

Then and Now 1951 & 2011

Celebrating the 60th Anniversary of The Festival of Britain

What was The Festival of Britain?



- *'A tonic for the nation'*
(Herbert Morrison, Labour Deputy Leader 1951)
- *'The post-war festival that would celebrate Britain's heritage, her industrial and scientific advances, by eradicating the residue of an inconvenient past.'*
(Iain Sinclair 2011, who visited it when he was eight)



The purpose of the festival was a country-wide celebration of Britain's history, achievements and culture to help Britons forget the trauma of war and show the world the British contribution to civilisation – past, present and future – in the arts, science and industrial design.

Festival events took place across Great Britain in 1951 but London's South Bank was the focus of celebrations where 22 pavilions told the story of the British people and their achievements. An enduring feature was the newly constructed Royal Festival Hall.

In Milton Keynes, our Heritage Open Days 2011 celebrate the 60th anniversary of the 1951 Festival of Britain as part of the national Archive Awareness Campaign.

Fifty-one special events highlight the Borough's significant contribution both to the national story and to the 1951 festival themes.

The Milton Keynes area has been fundamental to the nation's history thanks to its geographical location with unequalled connection to key transport and communication routes; and its innovative and forward approach to delivering so many historic 'firsts' in the UK.

This exhibition looks back to 1951 and compares the area then with how we live and work today.

What do you remember?