The History of Wales – Documentary Script

Introduction

INT. Room/Studio Daytime
NARRATOR TALKING INTO CAMERA, VIDEO AND IMAGES INCLUDED OVER THE TOP OF HIS NARRATION

SCOTT
(CASUAL BUT INFORMATIVE)

Wales. That outcrop of land, off of the West of England. No, not Devon… Go up a bit, there we are… Known not only for its abundance of sheep, mountains and funny accent but it’s deep, interesting history varying from the Strong Celtic warriors that once roamed these lands to the deep coal pits and rise of industry in the country, pivotal to the progression of the whole of the UK through the 18th to 20th centuries.

In this Documentary I want to talk about and teach you some of the history of this great nation, how it came to be and how it got to where it is today, and there is no place better start this story than at the beginning.

(Cue Start of Big Bang Theory intro)

Well maybe not that far back…

(Fade to black, sped up bbt intro)

Early History
WALES. REVIEW.
Not too much of Wales’ earliest history is known, we do know however that the Wales that we all know and love today with the same coastline came in existence at around 6000 BC. Humans have also been around for a long, long time. The oldest Remains of a human(ish*) species are those of a Neanderthal who is believed to have lived about 225,000 years ago. These Remains were found in a cave called “Pontnewydd Cave” in the Elwy Valley located in Denbighshire. This Stone age beast called Bryn (Probably) would have wielded advanced technologies such as sharp and blunt lumps of stone, usually flint, to go about his day to day life. Day to day life wasn’t what it is today though, as it was shared with all sorts of exotic animals by today’s standards, including lions, bears, wolves and leopards. Imagine if they were alive in Wales today…

(Shot out of window to street badly implemented leopard in street)

Oh, my good god....
**Bronze and Iron Age**

After Bryn ap Grug’s time, people started to settle down and go from Hunting and Gathering to settling down and living off of agriculture.

It was around 2300 BCE, the first copper is thought to have been cast, copper was used to make slightly more advanced tools than rock, but it was only 300 years later that the more advanced alloy, bronze was discovered. This was created by combining the already used copper and mixing it with tin. As well as creating tools such as basic axe’s but also more sophisticated items like slashing swords and rapiers. This transition into a new age was what sparked the beginning of the Celtic identity. Copper mining was huge back then as it was essential to a thriving life, it was mined on a large scale in particular at the great Omre which is located near Llandudno as well as Parys mountain (Anglesey.)

After the Bronze age, came the iron age, and other than through the obvious change in commonly used materials was the change in the weather. The era has been described as “an age of: Heavy rain and strong wind” By Geraint H. Jenkins in “A Concise History of Wales”. Not much has really changed since by the look of things…

Another highlight from the iron age are the hillforts. They made lots of hillforts. Chances are, if you’re in Wales, near a hill/ and or mountain, you are near what was once a hill fort.

Here is a map of where hillforts could be found, some can still be seen in varying conditions, mostly pretty dire condition since they’re like 3-4000 years old. Anyways here’s me on a visit to a hillfort near me.

**Hill fort scene**

(Cuts to person stood in hillfort talking to camera)

**PERSON**

What do you mean they’re all dead?

**CAMERA**

The Celts died off after 750 years. Surely you knew that?

**PERSON**

What? How Come? They were meant to be Great Warriors.

**CAMERA**

Well yes, they were, however, they lived in smaller tribes each with its own chieftain, rather than under one unified ruler, this meant they were no match for the Roman Legion when they came over in 43 CE who were exactly that: a unified force. The Romans also out did the Celts on the technology front, it was said that “If war is a competition between
opposing technologies, then the native tribes’ equipment was equivalent to training pea-shooters against panzer divisions”

(Possible video game scene of literal tank vs pea-shooter?)

PERSON
Oh Dear.

So, what you’re saying is the Celts got absolutely wrecked because the Romans were smarter, hence why there are none here today?

CAMERA
Yes, that and all of this did happen over 3000 years ago.

PERSON
Whatever, let’s just go get a drink...

(fades to black)

Roman Invasion
Ummm, yeah.

So, the tribes did fall due to their technical disadvantage and lack of “unificationnn?” But it could have also had something to do with the 40,000 troops Emperor Claudius sent over. Now it doesn’t take a genius to work out that’s a lot of men.

