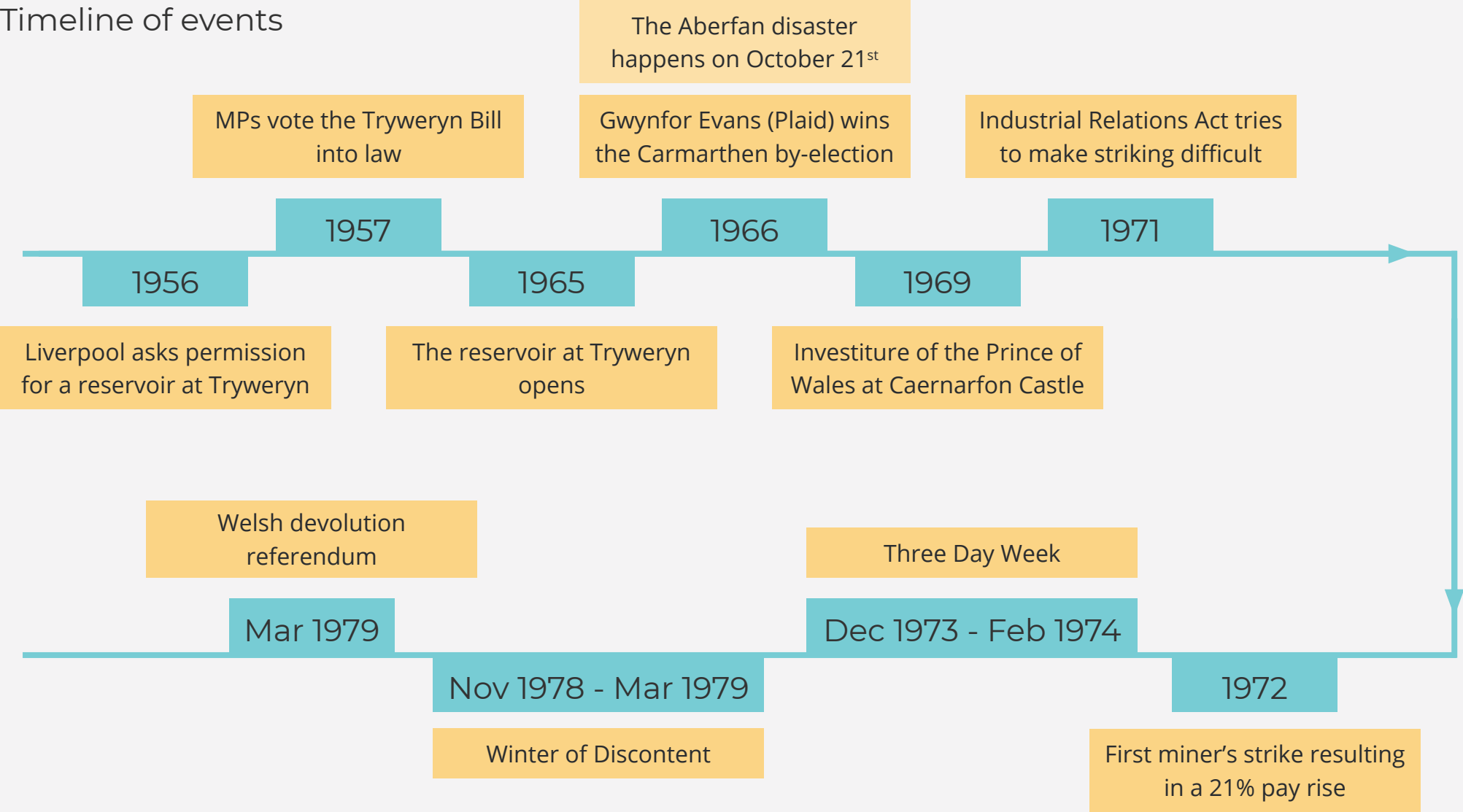


Key Question 3 : What were the main political and economic issues in Wales in the 1960s and 1970s?

Timeline of events



“Great steps were taken towards restoring the dignity and self-respect of an old nation that had forgotten to stand on her own two feet” Gwynfor Evans 1966

Important concept

Nationalism – pride in your own country, its culture, its heritage.

The English rule had tried to destroy a separate Welsh identity but being Welsh and speaking Welsh, had carried on.

