SOCIAL IDENTITY, SOCIAL CHANGE AND THE
CONSTRUCTION OF SYMBOLIC BOUNDARIES
IN A WEST HIGHLAND SETTLEMENT

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SOCIAL IDENTITY, SOCIAL CHANGE AND THE
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by

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In the last thirty years there have been very few systematic observations and analyses of everyday life at a local level. (see Bell and Newby, 1972) As a result our knowledge of local sub-cultures is seriously outdated (E.S.R.C., 1982, 13) and we are not maintaining an up to date social history of our own times. However, Bulmer, in an article entitled "The Rejuvenation of Community Studies?" (1985) and Willmott (1986) have both identified "some sign that the study of localities is being revived". (Bulmer, 1985, 433) This thesis, a sociological account of contemporary rural life in part of the Scottish Highlands, is a distinctive contribution to that revival.

The analysis proceeds on a number of levels and shows several signs of originality. It is more than a simple ethnography. By examining change and social process it goes beyond previous static and structural studies to analyse the implications that indigenous perceptions of identity and 'belonging' have for the nature of social process in a particular locality. Important differences from other localities and locality studies are recognised and social identity, rather than social structure, is the key element in explaining people's involvement in social change and the processes of daily life, and is the central issue around which the thesis develops.

Analysing the division that exists between 'locals' and 'incomers' in Fearnbeg involves operating at an advanced level with the interaction of symbols and actions. (While this is not a new challenge, its manifestation with regard to this location is unique). The thesis demonstrates that the most important social division in Fearnbeg society cannot be explained in structural terms alone. The core dichotomy, and why Fearnbeg people think and behave in the ways they do, can only be understood in terms of cultural and symbolic boundaries.
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Every ethnographer owes a debt to the subjects of his or her investigations. I hope the people of 'Fearnbeg' will accept my gratitude and forgive any errors in my representation of their social life. They are owed the greatest debt and to them all I extend my thanks.
DECLARATION

I hereby declare that, whilst registered as a candidate for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy with the Council for National Academic Awards, I have not been a registered candidate for another award of the Council for National Academic Awards, nor of a University.

The following activities, comprising the programme of related studies, have been undertaken:

i. Attendance at a short-course in qualitative data, Surrey, October 1987.


iii. Attendance at the E.S.R.C. Post-Graduate Summer School, Surrey, August 1988.

iv. Attendance and participation at post-graduate seminars in Plymouth.

v. Attendance and participation at various Sociology Conferences.

vi A schedule of guided reading compiled by the supervisors.

A. Macleod
CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION: A SOCIOLOGY OF OURSELVES

1:1 The choice of setting

The choice of Fearnbeg, a cluster of small settlements on a wet and windswept slope of hills in the north-west Highlands of Scotland (see Chapter Four below), as a site for sociological investigation may at first seem somewhat esoteric. It is neither a location, nor a subject for study that immediately leaps to mind as the subject of a dissertation. To be fair, the choice was partly serendipitous (something not that unusual in sociological research) and certainly not unrelated to the fact that Fearnbeg (a pseudonym) is where the researcher was born, grew up, and now lives. However, there are a number of reasons why this has proved to be a potentially fruitful site for research, and one that has provided an opportunity to extend sociological analysis.

In the first place, despite extensive research in several fields during the last two decades, our knowledge of contemporary life in rural Scotland
is still far from complete. To some extent, because of their exceptional economic, demographic and social structure and their unique cultural and historical characteristics, the Highlands and Islands of Scotland have attracted a great deal of academic research. Major themes that have emerged in the literature on the Highlands and Islands include the crofting system (Moisley, 1962; Hunter, 1976; Caird, 1979; Hunter, 1991), peripherality and underdevelopment, (1) migration and depopulation (McIntosh, 1969; Caird, 1972; Stephenson, 1984), agricultural resources (Mather, 1974; Bryden and Houston, 1976), patterns of economic development (Nicholls, 1976; Prattis, 1977; Turnock, 1979), the impact of tourism (Millman, 1971; Tourism and Recreation Research Unit, 1978) and the structure of rural communities and cultural traditions (Hunter, 1976; MacKinnon, 1977; Ennew, 1980). There still remains however, despite the work that has already been done, a great deal of scope for more incisive sociological research into social life in rural areas in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland. This thesis represents one attempt to fill an existing gap in our knowledge of our own country.
It is a response to the relative dearth of systematic observations and analyses of everyday life at a local level during the 1960s and '70s and, it is hoped, a distinctive contribution to the recent revival in community study. (see Chapter Two) An ethnographic account of contemporary rural life, it looks at the recent increase in the number of incomers to Fearnbeg and the consequences for the existing local social systems. (Stacey, 1969)

Much of what follows, for example Chapters Four, Six, Seven and Eight, can be read at one level as a new account of contemporary rural life although, as is argued below, the data presented also serve a deeper purpose.

It is still true that

the anthropology of ourselves is still a dream. (Harrison and Madge, 1937)

A descriptive ethnography of Fearnbeg, and explanations of how individuals and groups experience and express their differences from others, would itself be a useful contribution to any sociological understanding of the everyday
lives of ordinary people. (3) This research, however, goes beyond a simple ethnographic exercise to analyse the implications that indigenous perceptions of association have for the nature of social process in Fearnbeg. It goes beyond earlier static studies that concentrated on the objective characteristics of social organisation in rural areas. (Stephenson, 1984) The social organisation of Fearnbeg is displayed through the terms used by its members and the 'meanings' that various forms of social organisation - e.g. family, kinship, neighbouring - have for the people described.

When change comes to a society the form it takes is naturally affected, and to some extent shaped, by what was there before. In other words, it is affected by the existing cultural patterns. An adaptive mechanism by definition, a culture cannot be static; rather, change is one of its most fundamental properties. The social organisation of a culture is the way people co-ordinate their behaviour in adapting to new situations. Chapter Five argues that social identity is the key element in explaining Fearnbeg people's involvement in social change and the processes of daily life. (4) Detailed examination of sequences
of interaction to explore the process by which social identity is negotiated, manipulated, and varies from one social context to another (Rapport, 1986) leads to a sophisticated model of the process of social life at a local level.

The central issue is the local/incomer dichotomy, and the primary aim is to describe the ways Fearnbeg people mark out their immediate and intimate social identities. People belong to Fearnbeg in different ways, and the awareness and expression of these differences exist in terms of symbolism and the construction of symbolic boundaries - those boundaries of their social lives which demarcate most powerfully and meaningfully their sense of similarity to and difference from other people.

1:2 Locals and Incomers

While the circumstances of this research are specific, the distinction between locals and incomers is by no means unique. High levels of in-migration have been apparent in places like Fearnbeg for generations. (see I.S.S.P.A., 1978-'79) Recent demographic and social change has
underlined the wider relevance of the local/incomer dichotomy in contemporary society. Since the 1960s people have been steadily moving out of Britain's big cities to sink new roots in the countryside. Between 1966 and 1981 London's population fell by more than twenty per cent. In the 1980s another half a million city dwellers headed for the countryside and, with job relocations and improvements in communication and transport, this trend is likely to continue.

While the arrival of large numbers of people in rural areas has coincided with widespread changes taking place in society, care must be taken in any attempt to isolate the underlying causes and consequences of in-migration. The inherent issues have become so complex as to require a different conceptual level of analysis to that found in earlier studies.

In previous work the local/incomer dichotomy has taken second place to other social divisions; particularly those associated with social class and housing in the commuter belt. Where it has been studied before has been in the context of conflict in specific circumstances: e.g. rapid change (Giarchi, 1984); where there has been
competition over housing and/or jobs (Bryan, 1987); where a village has been 'commuterised' (Moseley, 1982); or where there has been overt conflict over control of local social and political organisations (Bulmer, 1982). The divisions between locals and incomers have been explained largely in terms of other dimensions.

(5) Points of conflict obviously do exist in Fearnbeg, but no single phenomenon or structural characteristic can be pinpointed that will satisfactorily explain why and how residents differentiate so strongly between locals and incomers.

Not only are many incomers not obviously different from locals in terms of kinship, neighbouring and religion - processes so beloved by community methodologists such as Cohen, 1978 and Mewett, 1986 - but these factors are relatively less important here than in other studies. It will be shown here that the division between locals and incomers is in fact a significant independent variable. (see Chapter Five)

The choice of setting has facilitated the study of the local/incomer dimension without it being obscured by other variables. In examining the
dichotomy in the context of Fearnbeg a more original perspective has evolved. Examples will be given in Chapters Six, Seven and Eight to show how the local/incomer dimension is perceived by Fearnbeg people, and how they 'use' symbols of identity to maintain, or at times negate, the social boundary that exists between the two groups. It will be shown how they manipulate or negotiate this boundary depending on context and circumstance. The boundary is more or less evident in different situations and in different kinds of social interaction. Variations in how individuals and groups are defined by other Fearnbeg people will be discussed in relation to such issues as neighbouring, informal care and kinship. (see Chapter Six) People relate their own and others' behaviour to collective identities. Chapter Eight looks at special events, like weddings and funerals, that involve a cross-section of the population to illustrate the importance of the collective identities of 'locals' and 'incomers'.

The local/incomer dichotomy, although it is not an obvious organising principal for action or readily visible in everyday behaviour, is absolutely central here. To be a 'local' or an 'incomer' in
Fearnbeg means belonging to a distinct social group and having a distinctive identity. (see Chapter Five) This study concerns itself primarily with the meanings that Fearnbeg people attach to their identities and how these, in turn, affect their behaviour and, in so doing, highlights the limitations of 'conventional' community study type research. (see Chapter Two) This brings us back to how this study was carried out.

1:3 The research

The bulk of the fieldwork took place between April, 1988 and January, 1989 when, for nearly nine months, the candidate lived in Fearnbeg and observed what was taking place whilst engag(ing) in the activities of those under study. (Claster and Schwartz, 1972)

Because the attribution of symbolic significance to social behaviour has to depend on ethnographic inference, participant observation and informal interviews were the principal research methods.
Alongside these, formal in-depth interviews were conducted to investigate individual experiences and beliefs about life in Fearnbeg. Relevant documents, diaries, newspapers, etc. were also consulted. By combining the study of group processes and individual social behaviour, these were the most suitable methods for achieving the aims of the research. The legitimacy of using qualitative methods in this type of research is well endorsed elsewhere. (e.g. Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983; Agar, 1986)

'Participant observation', in its strictest sense, refers to a research technique in which a social collectivity is observed by a member of that collectivity. The candidate was in the unusual position, as a sociologist, of investigating his own home. He was brought up in Fearnbeg and is accepted as part of the social setting, and as 'a local'. The last is significant, as other studies of this kind have for the most part been carried out by 'outsiders'. This is the first ethnographic study of the relationships and the divisions that exist between locals and incomers in a particular setting to have been conducted by somebody who belongs in that setting. It is the
first attempt to get really 'inside' the local's view of incomers.

Sociologists are by definition 'incomers', and often temporary ones at that, and typically face problems of establishing and maintaining relationships with subjects that will allow them to observe what they want to over a long period of time. (e.g. Whyte, 1955; Newby, 1977) In this case no time was wasted in establishing important relationships of mutual trust and understanding with the people under study (estimated by Wakeford to normally take at least one third of research time: Wakeford, 1988) because such relationships already existed. Also, data were less likely to be distorted, taken out of context or insufficiently qualified when reported by an individual who had experienced life in Fearnbeg in the same way as those under study.

There were many advantages attached to the candidate's status as 'a local' and these far outweigh the disadvantages, but the latter were never taken for granted. Over-familiarity with certain individuals or groups and a pre-existing social identity and group membership, for example, necessarily restricted freedom of action and
influenced the reactions of the research subjects. A discussion of these issues and how they were tackled can be found in Chapter Three. The emphasis on making sense of the 'local' sense of identity that comes across in Chapter Five reflects the researcher's awareness of his own position and which elements of the totality that he felt best able to research.

Complementing the unique position of the researcher, this social investigation is in itself novel in certain respects. The classic community studies attempted to describe total social structures and tended towards accounts in which everything could be explained in the context of these structures. (e.g. Arensberg and Kimball, 1940) Issues and problems emerged as by-products of this holistic approach. Later studies (e.g. Stacey, 1969) used communities as arenas in which to study a pre-determined social phenomenon. In this study a more open approach is adopted. The likelihood of the centrality of certain issues was anticipated before any actual research took place, but no particular issue was concentrated on in advance. The 'key issues' were allowed to arise naturally, i.e. to be defined by the people living in Fearnbeg. The significance of the
local/incomer dichotomy was not unexpected; but its importance in the research is a result of the subjects' own perceptions.

1:4 The plan of the thesis

It will be apparent that, while in a general sense, this work can be classified as a community study, it is not a typical or straightforward example of the genre. This in turn makes for some problems of organisation, in order that the reader who may share neither the same research paradigms nor knowledge of the site can best follow the arguments presented. In the next Chapter, the study is located within the genre, and the technical aspects of the research follow in Chapter Three. The framework for the study is completed by Chapter Four which describes salient features of Fearnbeg. The choice of feature, however, and the way each is discussed are informed by a theoretical perspective rather than being purely descriptive.

Having established a framework, Chapter Five will probably be seen as the key chapter as it sets out the culture perspective in some detail and argues
the centrality of the local/incomer issue. The later Chapters are to some extent an elaboration of Chapter Five, bringing into play new evidence and illustrations of how the dichotomous identities work 'on the ground'. As was noted above, these Chapters operate on two levels: both as direct sociological accounts in the form of a contribution to "our knowledge of ourselves", and as elements in the exposition of the researcher's arguments about locals and incomers in a structural setting.

The concluding Chapter summarises and draws together all the central issues in considering the saliency of the local/incomer dichotomy in Fearnbeg today. It should be remembered throughout, however, that no social organisation is static. Although the patterns of social relations described here are as found at the time of field research, incipient changes will inevitably act to alter them. With this in mind, the thesis will end by forecasting some of the possible implications the recent increase in numbers of incomers to Fearnbeg might have for the future social organisation of the place.
NOTES

1) Located on the periphery of Scotland, Britain and Europe, the Scottish Highlands have experienced a degree of disadvantage in their core-periphery relationships which is unparalleled elsewhere in the British Isles. (Carter, 1974; Bryden, 1979) Moreover, the insularity of the region and the introspective nature of its population have together contributed towards a singular type of cultural and economic development. Having said this, however, it must be acknowledged that the Highlands represent just one component of Britain's underdeveloped areas, the whole of which have long experienced poverty and deprivation as a result of a subordinate role in the regional division of labour which represents the outcome of 'internal colonialism'. (Hechter, 1975) The relative desolation of the Highlands is not simply the product of terrain, climate and remoteness but of a system of economic and social relations.
The Highlands supplied kelp, wool, mutton, beef, wood and labour to sustain urban industrial growth in the south. The Highlands certainly bear all the hallmarks of a colony or ex-colony — an economy dominated by primary commodity export; an economic order that has produced a system of social relations entailing a high degree of dependency and subordination; an educational system that is geared more towards English culture and history than to Scottish and which effectively serves to provide a 'visa for the south'; and an image of kilts-and-bagpipes and Caledonian sentimentality propagated by the tourist industry and endorsed by the Metropolitan-oriented media.

The structural shifts which have cumulatively reduced the Highlands to the status of a 'problem region' are well documented. (Gray, 1957) The limited agricultural resources of the area were laid waste by sheep so that the growing towns and cities of the central Lowlands and England could be clothed and fed. In the early nineteenth century, the production of kelp and beef was undermined by a collapse in prices, the economic and social
consequences of which were compounded by the mid-century potato famine; and in the late nineteenth century foreign competition brought about a severe decline in sheep farming. Many large estates were subsequently given over to deer-stalking and grouse-shooting, with the result that full-time employment opportunities were reduced still further. The peasant population that remained was mostly engaged in crofting, a form of subsistence farming so marginal as to make occupational pluralism a necessity, thus creating a delicate web of dependency between crofting, fishing and cottage industry. (Carter, 1976; Mewett, 1977)

2) Following conventions of confidentiality, 'Fearnbeg' and all other place and personal names that appear in the text are pseudonyms. Dates, ages of individuals, and other factual details have also been systematically altered. However, these changes have been made in a way that retains the validity of the material for analytical purposes.

3) A description of Fearnbeg and the structures of social life that exist therein is given in Chapter Four but, at the outset, it is
necessary to enter a word of caution. The account presented here is based upon research in a part of the country that is in no sense representative of rural Britain as a whole. How far it is possible to draw generalised conclusions from this analysis is therefore a moot point.

4) When I use the term 'Fearnbeg people' it is to refer to all those living in the study area, whether they are native to the locality or not. Where it is necessary to distinguish, I use the terms 'local' and 'incomer'.

2:1 Community research

I came to the conclusion that rural sociologists were not the masters of the phenonema of rural society. We toyed with it, but I did not perceive a great depth of understanding. The world was changing faster than the discipline was growing in its knowledge of the phenonema occurring in rural areas. (1)

Community research in Britain underwent a decline after the classic studies of the 1950s and 1960s. (e.g. Rees, 1950; Williams, 1956; Young and Willmott, 1957; Frankenberg, 1957; Stacey, 1960; Littlejohn, 1964) (2) The decline was coterminous with the rapid expansion and specialisation of British sociology that began in the mid-1960s. (see Payne et. al., 1981, pp. 95-97) It is worth pointing out that several early studies were conducted by social anthropologists,
and anthropological studies of what some social scientists rather dismissively term the Celtic Fringe (3) remain an exception to the overall generalisation about the decline of this type of study. (cf. Cohen. 1982; 1986) The contribution of sociology was much weaker. Commenting on the relative dearth of systematic sociological observations and analyses of everyday life at a local level, Howard Newby concluded:

One important result is that our knowledge of local, regional, national, occupational and class-derived sub-cultures is often seriously outdated. (ESRC 1982, 13)

In layperson's terms, we are not maintaining an up-to-date history of our own times. This trend is not an international one; e.g. community studies are alive and well in the United States. A major study of Muncie, Indiana, for example, examined how 'Middletown' changed over fifty years. (cf. Caplow et. al., 1982) (4) In this country sociology has channelled its energies in other directions, though several British overviews do stand out: notably those of Bell and Newby (1971) and Allan (1979). Monographs such as the
Banbury re-study (Stacey et al., 1975) and Pryce's study of Bristol (1979), however, remain the rare exception.