The Deceangli were the first welsh tribe to submit to the romans might, However, if there’s one thing the Celts had over the Romans was that they were not afraid to face up to the Empire.

Led by Caratacus son of Culobelinus, or Caradog as he came to be known as in Welsh legend, the Silures waged full blown guerrilla warfare upon the Roman Empire which lasted for 25 years! Caratacus faced the Romans for 9 years before he met his final battle came, near Caer Caradog in 51 AD. He actually used a hillfort for defence in this legendary battle giving the Britons an easy descent towards the Romans as well as somewhere to retreat to if necessary. The Britons also made a Rampart out of stone to try and hinder the Romans from gaining on them as well as this they also used a river for their defence.

He wasn’t actually killed in battle, he fled to another tribe called the Brigantes. This was all well and good but unfortunately, the queen of the brigantes, cartimandua was allied with the romans so handed him over to them wrapped in chains. For one reason or another though, possibly because of this, Cartimandua’s people later revolted against her.

(cut to snapchat parody?)
After this point is when things started to go downhill for the Celts and after this the Romans more-a-less owned Britain.

There are still multiple signs of the romans around today, most notably the massive, straight roads they left on top of our hills.

ROMAN ROAD SCENE

Did you know there are over 1000 kilometres of these roads, linking together where the great Roman forts once stood. The next stop along this particular stretch of road is Nidum, or Neath.

 Whilst it was always known that the romans had been in Neath, it was not known whereabouts until 1949 when the construction of flats in the area started. The Fort was 525 feet across and had a total area of around 6.25 acres.

Not much of the Nidum can be seen today apart from a small part of the south western gateway situated by what is now Neath Abbey Road. There is also the theatre on the Neath college campus right next to where the fortress would have been that has for obvious reasons been called the Nidum arts centre.

Some of the welsh language also comes from the Romans, like “Pont” meaning bridge comes from the Latin Pontus and “eglwys” meaning church derives from “ecclesia”.

Vikings

Several hundred years after the whole Roman fiasco, there was that whole other group of foreign invaders here to plunder and pillage us of all we hold near and dear. Our Scandinavian friends, the Vikings. Back in around 793 AD, the first Vikings landed in Britain. They were hungry, desperate marauders who decided to make their own problems other peoples by rolling up to their front doors and murdering everyone and taking their stuff. Thankfully, when compared to the other countries in the British Isles, Wales didn’t get it too bad this is probably because we were the most protected/furthest away from Ikea- I mean Scandinavia.

(Cut to Viking building furniture?)

There were however some Vikings who settled in Wales, and one of the dead giveaways of this are the place names for example: Milford and Fishguard as well as some of Wales surrounding islands, Grassholm, Skomer and Tusker rock which is named after a Danish Viking who once lived in what is now Glamorgan.
Swansea is also said to be a product of the Vikings, when Sweyne Fork-Beard got shipwrecked on the bay there. Information on Vikings in Wales however is very limited due to lack of written evidence from the time.

Whilst the evidence on South Wales Vikings are limited, North Wales is home to some tragic Viking Stories.

In 987, the Vikings laid siege onto Anglesey and took 2,000 men and sold them into slavery. This was big as at the time when you consider the total population probably wasn’t much more than this meaning that the Vikings pretty much took a whole island.

**NORMAN WALES**

1066 saw great change for Britain, Wales not excluded. After William the Conqueror went and demolished Harold and Co. in the battle of Hastings, he took the crown of England and when doing so saw a lot of change to the social structure of Britain. Wales fell to the Normans for the same reasons as it had to the Celts, they failed to unite as one so Normans got control. Interestingly enough, the words “Wales” and “Welsh” come from the Normans and the words mean “foreign land” and “foreigners”.

**Rebellion**

So, Wales was dominated by England for a while, but this is Wales Vs. England we are talking about so the Welsh wouldn’t really just be beaten into submission. The Welsh showed their distaste to being under English rule through a variety of ways like when a large group of the Welsh refused to go off and fight in France for the English, sparking a revolt. Wales still had its own royal houses who were in fact the leaders of these rebellions.

