

The 1950s

The Coronation



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Britain in 1953, Coronation Year, was a time of optimism and self-confidence, hopeful of what the future might bring. The Coronation was, the Times remarked, a 'holiday from reality'. It was a chance for people to finally celebrate their hard-won victory after the miseries of World War Two.

On Coronation Day itself, 2 June 1953, it was announced that Edmund Hillary and Sherpa mountaineer Tenzing Norgay, as part of a Commonwealth team of climbers, had conquered Mount Everest. All this was proclaimed as the beginning of a glorious new 'Elizabethan Age' for the nation.

The Coronation ceremony followed a similar pattern to the Coronations of Kings and Queens before. Parts of it were almost identical to that of Edward II in 1308. It was the world's first major international event to be broadcast on television. Sales of TV sets had rocketed and millions of people were able to watch the Coronation live. Across the country street parties were held and in London the roads were packed with people waiting to see the procession.