British sociology virtually abandoned the rural community as an object of study on the assumption that it had been eclipsed by the changes taking place in mass society. (Vidich and Bensman, 1958; Stein 1960; Warren 1963; Martindale and Hansin 1969; Gallaher and Padfield 1980) (5) These authors, and others, claimed that the increased presence of extra-local forces had destroyed the horizontal integration of small rural communities and that small-scale and narrowly focused investigations could not yield worthwhile insight into the more general workings of British society. Because local communities were held to be no longer in command of their economic and political fate - if, indeed, they ever had been - what could be gained by studying local relations per se was perceived to be severely limited. Larger institutional structures were seen to be the overriding concern.

Within that framework there is a tendency to view the rural community in a romantic light. One of the starkest features of Highland history is the
loss of its people and the disappearance of its communities. The remains of croft dwellings can be seen in numerous places; in many there is nothing left to remind today's visitor of the scores of inhabitants who once lived there. This is one of the many reasons for there being so much romantic fog encapsulating life in the Highlands and other of the more remote rural areas in Britain, and for so many nostalgic and unrealistic pictures of communities in decline. (e.g. Brody, 1974) As this thesis unfolds we will see a determined attempt not to over-romanticise. That Fearnbeg is not in decline is evidenced in, among other things, a relatively stable population, a full school roll, a high level of employment and a strong sense of identity and association with place.

The main reason for the decline in small-scale community study was, however, not a distaste for romanticism but the wave of sceptism in the 1960s about the connection between built form and social relationships, and whether 'rural' and 'urban' were useful means of distinguishing forms of social relationships. Herbert Gans' maxim that
ways of life do not coincide with settlement patterns (1964)

was followed by Pahl's suggestion that

any attempt to tie patterns of social relationships to particular geographical milieu is a singularly fruitless exercise (1966)

and Margaret Stacey's argument that

it is doubtful whether the concept 'community' refers to a useful abstraction (1969). (6)

Such a wholesale rejection of geographical space as a determinant, or even a constraint, upon social action was bound to have an adverse effect on locality studies and had profound implications for the continuation of rural sociology in its traditional form.

In failing to recognise the value of research into small-scale systems, sociologists ran the danger of treating British society as excessively homogenous. Broad generalisations cannot be
expected to apply equally well to every situation, and all local settlements are not the same. An emphasis on macro-level behaviour necessarily ignores differences in the cultural salience of 'locality' in people's lives. (MacKinnon 1977; Strathern 1981; Cohen 1982) It took people working on the boundaries between sociology and social policy, like Clare Wenger (1984), Peter Wilmott (1984) and others, to rekindle an interest in local-level sociology: the policy of 'care in the community' put neighbourhood and locality back on the research agenda. Bulmer, in an article entitled "The Rejuvenation of Community Studies?" (1985), and Willmott (1986) were among the first to recognise some sign that the study of localities is being revived. (Bulmer 1985, 433)

The recent revitalisation of interest in community studies has amply demonstrated the variability of local social processes and cultural meanings. (see, for example, Abrams 1980; Bradley and Lowe 1984; Bulmer 1986; Willmott 1987; Williams 1989; Borland, Fevre and Denney 1990)
Community as social structure

The study of community has perhaps most often been approached via an examination of social structures: that is, by examining the interconnections of social institutions. Increasingly those adopting a structural approach have suggested that the word 'community' be dropped altogether and replaced with the idea of 'local social systems'. This was strongly promoted by Margaret Stacey (1969) in a paper outlining the myths to which community studies had given rise. (7) If institutions are locality-based and interrelated there may well be, she argues, a 'local social system' that is worthy of sociological attention. She does not call this system a 'community' because the latter, she feels, is a non-concept. With some writers (e.g. Strathern, 1984) having suggested that the 'local social system' is nothing but the shadow of community rediscovered, it is worthwhile looking at Stacey's original paper to understand precisely what she meant by the term.

To begin with, operating within a conventional Weberian framework of interpretation, Stacey formulated local social systems as an ideal type -
an analytical construct against which the social formation of actual localities could be compared. Its systemic components are social institutions: family structure, kinship patterns, belief systems, etc.. A social system can only be said to be constituted locally when

a set of inter-relations exists in a geographically defined locality.  
(Stacey 1969, 140) (8)

Stacey considered a series of propositions, following seven distinct themes, useful for generating hypotheses. (9) She suggests this as an empirical research agenda and a 'modus operandi' for locality studies. In contrast to the community studies approach she intends such local analysis to make explicit the distinction between the content of social relations and the normative structure in which local social actors are embedded. In other words, she regards it as an open question as to whether, and to what extent, the social imagery of 'community' actually conforms to the structure of social practises.

By stressing structure rather than social activity Stacey is inclined to place localities within a
rather static framework. A fundamental question is begged: can structural analysis alone show whether any particular social aggregate is more or less a community? The major problem here is that so frequently community has been taken as synonymous with certain broad patterns of social relationships. From Toennies (1887) onwards, despite the many debates about definition, there has been little attempt to understand community as anything other than an exclusive property of the "Gemeinschaft" type of social structure. (10) This led to the assertion that rural communities were static social systems, rather than merely treating them as such for the heuristic benefits of such a model. The typically holistic approach of anthropologists to the study of social systems inclined them to look for well-integrated, relatively isolated, 'closed' communities as the objects of their studies.

Arensberg and Kimball's study of County Clare (1940), for example - although regarded as a pioneering work - was only an extension of previously worked out anthropological techniques to a new geographical area. In fairness, this worked quite well - but their functionalist approach meant that they perceived more harmony,
coherence, integration and stability than there actually was. They were not so much interested in the locality itself as in conducting a study that would verify the conception they had about the structure and functioning of society in general. According to them the entity of community is simply an index of generalised Irish cultural tradition. This cultural tradition is clearly identical with what they conceptualise as social structure. Irish society is described as homogenous and virtually insulated from outside influences. The main components of this society are reciprocal rights, stable population and the criss-crossing ties of kinship which are the raw material of community life.

(Arensberg and Kimball, 1940, 125)

Kin ties are frequently described as if they are the framework of community life. The family is the archetype of the community, and its moral form is implicitly what is "good" in that particular conceptualisation of pre-industrial society. They saw "family structures, kinship patterns, belief systems, etc" (cf. Stacey, 1969) as being important in all communities and, having a preconceived mental image of all societies as an
organic or integrated system of mutually interrelated parts, attached more importance to them than was warranted. In that sense they treated all communities as similar, but the similarity of social forms in different places is more apparent than real: what matters is how the people involved regard these terms. (11)

2:3 Community: "Formed by Social Processes"

Following from this, the approach adopted here is to understand 'the community' through the stock of knowledge people use to inform and guide their everyday behaviour. The objective is less to describe the structures of social organisation in Fearnbeg than to show how they are perceived and used by the people who live there. The point of departure is that of Gusfield, who writes that communities, as objects of study, are constructed and constituted by the actors; they do not have an independent existence. It is in this sense that the commonsense, everyday actions of people can be conceived as
methodologies for gaining and using knowledge. (1975, 25)

Any perceptive study of community must consider not only the usual pattern of social behaviour as it appears outwardly, but also the attitude of people towards the normative order as a whole. A social systems or structural approach does not take the subjective view of people sufficiently into account; a more humanistic and methodological individualistic approach is needed.

Community can no longer be adequately described in terms of institutions and components, for we now recognise it as a symbol to which its various adherents impute their own meanings. They can all use the word, all express their co-membership of the same community, yet all assimilate it to the idiosyncracies of their own experiences and personalities. (Cohen 1985, 74)

Fearnbeg people do not normally view themselves in terms of their objective characteristics, but as unique entities composed of and confronted by elements peculiar to them which provide their
behavioural terms of reference. The way they think about social events differs according to their perceived place in both the local and wider society, and according to chance features of biography. At one level every person in Fearnbeg is unique: because of the highly complex social individuation and cultural complexity that exists any general statements about the social organisation of the locality always run the risk of being oversimplistic. The social identities of Fearnbeg people can be seen as a combination of how they see themselves and how they are seen by others. They are a product of interpretive understanding and, therefore, the outcome of processes of interaction - they are formed by social processes. (Berger and Luckmann 1987, 194)

The predominant paradigm of sociology assumes that knowledge of objective prior states of actors (e.g. gender, role positions, social class, etc.) enables prediction of lines of action in given situations. Such a conceptualisation tends to downplay the creative nature of human interaction. Focus on definition of the situation as an emerging subjective reality shifts sociological
attention from a relatively fixed structural conception to a processual conception of social phenomena. It is important to stress at the same time the interrelationships between the structural and the processual aspects of reality perception. On the one hand, it can be argued that humans do indeed interpret their situational circumstances and thus constantly reconstruct reality. Role positions and other normative prescriptions are not necessarily determinants of actors' behaviour in specific situations. Actors must determine what situations mean before and during their own actions in order to properly adjust their lines of behaviour relative to the situation.

On the other hand, however, most people are not living in a dreamlike state of meaningless flux; i.e. reality, although subjective and processual in one sense, has concrete and stable properties that are experienced by actors regardless of subjective definitions. This perspective closely follows Berger and Luckmann's (1987) argument that subjective aspects of human experience in the context of social interaction result in a social reality that is perceived as separate from the individuals who in fact produced it and as objective with real consequences. Looking at
community, it can be assumed that individuals experience it as an objective reality at the same time as they are subjectively creating it. The concept of community must be linked to the subjective worlds of members of communities. It is obvious then that it is not how the researcher predefines community that is important, but how the members themselves define their situations.

Individual people live within the confines of a continuum of interlinked and overlapping behaviour patterns. These should not be conceptualised as concentric circles with the individual at the centre point and the layers reaching out from family to township to region to nation. The person is always decentred with respect to any such set of sociological circles. Individuals in Fearnbeg do not move from the family circle if they travel to the east coast or further afield. Their behaviour may be different there for some purposes but they are always somebody's brother or sister, someone else's husband or wife, another person's father or mother. Their interactions with the agencies of the State, such as Highlands and Islands Enterprise (see Chapter Four), are influenced as much by these kinship roles as they are by their roles as residents in Fearnbeg.
Because of the individual's own life cycle he or she is not only decentred with respect to these concentric circles but also displaced. The individual is not a fixed point but experiences a lifetime of growth and decay, a dynamic set of roles according to age and experience, all of which place him or her differently within each circle. This account attempts to present a set of experiences rather than a set of generalisations. Generalisations belong to kinship theory, not to the lived-with experience that is life in Fearnbeg.

In so far as one can represent these individuals and their meanings as a whole, it is useful to think of life in Fearnbeg as characterised by conditions of 'dynamic equilibrium'. That is, while in the short term there appears to be a social structure which, as a whole, appears relatively unchanged and unchanging, constant and irregular changes are in fact taking place within it - a much less neat and tidy concept than the orthodox 'Gemeinschaft' view of rural social structure. Not all the components of that equilibrium are in touch, let alone neatly articulated together. In the longer term, this loose articulation permits deeper social changes,
and the vertical integration of the settlement into wider British society makes such changes inevitable.

2:4 The Symbolic Construction of Community

The social organisation of Fearnbeg itself is displayed through the terms used by members of the locality and the 'meanings' that various forms of social association - family, friendship, neighbouring, etc. - have for the people described. (see Chapter Six) Culture does not exist in social structure or in the 'doing' of social behaviour: it inheres rather in the 'thinking' about it. In seeking to understand the phenomenon of community we have to regard its constituent social relations as repositories of meaning for its members, not as a set of mechanical linkages. People make constant use of complex meaning systems (the meaning of actions and events to a particular group) to organise their behaviour, to understand themselves and others, and to make sense of the world in which they live. These systems of meaning constitute their culture. This view is not to treat culture as deterministic: rather, it is to side with Geertz when he writes:
Believing with Max Weber, that man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun. I take culture to be those webs, and the analysis of it to be therefore not an experiential science in search of law but an interpretive one in search of meaning. (1975, 5)

There are three interrelated principles contained within Ceertz's formulation. The first is that culture (webs of significance) is created and continually recreated by people through their social interaction, rather than imposed upon them as a Durkheimian body of fact or a Marxist superstructure. Secondly, being in continual process, culture has neither deterministic power nor objectively identifiable referents (law). Third, it is manifest, rather, in the capacity with which it endows people to perceive meaning in, or to attach meaning to, social behaviour.

One of the normative evaluations of community states that sharing and mutual help decline in urban or modern situations. It is difficult to establish the validity of such an opinion except by longitudinal study. But, as elaborated on in
Chapter Six below, there is no doubt that living in Fearnbeg entails being involved in a set of relationships that transcend the boundaries of individual families or households. One resident of long-standing in Fearnbeg said:

There's no comparison between living in a place like this and living in a big town or city. I know folk who have lived down south all their lives who have never even spoken to their next-door neighbours. The only people they know outside their own families are the people they work with and a few friends who they see from time to time. It's completely different up here. Everybody here knows everybody else, and we help each other out when we need to. We've a completely different lifestyle up here, and a completely different way of living. When it comes right down to it, we're a different kind of people.

Here is a good example of how at least one person in Fearnbeg compares the culture of that place with that of another. It shows how different
kinds of social interaction can have different meanings attached to them and symbolise different cultures.

Geertz quite rightly commends us to understand culture by trying to capture its experiential sense - to discover 'what it feels like' to belong to a culture. We should all be experts in this since we are all members of cultures. But we are not always conscious of our membership, for it is in the nature of cultures that such so-called 'learned' behaviour is so completely assimilated that it emerges as unthinking response. We, like the respondent quoted above, become aware of our culture when we become aware of behaviour which deviates from the norms of our own. We are not aware of the distinctiveness and the circumscription of our own behaviour until we meet its normative boundaries in the shape of alternative forms. One of the primary experiential senses of culture is that it is our culture, and that it differs from others. If people perceive fundamental differences between themselves then their behaviour is bound to reflect that difference: it means something to them which it might not mean to others.
Where cultural differences were formerly underpinned by geographical boundaries these have now given way to boundaries which inhere in the mind: symbolic boundaries. These boundaries are mental constructs which condense symbolically their bearers' social theories of similarity and difference. It is in the symbolic that we now look for people's sense of difference, and in the symbolic, rather than physical, that we seek the boundaries of their worlds of identity and diversity. Schwartz (1975) calls this posting of symbolism on the boundary 'ethnognomony' or 'cultural totemism'; that 'self-reflexive' portion of culture through which a community informs its own sense of self by marking what it is not as well as what it is. These terms emphasise traits and characteristics at once emblematic of the group's contrasting identity and relation to the people within its ambit of comparison.

It is, then, at the social boundaries of local groups that locality becomes meaningful: that is, groups become aware of their local identity, which is an expression of culture, when they stand at its boundaries. Cultural boundaries are not natural phenomena: they are relational and constructed in the mind. One's culture is at the
forefront of consciousness and social process. Although people may not be aware of it as a culture they are aware of it through their identities as, for example, Scots, Highlanders, or people of Fearnbeg. Their capacity to be so aware both explains to them why they behave differently from others and may also incline them to consciously engage in certain kinds of behaviour.

Cultural boundaries are not natural phenomena. They are invoked and ignored by those within them for different purposes. I might choose to identify myself as British, Scottish, as a Highlander, or as belonging to Fearnbeg. With each 'ascending' level I increasingly simplify (and thereby misrepresent) the message about myself. At each 'descending' level I present myself through increasingly complex and informed pictures. Belonging to a locality is, in everyday life at least, very much more of a cultural reality than association with a nation.

When people are aware of their culture, what is it that they are aware of? They know their way of doing things; they know a customary mode of thought and performance. They do not necessarily value it simply because it is traditional, but
because it suits them. It developed to meet their own requirements and conditions and, if those requirements and conditions remain, their's is felt to be the most practical means of doing whatever is required. In this regard tradition can be seen to have a pragmatic rather than an intrinsic value: people may emphasise the long history of some practise not simply to demonstrate its consequent sacredness but to exhibit its appropriateness to those particular circumstances, and to portray the ingenuity and skills of those who originated them - and, by implication, of themselves.

It is in the context of rather mundane circumstances that this is made apparent: how to evaluate your neighbour's work in stacking his peats; where to fish for particular species; when to plant potatoes; how to tell a yarn. Mundane they may be, but they provide the dynamics of a community's social process. Each such commonplace event is a statement about the culture in which it occurs. People thus become aware of their culture and experience their distinctiveness, not through the performance of elaborate and specialised ceremonial, but through the evaluation of everyday practises. The sense of 'belonging', of what it
means to 'belong', is constantly evoked by whatever means come to hand: the use of language; the shared knowledge of genealogy; joking; the aesthetics of subsistence skills. This persistent 'production' of culture provides fundamental means of maintaining the community. The mundane, then, is sociologically significant. (12)

At the level of locality people's knowledge of events and each other is very much more complete than in the heterogenous urban environment. In the locality the personal characteristics of individuals are much more like public knowledge, and such knowledge provides an essential currency for social interaction. (13) The publicness of knowledge has profound consequences for the conduct of social life. It characterises the elaboration of culture, the organisation of social structure; it pervades all the ways and circumstances in which people confront each other socially. Thus it characterises social relations within the milieu. The complexity of relatively small settlements like Fearnbeg is compounded by the fact that such settings are the arena of primary relationships: people tend not to engage with each other for the limited purposes attributed to a specialised 'role'; rather, they
come across each other all the time, engaging very much as whole persons in what have been called 'multiple roles':

A man's total role may be made up of many roles — husband, father, son, uncle, worker, worshipper, game-player. (Frankenberg, 1966, 240)

The small number of individuals involved, their visibility (both literally and sociologically), and their multiplex role relations mean that people know a great deal about each other, and because everything is salient as public knowledge, people have to behave in particular ways and accord with the conventions of intimate society. People belong to their settlements in intricate ways and individuality is somehow subordinated to communality. In this sense one can say that a culture 'models' its forms of behaviour, which are, in turn, a comment upon it.

There is an idiomatic congruence of different aspects of a settlement's social organisation which is perceived and expressed by members of communities. Thus it can be said that, in Fearnbeg, kinship and neighbouring cannot be
properly understood without each other. (see Chapter Six) Therefore, although certain kinds of social organisation - say kinship or neighbouring - may appear to have a certain similarity between one British community and the next, they are not in fact alike. Not only is the combination of each unique, but beneath the ostensibly common forms are different worlds of meaning. It is precisely in such differences that people perceive, cherish, and even accentuate their cultural boundaries.

But this does not mean that the ethnographer should ignore the relationship between a given locality and the wider society of which it is part. Localities are often studied as samples, as microcosms of a nation State, its customs and social relationships. Very few studies show an appreciation of the local significance of national changes. (14) Most oppose the structure of their study area to the structure of the State, enabling the occupational, ideological, political and communicatory links between the two to be studied. But such an opposition is artificial. The occupants of a rural village do not live in one social structure and view the State as an externally-opposed structure. They live in and
experience both simultaneously. The relationship between locality and nation should not be examined through the study of mediators between two disparate spheres. What is needed is a sociological consideration of the operations of government and administration, as much as those of villages and townships.

