

Movers and shakers of post-war Britain



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During the 1950s, Britain was recovering from the after effects of the Second World War.

Rationing was enforced until 1954 and many families were living in very poor conditions due to the fact that hundreds of homes were destroyed in raids throughout the war. However, the 1950s were a time of innovation with major developments in technology.

There was also a sense of euphoria that the war had finally ended.

To help rebuild the countries' homes, Professor Patrick Abercrombie published the Greater London Plan, the principal aim of which was to move one million people into newly-created satellite towns around London.

The Order designating [Hemel Hempstead](#) as a New Town was made on February 5 1947, and in March the Hemel Hempstead Development Committee was formally set up.



The foundation stone for the first house in the New Town was laid by the Mayor of Hemel Hempstead, Councillor Selden, on April 23, 1949.

The first occupation was in February 1950, when the keys of four houses in Homefield Road were presented to bricklayers who were working on the estate. The Development Corporation was very keen to create a community spirit.

Community Associations were started and people published local newsletters, such as the Adeyfield Argus and Bennetts End Bugle.

Elizabeth II was crowned Queen in 1953 and, even though rationing was in force, everyone was allowed an extra pound of sugar and four ounces of margarine to celebrate this very special occasion.

The first televisions were being introduced into homes. One popular television show was 'Muffin the Mule'.

It was a puppet character loved by many [children](#) of the time – for some the very first taste of this novel entertainment medium.

The TV show was presented by Annette Mills and ran from 1946 to 1952.

The Festival of Britain in 1951 was an event that marked the centenary of the Great Exhibition of 1851.

The festival generated demand for new fashions in furniture and furnishings. The exhibits introduced new styles of many items made from revolutionary materials, such as fibreglass, plywood, Formica and plastics.

Some of our local industries were exhibiting at the Festival of Britain.

For example, at the Museum Store there is a sample of the wrapping paper made especially for the festival, manufactured by the packing supplies department of John Dickinson's in Apsley.

In the early 1950s, Rolls Razor was based at [Hemel Hempstead](#) and the company employed around 200 people of the town. Unfortunately, the firm only lasted a few years at this location.

The 'Viceroy Dry Shaver' made at Rolls Razor was said to be difficult to use, as one had to crank the lever for it to work.

Sir Edmund Hillary was reputed to have used one of these hand-operated shavers during his successful ascent of Mount Everest in 1953.

Rock-n-Roll developed throughout the 1950s; some would say music during this time was very influential on modern music.

Favourite stars of the age include Buddy Holly, Chuck Berry, James Brown and Elvis Presley.

Film directors, such as Alfred Hitchcock, paved the way in film-making and helped develop how people tell stories in films today.

Dial M for Murder, Rear Window and Vertigo, are now thought of as classic films of the period. In 1953, Audrey Hepburn, the Emma Watson of the day, won an Oscar for her role in Roman Holiday.