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Presents a brand new 6 part series for BBC 1 Wales
Tuesdays at 10:35pm from 12th April 2011



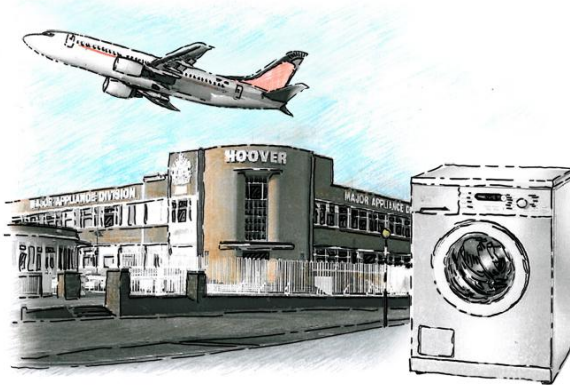
Absolutely Productions new series for BBC 1 Wales *Red Letter Day* remembers some of the dates that will go down in Welsh history as a turning point for the culture, the employment and the lives of people in Wales - for better and sometimes for worse. Narrated by John Sparkes, Red Letter Day looks at stories that hit the headlines at the time - from the 1960s through to the 1990s - but whose legacy lives on. These are six dates that we'll want to remember - or that some would sooner forget.....

Programme 1:



August 1st 1992

On August 1 1992 Hoover launched a promotional campaign in order to shift the backlog of appliances building up at stores



throughout the country. The deal was that if you spent £100 on any Hoover appliance you would receive two free flights to a European destination of your choice.

People rushed to snap up the offer – and buy

the Hoover appliances, and seeing that the promotion had delivered sales beyond their expectation, Hoover marketing people extended the offer. In October if you spent £100 on a Hoover appliance you would receive two free flights to the USA.

Unbelievable, the television advert said, and it was. Hundreds of thousands of people who'd bought a Hoover appliance were now demanding their free flights. The promotion turned into a disaster that would cost the company £30million.

This episode of Red Letter Day tells the story of why Hoover were driven to launch the ill-fated promotion, and its consequences. In doing so, using unique archive footage, we trace the history of the firm from the time it came to Pentrebach in Merthyr in 1948 through to its closure in 2009.

The town's former MP Lord Ted Rowlands explains why 'when Hoover caught cold Merthyr sneezed' and with his first-hand knowledge fondly recalls what Hoover meant to Merthyr.

Programme 2:



3rd November 1960

The fishing fleet of Milford Haven was in decline in the late 1950's. At the same time a crisis on a different continent was looming when Egypt's leaders nationalised the Suez Canal. For Britain this meant the end of small oil carrying ships as the journey to bring the oil here from the Far East would involve sailing around Africa. This meant big ships and big ships needed deep harbours.

Esso's existing harbour in Filey on the south coast wasn't deep enough to accommodate the huge ships now needed so they looked elsewhere.

Milford Haven provides one of the deepest harbours in Britain so that was where the company looked to build an oil refinery. On November 3 1960 the £18million refinery was opened by the Duke of Edinburgh and a new chapter in the fortunes of Milford Haven began. This was the red letter day, the turning point which marked the start of a new industry in the Haven. Esso were followed by Gulf, Amoco and Texaco who all set up refineries in the 1960's there.



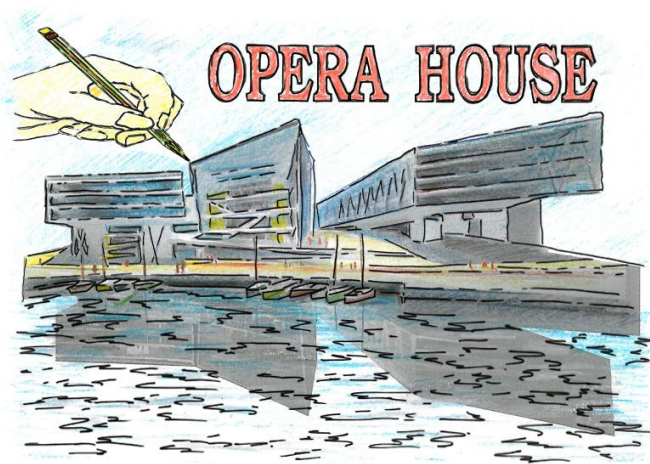
Jobs on the refineries meant work was plentiful but in the 1983 Esso closed to move to the oil fields of the North Sea. Other companies followed. The land alongside the Haven was becoming derelict and jobs were almost impossible to find. But in 2009 Esso, now under the name of Exxon Mobile together with Qatar Gas opened the LNG site at South Hook. The gas imported here provides 25 per cent of the gas used in Britain and is piped from Milford Haven to Gloucestershire. The fortunes of the town have been revived again.

