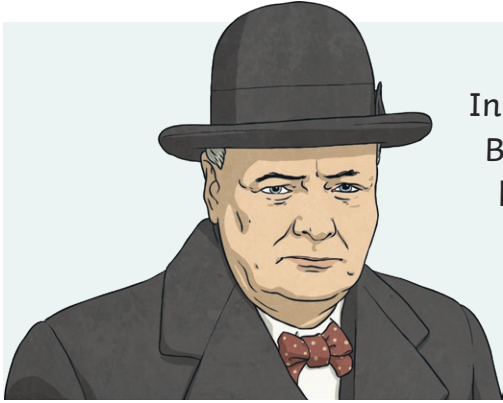



Post-War Britain



In 1945, wartime Prime Minister Winston Churchill told the nation that there were many 'toils ahead' for Britain. After years of war, people wanted a brighter future and they voted in a Labour government in the hope that it would ensure better days ahead. Prime Minister Clement Attlee's government brought in a range of measures to try to help the country recover. Still, this was a time of great austerity (financial hardship) for the nation. Britain had a huge war debt, many important industries were in trouble and lots of people needed somewhere new to live.

Post-War Winds of Change



The Welfare State – In 1942, William Beveridge wrote a report that highlighted what were called the five giants: **disease, want, ignorance, idleness** and **squalor**. Following the report, new Acts of Parliament were passed to create a country where the state supported the people in times of need and tried to ensure that citizens had rights to healthcare, education, good housing and well-paid jobs.

Nationalisation – Between 1945 and 1951, Labour nationalised (brought under government control) these large industries: **iron and steel; the railways; coal; gas**.

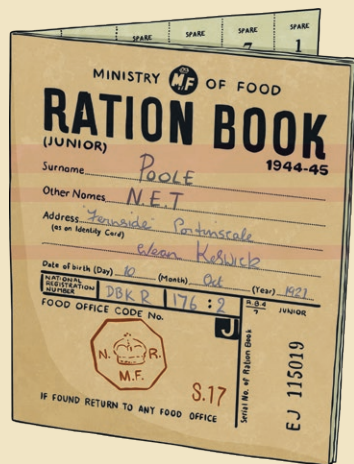
End of Empire – After 1945, many countries that had once been part of the British Empire gained independence, including India in 1947 and Nigeria in 1960. Most former territories (lands that were part of the Empire) became voluntary members of the Commonwealth of Nations.

On the Move – In the post-war years, many people moved to and from Britain. There were plenty of jobs to fill so people came from places such as the Caribbean and India to settle and work in Britain. They helped to rebuild the country. People moving from Britain often went to Australia.



Post-War Woes

Rationing – Foods and fuel were still in short supply so wartime rationing continued until the 1950s for many items. Queuing outside shops to get basic items was part of daily life. In July 1946, bread was added to the list of foods that were rationed for the first time. Everyone was pleased when sweet rationing finally came to an end in 1953. Meat was the last thing to be derationed in 1954.



Winter 1947 – Known as the Big Freeze, the severe winter of 1947 almost brought the country to a standstill. The heavy snowfall caused terrible hardships. Over two months of blocked roads and railways resulted in food and fuel shortages. Power to homes was limited. Crops and livestock were lost. When the snow finally began to clear in March, it caused widespread flooding.



Smog – With coal fires and heavy industry in cities, 'pea-soupers' (thick, yellowish fogs) were common. On 5th December 1952, the smoky pollution in London that usually drifted into the atmosphere was trapped. The thick smog lasted for five days. Face masks had to be worn and visibility was down to just a few metres or less. More than 150,000 people went to hospital and it is now thought that 12,000 people died from the effects of the toxic fumes.



Did You Know...?

Pollution was such a problem in post-war Britain that the Clean Air Act 1956 was passed.

Post-War Wonders

The National Health Service – 5th July 1948 saw the launch of the National Health Service. Now, everyone had the right to free healthcare (paid for by taxes) from the ‘cradle to the grave’.

New Towns and Tall Tower Blocks – Houses bombed during the Second World War had to be replaced. Prefabricated houses (prefabs) were constructed quickly from metal and wood-framed kits. By 1951, 800,000 new council houses had been built. With a shortage of land in cities, new, modern high-rise flats helped to solve the housing shortage. Many people had a toilet inside for the first time. From 1946, there were waves of completely new towns planned, such as Harlow and Stevenage!

Television – The BBC started up again in 1946 and, in 1955, ITV began broadcasting. There was a huge rise in television ownership. By 1959, around 70% of homes had a black and white TV.

Fascinating Facts – Athlete Roger Bannister ran a mile in under four minutes!

By the end of the 1950s things were looking up. International trade had improved so wages rose. People had more money to spend. Rationing was over and people had better homes, free healthcare and more free time. In 1957, Prime Minister Harold Macmillan told the people of Britain that ‘You’ve never had it so good.’ Britons were ready for the swinging 60s!

Post-War Celebrations Timeline

Although this was a time of austerity, there were still events that the nation could celebrate.

Princess Elizabeth marries Lieutenant Philip Mountbatten in 1947.

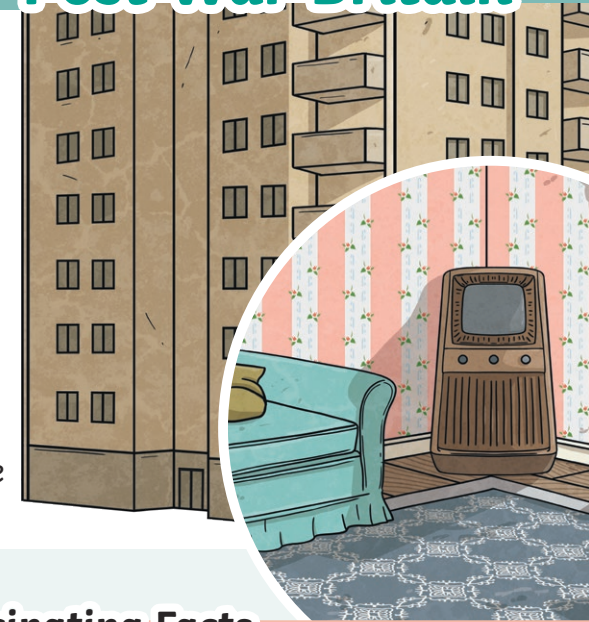
The Peak District is designated as the first national park in 1951.

The coronation of Elizabeth II takes place at Westminster Abbey in 1953.

London hosts the Olympic Games in 1948.

The Festival of Britain, an exhibition of science and great inventions, takes place on the South Bank, London, in 1951.

All rationing finally comes to an end in 1954.



Fascinating Facts

Dentists provided 33 million artificial teeth in the first nine months of the National Health Service.

Thousands of households bought their first television set especially to watch the Queen’s coronation in 1953.