Tryweryn flooding 1965

67 people lived in Welsh-speaking Capel Celyn in the Tryweryn valley.

In 1956, Liverpool City Council wanted to flood the valley to make a reservoir. Protesters marched through Liverpool but the council passed their plan.

35 of 36 Welsh MPs voted against it in Parliament but it passed 166 to 117. votes. Support for Plaid Cymru increased.

The Ministry for Welsh Affairs had 680 letters of complaint, bombs were planted by MAC (Movement for the Defence of Wales).

By 1957, most residents happy to receive compensation and relocation. 48 people lost their homes. 3.2 km² of land were submerged.

Tryweryn opened on 28th October 1965. There were protests by the paramilitary Free Wales Army with their uniforms and Welsh flags.

Key words	
Abstain	not voting for or against something
Public inquiry	legal process to investigate an incident
Investiture	a ceremony to give someone a formal title
By-election	emergency election of an MP for one constituency
General election	an election for all MPs in Parliament
Trade union	represent the worker’s interest to employers
Strike	workers refuse to work to influence employers
Inflation	rising prices
Devolution	moving power from central to local government
Referendum	a public vote about an important issue

Aberfan disaster 1966

On October 21st 1966, a mine waste tip collapsed covering part of Pantglas primary school and damaging several farms and villages around Aberfan. 2,000 people dug through the rubble to find survivors. 144 people died, 116 of them were children aged between 7 and 10.

50,000 letters of condolence were sent. The funerals of the victims was broadcast on the BBC. The Queen visited eight days after the disaster.

The public inquiry lasted 2 months, heard 136 witnesses and looked at 300 pieces of evidence. It blamed the NCB (the National Coal Board) and insisted it pay compensation for injuries, deaths and damage to property as they had ignored warnings about a spring under the tip and said it was safe.

Key Question 3 : What were the main political and economic issues in Wales in the 1960s and 1970s?

Investiture of the Prince of Wales 1969

The title 'Prince of Wales' was a symbol of English control of Wales. There were protest marches, complaining about English imperialism.

- Charles went to study Welsh at Aberystwyth University and some of the Welsh students protested. His tutor was a supporter of Plaid Cymru.
- Movement for the Defence of Wales (MAC) planned four explosions to cause disruption. The bombs killed two MAC members and injured a boy.
- The investiture went ahead on 1st July 1969 at Caernarfon Castle. 500 million people watched the ceremony around the world. The ceremony cost £200,000 of public money but had produced a big boost to tourism.
- 75% of Welsh people supported the event.

Rising support for Welsh nationalism

36 out of 650 MPs represented Wales in Parliament. Most Welsh people lived in industrial areas, were not Welsh-speaking and voted Labour.

Between 1959 and 1974 Plaid Cymru's share of the vote increased from 0.2% to 20%. Reasons why support for Plaid Cymru increased :

- mine closures was leading to rising local unemployment
- English councils were buying land in Wales for reservoirs
- concern about the threat to Welsh language and Welsh culture.

Plaid leader Gwynfor Evans won a by-election at Carmarthen in 1966. By 1974 there were 3 Plaid MPs.

Labour government depended on support from Welsh nationalists so they allowed a referendum on devolution to give Wales an Assembly.

Plaid Cymru supported the YES campaign in Wales, while the NO campaign had the Welsh Conservatives and Labour MPs. Some argued it would cost too much money, others worried about the Welsh language, or that it would only benefit the South. There was no all-Wales daily newspaper to support YES, while UK-wide newspapers supported NO. Only 11.9% voted YES.

Industrial unrest and strikes

- The miner's strike in 1972 caused power cuts – they asked for a 47% pay rise and got 21% after the government offered them 8%.
- The general public supported some strikes for higher wages as rising inflation meant that prices were rapidly rising in the early 1970s.

The Three Day Week 1973-4:

- miners, electricity engineers, train drivers began overtime bans
- power blackouts as coal was not getting to power stations.

Three-Day Week meant electricity would only be provided for 3 specific days each week. Pay rises eventually stopped the strikes.

The "Winter of Discontent" strikes 1978-9:

To limit inflation the Labour wanted 5% pay increases but prices were rising by 10%. Parliament allowed employers to break the 5% limit.

- lorry drivers on strike - petrol shortages, medicines not delivered
- public employees strike - rubbish piled up, bodies went unburied
- 30 million working days were lost.