

## HUMANITIES — WELSH HISTORY · YEAR 5–6

# Aneurin Bevan ac y GIG

The NHS — Years 5–6

## Key facts

1

**Aneurin 'Nye' Bevan (1897–1960)**

Labour politician born in Tredegar, Monmouthshire (now Blaenau Gwent), South Wales. Son of a coalminer. Left school at 13 to work in the mines. Self-educated. Became MP for Ebbw Vale (1929). Minister of Health in Attlee government (1945). Created the NHS.

2

**The National Health Service (NHS)**

Free healthcare for all at the point of use, funded by taxation. The NHS was founded on 5 July 1948 — Bevan's creation. The most radical social reform in British history. Aneurin Bevan is its architect.

3

**The Tredegar Medical Aid Society**

A mutual aid fund in Tredegar — miners paid a small weekly contribution for healthcare. This was the direct model for Bevan's NHS. He described it as 'the model for the world.'

4

**Bevan's principle**

'No society can legitimately call itself civilised if a sick person is denied medical aid because of lack of means.' This principle underpins the NHS.

5

**Opposition to the NHS**

The British Medical Association (BMA) strongly opposed the NHS, fearing doctors would become state employees. Bevan overcame this by saying he 'stuffed their mouths with gold' — allowing doctors to continue private practice.

6

**The NHS today**

The NHS employs 1.7 million people in England alone. Wales has NHS Cymru. One of the world's largest publicly funded health services.



# And the NHS matter to Wales

A Welsh gift to the world

- **WORKING-CLASS ORIGINS:** Bevan's strength came from personal experience of poverty and industrial Wales. He was not a theorist — he was describing what he had lived.
- **TREDEGAR MODEL:** the NHS was not invented from scratch. It was scaled up from a system that already worked in a Welsh mining town. Wales gave the NHS to the world.
- **SOUTH WALES VALLEYS:** the areas that produced Bevan — Tredegar, Ebbw Vale, the Rhymney Valley — are among the most deprived in Wales today. Bevan's legacy is visible in the hospitals that serve them.
- **BEVAN MEMORIAL:** the Aneurin Bevan Memorial Stones at Waun-y-Pound above Tredegar — five standing stones in the landscape where he used to walk.
- **NHS AT 75:** in 2023, the NHS celebrated its 75th birthday. A poll found it is the institution Britons are most proud of. This began in Tredegar, Wales.
- **DISCUSSION:** should healthcare be free? What would life be like without the NHS? What would Bevan think of healthcare today?