**PLAGUE**

Few things are more devastating than Mufasa’s death but the black death cuts it pretty close. For some, it marks the end of the middle ages due to how much everything changed before and during this era.

It was October 1347, when a group of sailors with “sickness clinging to their very bones” entered the port of Medina, Sicily. No one knew the devastating consequences of the disease these damned souls had brought back with them from the east.

The diseases made its way into Britain so quickly through the rats on board of the boats. I say diseases as this black death
was a "cocktail" of a variety of plagues – Bubonic, pneumonic and septicaemic.
The whole of the Western world got absolutely devastated by the plague with over 25 million people being killed between 1347 and 1351. That is over half the population at the time! The welsh name for this tragedy was "Y Farwolaeth Fawr" Translating to the "Great Morality".
And in great morality we were, with over a quarter of Wales population being wiped clean out. The close nit town of Holywell had virtually all of its lead miners wiped out. Obviously since everybody was off busy dying of the plague, it meant that there were fewer people to till the land and work so on top of a lot of the people being deadly ill, it was also a time of a lot of economic hardship. It took wales many, many years to recover from the aftermath of the Black death.

**PLAGUE SCENE**

**EXT. Empty Street**

**CHARACTER WALKING DOWN THE STREET LOOKING AROUND AT SURROUNDING ENVIROMENT AS IF SOMETHINGS WRONG.**

**PERSON**
(worried, Confused)
Where is everyone?

**CAMERA**
Did you not hear? The plague came back and killed everyone off.

**PERSON**
WHAT!? How did I not here about this?

**CAMERA**
Probably because you were too busy off looking at Hillforts up in the mountains.

**PERSON**
A man’s got to have his hobbies and interests. Anyway, how does this plague spread?

**CAMERA**
Well there are 3 forms of the plague – bubonic, pneumonic and septicaemic.

Bubonic plague would spread through fleas and insects that would inhabit small animals like rats and was the best plague to get if there was such a thing as it had a 50% mortality rate. Pneumonic and septicaemic was a different ball game completely, with a 90% mortality rate you were almost guaranteed a Gary Goner. Even this though was nothing compared to that of the septicaemic plague with a 100% rate of death of those who contracted it. You were properly screwed if you got this one.
PERSON
How would I know if I had the black death inside of me?

CAMERA
Well bubonic targets the lymph nodes, leading to swelling in the armpits and groin as well as other common flu symptoms like a high fever, achy limbs etc. Pneumonic on the other hand attacked the lungs, so can lead to cardiopulmonary failure as well as a deadly chest pain.

PERSON
What about septicaemic? What does that do?

CAMERA
That one targets the blood and can often follow up from the bubonic plague. Pretty much everything bad that can happen to your body happens with this one, with it ending with all your internal organs shutting down. A big physical sign of septicaemic plague is necrosis in the nose, hands and toes, basically causing them all to go black and crusty like Dumbledore in the half-blood prince, this then can potentially lead to amputation.

PERSON
(Looks shocked at person behind camera, hides his hands in pockets/ behind back)

CAMERA
Hey what that on your hand?

PERSON
(Clearly Lying)
NOTHING.

CAMERA
(Grabs his arm shows hand to camera, all black and wrinkly, armpits also swollen.)
OH MY GOD.

PERSON
Coughs blood away from camera.

Cuts to black

Owain Glyndwr
If you have ever even thought about looking into Welsh independence and or revolution, you will have heard of Owain Glyndwr.
For most of his life, Glyndwr was a perfectly good law-abiding citizen, working as a squire of Sycharthand and Glyndyfrdwy who were both very good at obeying the English.
In about 1400 everything changed for Glyndwr as he got in a dispute with his next-door neighbour. The whole argument was over where their garden fence started and who owned what land. Because of this dispute, his neighbour Reginald Grey neglected to tell Glyndwr of a summons from the king, who wanted Owain's help. This then made it look like he’d committed treason by pieing the king off. The king’s response then when Glyndwr and Grey brought their complaint higher up was “What care we for these barefoot rascals?” basically meaning lol I don’t care they’re poor people problems.

This upset Owain so he then decided to launch a full-scale revolt against the people in charge.