An important point to emphasise here is the dynamism of Fearnbeg. It is not a residual community but one that has moved with the times. Far from being an area untouched by capitalist development, it exhibits the results capitalist developments have on some areas in every country of the world. The specific cultural characteristics of Fearnbeg have been produced through the development of capitalism in Britain. Most descriptions of the Highlands and Islands of Scotland return to the past, and this account is no exception. But the intention here is to re-examine the received wisdom of standard historical and sociological accounts. If Fearnbeg was held up in a mirror, the image seen would not be that of a past state in contrast with the present position elsewhere in the United Kingdom. On the contrary, it would appear as the consequence of this present position. This thesis is an attempt
to realise this appearance: to describe Fearnbeg as an integral part of the United Kingdom, rather than as an isolated 'traditional community'. It is not the intention, however, to deny the unique social and cultural aspects of the area.

2.5 Social Change

According to P G Mewett:

the local cultures of rural populations generally, and of geographically peripheral rural areas in particular, have been devalued. (Mewett, in Cohen, 1982, 22).

This process occurs when rural people denigrate their local culture as they compare it unfavourably with a dominant cultural orientation rooted in urban industrial areas. The negative evaluation of rural life has been reported, for example, from Wales (Emmet, 1964) and Ireland (Brody, 1974):
Increasing awareness of the urban industrial milieu eventually brings to rural peoples in more traditional communities a new level of self criticism...... Criticism or new awareness of the traditional life, in relation to indirect contact with another culture, turns on comparison. Where that comparison is with urban industrial capitalist society and culture, a number of new elements become central. This urban culture represents itself as a culture of personal freedoms. Social, sexual and economic opportunities are corollaries of this freedom. (Brody, 1974, 9-11).

Many esoteric cultures have declined as rural people have assessed them as irrelevant to the circumstances of their contemporary life situations. They become deserted, culturally and/or demographically. (e.g. Inishkillane) But contrary cases do exist, as witnessed, for example, by Cohen's (1978) description of the process of 'cultural accounting' that people in the Shetland island of Whalsay use to promote a self-image of superiority over outsiders. As with
Whalsay, there are many other places that see themselves as being under a threat of some kind: the Kilbroney Protestants, flung into defensive solidarity by the perceived Catholic threat to their long political hegemony; and the islanders of Tory, Lewis and Whalsay, all striving in their different ways to sustain themselves in the face of inexorable and diverse pressures from 'outside'. (Cohen, 1982) Fearnbeg is undoubtedly representative of the common phenomenon of exhibiting a decline in its local culture: a process manifested in, among other things, the decline of Gaelic; lack of knowledge about the past (Macleod and Payne, 1988); changes in crofting; and a dramatic increase in the ratio of incomers to local people over the last thirty years. But the strength of local culture does not necessarily diminish as the locality becomes increasingly precarious - quite often the reverse seems to be the case. Local Fearnbeg people, aware that their once distinctive culture is under threat, have responded by making the elements of their social organisation and process ideological statements - condensations - of the whole and, thereby, emphasising the tightly structured intricacy of local social life.
Today, it is those who move in to Fearnbeg from the 'outside' to live who local people see as the biggest threat to the esoteric culture. As more incomers arrive, especially urban people and non-Scots, new ideas and customs and habits arrive with them. What they do not bring with them is just as important. They do not bring with them a culture that duplicates what was there before - a replacement culture to fill in the missing elements lost as the locals leave or die. Although these incomers may have no conscious wish to alter conditions in Fearnbeg, and even express a desire to preserve the way-of-life there, their very presence is, ironically, contributing to its decline. As a result of in-migration an old and distinctive culture is being replaced with elements of the much less distinctive general urban culture.

It must be stressed, however, that incomers to Fearnbeg have arrived in an already fluid social situation - one which would not have remained static in any case. With its mobile population it would be difficult to imagine Fearnbeg duplicating itself culturally over even one generation. Even without the effect of incomers on local culture, ways of life in Fearnbeg are
changing as a result of its connections with the world at large. Culture change is a normal, if saddening, process; but if it takes place at too fast a rate it can cause divisiveness. Human society is inherently dynamic: Fearnbeg has continually changed and developed through time and social conflict is not new to the area. However, the stresses between the indigenous and incoming people are of a different order to those previously pertaining. It is these stresses, and the distinctions that are drawn between locals and incomers in Fearnbeg by the people of Fearnbeg themselves, that are of central concern here. Before going on to discuss these, however, something must be said about how the data on which this thesis are based were collected, and how they were used. That is what the next Chapter sets out to do.
NOTES

1) This quotation is taken from James H. Copp's presidential address - "Rural Sociology and Rural Development" - to the Rural Sociological Society, (Rural Sociology, no. 37, 1972)

2) For accounts of some of these earlier studies see Frankenberg, 1966 and Bell and Newby, 1971. It is worthwhile remembering that many of these studies were conducted by social anthropologists: (e.g. Arensberg and Kimball, 1940; Frankenberg, 1957; Barth, 1969; Brody, 1973) rather than sociologists. In 1972 Howard Newby called for more sociological studies and made a significant contribution to the genre with Green and Pleasant Land, 1979; but anthropological studies are still the mainstay of this type of research.

3) The land areas of the constituent parts of Great Britain are, in round figures, England 50,000 square miles, the whole of Ireland 32,000, Scotland 30,000 and Wales 8,000. England, then, occupies about 40 per cent of the total land area. What is interesting about
these figures is the fact that to this day eminent social scientists like Anthony Cohen appear to dismiss Scotland, Ireland and Wales as the "Celtic Fringe". Which is to say, in other words, that the British Isles are 60 per cent 'fringe' and 40 per cent 'whole fabric'.

4) The classic studies of the Chicago School; Middletown, Street Corner Society and The Urban Villagers continue to inspire sociologists to undertake locality studies. In Chicago alone one can point to a range of studies of local community structure, by Gerald Suttles (1968), Albert Hunter (1974), Bill Kornblum (1974), Edward Kantowitz (1975), or Elijah Anderson (1978). Or consider the range of studies available of one ethnic group, black Americans, which include Liebow (1967), Hannerz (1969), Schulz (1969), Abrahams (1970), Stack (1974), Susner (1982) and Bell (1983), to pick only some examples. More ambitious attempts to apply network analysis to the analysis of local social relationships include those of Laumann (1973), Wallmann (1979) and Fischer (1982).

5) This shift away from locality studies can not be accounted for simply as a turning away from
small-scale ethnography towards more quantitative research methods. Such qualitative studies flourish in fields such as the sociology of health and illness and of education. See, for example, Robert G. Burgess's *Strategies of Educational Research*, 1985.

6) The term "community", like other concepts taken over from common-sense usage, is notoriously open-ended, and has been used by sociologists and anthropologists with an abandon reminiscent of poetic license. In their paper, "Definitions of Community: 1954 through 1973", Sutton and Munson surveyed some one hundred and twenty five definitions of the concept. Unfortunately, just as the term "community" has caused confusion, both etymologically and conceptually, so to does the term "system". In fact, systemic writers have to start off their studies by stating which variants of systems thinking they adopt and which they exclude. (Giarchi, 1984)

7) When Stacey attempted an overview of definitions she pointed out that the feeling of belonging to a particular area is often
confused by sociologists with arbitrary delimitations like parish boundaries. She suggests that this is due to a normative orientation. (Stacey, 1969, 135) But even arbitrary or administrative definitions cannot define "community" as distinct from tribal society, even though they may provide the social scientist with the rationalisation for studying a particular locale.

8) The inter-relations are unlikely to be complete, or totally confined within the boundary of the locality, but this does not mean that there is nothing worth studying. Actual localities will display either partial or non-existent social systems. In consequence, the model of a local social system should include an understanding of the spatial and temporal changes taking place in the social structure of particular localities.

9) The seven themes in Stacey's propositions for generating research hypotheses are:

- temporal changes in the 'local' and 'newcomer' populations of the locality;
convergence and overlapping of the social status and elite roles of local institutional actors;

presence and absence of specific social institutions;

articulation of local and national political structures;

strength of 'belongingness' and shared belief systems;

overlapping of local and national social systems; and

connection between geographical association and the strength of social networks.

10) If there is a key originator of the theory of community the label perhaps suits Ferdinand Toennies more than any other individual. Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft (usually translated as 'Community and Society') was first published in 1887 and has provided a constant source of ideas for those who have
dealt with the community ever since. His identification of a particular system of social relationships with a particular geographical locale has been his most enduring, but also perhaps his most misleading, bequest to the sociology of community.

11) Although issues of kinship arise in this particular study some doubts will be raised as to their relative importance in the wider context of social life in Fearnbeg. There is no denying its significance concerning help and support (cf. Chapter Six) and that it is an important organising principle but - and here again this study is marked off from others - Fearnbeg society is not depicted as revolving around kinship.


13) The point that is being made here is about how a culture can be shared. It is easy to overestimate the extent to which people in
small communities interact. This is an important consideration which will be discussed at length in Chapter Four.

14) Perhaps the Banbury ethnographies are the sole examples of attempts to examine local politics with respect to national political parties, rather than just in terms of face-to-face power struggles between individuals. (Stacey, 1960; Stacey et al., 1975)
CHAPTER THREE

FIRST PERSON REFLEXIVITY

3.1 Reflexivity

Critics of ethnography frequently complain about the relative inattention of writers in that tradition to certain sorts of methodological questions. Influential texts like Bruyn (1966), Glaser and Strauss (1967), and Denzin (1970), present abstracted theories of method which attempt to set out general principles for the conduct of research, but there is little indication of how these principles may be articulated with fieldwork practice. Much of the anthropological literature in sociology varies a great deal between telling a few good stories about what research is 'really like' and offering some kind of analysis of the implications. Typical examples might include Whyte's Appendix to the 1955 edition of Street Corner Society; the collections edited by Hammond (1964); Vidich, Bensman and Stein (1964): Douglas (1976); and Bell and Newby (1977). In general these accounts are stronger on anecdotes than on drawing out more
general implications in theoretical terms. The failure to integrate fieldwork practise with more analytic reflections on the experience has led to relative neglect of the moral problems of field research.

Since, in any social research, the observer is the instrument through which and by which the phenomena of the investigation are selected and filtered as well as interpreted and evaluated, the way in which he or she operates is crucial in transposing reality into data and producing a close correspondence between the actual and the recorded event. The observer is in a face-to-face relationship with the observed and gathers data by participating with them in their natural life setting. Thus, he or she is part of the context being observed, and both modifies and is influenced by the context. It would be impossible here to isolate a body of data 'uncontaminated' by the researcher.

Reflexivity is an obvious and essential element in this project and the reflexive nature of social research must be recognised: that is, that the researcher is part of the social world under study. (see Hammersley and Atkinson, 1984)
is not a matter of methodological commitment, it is an existential fact. The role of the researcher is an active one and that he or she may play an important part in the shaping of contexts becomes central to analysis. In fieldwork the researcher is a research instrument who's reactions tell something of crucial importance about the nature of the phenomena under study. Indeed, part of the evaluation of such work turns on what the audience knows about the ethnographer, and the style of research and reporting adopted in order that the credibility of the witness can be assessed. Details of my own biography are crucial in understanding not only my motivation for engaging in research, but also in comprehending the importance of relating a relevant methodology that exploits my participation in the social milieu.

3:2 Ease of access

Having been brought up in Fearnbeg I was in the uniquely advantageous position, as a sociologist, of being 'known' and 'placed' in the community before any research was undertaken. Other accounts of communities have typically been done
by people who 'came in from the outside'. It is very unusual for someone to study 'their own' community (see discussion of Jenkins' work, below), and this adds to the distinctiveness of the study. As well as being 'known' by the people living in Fearnbeg I was equally fortunate to know my 'cast of characters'. Furthermore, having learned the language in the same way as many of my research subjects did, and having experienced community life with the same rhythm, I was in a position where data were less likely to be distorted, taken out of context, or insufficiently qualified when reported.

Before even entering the field I realised my capability to cut through many of the characteristic problems faced by would-be ethnographers. Access to subjects was straightforward because I was already a part of Fearnbeg life and regarded as such by all the residents. Even access to the subtleties of such phenomena as kinship and friendship was readily available. Having spent the greater part of my life within social situations in Fearnbeg I was aware of their context and their intricacies. All potential key-informants were already known, as were where to go and who to ask in following up
specific areas of enquiry. Any outside researcher seeking information would have had to discover who to ask; who to ask first; whether permission was required; and so forth. In my case such knowledge is part of the badge of membership and easily put to use. I also benefited from the amount of time I had spent away from Fearnbeg. These periods of semi-isolation from the place enabled me to look at it in a reflexive manner, and stand back from certain situations should the need arise.

In contrast, most groups are studied by outsiders who typically face problems of establishing and maintaining relationships with people that will let them observe what they want to over a long period of time. (Whyte 1955; Liebow 1967; Newby 1977; Barbera-Stein 1979) Experienced fieldworkers might realise that such difficulties provide valuable clues to the social organisation they want to understand, and people's responses to a stranger can often tell something about how they live. Indeed, it is true to say that, in some settings, the participants might feel less threatened by a 'stranger' than by a friend. In this particular study however, the researcher enjoyed the same advantages as Beynon:
... being regarded as a local was an important step forward. ... This considerably lessened the sense of threat which some felt I posed. (Beynon, 1983, 41)

People in the field, understandably, seek to place or locate the ethnographer within their own experience. Where individuals or groups have little or no knowledge of social research researchers are frequently suspected, initially at least, of being spies for some outside agency. Prior too, and during this piece of research, there were serious mismatches between subjects' expectations of the research and my own. Before I took on the work there was a lot of speculation in Fearnbeg about what it would entail. One public-spirited individual was led to believe (by others who knew better), that I was investigating the suitability of the area for the dumping of nuclear waste. He was understandably upset and annoyed about my supposed part in this defilement. Such a false impression could, obviously, have serious consequences for the whole research - not to mention the researcher. Another resident remains under the impression that I am some kind of journalist. Fortunately, such erroneous
conceptions have not proved detrimental to the research process in this case, but they do show how easily the legitimacy of the investigation could be jeopardised. On balance, being a full member of the community was an advantage but, as I will illustrate later in this Chapter, it was not without its problems.

3:3 Ethical questions

A problem often faced by ethnographers is deciding how much self-disclosure is appropriate or beneficial. It would have been wrong of me to expect honesty and frankness on the part of participants if I had not been frank and honest about myself. Trust is an interpersonal matter; a question of everyday conduct and a continual series of informed bargains. In the last analysis, ethical fieldwork turns on the moral sense and integrity of the researcher negotiating the social contract which leads the subjects to expose their lives. It follows that, if this is such a personal matter, there must be mutual trust between the researcher and those under research. Competent fieldwork requires a clear conscience. To facilitate this I told the people of Fearnbeg
that the information they gave would be treated confidentially. My "assurance of anonymity" (Lofland and Lofland, 1984, 29) was the promise that real names of persons, places, and so on, would not be used in the research report and/or that pseudonyms would be substituted. My status as an insider meant that I was afforded a great deal of trust by my informants, and I was allowed access to settings, detailed conversations, and information that might not otherwise have been available.

Having stated the importance of trust between researcher and researched I must now admit to, on occasion, being economical with the truth. Writers on naturalistic methodology generally conceive the major entry problems of the 'known' researcher to be strategic rather than ethical; implying a sharp distinction between 'open' and 'covert' research. For the sake of clarity this distinction is a useful one. However, it is also essentially artificial. Julius Roth has stated the case succinctly:

All research is secret in some ways and to some degree - we never tell the subjects 'everything' - so long as
there exists a separation of role between the researcher and those researched upon, the gathering of information will inevitably have some hidden aspects, even if one is an openly declared observer. (Roth, 1970, 278)

When I began my research into Fearnbeg I was often approached by individuals who wanted to know what I was "supposed to be doing". Rather than telling people, who had little or no knowledge of sociology, that I was carrying out an ethnographic study and was interested in identity, symbolism, etc., I simplified my proposals. I told people that I was planning to write about the changes taking place in Fearnbeg, and that I would be carrying out interviews and watching what was going on from day-to-day. If I was asked to elaborate I did so gladly, but my original explanation was usually satisfactory. Nobody gave any indication of disapproval. In fact, most people were encouraging and offered help: giving advice on who to go and talk to; telling me their own views on Fearnbeg as a place to live; showing me old photographs, diaries, etc. Here again my personal biography proved a great asset.
Whether or not people have knowledge of social research or are interested in what such research entails, they are often more concerned with what kind of person the researcher is than with the research itself. Dean put it like this:

A person becomes accepted as a participant observer more because of the person he turns out to be in the eyes of the field contacts than because of what the research means to them. Field contacts want to be reassured that the research worker is a 'good guy' and can be trusted not to 'do them dirt' with what he finds out. (quoted in Dingwall, 1980, 885)

I could offer such reassurance and have it accepted because I had, unconsciously and over many years, built up a reputation for trustworthiness in Fearnbeg. If I had not betrayed the trust which was placed in me before undertaking research, then there was no reason to believe that I would do so now. Furthermore, it was generally accepted that as a member of the Fearnbeg society I was hardly likely to 'do (it) dirt' because, by inflection, I would be contaminating myself.
By simply complying with common sense and decency and by being open and honest about my intentions I allayed any future possibility of accusations of deceit or betrayal of trust. Without in any way denigrating the attention which has been paid to ethical questions, or belittling the honestly expressed moral anguish of some researchers, it seems to me that too much can be made of the fieldwork setting as involving special ethical problems. When research involves voluntary agreements and co-operation these ethical dilemmas are the same as those normally faced by morally sensitive individuals. Why should there be a difference? Fieldwork is not detached from ongoing social life. Just as in many everyday situations, the ethnographer often has to suppress or play down personal beliefs, commitments and sympathies. This is not necessarily a matter of gross deception. The social requirements of tact, courtesy, and 'interaction ritual' (Goffmann, 1972), mean that in some ways everyone has to lie. For the researcher this may be particularly a matter of self-conscious 'impression management' (Goffmann, 1955), and may thus become an ever-present aspect of social interaction in the field - 'personal front'. (ibid.)
'Impression management' is also a useful aid in preventing an unacceptable amount of bias on the researcher's part. I was determined not to bias the fieldwork by talking only with people I found most congenial or sympathetic, or to rely too heavily on friends as informants.