Our interviewee councillor Eric Harris, Mayor of Milford Haven 2010 - 2011, has lived in Milford nearly all of his life. His grandfather was a fish merchant so as a boy he remembers the fishing fleet in the harbour. As a man he remembers the oil coming and going and now the arrival of the gas industry. Through unique archive footage, some provided by Esso includes the memorable Tiger in you tank adverts, we tell the story of the Haven.



When Lord Crickhowell was appointed secretary of State for Wales in 1979, he knew the derelict Cardiff docks area was a prime site for re-development, and during his final year in office he set up the Cardiff Bay Development Corporation to make the vision a reality.

It was quickly decided the development needed a centre piece building, and it should be a centre for the performing arts, which would include a home for the Welsh National Opera. A trust was set up to action the plan and it was hoped it would do for Wales, what the Sydney Opera House had done for Australia.



An international competition, to find an architect to design this centre piece building, was launched, and it was hoped they would secure some money from the newly set up Millennium Commission, which was using national lottery cash to fund land mark projects, to celebrate the new Millennium in style.

On the 15 September 1994 - a crowd gathered at the Norwegian Church in Cardiff Bay to find out who had won the competition. It had attracted 269 entries, which included submissions from world renowned architects such as Manfredi Nicoletti. But it was to be Iraqi born Zaha Hadid's day. She was relatively unknown and this was to be her first big project in the UK. But in the manner of a grand opera, the story of the Cardiff Bay Opera House Trust's attempt to build Zaha Hadid's design has many twists and turns along the way, and ultimately ends in rejection and failure.

The design proved unpopular with many people, and some even branded the whole project elitist. A storm was brewing, and the pressure on the Cardiff Bay Opera House Trust to reconsider their choice was growing by the day. The local authorities, Associated British Ports and crucially Cardiff Bay Development Corporation were united in their condemnation of what was after all the design that had won the competition.

The Opera House Trust invited other architects to re-submit entries, to be considered along with the winning design, and

eventually the trust announced they were still backing Zaha Hadid's design.

Then Cardiff City Council and the Welsh Rugby Union announced they too were planning an iconic new building for Cardiff, and they too would be bidding for Millennium Commission funding. There was now a new worry that the Millennium Commission would not fund two major projects in the same place. People were starting to talk of the battle of the bids.

The Millennium Commission denied this was the case, but eventually rejected the opera house project, arguing there were too many "imponderables."

It was back to the drawing board for Lord Crickhowell and the Cardiff Bay Opera House Trust, they came up with a new plan, but this time it was rejected much closer to home, when the Cardiff Bay Development Corporation withdrew their support for Zaha Hadid's design.

Zaha Hadid did eventually get to build an opera house, in Guangzhou, China. When it opened the critics praised its intergalactic design, as well as reflecting on Cardiff's loss for missing out on a Zaha Hadid building.

Lord Crickhowell still laments on the missed opportunity for Cardiff, by not having a building designed by someone who turned out to be one of the world's greatest architects.

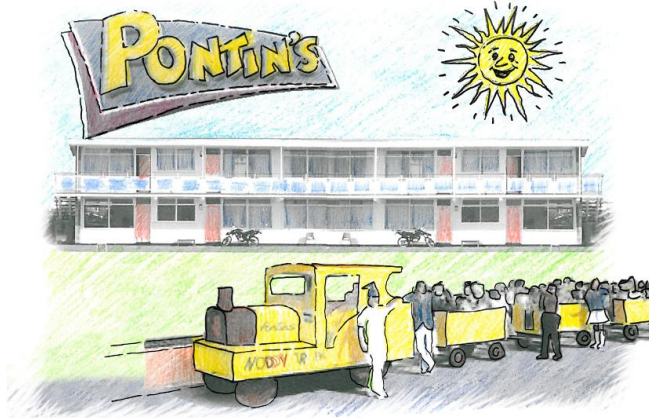
Programme 4:



3rd July 1971

THE north Wales coast with its mild climate and sandy beaches had attracted people who could afford to go there for a holiday for many years.

When, after the war, workers began getting paid holidays, the coast saw thousands arrive from the industrial northern towns of Liverpool and Manchester.



At the time they stayed in purpose built holiday camps such as Butlins in Pwllheli. In the 1950s and 60s the camps thrived, but by the early 1970s package tours to overseas sunshine destinations threatened their fortunes.

