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(Ross, K., 2010)

# December 1953: This month last century

1953

Posted 19 December 2010 by Kirstie Ross <<http://blog.tepapa.govt.nz/author/kirstieross/>> & filed under Collections Online  
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<<http://blog.tepapa.govt.nz/category/exhibitions/slice-of-heaven-20th-century-aotearoa/>> .

57 years ago – Queen Elizabeth arrives in Auckland, becoming the country's first reigning monarch to visit New Zealand (23 December 1953)

The Queen and her husband, Prince Philip, arrived in New Zealand just before Christmas in 1953 for a day tour. In the past, only sons or brothers of monarchs had visited the country, such as the Duke of Cornwall and York who visited in 1901. The Duke was the son of King Edward VII and grandson of the late Queen Victoria.





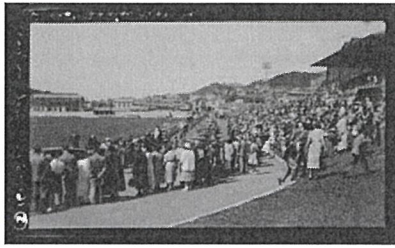
<<http://blog.tepapa.govt.nz/wp->

[content/uploads/2010/12/invitation-for-roayl-blog1.jpg](#)>

GH009568 Invitation to the hui at Rotorua put on for the Duke and Duchess of Cornwall and York, 1901, by Benoni White. Te Papa.

New Zealanders had been waiting patiently to see a reigning royal in their homeland. At long last, over the summer of 1953-1954, we had the opportunity to express our loyalty to the Queen and the British Commonwealth.

It was as if all our Christmases had come at once. Altogether about three-quarters of New Zealand waved Union Jacks and craned their necks to catch a glimpse of the newly-crowned Queen Elizabeth II.



<<http://blog.tepapa.govt.nz/wp-content/uploads/2010/12/a-008487-queens-visit-december-1953-january-1954-16-01-1954-adkin-leslie.jpg>>  
A.008487 The Queen at the Basin Reserve, Wellington,  
16 January 1954 by Leslie Adkin. Te Papa

Finally, the Queen was face-to-face with her subjects. Her Christmas message, broadcast from Auckland, touched on the importance of this:

*'I want to show that the Crown is not merely an abstract symbol of our unity but a personal and living bond between you and me.'*

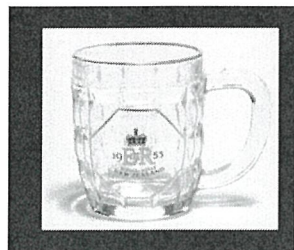
Elizabeth and Philip had sailed south to New Zealand after visiting Fiji and Tonga. Brian Brake took personal photographs of this leg of their tour, while he was covering it for the National Film Unit.



<<http://blog.tepapa.govt.nz/wp-content/uploads/2010/12/ct-045267-fiji-royal-tour-1953-brake-brian.jpg>>  
CT.045267 Fiji - Royal Tour 1953 by Brian Brake. Gift of Raymond Wai-man Lau. Te Papa

The Queen's first port of call in New Zealand was Auckland. According to one newspaper, the day she arrived *'was the best day in Auckland's history'*.

While they were in New Zealand, the Queen and Prince Phillip passed through 46 towns and cities from the Far North to Bluff. And after the Queen and Prince Philip sailed off in the *Gothic*, the Prime Minister Sid Holland proclaimed that *'New Zealand has known nothing like this before'* – and probably not since.



<<http://blog.tepapa.govt.nz/wp-content/uploads/2010/12/gh013242-beer-tankard-circa-1953-unknown.jpg>>  
GH13242 Beer tankard made as a souvenir for the 1953-54 royal tour. Te Papa

Many New Zealanders made or bought souvenirs to keep the memories of the royal summer alive. There were tour souvenirs to suit all tastes and budgets. Regardless of a souvenir's cost or quality, all were treasured keep-sakes of a glorious royal summer.

Collections Online <<http://collections.tepapa.govt.nz/Theme.aspx?im=2432>> has a selection of souvenirs from the 1953-54 royal visit and the 1953 Coronation.

Visit the *Slice of Heaven: 20th Century Aotearoa* mini-site <<http://sites.tepapa.govt.nz/sliceofheaven/web/html/default-3.html?im=2546>> for more about these topics.

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