Being friends with people means being open with them and acting as a person rather than a fieldworker. If the person one befriends is marginal in the community and sympathetic towards sociological perspectives, this is no problem, but if he is active in the community, friendship may threaten the participant observer's neutrality. (H.J. Gans, in Burgess, 1982, 56)

I disagree with Gans' implication that 'neutrality' is a pre-requisite of good field research. Because of my background it was impossible for me to remain neutral in personal relations in Fearnbeg. It was inevitable, for example, that I would be friendlier with those that I had been friendly with before than with those people I had never particularly liked. But, it does not necessarily follow from this that the
research will be any less worthwhile, or the findings less reliable.

In any research, where the researcher lives in a particular place for any length of time, he or she will get caught up in certain sub-sets. (cf. Frankenberg, 1957) Due to my lifetime of interaction with Fearnbeg people I was already trapped in a social persona which did not magically disappear when I took upon myself the role of participant observer. To the people in Fearnbeg I was still "Angus". I was still associated with the same social behaviour and with the same social groups within the place. Ditton, in a most sensitive passage concerning the problems of fieldwork, has commented on his feelings about turning individuals, to whom he felt close, into sources of data:

Sometimes I almost felt I was doing research on my own family. (Ditton, 1977, 17)

I was, in effect, doing exactly that. My family, friends, neighbours etc., were all potential sources of data. Because of my pre-existing status it was inevitable that it would be easier
to access certain groups and individuals than others. Long-standing friends or members of my immediate family, for example, were more amenable sources of information than certain people with whom I was not particularly friendly or sub-sets to which I did not belong. A prime example of this facet of my personal biography is the fact that I found it easier to access the locals and long-term residents in Fearnbeg than I did the recent incomers and holiday-home owners. This was inevitable. I knew before undertaking any fieldwork that it would be much clearer sailing gaining access to, and better quality data from, people with the same social background as myself whom I knew well as opposed to middle-class city-dwellers who spent very little time in Fearnbeg each year or who had only just arrived there to live. As the fieldwork progressed, it became ever more apparent that it was easier for me to access local as opposed to incomer culture. Consequently it was the local culture in Fearnbeg that became the principal focus of my research, and it was while focussing on localism that I felt most confident about the quality of my findings. Perhaps, somewhat ironically, my supervisor Professor Geoff Payne, who is himself an incomer,
was better equipped than me to gain access to particular groups.

Because Professor Payne spends several weeks each year living in Fearnbeg he - as well as being something of an expert in the research area - possesses a good deal of knowledge about the place and the people who live there. As a member of the sub-set of incomers he is a subject of observation with first-hand knowledge of the phenomenon under study. This is beneficial in that it further stimulates his interest in the research and heightens the onus on me to produce work of both a detailed and impartial nature. His position as subject/supervisor could be regarded as potentially problematic in that it might influence any decisions I make regarding what to report and what not to report. In order to maintain a good working relationship I could, for example, omit any mention of involvement in the "darker side" of community life (see below) on the part of someone with whom he is friendly, or I could fail to include any particularly derogatory remarks made about incomers. Fortunately, no such deceit would be useful here because both parties are aware of the social situation in Fearnbeg and the attitudes regarding incomers. There was, however, no danger
of collusion on our part and, on balance, our relationship was more beneficial than detrimental with regard to the work in hand.

I made no effort to safeguard the 'feelings' of the supervisor, or to avoid the sometimes uncomfortable realities of my own pre-existing status as a member of Fearnbeg society. Aware of the dangers of biased selectivity I took precautionary steps to avoid them. Before undertaking any fieldwork I listed the names of every adult (16+) living in Fearnbeg. Each name was then placed in one of ten categories with headings ranging from: 'intimate friends and relatives' through, for example, 'people I am not really friendly with', to 'people I do not know'. Throughout the fieldwork attention was paid to individuals from all ten categories in what I think was a successful attempt to overcome the risk of blatant or unnecessary bias.

Beyond this risk lies a second and more worrying problem - the exploitation of friendship. As a fieldworker I necessarily gathered a lot of data through the development or continuance of close friendships with some of my subjects. (Whyte 1955) At one level this was clearly legitimate; insofar
as my friends would bring pieces of news for me to record, even though other parties were unaware they were doing so. Many data, however, were offered in interaction with friends and confidantes which they did not recognise as research relevant - people tended to forget my overriding concern with what they regarded as mundane everyday activities. If the information was regarded as a "good bit of gossip", or potentially damaging to a third party, it was more likely to be transmitted in the context of friend-to-friend than in that of informant-to-researcher. When dialogues like these took place I would allow my 'personal front' to slip a bit, indicating that I might be involved in my capacity as researcher as well. This again diminished the chances of any future recriminations. Throughout my time in the field, however, I never got the impression that people were 'holding back' information because of my research interest. This is a further indication that the people of Fearnbeg were more concerned with me as a person than with any research I might be carrying out.

There are, of course, aspects of 'personal front' that are not open to 'management' and that limit the negotiation of identities in the field, and
these include so called 'ascribed characteristics'. Although it would be wrong to think of the effects of these as absolutely determinate or fixed, such characteristics as gender and age could shape relationships with people under study in important ways. To some extent they prevented me from the kind of close, collaborative relationship that I believe I achieved with men of my own age. (see Morgan, 1981) The researcher cannot escape the implications of gender any more than he or she can grow younger. The issue of gender as such has, revealingly, only been raised in relation to female fieldworkers who often gain access to male dominated situations. (Golde, 1970; Warren and Rasmussen, 1977) It would be grossly patronising to attempt to impose the theoretical implications of a male ethnography on to women. (Burgess, 1984, 91) The fact that Fearnbeg is still a paternalistic society is no excuse for the "total exclusion of half the population". (Corrigan, 1979, 13) It was impossible for me to gain access to certain information which, had I been female, I might have been privy, e.g. conversations in ladies toilets; young mothers discussing their respective children; young girls discussing young boys; mothers relating to their daughters
problems; etc. Yet I did garner some useful data from females that I do not think I would have been offered had I too been female. One young woman disclosed aspects of her relationship with others in her peer group which she claimed she would never discuss with another female. On another occasion a young woman approached me to ask what I, as a male, thought of some of the men in the place. The questions she asked went some way towards illustrating her own feelings.

As with gender, the effects of age should not be overestimated in this research. Problems of interaction do, of course, exist. Access could not be gained, for example, to the secret world of children or to some of the more intimate memories of the elderly. But, on the whole, older folk enjoyed relating stories and experiences to a "young lad", and being a bachelor in my late twenties I still had a great deal of insight into the younger generation.

Ascribed characteristics are, nevertheless, extremely important, and none more so in this case than my being regarded as 'a local' by everybody in Fearnbeg. Fortunately, in terms of conducting research, there were more advantages attached to
my status as a local than there were disadvantages. Ease of access to local people and incomers who had lived in Fearnbeg for a long time, i.e. the vast majority of the study population, far outweighed any problems of 'infiltrating' the holiday-home owners and more recent incomers. Young girls who spoke to me about personal experiences would not have done so had they not known me all their lives. Older people felt more at ease talking with someone whose family and background they knew a great deal about. I also got the impression that incomers to the area, both recent and longstanding, gained some satisfaction from explaining to a 'real local' the circumstances and consequences of their coming to live in Fearnbeg. My standing as a local also eased investigative discourse with holiday-makers. They would often ask questions about the place or its people, and their questions shed a great deal of light on how they themselves saw things. In such situations my personal front would be that which the holiday-makers attributed to me but, at the same time, I was carrying out a fieldwork role.
3:4 Field roles

There have been several attempts to map out the various roles that ethnographers may take on in the field. (Buford Junker in Hughes et al., 1952; Gold, 1958; Spradley, 1980) Jules Rosette (1978), for example, has argued for the necessity of total immersion in a native culture - actually becoming a member. This may seem attractive but, in this case, where the researcher already was a member, total immersion often proved extremely limiting with regard to collecting data. Whenever I got too immersed I was, by definition, implicated in existing social practises and expectations in a far more rigid manner than if I had not done so. By acting in accordance with existing role expectations I sometimes denied myself access to potentially fruitful lines of enquiry. For example, I often found myself involved in working with sheep. It proved difficult to organise action to optimise data collection when wrestling with a cantankerous cheviot. (It should be remembered that, because I spent a lengthy period of time in the field, many of the subjects were prone to forget, sometimes conveniently, that I was there to carry out research).
Although a variety of roles were adopted the aim throughout was to maintain a more or less marginal position. As Lofland points out, the researcher generates 'creative insight' out of the marginal position of simultaneous insider-outsider. (1971, 97)

He or she must be intellectually poised between 'familiarity' and 'strangeness', while socially poised between 'stranger' and 'friend'. (Powdermaker, 1966; Everhart, 1977) Everhart illustrates the dangers of immersion from his research on college students and teachers:

just plain fitting in too well culminated ... in a diminishing of my critical perspective. I began to notice that events were escaping me, the significance of which I did not realise until later. (Everhart, 1977, 302)

Marginality is not an easy position to maintain - it engenders a continual sense of insecurity. In the words of Hammersley and Atkinson:
There is a sense of schizophrenia that the engaged/disengaged ethnographer may suffer. But this feeling or equivalent feelings, should be managed for what they are. They are not necessarily something to be avoided, or to be replaced by more congenial sensations of comfort. The comfortable sense of being 'at home' is a danger signal. From the perspective of the 'marginal' reflexive ethnographer there can be no question of total commitment, 'surrender' or 'becoming'. There must always remain some part held back, some social and intellectual 'distance'. For it is in the 'space' created by that distance that the work of the ethnographer gets done. Without that distance, without such analytic space, the ethnography can be little more than the autobiographical account of a personal conversion. This would be an interesting and valuable document, but not an ethnographic study. (1983, 102)

It would be wrong on my part to claim that this intellectual distance was continually maintained,
and not to admit that social interaction was sometimes sought primarily for pragmatic reasons rather than in accordance with the research interest and strategies. I would sometimes go to a certain place or function with the sole intention of having a good time. Invariably, however, I would find myself, sometimes unconsciously, doing ethnography. For example, I would go to a dance and pay more than 'normal' attention to who was there. Or I would stop for an innocent chat with a friend and find myself trying to weasel out more information than I would have thought necessary had I not been conducting research. Notwithstanding the frequency with which sociology 'interfered' with my private life, I found it impossible to constantly maintain the role of an engaged yet disengaged member of a society where I was, after all, 'at home'. This often included pangs of guilt, but I was comforted by the fact that other ethnographers also experienced personal failings.

Richard Jenkins, born in Liverpool, moved with his family to Larne, a small town about twenty miles north of Belfast, in 1960. Apart from ten months in 1970-'71, Larne was his home until 1977. The housing estate where he lived as a child and an
adult is very similar to Ballyhightown, where he conducted his research, and there was much he felt at home about and recognised. He had previously held a post in a Youth Club in Ballyhightown and, when he returned there as a research student in 1978, continued to participate in this work. Like me, he retained something of his previous identity. Looked at from the standpoint of doing research this had undoubted advantages, yet it also instilled in the researcher a sense of complacency not conducive to the task in hand. On one occasion, after a heavy night's drinking with regulars in a local pub, Jenkins inadvertently left his fieldnotes on the premises. He returned to the establishment the following morning and retrieved the notes, but was left with the worrying thought that they may have been read. (Bell and Roberts, 1984)

Jenkins is in the W.F. Whyte Street Corner tradition (though less of an outsider than Whyte) and I recognise and sympathise with the problems he faced. Sobriety in a researcher obviously has its virtues. Unfortunately, it is usually in the kind of situation where moderation is most desirable that it is most difficult to maintain.
By acknowledging the fact that some of my data were collected in pubs I do not want to give the reader the impression that I spent all my time leaning on bars. They were excellent sources of information but, like many others, could not supply a constant and steady stream of data. Notwithstanding the innumerable opportunities for data collection, e.g. helping out on fishing boats; co-operating with work on sheep; attending Community Council and Hall Committee meetings; shopping; playing football; going to sales and coffee-mornings in the Village Hall; etc., etc., the vagaries of communal activity, weather, and people, dictated that more than participant observation was needed to give a rounded picture of life in Fearnbeg.

3.5 Interviews

The literature on qualitative methodology has traditionally distinguished rather sharply between participant observation and interviewing (e.g. Becker and Geer, 1970; Lofland, 1976), frequently viewing the former as the preeminent method, the latter as a pale substitute. This distinction is overdrawn and the invidious comparison
unwarranted. W. Gordon West noted that a review of sociological field reports suggests:

the bulk of participant observation data is probably gathered through informal interviews and supplemented by observation. (1980, 39)

Classic participant observation always involves the interweaving of looking and listening (Schatzman and Strauss, 1973), of watching and asking. Furthermore, many social situations can only be directly apprehended through interviewing. Thus, rather than being a poor substitute for participant observation, interviewing is frequently the method of choice. In this study it was an essential tool; both for discovering how people regarded life in Fearnbeg (past and present), and for making sense of much of the information gathered through observation. By systematically modifying my role in the field different kinds of data could be collected. I could then make comparisons which greatly enhanced interpretation of the social processes under study. (see Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983, pp. 198-200, for an account of 'triangulation')
The ethnographic interview, as a speech event, shares many features with the friendly conversation. Most of my data were gathered through participant observation and many casual, friendly conversations. People were often interviewed without their awareness, simply by engaging them in conversation and throwing in a few ethnographic questions. During these conversations I would casually introduce new elements to assist informants to respond as informants, but was always ready to shift back to idle conversation if the interview showed signs of becoming like a formal interrogation. A few minutes of easygoing talk interspersed here and there paid enormous dividends in rapport.

To organise interviews I simply asked people if I could forward a few questions about a particular facet of social life in Fearnbeg, e.g. working on a fish-farm, or growing up in the 1940s and 1950s. My main targets for gathering historical data were, naturally, older residents and, because of my local status, I had no problem in making the initial approaches. I did, however, sometimes experience difficulty in drawing out as much information as I would have liked from respondents. One elderly lady, for example, when
I went to ask her about the Church in Fearnbeg, assured me that she would have liked to help (which I believed) but that she did not really know a great deal about the subject. She advised me to go to speak to a friend of hers who, she said,

has got a much better memory than me and will be able to tell you a lot.

She then invited me in for a cup of tea, and the ensuing conversation yielded a great deal of the kind of information I was looking for. Her initial reticence was a common feature in most of the interviews I conducted. This was not because people did not want to help, but because they could not imagine their own lives and experiences being of any great interest. When I explained my overriding concern with how Fearnbeg people live, or lived, from day-to-day, they proved to be very communicative and helpful. Some were even enthusiastic: asking me back so they could tell me more. On one return visit an elderly lady and I spent hours pouring over old photographs she had 'dug out' for me. She then insisted on singing several old Gaelic songs once popular in Fearnbeg
- unfortunately I do not speak Gaelic, and she knew all the verses.

Difficulties in conducting semi-formal interviews with people I had known all my life often required a deal of tact and diplomacy. Several interviews were tape recorded, but the machine was sometimes more of a hindrance than an asset. I would always ask for permission from the interviewee before doing any recording but, although such permission was never denied, people often felt ill at ease knowing that what they said was being "taken down". The inherent problems involved in interviewing can be illustrated by relating certain interactional difficulties experienced in one particular interview conducted with an elderly gentleman in his home.

I arrived at the pre-arranged meeting armed with a tape recorder, a note-pad and a pen - all contained in a plastic bag. After initial pleasantries were exchanged the interviewee began relating the kind of stories and experiences I was after; so I started rummaging in my bag for the recorder. He realised what I was doing and said:
Ach, I forgot you were bringing that thing with you.

It was obvious he was not enthralled at the prospect of being recorded, so only the note-pad and pen emerged from the bag. Seeing these, he said:

I hope you're not going to write down everything I say. Half the lies I tell aren't true - not the sort of thing you'd want to be writing about.

I put the note-pad to one side and soon became engrossed in listening. I would occasionally ask for names or dates to be repeated and, by pretending to jot them down, transcribe some interesting quote or memory-sparking line. What I had planned as an interview ended up as a very enjoyable evening listening to an interesting man relating legends, stories, anecdotes and impressions of life in Fearnbeg. On eventually taking my leave I drove for about quarter of a mile before stopping the car and writing down everything I could remember.
That particular interview revealed a great deal more than what the informant actually told me. Apart from his own responses, which were interesting enough, the way I behaved is relevant here. Rather than being 'pushy' and trying to arrange the situation for my own benefit I allowed the interviewee to take some control. After all, I was in his home. More importantly, my conduct was regulated by my personal feelings. I had always liked and respected this man and, rather than offend him in any way, was willing to by-pass possible avenues of fruitful investigation. Had an outsider asked any insensitive questions it would have been bad enough - had I done so it would have been inexcusable. The fact that I wished to retain my pre-existing social identity in the eyes of the people of Fearnbeg did at times curtail the methods I might have used had I been doing research in another place. I do not think there was anything wrong or selfish in this, or that it had a detrimental effect on the research - it was purely and simply a concern for the feelings of others.

This concern has also led to my choosing not to write about certain facets of life in Fearnbeg in any detail. I do not want to paint a picture of
Fearnbeg as some sort of idyllic community, but nor do I wish to run the risk of deeply offending people by writing things about them they would not want to see in print. Suffice to say that deviant and criminal behaviour does exist in Fearnbeg, and can sometimes be of a serious nature. In the past ten years there have been cases of adultery; violent assault; illegal and dangerous use of firearms; misuse of drugs; theft; etc. etc.. The reader should be aware that there is a dark side to Fearnbeg life, but I do not intend placing too great an emphasis on it. Of course, when it has a direct bearing on the matter in hand it will be acknowledged, but not in a way which would point the finger of accusation at any individual. The purpose of this research is to show how people live in Fearnbeg - not to stand in judgement over them.

As well as this concern for the feelings of others my own feelings at times hindered, or brought to a halt, the research process. During my time in the field I witnessed, or was aware of, several emotional and traumatic incidents with which I felt personally involved. At certain times this involvement was too intense to allow for objectivity - I could not maintain my 'social and
intellectual distance' (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983, 102) and any attempt at worthwhile research was futile. Such incidents were rare, however, and, again, I do not think that my inability to act as a marginal observer at such times had any diverse effect on the research as a whole.

3:6 Practicalities of data-collection

Before entering the field the principal research techniques were clear in my mind: participant observation and informal interviewing. But I had only minimal practical experience of conducting ethnographic interviews or engaging in participant observation. How were the methods actually used to collect data, and what should I do with the data once I had collected it? It was necessary to 'learn' the practical skills needed for the collection and analysis of data.

