

## **1950's and 1960's in London**

The 1950's and 1960's changed and characterised London in various ways. Many people immigrated to London, the city was heavily destroyed and had to be rebuilt. Furthermore London became the youth culture centre. The purpose of this report is to give the reader a detailed insight into those years.

### **Immigrants**

At the beginning of the 1950's the first groups of Caribbean immigrants settled down in London. This time was called the 'open door period'. These people were needed to fill the requirement of workers amongst others in public transportation, construction and hospitals. That is why they were of great significance for the rebuilding of London. Despite this fact this mass immigration caused much racial violence and many riots especially in West London. The white people feared the development of a black community. Most of the Caribbean immigrants moved to poor areas like Notting Hill in North Kensington. In August 1958 the situation in Notting Hill escalated and gangs of young white men including "The Teddy Boys and Girls" chased and assaulted black people. The conflict was called "Notting Hill Riots" and lasted 7 days. These social problems were aggravated by the fact that many people became unemployed because of Britain's industry collapse in 1962.

People from the Commonwealth states and people from the the British Empire could immigrate easily because they possessed a British passport. The government was under high pressure. On account of this the government aggravated the immigration of non white people by a few new laws. In the year 1945 the number of non-white people was about a few thousand. Until the middle of the 1960s this number increased to almost 1.4 million people. Although this number increased rapidly the population dropped from approximately 8.2 million in 1950 to 7.4 million in 1970. London became one of the most diverse cities in the world.

### **Youth culture**

The 1950's and 1960's were characterised by the growth of youth culture and the city became the youth culture centre. The concerts of the successful bands like "the Beatles" and the "Rolling Stones" attracted a large number of tourists to the capital. Moreover, the incomes increased with the result that the people had more money and the living quality rose. Many subcultures developed in London which determined themselves by their lifestyle, their music and their fashion. The three most important subcultures were the "Teddy Boys and Girls", the "Mods" and the "Rastas".

"The Rastas" was a group which characterised themselves by wearing Dreadlocks. That lifestyle came up in the 1960s and was mainly performed by Caribbean immigrants. The activities of this subculture were amongst others listening to dub reggae music and smoking cannabis.

"The Mods" was a subculture which developed in the 1950's in London. Mod is the abbreviation for modernist. Significant for this group were the fashion and the music particularly Pop, soul and R&B.

The last important subculture is the “Teddy Boys and Girls”. They came up in the 1950’s in the capital of the UK and spread very fast. The group mainly consisted of young men and women who wore elegant clothes like drape jackets and slim-fit pants. Besides those brash clothes they were associated with American rock and roll.

### **Rebuilding of London**

As a result of the Second World War the major part of London was heavily damaged. In the 1950’s the rebuilding began slowly. The biggest problem which London had at this time were the housing shortages. This issue occurred due to the fact that many houses were destroyed. It should be added that the problem was complicated by the masses of labour immigrants. The blocks became unpopular quickly. That is why the city tried to convince people to move to the suburban towns.

Festival of London in May 1951 celebrated the nation’s recovery from the Second World War. This event made the people looking positively and optimistically forward. It was a sign of progress and redevelopment to the population.

Another problem was the smog which was caused by London’s inhabitants who heated their homes with coal. This issue climaxed in December 1952. There was a period of cold winter days and there was no wind. More than 100.000 people became ill and around 4.000 people died because of this smog. This time was called “the Great Smog” and lasted 5 days.

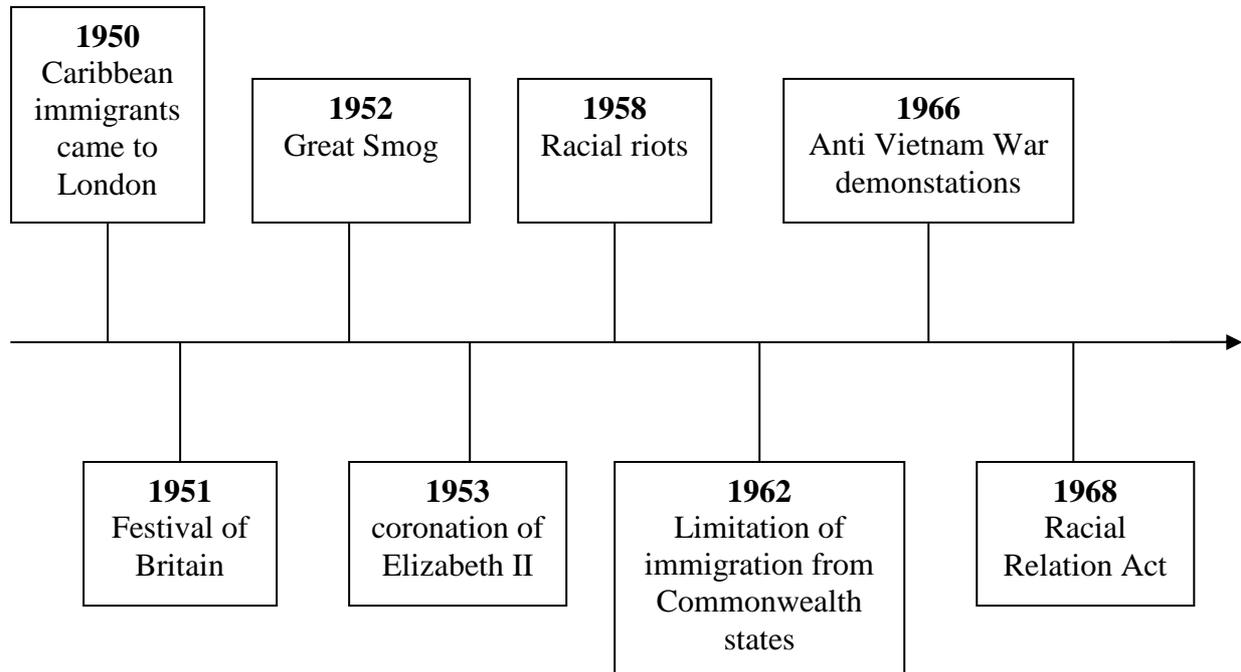


Destroyed houses after the Second World War



Festival of London in 1951

## Timeline 1950-1969



## Conclusion

Finally it can be said that the 1950's and 1960's were two booming decades which definitely characterized London regarding the social aspects as well as the infrastructure and the economy. It was a period of optimism. The city became very diverse because of the immigrant workers. The rebuilding of UK's capital was in full swing. Due to the increased earnings culture and especially youth culture grew a lot. All in all, those years were very successful and they made a different London than before.

Sources:

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