People seemed to like Owain Glyndwr as in September of 1400, his supporters proclaimed him Prince of Wales. Owain Glyndwr was believed to have supernatural powers by some due to how he won the battle of hyddgen in an atrocious storm, some of the enemy thought Glyndwr was controlling the weather.

3 years after becoming the prince of Wales, Glyndwr had is arch nemesis REGINALLDD GREYYY arrested finally settling his neighbourly feud.

Another notable achievement of Glyndwr and Co. was the capture of Aberystwyth Castle even though the English took it back a few years later. This castle is still partially here today however over the years has fallen into severe disrepair; a lot of the stone being scavenged by locals for construction.

This mass revolt only went on until 1412 when everything calmed down. The next year Henry IV died anyway, meaning Henry V took his placed who wasn’t really too bothered on what had happened in the revolution so offered everyone who rebelled a pardon. Glyndwr’s son didn’t accept the pardon and continued living as an outlaw until 1421 as this is believed by many as when Owain Glyndwr bit the dust.

Glyndwr is viewed by many as a welsh hero who stood up for nationalism and an individual Wales however in the long run, the rebellion he led caused more damage than it did good for the politics and economy.

Even today some still view him as a prodigy, back in the 1980’s a big arson campaign was directed against holiday homes by a group who called themselves “Meibion Glyndwr” or “Sons of Glyndwr”.

Owain Glyndwr actually cameoed in Shakespeare’s Henry IV play since he had a lot of relevance in Henry IV’s story, however since Shakespeare struggled with actual English, there was no hope really with spelling Glyndwr, so he is referred to as Glendower and is described a “wild, exotic, magical and spiritual”.

**Civil War**

Now from this point onwards in Wales history, things start to become a bit less “stab your neighbour over your garden fence” and change to “oooh lets work this out with democracy and votes a politics.” That being said, it wouldn’t be a very good
civil war if no one was stabbed and or shot. My research on Wales and the civil war is limited but I do know that Wales was overall very conservative and royalist in the situation. Because of this, Oliver Cromwell, that guy from parliament didn’t really like the Welsh, calling them “seduced, ignorant people”.

**Rise of Industry**

Looking at more recent history, Wales was useful for one thing; it’s industry/mines. A country previously poor, still possibly still recovering from the ruin that the black death left the economy in, was now starting to thrive from the industry of mining coal, slate, copper and tin. These products had already been mined even dating back to the bronze age in coppers case however the rapid industrialisation and advancements in technologies meant it was now on a whole new level.

The first copper smelting works in Wales were established here, in Aberdulais, in 1584. The waterfall behind me here was used to power the two copper mills near Neath Abbey which helped to supply the copper and brass industries in Bristol, Wadsworth and London. It is suspected that the reason the copperworks was opened was because Queen Elizabeth I needed money to fund a war with Spain and the Spanish Armada. After a German engineer developed a way to make coinage out of melted copper, he set up out of Aberdulais well out of the way of prying eyes.

This water wheel is the largest, electricity generating wheel in the whole of Europe! It actually still generates power today, feeding electricity back into the grid.

Copper and electricity were certainly not the only uses that Aberdulais falls had. The South Wales Coast was at one point exporting as much as 90% of Britain’s copper in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Eventually however, other countries like south America and Australia started to develop their own coal industries meaning copper in Wales started to decline.

After retiring from the copper industry, Aberdulais falls moved on to become an ironworks and then later to a tinworks which is where the site gets its name from today where it is now owned by the national trust. After the copper industry declined, the local valleys moved on to the new trend in metal works – zinc and nickel.

More than just metal and fuel was extracted from the mines and quarries, there was also another major resource extracted from the welsh mountains and that was slate. Perfect for building houses and roofs capable of withstanding the harsh Welsh Weather. Slate was a very fast expanding industry going from only 2,000 tons being exported in 1782, to over the next 80 years (That’s 1862 in case you’re slow like me), raising up to 130,000 tons being exported. Some more of the many uses of slate included: fencing, writing surfaces, pencils, black boards and grave stones.
All of these exports meant the industry certainly wasn’t lacking in sales/money with Penrhyn making a net income of £100,000 in 1859! That would be the equivalent of £4.5 million in today’s economy.

To learn more about the smooth, layered rock, I visited the National Slate Museum up in Snowdonia and trust me, there was a lot of slate.

