

Plaid Cymru the Welsh nationalist political party started in 1925 with the aim of making Wales an independent country, separate from the rest of the United Kingdom. It carries out campaigns to preserve the individual culture of Wales and the Welsh language. One of its campaigns led to the creation of the television station S4C, which broadcasts programs in Welsh. In 1966, a Plaid Cymru candidate was elected as a Member of Parliament for the first time. Since 2003 the party has 12 members in the Welsh Assembly and forms the main opposition party in the Assembly. The party leader is Ieuan Wyn Jones.

Eisteddfod n any of several cultural events held every year in Wales at which there are competitions for poets (called bards) and musicians. The biggest of these is the Royal National Eisteddfod of Wales. Eisteddfods started in the 12th century. The word eisteddfod means 'chairing', from the custom of putting the winning bard in a special chair.

Devolution involves the transfer of political power from a central government to a regional government. In the United Kingdom, this process took place in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland in the late 1990s. Scotland and Wales, mainly through their nationalist parties, the Scottish National Party and Plaid Cymru, had both demanded to have power devolved from the Parliament of the United Kingdom to their own political assemblies. Both parties had only a few MPs in the British parliament. Scotland has for a long time had its own system of law and a lot of control over its affairs, and until 1999 the Secretary of State at the Scottish Office had wide powers. Wales had always been concerned about its cultural as well as its political identity. The Welsh language is spoken in many homes, especially in the western half of the country, and it is taught in schools. Until 1999 the Welsh Office in Cardiff had responsibilities for the local economy, education and social welfare. Northern Ireland had its own parliament from 1921 until 1972, when the British government closed it and established direct rule from London. In 1998 a new Northern Ireland Assembly was set up as part of the peace process agreed between Irish politicians and the British government. In 1997 Tony Blair's government held a referendum in Scotland and Wales on the issue of devolution. A large majority of Scottish people and a small majority of Welsh people voted in favour of it. The Scottish Parliament started work in Edinburgh in 1999. It consists of 129 MSPs (Members of the Scottish Parliament). 56 of them are elected by proportional representation. It is led by a First Minister who is

chosen by the Parliament and who chooses the other members of the Scottish Executive (the group within the parliament that is responsible for deciding its policies). It has the power to raise or lower the basic rate of income tax, and to make laws affecting Scotland in areas including education, health, transport, local government, justice, agriculture and the environment. The Welsh Assembly was opened in Cardiff in 1999. It consists of 60 AMs (Assembly Members). 20 of them are elected by proportional representation. The Welsh Assembly has less power than the Scottish Parliament. It cannot make its own laws or raise taxes, but it has the power to develop and carry out policies affecting Wales in areas including education, culture, health, agriculture, the environment, tourism and the Welsh language. It is led by a First Minister who is chosen by the Assembly and who chooses the other Assembly Ministers to make up a cabinet. Matters affecting Scotland and Wales that are outside the control of the Scottish Parliament and the Welsh Assembly, including foreign affairs, defence and social security, are the responsibility of the Scotland Office and the Wales Office. These offices replaced the Scottish Office and the Welsh Office, and are part of the Department for Constitutional Affairs. Scotland and Wales still have MPs in the British parliament in London, and people may be members of both parliaments, though some people think it is wrong that Scottish and Welsh MPs continue to discuss English affairs in the British parliament. In 2002 the government published its plans to hold referendums to decide whether there should be regional assemblies in parts of England where research showed that there was interest in devolved government. It was decided that there should be referendums in three areas: the North East, the North West, and Yorkshire and Humberside and the first referendum was held in 2004 in the North East. See also West Lothian Question.

The revival of nationalism “Wales”

The word “*Welsh*” means foreigners because they weren’t Anglo-Saxons; they were Celts. They always tend to keep their identity alive through their own **language**. They had always struggled very hard against the successive invaders who wanted to Christianize, assimilate and keep them at the bottom of the social ladder. They are proud of their **history** and identity because aware enough of the sacrifice of their ancestors.

Throughout history, the Welsh have continuously developed their culture to adapt with modernization. Yet, they stick to their own identity through mainly their language and festivities. For instance, each year, they celebrate “Eisteddfods” (=sit together) which is a cultural event at which there are competitions for poets, musicians, and artists in Welsh language to keep their culture and identity alive.

Back to 60s & 70s, their **economy** was based on “coal mining”. Yet, in the 80s, a lot of factories closed because coal became unprofitable. A lot of citizens migrated especially to England. Only old people remained in Wales. So, it was a good opportunity for many English to invest in Wales; mainly in land and promote tourism → the Welsh culture declined. Also by anglicizing education programs and outlawing the teaching of Welsh language + centralization (London decision).

Through industrialization, there was urbanization of most areas and then a decline of the agricultural farming community.

- **Reviving** and promoting the Welsh culture by encouraging a movement by “Plaid Cymru” which is a political party to struggle for the revival of the Welsh culture in a pacific way. In other words, to recover what was robbed from the Welsh.
- Welsh nationalism and patriotism isn't supposed to be violent. It's true that the pipe line between Wales in England was once destroyed, bombings, writings on the walls (*go home English pigs*), refusing to speak English considering it as a betrayal to their identity, protesting, ..., but these were just exceptions often condemned by Plaid Cymru. Today, everything is bilingually written in Welsh and in English.

The British government gave Wales their own assembly “**devolution**” to deal with their local issues in 1997 through a referendum. Wales can enjoy then certain autonomy. That's very important for the Welsh to assert their sense of identity. However, they're still united with the U.K; as a matter of fact, **Prince Charles** is the prince of Wales → this title is very **symbolic** for the British unity though some Welsh consider it as an English domination.

The Welsh in general don't want to be independent (*only 7% who does*); yet, all the people are interested in keeping their identity.

The **symbol** of Wales was “the leek” plant which symbolizes the Welsh military defense against the English. Later the emblem developed to a nice “Daffodil” which is a flower symbolizing elegance.

Today, the Welsh regained the value of their language and changed the perspective of looking at it, which used to be considered an old language spoken among the ignorant and farmers. Nevertheless, with globalization the existence of English in the Welsh society can't be removed.