A change needed to be made and 3rd July 1971 was a Red Letter Day for Prestatyn when Fred Pontin built a holiday camp with something new. The “magic ingredient” was to provide holiday makers with chalets that were self catering - they were able to cook their own meals whenever they wished.

The self-catering idea proved its worth against those who argued that, when people went on holiday, they wanted to be sociable and abandon cooking for themselves. It was a huge success and pointed the way to the future of holiday camps.

Our story teller is Darrio Touhladjiev who was a blue coat at Tower camp at Prestatyn before he joined Pontins 38 years ago.



With so much of today's news being focused on the challenges of nuclear power as a result of the continuing crisis at Fukushima in Japan, Wales' own experience of nuclear plants lies in Wylfa on the north coast of Anglesey. It meets more than 40% of Wales' electricity needs and on a typical day, supplies enough electricity to power a city twice the size of Liverpool and Manchester combined.

April 26, 1986, was a Red Letter Day for Wylfa when part of the Chernobyl Nuclear Plant in Russia suffered a catastrophic failure and began to eject radioactive material into the atmosphere. Soon after alarms started going off in the Wylfa plant.

Bizarrely it wasn't because of any incident inside the power station. Workers had brought the radiation into the plant from the outside as rainfall had caused radioactive material from the cloud created by Chernobyl to fall to the ground. This resulted in emergency procedures being put in place uniquely to keep radioactive material OUT of the nuclear plant.



The disaster in the nuclear power plant in the Ukraine was the result of a flawed reactor design and mistakes made by the plant operators. It was the time of the Cold War and the Russians regarded anything to do with atomic energy as a state secret, and were

slow in relaying any information about the accident.

Following the accident, the levels of contamination in Wales led to Government restrictions being imposed on some sheep holdings. The movement and sale of sheep in some parts of North Wales were banned due to "high levels of radiation found in test carcasses".

Despite the controversy that will always accompany nuclear power, Anglesey could again be the site for the UK's next such generator which it is proposed could be built on the island by 2020. Along with nuclear energy several renewable energy initiatives are being developed to use Anglesey's natural resources with on and offshore wind farms and tidal and wave technology being considered.

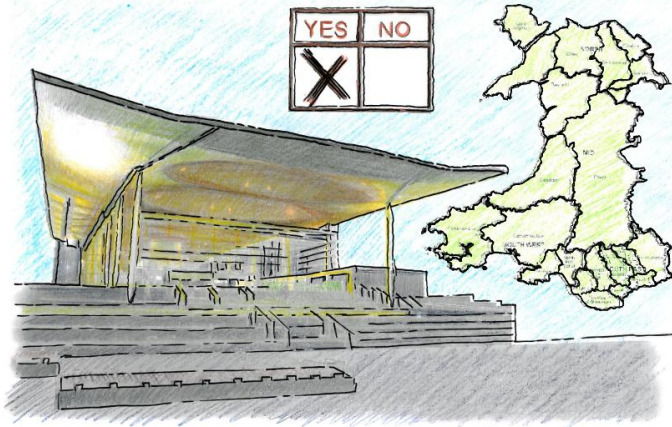
Programme 6:



18th September 1997

After more than a century of agitation and one unsuccessful referendum, Wales was once again offered the opportunity of running its own affairs. A new referendum was offered to the people of Wales and the date chosen was September 18, 1997. Would the nation take up the challenge of self-rule this time?

The answer was 'yes' but by the slenderest of margins. It was won by 6,712 votes but only after a night when the fortunes of both the "yes" and "no" camps ebbed and flowed.



The battle went to the ropes. It was only Carmarthen, the final county to declare, that allowed the 'yes' side to celebrate. It was a "thumbs up" to the establishment of a National Assembly for Wales but it was the narrowest of victories - in a turn-out of around 50 per cent at the polls, 50.1% wanted a Welsh assembly, while 49.7% did not. Whichever side one backed, it was a day and night to remember. As then-Welsh Secretary Ron Davies memorably said at the time "Good morning...and it is a very good morning for Wales".

The National Assembly for Wales was created by the Government of Wales Act 1998, and in 1999 the first Assembly Members were elected. Wales had its own elected government, and a new home - Ty Hywel in Cardiff Bay.

The search was on for another iconic building for Cardiff Bay to provide a permanent home for the Assembly, and on St David's Day of 2006, the sustainable building - made from traditional Welsh timber and slate, was opened.

And as the people of Wales prepare to go to the polls next month to elect the next tranche of Assembly members, fresh from the recent referendum which saw Wales vote to give the Assembly extra law-making powers, they can reflect back on the journey of the Assembly itself, an institution that was established with so narrow a margin.