To facilitate this I attended a short-course in qualitative data at Surrey University in October 1987. The techniques and issues raised there led to follow-up discussions with the research supervisors and further guided reading of texts such as Spradley (1980) and Strauss (1987). Study
during the first term culminated in a short period of fieldwork in which both myself and the first supervisor, Professor Payne, collected data and compared data collection processes on the same topic, resulting in the writing of a paper - 'Talking About The Past: Social Indenity in a Scottish Village' (Payne and Macleod 1988) — presented at the BSA Conference 1988.

Initial training in qualitative methodology was further consolidated by attending the ESRC Methodology Day-School at Warwick University (1988), and the ESRC Post-Graduate Summer School (August 1988). In addition the Society for Northern Studies Conference (April 1988) gave me the chance to meet and discuss historical material with people outside my own immediate discipline, while post-graduate seminars in Plymouth and the Annual Conference of the BSA (March 1989) provided further opportunity for discussion of work-related issues and the practicalities of research with fellow sociologists. Initial training culminated in the gaining of practical experience in the early stages of fieldwork, the bulk of which took place between April 1988 and January 1989.
Because research could not be tightly structured in advance it often proved impossible to match phases of observation with periods of other related work - choices had to be made as to what activity would be most beneficial at what time. I was fortunate in being able to forecast certain events taking place in Fearnbeg due, for example, to the loosely structured pattern of the crofting year, or pre-arranged meetings of such bodies as the Village Hall Committee, but most social activities in Fearnbeg do not correspond to a regular timetable. Decisions were made from day-to-day about the future direction of the project: e.g. where to go; who to talk to; what to observe; whether or not to use a tape-recorder.

I always carried a small notebook in the field, but was careful never to be over-conspicuous when taking notes. Lofland recommends that, even if one is a known observer,

the general rule of thumb is don't jot conspicuously. (1971, 102)

I found that note-taking could make the subjects self-conscious and cause them to act abnormally. Conversely, I sometimes felt personally constrained when taking notes in conversations
with people I had known all my life. To avoid any embarrassment I would use some excuse to briefly distance myself from the individual or group being observed, e.g. 'going to the toilet', or 'going out to the car to get cigarettes', and quickly scribble down single words, phrases or unconnected sentences. These key words and phrases served as useful reminders when it came time to create an expanded account.

a single word, even one merely descriptive of the dress of a person, or a particular word uttered by someone usually is enough to 'trip off' a string of images that afford substantial reconstruciton of the observed scene. (Schatzman and Schwartz, 1975, 95)

However, no matter how systematic and thought provoking notes taken in the field proved to be, when it came to writing them up I had to rely to a great extent on memory - a limited faculty. Expanded notes were writtten as soon as possible after each field session but I could not always be one hundred per cent sure that they were exact reconstructions of what had taken place. It was
inevitable that certain things would be forgotten—perhaps only to be remembered later—and that a certain amount of selectivity would take place.

The data obtained were originally produced in the form of field-notes based on the sequence in which events occurred and organised on a day-to-day basis. These were recorded away from the field of study unless I was observing a situation in which it was usual to take notes, e.g. Community Council meetings. Entries were dated and written out, in an intelligible and comprehensive form, on loose sheets of A4 paper stored in large ring-binders. Direct quotations were clearly distinguished from summaries provided by myself with quotation marks, and gaps or uncertainties in the quotations were also clearly indicated. I did not want to have to ask myself "is that what they really said or did?" when referring back to notes. Even when only isolated or fragmented sequences could be recalled and noted they were kept typographically distinct from my own descriptive glosses.

My field notes consist of relatively concrete descriptions of social processes and their contexts. Records of speech and action are indicative of who was present, where, at what
time, and under what circumstances. Ideas about the analysis of data that occurred to me during the study, such as speculation about the causal importance of certain variables, or the way chapters of the final report should be organised, were also included. They were clearly designated as my own analytic ideas and inferences by separating them from the strictly observational data by means of brackets. This is part of the 'progressive' nature of qualitative data analysis. If my notes engendered a good idea I could go back to the person or people concerned for further information—a stark contrast to the fixed data collected in 'one-chance' surveys.

Because I could not memorise everything recorded in my fieldnotes I had to have ready access to data in order to make selection for inclusion in the final report. My fieldnotes sometimes have a tendency to be boring, rambling and difficult to generalise from, so data analysis was necessary. My filing system, essential for keeping track of people, organisations and so forth, was well established during the first days of fieldwork. Written records were organised chronologically as a running record in which the data were stored by time of collection. To facilitate indexing of
these data each A4 sheet in my fieldnotes was divided into three equal sections marked off by a system of lettering and numbering. The letters and numbers corresponding to significant themes in the fieldnotes were noted on index cards with the appropriate headings (e.g. 'tourism'; 'holiday homes') which were stored in alphabetical order. Information was grouped under the most obvious categories, the better to locate it again. When new themes arose in the fieldnotes I simply added new headings to my card index.

A second, and separate, card index was used for the people being studied. The name of every individual in Fearnbeg was used as a heading for a card, and every time that name was mentioned in the fieldnotes it was indexed. By using my card index I have immediate access on all the data collected in relation to any particular person or theme. Long association with subjects occasionally pre-empted my failing to record purely factual data regarding their fundamental characteristics. This did not cause problems when dealing with data on an impressionistic level - only when I came to think about it analytically and look for independent variables did I require the basic fact-sheet types of information. My
pre-existing acquaintance with Fearnbeg people was useful here in that it enabled me to "fill-in" such details as the age or marital status of individuals.

In addition to fieldnotes that came directly from observing and interviewing I kept a personal journal throughout my time in the field. It was important that the biasing effects of my own emotions be kept in mind, so I kept a record of my own feelings on a day-to-day basis. These notes were kept separate from other data by recording them in a private diary. This diary contains a record of experiences, ideas, mistakes, confusions and problems that arose during fieldwork, and includes my reactions to informants and the feelings I 'sensed' from others.

It would have been all to easy to let my fieldnotes and other data pile up, day-by-day and week-by-week. The accumulation of material imparted a satisfactory sense of progress but would not have counted for much without regular reflection and review. Fieldnotes were constantly read and re-read, categorised and indexed; this being an early stage of data analysis. Many hours were devoted to listening to and transcribing.
tape-recorded interviews. Documents and diaries were scrutinised to see whether any links could be made to other sources of information. All this helped me to develop themes relating to community life in Fearnbeg and provided a 'focus' for future data collection. Analysis did not therefore take place just at the end of my fieldwork but was on-going and developmental.

With respect to documents and other memoranda relevant to the research, some were freely available and could be retained for later use, e.g. tourist guides, promotional material and circulars, while others could be bought relatively cheaply. Bodies such as the Highlands and Islands Development Board and the Crofters Commission were helpful with respect to providing background information and statistics. I was also fortunate in being able to borrow certain rare texts and manuscripts (e.g. Forfeited Estate Papers) from local people in Fearnbeg and being able to produce copies for retention. The Head Teacher in the local primary school allowed me access to the only photo-copier in the area. Of course this service was not free of charge and, while copying avoided the danger of omitting something important or losing the context of what was recorded, its
usefulness had to be balanced against costs in
time and money.

For most of the time spent collecting data I was
'on my own' in the field. It was imperative
therefore that regular contact be maintained with
the research supervisor. This was managed by a
system of pre-arranged weekly telephone calls.
These regular conversations allowed for guidance
and discussion of any practical difficulties
experienced in the field. In addition, interview
transcriptions and memoranda based on fieldwork
were posted to Plymouth. These were examined by
the supervisor and returned with added comments
and suggestions prior to related discussion in
subsequent telephone calls.

My ethnographic record, then, consists of
fieldnotes, research memoranda, transcriptions of
tape-recordings, photographs, documents, diaries,
and anything else relevant to the social situation
under study. It is these materials that are used
to present an account of the social world of the
participants. Yet only a selection of the
material gathered can possibly be used here. As
Woods (1981) indicates, it is important to
consider what should be included in the report on
the basis of four criteria: validity, typicality, relevance and clarity. In this study I will make extensive use of quotations from fieldnotes and interviews so that the informants are allowed to speak for themselves. It is my responsibility to select the material for analysis, but the themes and categories which influenced my selection belong to the people of Fearnbeg. It was through contact with them that I became increasingly interested in the relationships between long-standing residents of Fearnbeg and recently arrived incomers to the area, and these relationships form the core of this thesis. Before going on to discuss these, however, something must be said about what kind of a place Fearnbeg is and what it is like to live there.
CHAPTER FOUR

THE SETTING

4:1 Backdrop

Fearnbeg is a rocky peninsula containing a cluster of small settlements on a wet and windswept slope of hills in the north-west Highlands of Scotland. The topography of the area is typically west Highland. From a rugged coastline the land rises to form a barren mountainous hinterland; scenically magnificent but almost totally inhospitable to intensive agriculture. Less than one per cent of Fearnbeg's 40,000 acres of stony ground and wet peat moor can be classed as arable and this has restricted the settlement pattern to the relatively fertile lower lying coastal margins where the traditional landholding pattern of crofting persists. (1)

The mountains and the sea are an ever present backdrop to life in Fearnbeg and there are very few places where it is possible to be unaware of their presence. Another notable characteristic of the landscape is the almost total lack of trees.
The area is generally hilly, with numerous large and small freshwater lochs scattered over the bleak moorland. A dominant natural feature is the weather; the chief characteristic of which is its variability. Two persistent features are wind and rain. Strong winds are common, often rising to gale or even hurricane force. Belts of rain are often seen racing across the sea or hills, suddenly blocking out the view, followed by fitful periods of sunshine, and then again by a further brusque shower. According to one local aphorism:

if you can't see the mountains then you know that it's raining; if you can see them you know that it's going to rain.

The prevailing atmosphere is indeed damp and, even though the temperature does not fall too low in winter, there is usually a chill in the air, and the wind adds to the general discomfort.

Fearnbeg has a resident population of about 260. (2) Although the distribution of this population is no longer synonymous with crofting activity the settlement pattern remains characteristic of such places throughout the north-west. There are one hundred and five permanently occupied houses,
fairly evenly distributed between nine linear and grouped townships spread over an area approximately twelve miles in length and five in breadth. (3) The houses themselves, liberally interspersed with ruined cottages and 'holiday homes', are scattered beside the sub-standard single-track road that links the townships. This is the only road leading in to Fearnbeg - the mountains and hills providing a barrier to easy communication - and the nearest small town, Dornie, is some twenty miles away. (see Figure 4-1)

4:2 Services

Typical of isolated settlements on the Atlantic margins, Fearnbeg has limited services. There are two shops, a set of petrol pumps, two bars, a Post-Office, a Church, and a Village Hall. The local Primary School, with its staff of two, takes about thirty children up to the ages of eleven and twelve. In summer there is also a small hotel, a cafe, a camp-site, and a few other 'tourist attractions'.
Figure 4-1: Public amenities and services in Fearnbeg, 1992

KEY
1. Caravan and camp site
2. Sandy beach
3. Chalets
4. Telephone kiosk
5. Food processing factory and shop
6. Public bar
7. Bunkhouse accommodation
8. Harbour and slipways
9. Chalets and B&B accommodation
10. General store
11. Craft shop and tea room
12. Pier
13. Public toilets and information board
14. Free Church
15. General store and petrol pumps
16. Post Office and telephone kiosk
17. Hotel, cafe and public bar
18. Market garden
19. Village Hall
20. Primary School
21. Cemetery
Geographical location and settlement size mean that Fearnbeg people must rely on Dornie and bigger towns even further afield for certain services. (4) A mobile bank visits the townships every Tuesday; the refuse collection lorry comes on a Wednesday; a fish-seller and a 'fruit-and-veg' retailer go from door-to-door once a week; milk is brought in three times a week. A doctor comes from Dornie every Wednesday to make house-calls in the area and holds a surgery in the Village Hall. (5) The small library housed in the Hall is open on the same afternoon. A vet calls every two or three weeks. There are no ministers in Fearnbeg so they come from Dornie to hold services in the local Church, the Village Hall, or in people's homes. (6) Fearnbeg children of secondary school age travel by bus to Dornie - a round trip for some of about fifty miles. (7) The closest police station is twenty-five miles away; the nearest hospital, seventy. Medical emergencies from Fearnbeg are transported by road to hospitals on the east coast via the ambulance service based in Dornie. During the winter months this lifeline can be cut by snow-blocked roads and helicopters have to be used.
That Fearnbeg people are to a considerable extent dependent on larger systems is clear from the way basic services are provided. They have neither the same type or range of goods available to them locally as do town-dwellers. They must travel long distances to purchase durable goods such as clothes, hardware and furniture and, in many cases, their food supplies as well. (8) There are substantial differences between the prices of goods in the local shops and supermarkets in larger centres. Even when the cost of transport is taken into account, the savings on a weekly or fortnightly shopping bill are sufficient to persuade people to do the bulk of their shopping in towns. One consequence of this is that many Fearnbeg people have a different 'mental map' (Newman, 1979) of their 'consumption area' from their mental map of where they live. (9)

Wilkinson noted that

as people in rural areas look elsewhere for needed services, they weaken their behavioural attachments to the local society. (1986, 7).
Fearnbeg people's attachment to place, or 'community satisfaction' (Deseran, 1978; Goudy, 1990) is discussed in the next Chapter, but it is important to point out at this stage that it is not necessarily diminished by an increase in connections with the outside world. There are one or two exceptions, but most Fearnbeg people, while they still 'look elsewhere', make good use of local services. A high proportion might use the local shops, for example, as 'conveniences'; e.g. to buy items overlooked on shopping trips to Dornie, or in 'emergencies' caused by unexpected guests, or the like, but they realise the benefits of shopping locally and the need to sustain local services. One respondent said:

When you live in a place like this I think it's only right you use the local shops. I know it's cheaper to go to (Dornie) for most things - I do a lot of my own shopping there - but I still use both local shops at least once a week. If I'm ever stuck for a pint of milk or a loaf of bread I can phone up (one shop) and they'll send it down with the Postman; if I'm desperate for petrol or something I can get it at
(the other shop), even when the shop's shut. I couldn't ask them to do things like that for me if I wasn't a regular customer.

This interview extract is indicative of the fact that a lack of correspondence between people's mental maps of their 'consumption' and 'local' areas does not detract from their behavioural attachment to the local society.

Because Fearnbeg is so spread out and distant from the nearest towns the ability to 'get around' is of enormous importance to its people. The lack of a private car can mean isolation from a full range of shops and services, from many sources of entertainment, and from social contact of more than a limited nature. The only public transport available in the area is the mail bus that runs on a daily basis, excluding Sundays, to Dornie, but the service is expensive and inconvenient. Passengers travelling to larger centres have to make their own arrangements for the return journey as there is no connecting service to the south or to the east coast. Because of the distances involved within the local area itself Fearnbeg people must drive, or be driven, to the shop, to
school, to the pub, to church, to visit friends, to work, and so on. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that private transport is commonly regarded as an 'essential' rather than a 'luxury' in Fearnbeg, and that over eighty-five per cent of households have access to at least one car.

Increased car ownership (10) has resulted in easier access to facilities both within Fearnbeg and further afield, and to an expansion of the 'labour market area' (Bloomquist, 1990): i.e. that area within which people live and work as delineated by the spatial organisation of their community behaviour. In Autumn, 1990 there were six Fearnbeg people commuting in private cars to Dornie. (Others whose work takes them outside the locality on a regular basis include a Regional Council representative, a freelance journalist, and an agent for an international engineering company).

4:3 Making a living

This brief description of Fearnbeg would be lacking without some characterisation of the local economy. Unlike some places in the Highlands,
Fearnbeg is not a single economy settlement tied solely to fishing or to tourism, or to employment in a single large factory, and certainly not to crofting. The economic base is quite diverse, and this diversity is a reflection of the changes that have joined previously remote areas into larger, regional, national, and international networks, and that have bound small places into systems created by large ones. Fearnbeg's is definitely not a 'self contained economy'.

It is commonly believed that residents of rural labour markets face more limited opportunity structures than urban residents because of the larger population size and broader range of economic activities characteristic of urban areas. (Payne, Chapman and Payne, 1986; Bloomquist, 1990) The range of employment opportunities for residents of a labour market area, however, is not simply a matter of population size. Characteristics of the local job structure and the local labour supply also influence the opportunities for area residents. Greater size and diversity of economic activities increase the range of employment opportunities.
In terms of employment the activities that presently dominate the Fearnbeg economy are fish-farming, food-processing, and tourism. The two large fish-farms and the small food-processing plant provide jobs for over thirty per cent of the one hundred and twenty or so people who do paid work outside the home. (11) The increase in the number of locally available jobs brought about by these relatively new industries has facilitated full employment in the area. This means that more people are going out to work and earning more money to spend in the local shops and bars. It has also created more jobs. A young single mother employed in the food-processing plant can afford to pay a nanny - one of three engaged in separate Fearnbeg households - to look after her children when she goes out to work.

Description of the structure of employment in Fearnbeg is complicated by the wide range of small-scale economic activities that take place, the seasonal and part-time jobs that exist, and the fact that over twenty per cent of those who are economically active have more than one source of income. One woman, for example, works for the 'Crossroads' care scheme; as a shop assistant; and as a 'home-help'. Another individual can choose
whether to describe himself as 'a builder', 'a crofter', or 'a fish-farmer'. Attempts at occupational categorisation are further perplexed by the tendency for Fearnbeg people to move quickly from one job to another. In a period of six months in 1988 one local man held down full-time posts as a school-bus driver, a fish-farmer, and a member of the road gang. In May 1989 a young woman left her part-time job in the food-processing plant to work in the local hotel; but only on the understanding that she would return at the end of the busy tourist season.

4:4 Tourism

Relative to its population Fearnbeg receives a heavy influx of tourists during the short summer season. (12) The attractions of the place are largely similar to those of surrounding areas, but successful promotion has helped to establish it as a destination in its own right. (13) A wide range of outdoor activities are on offer: safe sandy beaches provide opportunities for swimming, canoeing, diving and windsurfing; there are plenty of hills and mountains to climb; and there is good sea, loch and river fishing.
At the peak of the tourist season, usually mid-August, holiday-makers are conspicuous. A conservative estimate of how many were staying in Fearnbeg during a period of fieldwork covering twenty-four hours in August, 1988, based on the knowledge that all available accommodation facilities were full, put the figure at around four hundred. The hotel, the fourteen holiday chalets, the camp-site, the seventeen holiday cottages (14) and seven residential caravans, and the six bed-and-breakfast facilities, are usually crammed to capacity around this time. Trade in the local bars and shops, all of which do reasonable business in the winter months, increases quite dramatically during the summer season. Others who benefit financially from tourism include the owners of the local craft shop and tea-room, a boat owner who conducts fishing trips and cruises around the scenic coastline, and an innovative market gardener who organises guided tours of his premises. Trade in the small shop at the food-processing plant also picks up during the summer.