(Cue “Slate” montage)

Whilst industry was blooming at this time, the living and working conditions of workers were not so much. Everything was very cramped with up to 12 people sharing tiny 4 room cottages. Then these people would go and work underground in tiny tunnels to mine metals and other precious resources, all whilst filling their lungs with soot and coal dust.

Living in these cramped, damp, morbid conditions was PERFECT for all kinds of germs and bacteria. A good example of this is from the centre of the modern world - Merthyr Tydfil. In just one year – 1849, 1,800 lives were lost to cholera, a disease that literally makes you diarrhoea yourself to death, as liquid leaves the body faster than clean water can be put in, especially back in the 1800’s where it wasn’t a case of buying a multi pack of Brecon Carreg’s from the local Lidl.

A huge proportion of how Wales got to where it is today is because of the coal mining industry. Living and learning in Wales since I was seven, the stories and history we were taught the most about was coal mining and how it shaped the nation. Even though coal is known to have been mined in Wales since the Romans were about, it became more important than ever down to our advancements as a civilisation. Coal burns a lot hotter and for longer than wood meaning upon it being available for the masses, it swiftly replaced wood as a main source of fuel.

Since there was a fresh demand for coal, it started being extracted from underground in gargantuous quantities so it could be used to supply large scale operations like the iron manufactories.

Now I’m quite bored of mindlessly dropping statistics of how much of something was made so here’s a bunch of coal so you know that a lot of it was dug up.

To sell some of this coal, there was Cardiff coal exchange, a big warehouse full of people selling the black diamonds to people who needed it. An interesting urban myth is that the Cardiff coal exchange was home to the first million-pound cheque being signed.

Now that is a lot of money for some burney rock, or so it may seem until you consider how dangerous and how many lives were being put at risk just to get the carbon-based rock from the ground.
One of the many risks that came with digging underground was running across gas leaks. One minute, everything is fine, the next, BOOM! Everyone’s dead! That was until this legend came along; Humphrey Davy and made the Davy Lamp. These told the miners when there was methane gas present so they could get the hell out of dodge.

Still, regardless of detecting the gas, getting out in time was another thing and even then, there were so many other risks in the mines (including balrogs of course). The death rates in these places were abysmal. 1851 – 1855 738 people died in mines in Wales, then in 1894, 290 miners died in one incident in Albion Colliery. To make these statistics even more shocking, 1 in 5 of these deaths were boys under the age of 15. They say “health and safety’s gone mad” well yes, this is exactly why. It was even common for 4-year olds to be working underground in these environments.

Well that took a bit of a dark and dreary turn. It’s obviously a crucial and important part of our history to talk about but I think we can lighten things up a bit again now and what better way to do that than talking about trains.

Big parts of the history of locomotives happened just here in Swansea and Mumbles. 1807 marked the first horse drawn passenger railway being used on the Mumbles/Swansea bay line. There was also Samuel Homfrey, who made a bet of 1,000 guineas that he could construct a steam engine capable of hauling ten tons of iron from Merthyr to Abercynon, 9 miles away. These two men’s competitive spark then led to a series of locomotive developments and discoveries throughout the years.

As well as a lot of industrial revolution, Wales also saw a lot of cultural revolution, becoming the “land of song” with the choir being the centre of this land. It was in the 1860’s that the Welsh decided they wanted their own national anthem so they came to the agreement they would sing “Hen Wlad Fy Nhadau” or “Land of My Fathers”. At one point, more people were supporting music and the choir than were supporting Rugby and other sports. More people attended the National Eisteddfod the year that Wales won its first rugby triple crown. The rivalry was just as intense as rugby as well with choral competitions often turning into mass brawls

Revolt

Whilst the mining and factory-based industries were thriving, farming and agriculture, not so much. Farmers were struggling to make a living and it especially wasn’t helped by the fact that almost everywhere you went at this time in was guarded by a toll road.
This led to everyone eventually kicking off because it was obviously quite unfair making all these poor people pay all that money just to go places. All of these people would come together and attack the toll bridges and their owners. This was obviously very illegal since they were causing physical damage to people and property. Because of this the leader was always referred to as “Rebecca” in these riots so no one person could be blamed for the riots. Why Rebecca you ask? Well, all of the men who took part in the riots would wear woman’s clothing. To then further hide their identities, they would blacken their faces or wear masks as well as make strange noises.

