

FESTIVAL OF BRITAIN 1951
IN NORTHERN IRELAND

OFFICIAL SOUVENIR HANDBOOK



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A MESSAGE

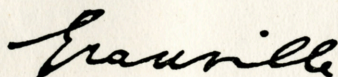
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HIS EXCELLENCY THE GOVERNOR OF
NORTHERN IRELAND

*I*N the history of nations, as in the lives of individuals, there are eventful days and years that call for special remembrance. The Festival of Britain marks the centenary of the great Exhibition of 1851, which symbolised British life and activity in the mid-nineteenth century. In the last hundred years the United Kingdom has made astonishing progress in many fields—science and the arts, industry and agriculture, and the general well-being of the people. All this has been achieved in spite of devastating wars and the economic disturbance they create.

That the Festival of Britain is being held in 1951, when the times are austere and the international outlook unsettling, is evidence of a resiliency of spirit that is characteristic of the British people. The Festival will be a source of new inspiration to all who value the British way of life and are ready to play their part in making the future bright and secure for the British Commonwealth as a whole.

To all who have worked so diligently in preparing for the Festival in Northern Ireland I send my thanks and greetings. May their labours be crowned with the success they so richly deserve.



Government House,
Hillsborough,
Northern Ireland.

*From Sir Roland Nugent, Member of the Council of the
Festival of Britain and Chairman of the Committee
for Northern Ireland*

This Handbook is a unique souvenir of a unique occasion. It gives an account of the principal aspects of the Festival of Britain in Northern Ireland and tells something of how the many-sided programme of activities and events, official and unofficial, was conceived and carried out. In particular it sums up the story of the Belfast Festival of the Arts and the Ulster Farm and Factory Exhibition. There is an important place, too, for voluntary contributions on a smaller scale and those routine events, both serious and frivolous, that have been given a special Festival flavour for 1951.

The pages that follow are largely concerned with the solid achievements that lie behind the summer festivities of 1951 in Northern Ireland—achievements in industry, art and agriculture and the multifarious activities that make up our way of life. The deeper purpose of the Festival, as a review and re-assessment of the strength and character of our national life, has been constantly in mind ; but we have not overlooked the fact that a Festival should be a bright and cheerful celebration, a kind of summer holiday tonic before facing wintry days and uphill tasks. I hope this book will be a happy memento as well as a useful factual record.

Many Ulster people, far more that can be named in a mere list of committees and sub-committees, have worked hard and willingly over the past two years to ensure the local success of the Festival. I should like to express my gratitude to them and to all who have contributed to the Festival programme commemorated by this Northern Ireland Souvenir Handbook.

We may wonder how future generations will think of the Festival of 1951. At a century's distance in the perspective of time we can appreciate the significance of 1851. 1951 in its turn will be a year to remember, leaving behind reminders of practical and permanent value. May the Festival of Britain of which we are proud to be part be counted in retrospect not unworthy of the people and land we celebrate. May it long remain a pleasant memory.

THE FESTIVAL OF BRITAIN is a Statement of Strength—an account of enterprise in years that are past, an account of achievement to-day, an earnest of power for the future.

Worn by two World Wars the British people and their land may be. But in lane and in street, in village and city—recovering—we walk and work with confidence and pride.

Our country surges with energy. In our Festival we show the nations that our craftsmanship, our invention and vision, our quality of endeavour, are as formidable as before.

Britain—great in the past—is still Great Britain.

We, the men and women of Northern Ireland, have played and are playing still our part in that endeavour. Our soil was stubborn, our resources few. Yet to-day our fields are fertile, our industries—built from little by determined hands—are honoured.

This Exhibition is a Story of Endeavour—of our work and our skill, our continuing craftsmanship in factory and farm—of our struggle in years that are past, our effort to-day, our endeavour for strength in the future.

We have given much—and we have much to give.

Inspiration and Historical Background

Two years after Queen Victoria and the Prince Consort had visited a linen trade exhibition in the old White Linen Hall, Belfast, the Great Exhibition of 1851 was opened by the Queen in Hyde Park, London. It was generally believed that Prince Albert, the driving force of the Great Exhibition, had first been fired with enthusiasm for the idea of a British demonstration of industrial and social progress by the success of the Belfast exposition.

Stories of the 1851 Exhibition are legion. It was one of the wonders of the age. Opposition was encountered and overcome, engineering problems and administrative difficulties were many and were met successfully. The Crystal Palace, revolutionary in design and construction, typified the courage and vision of those responsible for the Exhibition. The 1951 parallel is the South Bank site.

The 1851 Exhibition was a trade fair showing manufactured products from all over the world, but the Festival of Britain in 1951 is something much larger and wider in scope and conception. The whole country is on show, as well as the official displays in London, Glasgow and Belfast and elsewhere.

The Festival began as an idea accepted by the Government of the United Kingdom with the support of all political parties. It is intended to do two main things.

First, to provide a holiday celebration and a stimulus to the people of Britain after years of war and austerity, making them freshly aware of the achievements of Britain, and encouraging them to tackle the future with new energy.

Secondly, to show to the world at large the strength of British achievement in the Arts, Sciences and Industry in the present as well as the past, and the vitality of the British contribution to the world to-day and in the days to come.

The Festival should, therefore, be useful as well as enjoyable ; a fillip for the prestige of Britain as an exporting nation and tourist centre, as well as a tonic for our own people. Large numbers of visitors are expected to come to Britain in 1951, and many of these will come to Northern Ireland as well as Great Britain. In the very best sense it will be ' good for business.'

In the Festival year, then, Britain is the world's host, ready to show its visitors and its own citizens the discoveries and the achievements in Science, in the Arts and in Industrial Design which have made it a great nation. At the same time the Festival is, in the words of the Director General, ' an act of national reassessment, and an affirmation of faith in the future, in which every town and village is invited to join and in which, indeed, every citizen can share.'

The summer of 1951 should be a season of festivity. It will also be something more—an opportunity to complete a number of projects of lasting value to the community, leaving the nation as a whole and each local community better off at the close of the year than when the year began.

Publicity overseas for the Festival has been on a major scale and Ulster, as one of the main Festival centres, has been publicised throughout the world—even in countries where the language does not permit of transcription of the word ' Belfast.' Textiles and other manufactures from Northern Ireland are also, of course, included in many of the cross-channel Festival displays, Ulster industry having contributed worthily to the 1951 Stocklist, a register of all that is best in contemporary design.

Built from Little by Determined Hands

IN Ulster we are rich in enterprise, limited in basic material.

Before we can fire a furnace or lay a keel, we import the means to do so.

Yet we have built in Belfast the world's biggest single shipyard, biggest ropeworks and one of the world's biggest tobacco factories. A Belfast firm is the world's greatest maker of special textile machines, another makes most of the world's machinery for processing tea.

But our heavy industries are few, our farms can employ so many and no more. Throughout our Province, then, we are developing not only existing industries but new kinds of industry — that those in need of work may find it, that Youth may have its right.

And in industry old or industry new — the skill of our people persists.