An increase in consumption of goods and services calls for an increase in production which, in turn, entails an increase in the demand for
labour. In the summer of 1989 the young couple who own the local hotel and cafe employed six full-time and three part-time members of staff. Both local shops employed a part-time assistant; the food-processing plant employed two; and the two pubs jointly accounted for six. The craft-shop gave occasional work to three people; one man was employed on a part-time basis, to comply with Board of Trade regulations, as the requisite 'extra-hand' on the cruise boat; and another was employed in the market garden.

Generally speaking, employers will give jobs to people who live in Fearnbeg before looking for staff from outside the local area but, because the supply of jobs equals, and sometimes outstrips the local demand, some find it necessary to take on outsiders. In 1989 four of the seasonal workers in the hotel, and the one employed by the market-gardener were students who had never been to Fearnbeg before and who left at the end of the summer. Outsiders are also brought in to work in food-processing and salmon-farming.

4:5 Food-processing and fish-farming

As is often the case in rural areas, these new and expanding industries engender mixed feelings among
the resident population. One respondent referred to them as "a Godsend to those who work there" (15), but another said:

The fish-farms and the (food-processing plant) are employing plenty people just now, but what's going to happen when things start to go wrong? Once they stop making money, or go bust or something, they'll clear out and they won't give a damn what happens to us after they're gone.

A lot of Fearnbeg people feel this way and they are not being unduly harsh or pessimistic. Two members of staff on one of the fish-farms were made redundant in 1990 after an outbreak of disease had a dramatic short-term negative effect on the stocking density of fish; and they were not offered re-employment when the number of fish was brought back to its previous level. The food-processing plant (set up in the early 1980s and originally financed by the Highlands and Islands Development Board) (16) has already shifted the larger part of its expanding production process to the east coast. The move has not resulted in any immediate job losses, but employees are naturally
concerned about what will happen if the whole operation is transferred out of the local area. Their fears are exacerbated by the fact that the individual behind the original enterprise, who lives in Fearnbeg, has relinquished control of the business to a company based in the south with no other interest in Fearnbeg.

Both fish-farms are also controlled by outside agencies. They are run on capital from, among other sources, Scandinavia, and are heavily dependent on financial backing from multinational corporations and government bodies like Highlands and Islands Enterprise. Fish-farming obviously provides jobs, but its rapid expansion over the last five or six years has raised the issue of exploitation of the local area and people for profit. According to Neil Jamieson of the Scottish Scenic Trust:

The rise of fish-farming has provided jobs in remote areas and has undoubtedly saved some communities but the industry has been handled in an utterly uncontrolled, undemocratic way. (quoted in McKie, 1989)
A local crofter said:

Fish-farming has grown too big too fast. The farms are like factories; churning out as much as they can to make big profits - but all they're doing is flooding the market and bringing the prices down so they have to produce even more to make money. It's all wrong! We should have a system like they have in Norway where there's lots of small farms - not two or three huge companies running everything. If it was like that here we'd all be able to get something out of it and it could be run properly.

Interestingly, it is in large part due to the Norwegians dumping salmon on the Scottish market that salmon prices have plunged in recent years - (fish-farming, like food-processing and tourism, is highly susceptible to the ups-and-downs of national and international markets). The phenomenon, however, is also due to uncontrolled expansion. Financial returns are at rock bottom and interest rates have soared. Fearnbeg people employed in fish-farming, and in food-processing,
are very much aware of the precariousness of these industries and have adopted a somewhat cynical approach to work - often regarding it as short term, varied and insecure. They have no real control over their own livelihoods and know that, if the industries collapse or are moved to another location, they would be left with no immediate long-term prospect for making a living in Fearnbeg. Similarly, crofting and fishing, two traditional local pursuits, are subjected more than ever before to the vagaries of the wider economy and outside forces.

4:6 Crofting and fishing

There are approximately fifty uniformly small crofts (each about four acres in size) in Fearnbeg, but the number of crofters, or the number of working units, is less than half this figure. (18) The function of crofts as agricultural producers is of little significance today. Older people remember when, until relatively recently:

every croft in the place was growing crops of one kind or another - that was
right up until the early 'sixties ... People had their own potatoes and turnips, and they grew most of the hay they needed to feed their cattle in the winter. Nobody's growing anything these days. The whole thing's changed. (extract from interview with local crofter)

In the opinion of one elderly woman who has lived in Fearnbeg all her life:

It's sad to look at the place now when you remember what it used to be like. I remember the time when whole villages got together and spent days gathering in the hay or picking 'tatties'. They really were good times and, even if the work was hard, we didn't really notice it. It was good fun and, as far as I'm concerned, we were a lot happier and better of then than people are today.

Similar recollections were noted several times during the fieldwork. They are not just romantic notions of the past: I can personally remember, as a youngster, helping out with planting and
harvesting and herding cattle on my father's crofts. There are only a few vegetables for family consumption grown in Fearnbeg today, and to own a cow is now the exception rather than the rule. Two or three crofters still keep a few head of cattle but the grazings are now predominately under sheep.

Fearnbeg is an ideal environment for hardy hill sheep, yet their farming cannot be classed as prosperous. It is a hard life, often seeming a constant battle against the elements, with high expenditure and low returns. In a recent briefing paper to the government the Scottish Crofters Union said the continuation of hill farming in many parts of the Highlands was under threat from a serious financial crisis (The Guardian, Oct. 31, 1989) and, at the time of writing, the hill sheep economy is still severely under threat, and rapidly contracting. In 1988 Fearnbeg crofters were paid, on average, £35.00 for every sheep they sold; but in 1991 the average price was closer to £20.00. Along with falling prices, the expense of transporting livestock to markets on the east coast has increased, as has the cost of importing foodstuff (19); interest rates have risen and
tougher European subsidy restrictions are on the way. (Hetherington, 1989)

Clearly the lion's share of income sustaining standards of living in Fearnbeg today comes from outside crofting: crofting agriculture or sheep-farming are not financially viable unless income is provided from other sources. This has been the case ever since it became anything more than subsistence agriculture (Hunter, 1976, pp. 117-119) giving rise to a system of necessary occupational pluralism.

No human institution survives by remaining forever the same, and crofting is no exception. For places like Fearnbeg to remain financially viable it is necessary for there to be plenty of non-agricultural work to be had, and it is in this sense that the health of crofting depends on developments in the wider economy: on the level of activity in tourism, fish-farming, construction, and so on. Increased levels of non-croft cash income have permitted households to relinquish their dependence on croft production and crofting is no longer the major component in occupational pluralism. It is still, however, of central importance as a form of occupation of the land.

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The apparent paradox may be resolved by seeing crofting and its associated activities as being more than merely economic: as having in addition a powerful symbolic dimension which 'condenses' a sense of the valued past and the continuity of tradition even in the much changed present. The croft is not just an arena of labour; it is almost family territory with long established and strong ideological associations. As such it is a fundamental referent of identity. More than this, it retains important economic and social functions. The crofter has security of tenure so long as the rent is paid and a number of statutory conditions observed. (see Grant, 1977) He or she has the right to hand the croft down by succession or bequest, or to assign the tenancy, with the approval of the Crofters Commission, to someone of his or her choice.

That crofters have a good deal of control over housing is important for their self-identity as Fearnbeg people with 'roots' in the place and ensures that the housing situation, to a certain extent, is not market-driven like it is, for example, in East Anglia (Newby, 1979) where people are able to get houses by pricing other people out of the market. Fearnbeg people still retain a
certain amount of control over their own futures and, although the picture of decline and decay drawn in Inishkillane (Brody, 1972) can be related to certain places in the Highlands today (Ennew, 1982) it is not a true reflection of life in Fearnbeg.

It is plausible to see the croft as a symbolic resource through which, during a period of change, social identity can be stabilised. Crofting, is a way of both masking the cultural distance which has been travelled, and of reinforcing commitment to the ideals of the community ...... The croft is the repository of that valued tradition in which resides the idea of community. (Cohen, 1979,263)

It is one of the tools Fearnbeg people can use for expressing symbolically the continuity of past and present, and for re-asserting the cultural integrity of the place in the face of its apparent subversion by the forces of change.

Fearnbeg's social and economic life has indeed changed substantially since the early 1970s but
crofting, although the financial returns it offers are marginal, clearly remains salient and highly valued. There is still a continuous demand for crofts and great interest taken in people's crofting performance. That the demand outweighs the supply is partly explained by the fact that people want them as sites for homes, and the system of grants and loans available to crofters.

(20) Under a scheme for croft housing and buildings administered by the Scottish Office Agriculture and Fisheries Department a crofter may qualify for grant and loan assistance for the erection, improvement or rebuilding of dwelling houses and other croft buildings. This kind of beneficial state intervention has led to the social and financial significance of crofting lying less in its cash returns than in other factors.

However, due to the limited scope for development on their land, assistance to the Fearnbeg crofters has been low and they have not received financial help with any major projects. They are cynical of the way quangos like Highlands and Islands Enterprise appear more concerned with investing in large enterprises, like fish-farming and food-processing, than in small-scale ventures. Because
of lack of capital crofters cannot always find the total finance needed for desirable schemes, which in some cases have to be completed before the grants are paid. There are no one hundred percent grants in crofting. It has been said that the Treasury has a genius for making some schemes of aid quite inoperable. (Thomson, 1984)

The impression - in some ways justified - that crofters are poorly treated acts as a justification for making the most of the government benefits that are provided. Manipulation of subsidies or other gains made at the expense of some authority carries no moral censure: it is legitimated by the view that the benefits of the wider society are absent from the place, partly because of the way it is treated by central government. Outwitting bureaucracy is therefore a symbolic gesture of taking for themselves part of what they feel they have been denied in the first place. (21)

Another example of this is salmon poaching. In the summer of 1988 at least twelve Fearnbeg people - (there may have been others who I was not aware of) - were directly involved in the illicit act of
netting salmon without a license. One of these men said in an interview:

People have been poaching here for generations and there's nothing wrong with it as far as I can see. The salmon don't belong to anybody and we've got as much right to catch them as anybody else, even 'though the law says different. It's not fair that two people should be able to take as much as they like while other folk can't even get one for the pot. I'm not saying it's them to blame - they've got to make a living the same as the rest of us - it's the law that's wrong.

The two local men who lease the fishing rights around Fearnbeg's coastline are the only Fearnbeg people legally entitled to catch salmon. They have turned a blind eye to small-scale poaching activity in the past, in the knowledge that it did not endanger their livelihoods - but the salmon fishing industry is now faced with a much more serious threat to its survival.
The dramatic fall in the price of salmon over the last half-decade or so, caused by the market being flooded with fish-farm produce, means that it has become harder and harder for salmon fishermen to earn a decent wage - a good example of how a new industry, while it might bring employment to the area, can bring about the decline of more traditional enterprises and a consequent loss of jobs. The salmon fishing industry has been an important source of seasonal income to Fearnbeg households since the turn of the century. (22) In the 1940s and 1950s it provided employment for upwards of forty men for several months during the summer. It had particular importance as a part-time occupation for crofters and was a principal source of cash income. In the 1970s and early '80s one salmon fisherman employed as many as fifteen workers during the summer, but in 1989 he decided it was no longer financially viable to put his nets in the sea. His counterpart still fishes but only employs one assistant and is finding it difficult to make ends meet.

The fishing industry in Fearnbeg today centres around creel fishing for prawns, but this pursuit is also undergoing a serious decline. (23) In 1980 there were seven creel-fishing boats over
thirty feet in length fishing for prawns around Fearnbeg's coast, providing full-time employment for nine crew members as well as the boat owners themselves. Several smaller boats fished for lobsters and crabs. Today there are only four boats fishing full-time for prawns, lobsters or crabs, depending on the season and the respective prices, with two men working on each boat, and this decline in the availability of employment has obvious social repercussions. There are also three single-handed part-time fishing boats whose owners all have another source of income; e.g. holiday chalets. For those with no other income fishing is now, out of financial necessity, a full-time occupation. The capital outlay and running costs of the modern fishing vessels mean that it is now a year-round, five day per week activity. The symbiotic relationship between crofting and fishing, frequently assumed to be the ideal combination for maintaining the 'crofting way of life' (Ennew, 1980, 55) has disappeared from Fearnbeg: the first activity is not viable without some other source of income, and the second is too intensive to allow time for other work.
A diversity of occupations, unrelated to any local particularity and not providing any obvious social bond, has come to prevail in Fearnbeg; making for differences rather than fostering common interest and cohesion. The dominant pattern is still one of manual work on a small scale, but the increased diversity of the economic base means that Fearnbeg people do not have a collective work oriented consciousness like, say, the coalminers in Ashton. (Dennis, Henriques and Slaughter, 1956)

A division exists between employers and employees but it is not so clear cut as, for example, that found in East Anglia. (Newby, 1977) This is because the companies that provide the majority of jobs in Fearnbeg (i.e. those that control the fish-farms and the food-processing plant) are based outside the area, and individual locally-based employers are not regarded as capitalist entrepreuners. Their lifestyles are not distinct from those of the people who work for them and they do not adopt modes of behaviour that distance them socially. The owner of the shop is not on a different social level from the shop-assistant. A stranger would not be able to tell whether one
person was wealthier than another simply from style of dress or speech, or from the consumer durables they own, or from their social behaviour. White-collar workers, like teachers and nurses, have relatively high social status but it is not very visible; partly because they are so few in number, and also because they need to accept the fundamentally egalitarian values of Fearnbeg if they want to remain on 'good terms' with other people there. The social stratification of the resident population, then, is shallow and restricted.

In many places work operates as a divisive force primarily because it is class linked - that is, people who work in different jobs associated with different prestige levels tend to choose people at their own level with whom to associate rather than to cross job-related class lines. (Williams, 1956; Littlejohn, 1963; Newby, 1977; Strathern, 1982) In Fearnbeg personal esteem is more important than formal prestige and class distinction in a formal sense is poorly developed.

The chief criteria of class is the ownership of property and position in the division of labour. A class consists of individuals who, by virtue of
their position in the economic order, share similar experiences and similar opportunities in the market. Their perception of class, and their class consciousness are governed by whether or not they are aware of these common interests and whether they act upon them. (Marshall et. al., 1988; Runciman, 1990) There is little evidence of class consciousness in the classic sense in Fearnbeg, but this does not mean that the people there are unaware of or deny the existence of class distinction.

Rural society is sometimes characterised as 'open', in the sense that its social order is graspable to those who live within it, and urban society as 'opaque', its principles of organisation mysterious; but the labels might well be interchanged, for it is in the smaller rural society that class relationships are veiled and mystified. For example, the manager of the food-processing factory in Fearnbeg is seen to exploit his workforce; the workers are aware of this exploitation but do not collectively oppose it. To put it simply, when there are only a handful of professional people in the vicinity, and they are your neighbours, it is difficult to see them as representative of a class. To put it more
sociologically, rural opportunities for primary interaction can mitigate and overlay relationships of economic position.

It would be theoretically possible to sub-divide the population of Fearnbeg, on the basis of sociological convention, into upper, middle, and lower classes. In both local and incomer camps there are individuals who could, theoretically, be placed on every rung of the class ladder. Such a basis for stratification, however, would be largely unreal, unrecognised in the speech and behaviour of Fearnbeg people. They do not see social class as a significant feature of interpersonal relations, and do not show deference to people in class terms, and do not attribute status to people merely because they have a better job, or more money, or live in a bigger house. (24)

As the thesis unfolds we will see that the dialectic of social process in Fearnbeg is being played out in terms of cultures rather than classes. Insofar as there is any class differentiation it is in relation to incomers with inherited wealth or who have retired from well-paid white-collar work, but only one or two people
in this small minority try to put any social distance between themselves and other Fearnbeg people. Attempts by individuals to assert themselves as socially superior will inevitably result in their becoming the object of ridicule. A good example of this was a local man who married a wealthy English woman. Imagining that he had achieved a higher social status, he cultivated a middle-class accent and made his self-felt superiority quite obvious; but it was only self-felt, and local people who had known him all their lives were often heard laughing behind his back.

One man said:

I remember (him) when he was scrubbing the pots in the kitchen of the hotel - he wasn't so high and mighty then. If he hadn't married into money he'd probably have spent the rest of his life as somebody else's skivvy. He never did a stroke of work after he got married but still managed to live like a lord; but he didn't fool anybody - at least not the people who knew him.

Notions of social differentiation are not converted into status because of the pressures
exerted by social relationships and their multiplex nature. Chapter six goes on to explain how Fearnbeg people rely on one another for help and support in times of need and such a system of cooperation, for example, could only suffer if social class barriers were erected between those who are part of it. The real economic and political power exists for the most part outside the locality - indeed, outside the country - and perceived differences in wealth, power or social status among Fearnbeg people themselves are relatively unimportant.

4.8 Social life

With the heavy influx of holiday-makers and seasonal workers it is not surprising that social life in Fearnbeg builds up to a peak during July and August. Fearnbeg people welcome the opportunities for socialising with new people and renewing old acquaintances with regular summer visitors; many of whom were brought up in Fearnbeg and return with their families to stay with relatives or in the old family home.
There is, however, another side to the coin. The pubs and shops are usually crowded at this time of year and Fearnbeg people complain that they cannot go out for a quiet drink, or that the shops are always busy or sold out of the items they want, or that they have to wait in queues to use the petrol pumps. The dramatic increase in the number of cars on Fearnbeg's single-track road is a major source of annoyance. Many tourists are so intent on admiring the scenery that they can be oblivious or, even worse, indifferent to other road users. Some appear as unwilling to look in their rear-view mirrors as others are incapable of reversing into passing places. Perhaps the greatest cause for concern in relation to tourist traffic is the number of sheep and lambs that are found dead or dying at the side of the road after being hit by cars. Between the end of June and the middle of August, 1988, one Fearnbeg crofter lost eight lambs in this way - a serious financial blow - and only two of the drivers involved had the decency to report what had happened. Tourists have also earned themselves a bad reputation for not controlling their dogs and allowing them to worry sheep.
Various social events occur at this time in Fearnbeg to the benefit of residents and visitors alike. Dances and ceilidhs take place in the Village Hall and, in recent years, a Gala weekend has been organised late in July. The proprietors of the two local bars hire professional entertainers and organise regular functions with late licenses. This is a busy time for them and they are glad of the extra income. In many respects the summer months also represent the peak period of the working year for crofters. The returning exile may well be involved as much in sheep-shearing, for example, as in leisure activity; although often the two go hand-in-hand. The 'sociability of the fank' (Grant, 1977) enters the realm of recreation or entertainment.