The “Rebecca Riots” started on the 13th of May 1839, when men armed with axes and sledgehammers destroyed the gate in between Pembrokeshire and Carmarthenshire. On top of the toll roads, rioters also threatened landlords to reduce rents because they were being charged more in Wales than in England. Overall, over 500 attacks were carried out in the Rebecca riots.

Modern Wales
From this point in history people started to pull things together a bit more. Things went from arguing with your neighbour led to full blown national revolution to democratically working things out over debates and time. It all became a case of political parties. Labour this, conservatives that, the rise of modern democracy. However, what happened next was in no way democracy or even Humane for that matter.

Politics Scene
EXT. Open Field/Location

PERSON
(Relieved, Refreshed)
Ah I’m feeling so much better now, thank god for vaccines.

CAMERA
Yes, I’m glad to see you pulled through AND only lost 2 toes.

HECKLER
(Shouting in the distance)
OI! YOU OVER THERE, CAN SMELL YOU FROM HERE!

PERSON
(Frustrated/Angry)
Let’s see if you can smell me without a nose.

(pulls out sword from belt, starts moving towards)

(CAMERA Puts themselves between the two)
Woahh, we do NOT do that here, this is the modern era we use democracy and common sense to sort things out now, there’s a government and legal system now. You can’t just go around randomly mutilating and killing people for minor reasons.

I should probably put away this sword then

Yes, and pick up this gun because we’re going to war with Germany! High Ho! High Ho! It’s off to France we...

Woah, Woah but you just said...

Ah nah, what I meant was it’s wrong unless your government tells you to do it.

14 years after moving into the new century, 272,924 Welsh men were recruited to fight over seas in what would become known as the Great War. In a number of places, virtually every eligible man went to fight such as Britton Ferry in Neath. People in power motivated the men by reminding them of the country’s history defending itself against invaders. There was a “Welsh army” under the 38th, they fought in France in 1915 and were actually a part of the Battle of the Somme. All of the Women who were then left at home had to step up and keep the country running by themselves. This was a crucial point in change for women in society in Britain.

Depression

Spoilers for private peaceful: We won the war, however, that didn’t mean life was perfect from then onwards. When the stock market crashed in America it had a surprisingly drastic effect on us, here over in Wales since Wales exported some of its products to America and since no one could afford it any more, no one was buying it. Between 1921 and 1936, 241 mines were closed halving the workforce of 270,000. Times were so hard that people were having to crawl around slag heaps to look for scraps of coal to heat their homes. All of the industrial growth that Wales had seen over the past few centuries halted and a mass emigration took place. People just up and left, Wales loosing over 400,000 of its population. Unemployment was at its all-time highest during this period.

World War Transition
PERSON
Ah thank god I survived the Great war that will never happen again, annnddd the depression where we all lost our jobs. If we can get through this, we can get through anything.

(Lifts up newspaper saying second world war has started)

PERSON
AHHHH FOR FFF...

WWII
Why only have on world war (BOOOORRRINNNNGGGGG) when you can have 2? Turns out the Germans weren’t done with losing to us yet so came back for round 2. This time with the blitz and some horrific crimes against humanity.
All things considered; Wales’ wasn’t affected too badly in WW2 when compared to WW1 however that doesn’t mean it didn’t suffer.
The Welsh struggled through this though with a strong sense of humour. An entertaining story I heard was about a man in Cardiff, ushering his neighbour into the air raid shelter, only to be told he had to find her false teeth first, and his response to this was something along the lines of “Hitler’s Dropping bombs, not sandwiches!” Anyway, I chuckled slightly at that.
The emigration crisis that Wales had faced in the last decade was soon fixed with a million and a half mothers and their children being evacuated from cities such as Birmingham, Liverpool and London and coming to the Welsh country side where they were welcomed with open arms. All of these English arrivals helped to dilute down the overall Welshness of Wales, meaning over time things became more and more English and connected with the rest of Britain.
Wales, thankfully was very well informed as to what to do when enemy officers were casually driving past them through the streets of Swansea EVEN if their friend happened to be driving this is thanks to leaflets that were handed out to the populous that read:
“If you happen to be standing in a ditch or behind a tree or some other position of safety, and you have some kind of grenade or bomb in your hand, and a car comes along with enemy officers, driven even by your best friend, you must let them have it. It is what your friend would want you to do.”
So yeah that’s that.
Just like everywhere else, the important, industrial areas were primarily targeted in the Blitz. Places hit notably hard include Pembroke Dock, Cardiff and Swansea. Cardiff and Swansea are the two most populated areas in the country and Pembroke was where a lot of goods were imported and exported from.
Swansea suffered the most though with the whole of the city centre and it’s surrounding areas being flattened after being hit really hard in the winter of 1941. Here’s some more statistics to help you get a grasp of how bad it was. So. 70 German aircraft dropped 35,000 incendiary bombs and 800 high explosive bombs down onto Swansea. So yeah hopefully those big scary numbers showed you the damage. The glow from the fire was so intense that you could actually see it from Devon, across the channel. Obviously, all that damage led to loss of life with 230 people killed and over 400 injured.