The weather and seasonal rhythms play an important part in Fearnbeg life. In mid-June long evenings linger until close on midnight and it never gets completely dark. If the weather is good, outdoor activities continue until late in the evening, and the pattern of socialising is fluid and relaxed. In great contrast to the summer months, which provide many opportunities for outside contact, are winter conditions when outside work greatly reduces and opportunities for social contact are
curtailed. Protracted periods of bad weather can reduce outside contacts considerably, especially for the elderly.

The length of daylight varies considerably from summer to winter: as Autumn succeeds summer days shorten, visitors rapidly thin out, and Fearnbeg people return to what is a much more routine way of life. Public entertainments are few, but for those with the ability and the desire to reach them, the two local bars continue to do good trade, especially at weekends. The pubs are a central focus in Fearnbeg, but they do not encompass all the people. For those who are not 'regulars', or complete abstainers, the local shops and Post Office take on a greater significance as meeting places. On a more formal basis, the local Church provides opportunities for its small congregation to socialise with one another. Another important focal point for meeting people outside the home is the Village Hall. It is here that Fearnbeg people gather to support a number of voluntary societies and clubs of various kinds: the Community Council; the Hall Committee; the 'weight-watchers' club; the 'keep-fit' club; the cookery class; the youth club; the 'over sixties' luncheon club; etc..
Although housing is fairly geographically dispersed throughout the area, main services such as a general store and the petrol pumps, the School, the Village Hall, the Post-Office and the Church are centralised in one township. The location, degree of accessibility and pattern of use of these facilities has an important effect on the frequency of contact between people living some distance from each other. Indeed, although social interaction in Fearnbeg is often haphazard, it is most frequent during particular forms of activity carried out in specific places at certain times; for example, Sunday worship at the local Church, or Saturday afternoon shopping. These occasions provide opportunities for exchanging news and airing opinions on current issues of general interest and, as such, they set the context for the affirmation of mutual association and thus contribute towards the creation and maintenance of a degree of social unity. Thus, though spread over a wide area, a sense of collective identity nevertheless exists within Fearnbeg.

However, contrary to Frankenberg's portrayal of 'truly rural' societies as close-knit social networks in which everybody interacts with
everybody else (1966, 17), Fearnbeg is not characterised by an all-embracing system of face-to-face relationships. Whenever Fearnbeg people cross each others paths they usually exchange greetings, but all this shows is how the representational notion of the locality as a familiar social world serves as a normative notion. It shapes and informs people's customary behaviour, implying that everyone 'should' know everyone else and therefore should act as though they do. Recognising and being recognised by others creates a sense of belonging. (Holy and Stuchlik, 1983; Wallmann, 1984) But many people in Fearnbeg do not know, have never met and, in some cases, do not even know of other people living in the locality. This is hardly surprising with so many new people coming to live in the area; but it is also true to say that people who have lived in Fearnbeg for a good many years do not always know one another. Participant observation in one of the local shops provided a stark illustration of this point.

A young local woman, making her way out of the shop, said "hello" to an elderly spinster who has lived in Fearnbeg since the 1950s. When the
latter was paying for her groceries she asked the shopkeeper:

Who was that young girl I bumped into on the way in? I'm sure I should know her but I never seem to remember her name or who she is.

The shopkeeper, a recent incomer herself, explained who the young woman was and said:

I'm sure you know her mother, (Cathy Ross).

But, despite the fact that Cathy has lived in Fearnbeg for over sixty years, the reply was:

No my dear, I'm afraid I don't. I suppose I must have seen her around, but I wouldn't be able to tell you who she was if she walked in here just now.

There is quite a wide variation in the sociable lives led by different Fearnbeg people, and the fact that nearly 34,000 separate dyads (24) could, in theory, exist within the resident population emphasises the point that primary ties are not
bound up within a single densely knit solidarity. Social patterns diverge markedly with respect both to the amount and type of sociable activity engaged in. Some people are highly active socially, interacting with numerous others in numerous settings; others, through circumstance or choice, are not.

William Fraser, for example, a local man born in 1887, is largely confined to his home and his only social contact is with close family and friends. Most Fearnbeg people know who he is, but rarely see him; some incomers, although they may have heard of him, certainly do not know him. William is isolated from other people to a certain extent because he is elderly and suffers from poor health; Rodger and Nancy Hyde, on the other hand, have made a conscious decision to interact with as few other Fearnbeg people as is possible. They do not talk to anyone if they do not have to. They never go to the pub or attend social gatherings, and do all their shopping and other business outwith the locality.

Not all Fearnbeg people, then, have social relations with one another and, those who do, do not necessarily interact on a regular basis. Mary
Mackenzie, for example, described Cathy Ross as her "oldest friend in the place", but went on to say:

We hardly ever keep in touch these days. I should really try to get over to see her more often, but it's difficult without a car or being able to drive myself. I see her at the hall sometimes when there's something on up there, but I never get round to the house.

Although they live only three miles apart - a relatively short distance in rural terms - Mary and Cathy rarely meet in the course of their day-to-day activities. Both women are busy housewives who normally only venture outside their own homes and the townships they live in to go to the local shops and the Post-Office. Mary has a neighbour who takes her shopping every Tuesday and Cathy's husband takes her every Saturday, so there is little possibility of a 'chance' meeting. If they were able to drive themselves perhaps they would see more of one another and enjoy social contact of more than a limited nature, but the geographical distribution of households and the
ability or inability to 'get around' independently are not the only factors determining Fearnbeg people's social behaviour.

The sociable activities of, most Fearnbeg people tend to be patterned in a repetitive manner involving regular repeated events with the same associates. A range of people may be met and various types of activity enjoyed on occasions but, overall, it is the few recurrent situations undertaken with the same people that predominate. Mothers with babies, for example, are tied to their homes for much of the time and the range of acquaintances with whom they interact regularly is fairly limited: usually their own families and other young mothers. Their lives seem to revolve around caring for their babies and it is the practicalities of this responsibility that, to a great extent, dictate association.

The social significance of a meeting or visit often outweighs its practical purpose, but without such a purpose, it would rarely occur at all. (Rees, 1950, 166)
Some of the 'practical' relationships that exist between Fearnbeg people are discussed in Chapter Six; the point being made here is simply that individuals are not always able to pick-and-choose who they will and will not associate with.

Fearnbeg people tend not to engage with each other for the limited purposes attributable to a specialised "role" (Frankenberg, 1966); rather, they engage very much as whole persons. At the local level people's knowledge of each other is very much more complete than in a heterogenous urban environment, and all knowledge about people is judged to be relevant by those with whom they interact, regardless of the specific purpose of the meeting. Out of a myriad of conversational exchanges - in the home, at the roadside, at the shop or the pub - most Fearnbeg people are party to the formation and elaboration of a stock of complex information that provides them with a conceptual map of the workings of Fearnbeg in its entirety.

It is difficult not to notice what other people are up to in such a small place: the physical layout of the houses, strung out along the single-track road that connects the townships, means that
public space is indeed very public. It is practically impossible to go about any kind of business unnoticed and, although there may not be binoculars on every window ledge, an avid interest is taken in what other people do. Awareness of such details as the cars people drive; the work they do; the friends they have; how often they visit the pub; if they go to church; when they go shopping; etc., provides the necessary background for the elaboration and embellishments that are the distinguishing features of local gossip.

It is through the agency of gossip that news is spread throughout the townships. Interconnected and overlapping social networks mean that it never takes long for any interesting bit of gossip to reach every house in the area. The local 'grapevine', however, often proves to be an unreliable source of information. According to one local aphorism:

if you are seen cutting your toenails at one end of (Fearnbeg), by the time the story reaches the other end people will be saying that you cut your throat.
Much of the gossip in Fearnbeg is innocent and harmless, but it can also be malicious and extremely unpleasant for anyone on the receiving end. An extremely effective form of social control, it can make the close-knit nature of life in Fearnbeg feel repressive and claustrophobic, particularly for young people. (26) The "publicness of knowledge" (Emmett, 1982) has profound consequences for the conduct of social life. It characterises the organisation of social structure and pervades all the ways and circumstances in which people confront each other socially, and has obvious effects on social relationships.

The image of the countryside as the location of a natural way of life: of peace, innocence, and simple virtue (Williams, 1975, 9)

endures today even in our heavily urbanised society. But Fearnbeg is not an "idyllic community" wherein everybody gets on well with everyone else all the time and, although an outside observer might see Fearnbeg people as living in an atmosphere of comparative harmony, there are in fact many rifts and tensions existing
between them. It is worth reminding anyone who regards life in the countryside as a commitment to romanticism of the often oppressive and constraining nature of life in such a small place; of the fights and feuds between nigh-dwellers; of the 'back-biting' and malicious gossip; of the heavy drinking; and so on.

For Raymond Williams, growing up in a small rural village on the Welsh-English border, his home was a place in which people did not always like each other, they often played tricks on each other, they were sometimes in dispute with one another, but there was nevertheless a level of social cohesiveness. (1975) The same is true in Fearnbeg. The point is that conflict is commonplace, but it is 'contained' in such a way that it does not upset the overall balance of social life. (cf. Gluckmann, 1960, pp. 1 - 4) It is partly because Fearnbeg is not a face-to-face society in the strict sense that this is possible. The 'publicness of knowledge' means that Fearnbeg people are able to order their routines so as to maximise a sense of harmony, as well as avoiding situations which might result in tension. There is enough 'space' for people to be able to avoid conflict.
Yet there are still obvious divisions in Fearnbeg society; between groups as well as individuals (e.g. between crofters and fishermen; Gaelic speakers and non-Gaelic speakers) and some of these will be discussed in the next Chapter. The overriding concern, however, is with one of these divisions in particular: namely that between those people who have lived in Fearnbeg all their lives and those who have come to live in the place from outside.

Fearnbeg is presently experiencing pressures of the sort which have already transformed so many other rural localities in more southern parts of Britain; pressures which have to a large part been produced by the growing interest in setting up home in the countryside. Fearnbeg is sufficiently far removed from urban centres to have so far escaped the fate of those innumerable English villages which have been changed into commuter settlements. But processes that are in many ways similar to those which have brought about the so-called 'gentrification' of so many farm cottages in England, Wales and the Scottish Lowlands are more evident in Fearnbeg today than ever before. It is to these processes, and what they mean for
Fearnbeg people, that attention will now be turned.
NOTES

1) General descriptions of crofting are given by Collier (1953), Darling (1955), Thomson (1984), and Hunter (1991). Hunter (1976; 1991) analyses the development of crofting, and a definition of the croft is provided by Bryden and Houston. (1976, 33)

When I refer to Fearnbeg as a "crofting community" I use community synonymously with village, or settlement, or neighbourhood: a usage that implies nothing about the settlement, nor imputes characteristics to the resident population.

2) The social organisation described here is as it was during the fieldwork. There were 261 people living in Fearnbeg in August, 1989 but, due to births and deaths, and in- and out-migration, the population figure has fluctuated somewhat throughout the course of research.

3) "Township" is the official term applied to each crofting village. Because the nine townships in Fearnbeg are viewed collectively by their
inhabitants and by other people (e.g. tourists) they are treated as a distinct social unit. They are, collectively, "my unit of study".

In 'linear' townships the houses are strung out on one side of the road: houses in 'grouped' townships are clustered and the road runs between them.

4) Steamer routes once effectively linked settlements in the north-west area to 'the outside world' and to one another. Today the communication pattern is one of strong west to east lines via main roads. One effect of these changes in transport has been to separate the north-west into localities isolated from one another but well connected with the more anglicised administrative and economic centres in the east. Several aspects of everyday life in Fearnbeg manifest how the cultural integrity of its people has been affected by these changes - an obvious phenomenon being the decline in Gaelic speaking.
5) For the sake of anonymity these may or may not be the actual days that these services are brought to Fearnbeg.

6) Because people living in Fearnbeg today come from a variety of religious backgrounds the Free Church building can no longer accommodate them all and other premises are used by those of a different faith. This point will be picked up on and discussed more fully in Chapter Eight.

7) The school in Dornie was up-graded to 'secondary' status in the late 1970s. Before that Fearnbeg children of secondary school age went to an academy on the east coast. They stayed in a hostel, only returning home at weekends.

8) Fearnbeg people will usually try to keep transport costs down by combining shopping trips with other tasks: e.g. a visit to the dentist, or to hospital. Those residents who purchase all their groceries locally are for the most part those without access to transport and elderly people who live on their own.
9) The mental maps of those Fearnbeg people who rarely, if ever, travel outwith the geographical boundaries of the locality are likely to correspond to these confines. This does not mean that they are unaware of what goes on in 'the outside world'; only that their personal 'social space' is relatively small. Older people who have lived in Fearnbeg all their lives will refer to any place that is south of Dornie as being "down country", giving some idea of their unfamiliarity with these places. The phrase amuses incomers who have come to live in the area from places as far afield as Cornwall, and local people who have experienced life away from home - e.g. at secondary school - and feel better acquainted with 'the outside world'. But, like everything else, people's perceptions of their own horizons are relative. One young woman who went to school on the east coast said, rather disparagingly:

to hear them talk about 'going down country' you'd think they'd never been out of the place in their lives.
She, in turn, was criticised by another local woman who spent some time living in Glasgow and London:

She should make more of an effort to get out of this place for a while. All she can talk about is what goes on here and what she did when she was in school, and neither are very exciting.

10) Only thirty years ago cars were still regarded as something of a novelty on the gravel road that, at that time, linked the Fearnbeg townships.

11) As with population figures, the number of people in employment did not remain constant during the fieldwork period.

12) Fearnbeg's connections to larger systems are starkly clear with regard to its dependency on outside forces for the flow of tourists through it. How many people come to the place, how many stay, how long they stay, and how much money they bring with them and spend in the area depends, for example, on the general state of the British and world
economies, and how much spendable income people have.

13) In addition to the efforts made by the local Tourist Association, those people who benefit financially from holiday-makers - e.g. the owners of chalets, or the market-gardener - make use of any potential source of publicity available to them in order to attract people to Fearnbeg.

14) 'Holiday cottages' should not be confused with 'holiday homes'. The first are owned by Fearnbeg people and let to holiday-makers; whereas the second are owned by outsiders who do not rent them out but come to live in them themselves for a few weeks every year.

Fearnbeg is typical of the Scottish Highlands today in being a popular location for holiday homes. The main focus here is on the usually resident population of locals and incomers; not the 'second-homers' whose often harmful impact on local housing markets was well described by Skene and Sewel in the June-July, 1984 issue of Radical Scotland.
15) This quote was taken from a lengthy piece of writing by a middle-aged man who has lived in Fearnbeg since the early 'seventies. During the fieldwork period he expressed a keen interest in my research and offered to help in any way he could. Over a couple of drinks in one of the local pubs he said he would be happy to put down on paper his thoughts on the changes he had seen taking place in Fearnbeg since his arrival there. The result was a valuable contribution to the research and one that is much appreciated.

16) After the passing of the Crofters Holdings (Scotland) Act 1886, successive governments introduced a variety of measures aimed at tackling the social and economic difficulties that faced the Highlands and Islands. One of these was the setting up of the Highlands and Islands Development Board under the Highlands and Islands Development (Scotland) Act, 1965. Parliament set the objectives of the Board as, first,

assisting the people of the Highlands and Islands to improve their economic and social conditions
and, second,

enabling the Highlands and Islands to play a more effective part in the economic and social development of the nation. (H.I.D.B., 1979)

In April 1991 the H.I.D.B. mutated and became Highlands and Islands Enterprise which, along with ten local development companies, carries on the work the Board has been doing for a quarter of a century.

17) Regional aid programmes, by-and-large, have been failures in declining areas throughout Britain (Emmett, 1979), and a crucial factor has been the ease with which companies receiving financial aid on moving in to poor areas can manipulate the system and move out when they have 'outgrown' the local area, or when the government money ceases to flow.

18) The number of crofts does not correspond with the number of crofters, or with the number of working units. In some cases, as a result, for example, of succession, assignation or subletting, a crofter works two or more crofts...
as one unit, although each croft retains its separate legal identity. This trend is partially explained by an increase in the number of absentee crofters. (see The Crofters Commission Report, 1982)

19) The Commission of Enquiry into Crofting Conditions (1954) states that diverse as the conditions are throughout the crofting area there was one complaint that was universal. It related to the high cost of carriage both by land and sea, and to the strain which this imposes on the precarious economies of these remote communities. (Scottish Economic Committee, 1954, 189)

20) There are a wide range of grants available to crofters. Financial assistance is on offer for the growing of crops on marginal land, land improvement, the provision and improvement of fencing, drainage and other schemes such as the installation of electric generators, water supplies and the provision and improvement of roads. The Crofting
Counties Agricultural Grants Scheme offers grant assistance for a range of capital works of improvement carried out by individual crofters on their own land or by grazing committees on common grazings. Scottish Office Agriculture and Fisheries Department also operate a number of useful minor schemes aimed at improving the quality of livestock, e.g. the loan of quality bulls and rams.

21) Feelings of being hard-done-by were intensified in April 1989 when the community charge, or "poll tax", was introduced in Scotland - understandable in light of the fact that Fearnbeg people pay much more than some of the wealthy landlords and southern speculators who own much of northern Scotland to a council that offers them inferior services.

22) The legal season for netting salmon in the sea runs from February to August but, because the bulk of fish arrive fairly late around the Fearnbeg coastline, no fishing takes place before the end of May.
23) In some respects the present decline in prawn fishing reflects the earlier decline in the herring industry. East coast fishing boats are often seen round Fearnbeg's coast trawling the sea bed for its harvest of shellfish and damaging the breeding grounds and habitat as well as depleting the stocks that are left for the smaller local boats. With overfishing the price of prawns in the European market has dropped and, on top of this, the present economic recession means that buyers are even less willing to pay a decent price for what is an excellent and valuable food source.

24) The landlord is perhaps the only exception to this rule - simply because she owns so much of the land in Fearnbeg. (There are still residual patterns of respect for landlords who replaced the old clan Chiefs in the Highlands). However, her standing as a landlord does not detract from the fact that Fearnbeg people see her as 'ordinary' and approachable - qualities that score highly in the social values of the place. A very popular lady, she has been a permanent resident in Fearnbeg for most of her eighty years and knows most of the people in the area.
by name. Although never one to divorce herself from what was going on in the place, failing health has meant a slackening of her grasp of local affairs and local residents fear that it might not be long before someone else takes over as landlord:

I don't know what's going to happen when (she) dies. I suppose the Estate will be passed on to one of her husband's family, but I can't see any of them being nearly as good a landlord as she is. She never stands in the way of anybody who wants to do something worthwhile, unless she feels it's bad for the place, and she'll help you as much as she can... One of the good things about (her) is that you can talk to her. She's definitely not a snob. (extract from interview with local crofter).