Post War

After the second world war, Aneurin Bevan, a labour politician from the Sirhowy Valley started a campaign with the slogan “free health for all”. He was fed up with the poor working conditions of the mines and factories and thought that to compensate everyone in Wales should be entitled to free health care. Because of this, our National Health Service was created. Hence why you don’t have a $3,000 bill to go with your broken leg.

Post-War Wales saw a lot of other developments too. With Baglan Bay’s Petrochemical complex next to Llandarcy oil refinery, Port Talbot became an industrial hub. The whole of South Wales was classed as a “developing area.” Another development was the opening of the national parks with rambling becoming a large part of leisure throughout the country.

Aberfan

In 1966 however, Wales saw one of its darkest moments. At 9.15 in the morning, on the 21st of October, a waterlogged slag tip slid down the mountain at Aberfan, engulfing not only half of the farm, and some houses but also half of the school; consuming it in a river of mud. 144 people killed, 116 of which, children.

This Tragedy destroyed the country, ruining a whole village of people’s lives. It has been compared to Wales equivalent of the JFK Assassination in the sense that everybody remembers exactly where they were when they heard the news. The Coal boards took most of the blame, rather than the common workfolk with reports saying they’d been led astray by the foolishness and ignorance of those higher up. This left the national coal board to pay out compensation for all those effected by the incident. The money for some however wasn’t enough.

Margaret Thatcher

Now I’m very sorry for this next bit. Cover your kids ears because I’m going to be talking a lot about the P word. That’s politics by the way. A big part of recent Welsh politics
involves that of the IRON LADY or just Margaret Thatcher if you aren’t into comic books. Like Marmite, hated by some, loved by others, Thatcher played a pivotal role in the end of the Welsh coal mining industries. Upon being elected for her second term, she decided she’d spice things up a bit by assigning Ian MacGregor as head of the National Coal Board. Now this particular MacGregor had a lot of experience as an industrial axe-man after laying off 100,000 people in British Steel. So needless to say, it wasn’t looking good for the National Coal Board. In 1984, 20 pit closures, 20,000 jobs gone in the dust. This then led to a string of riots and strikes as it wasn’t just their jobs that the government was threatening but the way of life for the past 300 years. These riots were extremely bad with peoples seemingly supporting the miners and their point of view. One event where that wasn’t the case however was when an innocent taxi driver died called David Wilke. He was driving when two miners dropped concrete blocks off a bridge onto his taxi as he was driving a “strike-breaking miner” to work. In the end the majority of mines were shut down throughout Wales. Completely changing the country as a whole. Working in the local mine was almost the standard way of life through a large portion of Wales so now, without having that as an option left everyone without jobs but because of the mines taking up the majority of peoples careers, there weren’t really many jobs in other fields for people to take, or at least enough for everyone.

**Ending**

And that is what led to the country being where it is today. The mines now largely being a just a memory with the occasional remnants of the age that once was dotted around the country side. I think everyone should know where they came from and what got them to where they were today and this documentary has been an attempt at that. I certainly learnt a lot about Wales’ history from this and hope that you did too. To go from the first settlings of man to Margaret thatcher really was an adventure.

(fade to black)