Her status as landlord does not detract from her personal qualities (esteem), or vice versa - she can be described in the most glowing terms, as 'ordinary' and 'approachable', but she is still the landlord. What is
interesting is that other Fearnbeg people see her as a part of the place, and belonging to it in a way that others who have come there to live from the outside never will.

25) In a population of 261 (the population of Fearnbeg in August 1989), where every person knows everybody else there is a total of 33,930 separate dyadic relationships. This is derived from the formula \[ \frac{n(n-1)}{2} \], where '\( n \)' = the number of people in the population.

26) Rosemary Lumb found gossip to be generally of less importance in the Highlands than elsewhere - (she forwards the example of Mediterranean society) - but still believed lack of anonymity to be a strong incentive for young people to leave home. (1979, 2)
CHAPTER 5

LOCALS AND INCOMERS: THE REAL DIVIDE

5:1 The Primary Associational Categories

An ubiquitous feature of all societies is the division of groups into differential positions. This Chapter will show that the most important social division in Fearnbeg is the one between locals and incomers. There are, of course, many other obvious divisions existing therein - e.g. between crofters and non-crofters; Scots and English; Gaelic speakers and non-Gaelic speakers; men and women; etc. - but none are so powerful as the local/incomer dichotomy, and none can be pinpointed that will satisfactorily explain why and how residents differentiate so strongly between locals and incomers. The choice of setting has facilitated the study of the local/incomer dimension without it being obscured by other variables - the most pervasive social division can be explained solely in terms of locals and incomers.
Any analysis of social relations in a small place like Fearnbeg requires an understanding of the commonly agreed bases on which people associate with and differentiate between one another. The appropriate bases for association, or associational categories, form part of the social knowledge shared by everyone who lives in Fearnbeg. The vast number of actual relationships found in the place (see Chapter Four) are simplified and classified by reference to a number of commonly understood associational categories. These provide the focus for group formation and the means by which each person can socially position - or, put differently, know about - each other person. The social position of each person produces a commonly known and understood basis for their interaction with others. In this way a local structure of interpersonal relationships is produced. A local social organisation, therefore, emerges from the associational categories that inform the everyday activity of Fearnbeg. The two associational categories of most importance here are, of course, those of 'locals' and 'incomers', so they will be known as the primary associational categories; other bases for association - e.g. family, friends and neighbours - will be classed as secondary.
The division between locals and incomers in Fearnbeg cannot be explained in terms of well recognised divisions like social class or of other simple oppositions such as crofters/fishermen or Gaelic speakers/non-Gaelic speakers. It is only in terms of the principal characteristics themselves that explanation is possible. Wider than family or kinship, status or class, the two primary associational categories provide a social classification based upon fact and upon the values of Fearnbeg people; a differentiation locally recognised both in conduct and in speech.

5.2 The threat of in-migration

Fearnbeg has witnessed population movement for centuries. Local men went to the east coast for long periods to work in the fishing industry; women travelled down south to take up domestic jobs; children and teenagers left home to be educated; etc. and, at the same time, people started to move into the area from outside. But it was not until the 1960s that this slow but steady stream began to take on the character of the heavy influx apparent in the 1980s:
Table 5-1: Changing rates of incomers to Fearnbeg, 1960-1989

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of incomers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1960-'69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970-'79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980-'89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: fieldnotes)

(These figures represent only those incomers still living in Fearnbeg, and do not include children born to incoming parents after their arrival or incomers who have since left).

The recent acceleration in the perennial phenomenon of in-migration has brought about many changes to the social organisation of Fearnbeg, not all of which have been welcomed by the local population. Despite most incomers having no conscious desire to alter conditions in Fearnbeg, and some expressing a predilection to preserve the
way-of-life there, their very presence poses a threat to the once distinctive local culture.

Culture change is normally a gradual process; if it takes place at too fast a rate, however, it can produce tensions and dislocations that divide a society. Local people are now aware of the possibility that "their" society could soon be "overrun" with outsiders. This perceived threat to the traditional lifestyle has, it is suggested, helped to spur increased concern and interest in their own identities on the part of those in the receiving population. Confronted by social change, they seek to replace the now anachronistic structural bases of their community boundary with symbolically expressed cultural bases before their community disintegrates as a distinctive entity.

..... they do so because ... (they) ... find their identities as individuals through their occupancy of the community's social space; if outsiders trespass in that space, then ... (their) ... own sense of self is felt to be debased and defaced. (Cohen, 1985, 109) (1)
In reviewing fieldwork notes from weeks in which there were no major social events it became apparent that there were a high number of references to locals and incomers in routine conversations. For example, in one seven day period in June 1989, chosen at random, thirty-two spontaneously occurring explicit references to the local/incomer dichotomy were recorded. The following quotes were taken from that week's fieldnotes:

I am a local because I've lived here all my life.

The only people who can call themselves local are the ones who were born here and brought up here.

Once an incomer, always an incomer.

These, and other quotes, bear testimony to the real social division that exists between the two primary associational categories; but how is this division to be explained?

Local people feel that they are attached to their home area by deep social and historical
associations, and retain their own unique "possession" of the place. Within the wider cultural context those who possess are always divided from those who do not. Fearnbeg people's notions of belonging must be understood, at least in part, within a framework of ideas that also put a value on "not belonging". It follows from this that sense of place and belonging could be used to discriminate between the primary associational categories. However, a strong sense of place is expressed by most Fearnbeg people, so it can not be used as an independent variable to establish the boundary between locals and incomers.

Another potential source of differentiation is the fact that many settlers have no knowledge of local history and culture. For local people, Fearnbeg's past is bound up with their own personal history and identity; for the incomers it has no special significance in that sense. (Payne and Macleod, 1988) Having grown up in the place, local people know a great deal about local families, and are aware of their own relationships with these families. Incomers cannot share this unique relationship to Fearnbeg and their lack of knowledge of kinship connections between their long-established neighbours, as well as posing
difficulties when participating in local conversation and gossip, emphasises the cultural divide. However, with the increasing number of incomers the divide has become more and more hazy and some of Fearnbeg's cultural mainstays have weakened. The use of Gaelic as a means of communication, for example, has declined and the language has lost the meaning it once held for Fearnbeg people.

5:3 Gaelic and non-Gaelic speakers

In the 1950s Gaelic was spoken a great deal: in the home; at work; in the pub; etc.. Now there are fewer than a dozen people in Fearnbeg who can carry on a conversation in Gaelic and it is heard infrequently - usually in relation to crofting matters. The youngest of the Gaelic speakers is in his late thirties; all the others are aged over sixty. From the days when Fearnbeg people learnt Gaelic as a first language, the vast majority of those who regard themselves as locals today make no effort even to learn it even as a second. Proficiency in Gaelic is still regarded as a sure sign of localness, but it is no longer central to localness; there can be no overall distinction
made between Gaelic-speaking locals and English-speaking incomers.

Gaelic is not a necessary element in the set of symbols which locals deploy to construct their social identity. To speak Gaelic fluently per se is unimportant: its significance for local people is that the fluent speakers are all locals, so that the language is one marker among many of localness, rather than the central carrier of the local tradition. Too few fluent speakers remain for the latter to be true, and too many locals are not Gaelic speakers for language to form the basis for either primary or secondary associational categories.

Indeed, paradoxically, a partial ability to speak Gaelic might almost be said to be a mark of non-localness. After a generation which lost its language diversity and came to belittle the Gaelic, it is now the new outsider, or the local with strong external connections, who most typically seeks to promote the language. The host population is largely apathetic, or even hostile, to Gaelic: its people do not need it for their own sense of well-being, self esteem and identity. In this sense, Gaelic has become alienated from
its natural culture and finds itself in an ambiguous position. Gaelic fluency may mean one thing, but a smattering of Gaelic can mean the opposite: it can be the badge of belonging to me, or to them.

It follows that the survival, let alone the revival, of Gaelic in Fearnbeg cannot depend on its place in a local culture that draws its vitality from other sources. The future of the language in Fearnbeg is finely poised and it now falls to more formal mechanisms and consciously planned interventions to sustain the language. (see Macleod and Payne, 1991) There is still at present a sufficient base on which to build and the deployment of formal mechanisms could, given time, reverse the loss of language diversity in the previous generations. Only after such a successful intervention is there any hope that Gaelic might once again be re-incorporated into the local culture as one of the key symbols of belonging in Fearnbeg.
Fearnbeg people often distinguish between locals and incomers on the grounds that the latter were not 'born and bred' in Fearnbeg (2). When they represent their identity to people from the 'outside world' they will often summarise how they belong to the place in this dichotomous manner: e.g.:

I was born and bred in Fearnbeg so I am a local,
or
I was not born and bred in Fearnbeg so I am an incomer.

Used in this way the local/incomer idiom is a 'cultural shorthand' (Phillips, 1986): a symbolic typification of people through notions of cultural distinctiveness. This shorthand distinction entails a notion of cultural boundary: one either belongs as a born and bred local or one is an immigrant who has settled in the locality but whose roots lie elsewhere. The local culture in Fearnbeg is built, in part, around location and ascribed biological characteristics. This allows
for locals to regard themselves as something akin to members of some sort of "exclusive club" to which incomers can not gain entry. The club has conditions of entry which are recognised by members and non-members alike. They also recognise the fact that there is a certain "status" attached to club membership. One incomer said:

I don't think that there's any way that we'll ever really be regarded as local by people who have lived here all their lives. I suppose it's understandable - we are incomers, and there's nothing we can do to change that. I'd like to think though that we are accepted as part of the community. I don't feel like an outsider here; this is my home now. I like to think of myself as a local even though I know I'll never be as local as someone like you.

The assertion of local status - that local people constitute the core of the society - carries connotations of exclusiveness felt by incomers as a 'closeness' in which they cannot share. This is
what it is designed to do. If such a straightforward dichotomous situation existed in the reality of day-to-day life a 'status table' of Fearnbeg people would look like this:

Table 5-2: Local/incomer status of all Fearnbeg residents, August 1989

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Born and bred locals</th>
<th>105</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Incomers</td>
<td>156</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total population</td>
<td>261</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: fieldnotes)

However, the intricacies of social organisation in Fearnbeg society cannot be explained in this oversimplistic dichotomous manner: in daily life other levels of differentiation are apparent. Something more than a cultural shorthand is needed to draw a workable distinction between locals and incomers.
Such a kind of 'cultural longhand' (Phillips, 1986) comes into play when Fearnbeg people portray themselves to themselves and to each other in everyday conversation and gossip. In these local conversational contexts people represent themselves less in dualistic terms and more in qualified ways. They place themselves and their families at various points along a scale of localness; ranging from 'real' locals at one end to recent incomers at the other. The term 'real local' infers the truism that there are, as well as the division between locals and incomers, 'degrees' of localness. The terminology is agreed upon, and this agreement in turn depends upon a particular model of the locality: i.e. on the notion that it is made up of a core of local families. But when it comes to allocating particular individuals to these categories, agreement as to the basis of classification may cease.

Some people in Fearnbeg regard themselves as being 'more' local than others because, as well as having been born and bred in the place, they can also point to one parent satisfying the same criterion. If this were taken into account Table 5-2 would be altered to look like this:
Table 5-3 Local/incomer status of all Fearnbeg residents, August 1989

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Born and bred locals with at least one local parent</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Born and bred locals</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incomers</td>
<td>156</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total population</td>
<td>261</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(source: fieldnotes)

By extension, a local person with two born and bred parents can be regarded as more local than someone with only one, so the table could be altered yet again:
Table 5-4: Local/incomer status of all Fearnbeg residents, August 1989

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Born and bred locals with two local parents</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Born and Bred locals with one local parent</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Born and bred locals</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incomers</td>
<td>156</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total population</td>
<td>261</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(source: fieldnotes)

Potential complications of the Table are endless. One could, for example, logically question the local status of grandparents, and so on. Yet such extensions would be of little significance: so few people in Fearnbeg today can claim pure local grandparents that they are not important in differentiating locals from incomers. Nevertheless, individuals who regard themselves as
real locals can, should any legitimation of their status be deemed necessary, remind others of their links to the locality through family and kinship connections. (3)

5:5 Family and Kinship

Cohen (1982) makes the point that the social organisation of a community must be sought in the categories which its own members use to order and understand their own milieu, and it is clear from Fearnbeg people's own formulations that any attempt to understand the local/incomer dichotomy cannot proceed without kinship connections being taken into account. Kinship connection is an integral part of local identity that, in association with community membership, provides a model for status identification and is a marker of difference between the primary associational categories. It is not, however, of overriding importance in everyday life in Fearnbeg and, although it can not be ignored in this thesis, it will not be over-emphasised.
Kinship does not constitute the framework of community life Arensberg and Kimball (1940) found in County Clare:

Criss-crossing ties of kinship which are the raw material of community life. (1940, 125)

Nor is it as overwhelmingly significant - reducing other phenomena to such relationships - as Cohen (1982) found to be the case in Whalsay. Consequently, the concern here is not with kinship per se, but with how notions of belonging in a particular secondary category are tied to notions of community, succinctly expressed in contrast between locals and incomers.

Although kinship in Fearnbeg is not as significant as in Whalsay, it is still a considerable factor. Immediate family relationships, especially the kind shared with others under the same roof, are important in organising the lives of Fearnbeg people; as, indeed, they are anywhere in Britain. (see Finch 1989) Chapter Six will show the importance of family and relatives in terms of personal care and support and in the life-cycle rituals of marriage and death. It is also worth
pointing out that kinship can be an important tool for reinforcing ideas on identity. The inheritance of crofts—usually passed from father to son—for example, is one way that local people accentuate the difference between themselves and incomers who have no traditional claim to croft land. (see Chapter Seven).

The value of kinship as an index of localness varies depending upon the circle or degree that people can appeal to when reckoning their own and other people's identities. The most immediate circle of kinship for any individual is their natal family. Surrounding this are circles of relatives. The furthest circle of kinship connection is that of one's ancestors. The concept of 'family' provides a principal of association in Fearnbeg that defines a social set to which people belong. Those who belong to old, and therefore well-established, Fearnbeg families are descended from people who settled in the place in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. (4)

Several of the old families in Fearnbeg today can trace their ancestry to the year 1825 when Donald Fraser came to Fearnbeg. (5) He was followed
there by his parents and his brothers and sisters. Donald married a local woman in 1849, and his brothers and sisters also formed local partnerships. Of the one hundred and five households in Fearnbeg in 1989 that were occupied all the year round, occupants in forty-nine were either descended directly from these families or from other 'old' families linked to these through marriage. Kinship connections, then, form a dense network that link a large percentage of the inhabitants, but they did not feature regularly in everyday conversation during the fieldwork period. Perhaps the assumption, on the part of incomers as well as locals, that local people are all related in some way or another preempts any further need to demonstrate geneology. In any event, although certain individuals are very knowledgeable with regard to geneology, and most are aware to some degree of family connections, the majority do not regard relationships extending beyond first-cousin as salient in everyday relations. (cf. Frankenberg, 1957) One local informant said:

I suppose I'm related to everybody in the place in one way or another. But second-cousins and all that - they don't really mean anything do they?
Kinship, then, is a second order principle (in comparison with those of local and incomer) and is not a category that is used regularly. It is worth noting, however, that people will sometimes use more distant kinship ties to reinforce their identity as locals. The members of one family, for example, who can only claim second generation local status directly through their father, will legitimate their inclusion in the core set of locals by pointing out that they are second-cousins to another individual who can trace her family ties in Fearnbeg through four generations. The openness of the bilateral system, where neither parent takes precedent in kinship relations, can be especially accommodating in cases involving self-estimation of status. The following illustration shows how emphasis can be placed on one set of ancestors rather than another in justifying a claim to being a real local.

The illustration is taken from a conversation I prompted with three men in their early twenties—all of whom satisfy entry conditions to the exclusive club of locals by virtue of having been born and bred in Fearnbeg. The talk centred on what other Fearnbeg people were eligible for club membership and the ultimate sanction of birth was
used to reject many of the names forwarded. James Fraser, a young man who has spent the greater part of his life in Fearnbeg, joined the conversation. He has always been regarded as a local by everyone in Fearnbeg but, on this occasion, was denied local status on the grounds that he had been born in England. Irritated by what he saw as petty attempts at 'one-up-man-ship', he said:

I'm just as much a local as any of you. I've lived here all my life haven't I? It's not my fault I was born in England ...... My old man's family has lived here for hundreds of years.

James is in the frustrating position of being regarded as a local most of the time but, should the ultimate condition of birth be invoked, it can be argued that he is not a real local in the true sense.

I redirected the conversation slightly by asking whether those children who were born and bred in Fearnbeg, but to incomer parents, should be regarded as being more local than James. There were after all, at that time, sixteen children
under the age of ten in this position. One grudging reply was:

I suppose you could say that. If they've been born and bred here then they must be locals. I wouldn't call them real locals though ....... Maybe they are, but I don't think of them as locals.

The implication is that there is more to being a local than simply having been born in Fearnbeg. As numerous conversations testified the term 'local' conjures up several related images in the minds of Fearnbeg people: being rooted in the place; the identity that comes from belonging; bounded social horizons; a sense of antiquity and continuity over time. Fearnbeg's past is bound up with the local's own personal history and identity; it has no personal significance for the incomers. The latter might think of their children as being local by birthright and assume that they will grow up being regarded as such, but many of the values and assumptions shared by incomers are not shared with local people. The latter realise that these births have important implications for the future balance between the
primary associational categories and feel their identity to be under threat. The more people who can claim entry to their exclusive club the less exclusive it becomes.

Another consideration regarding the future balance between the primary associational categories is that as incomers settle in Fearnbeg and the second generation grows their own kinship networks develop. There are now two extended families of incomers with members in different households. (see Chapter Six) As more people settle in Fearnbeg, and as more children are born to incoming parents, the boundary between the primary associational categories becomes less distinct, and this is exacerbated by the prevailing penchant for local people to choose non-locals as their spouses.

The high rate of locally endogamous marriage that Cohen (1978) witnessed in Whalsay is definitely not a norm that applies in Fearnbeg. Since the late 1950s there has been only one marriage between two local people, in April 1990, and the couple now live on the east coast. Of the eighteen local people still living in Fearnbeg to have been married since 1960, all chose either
incomers or people from outside Fearnbeg as partners. Fifty per cent of these partnerships were formed between incomers and locals they met after their arrival in Fearnbeg. Courting is not unknown between local couples but there is no reason to forecast any change in the overall tendency for local people to marry non-locals.

It is difficult to say just how far incomer spouses, or spouses from 'outside', are ever truly assimilated in Fearnbeg. (cf. Strathern, 1982) The very formulation of the 'real local' contrasts with the outsider affine. From interviews and conversations with incomers, however, it appears that females are more readily accepted than males by the host population. Thirteen of the incomers to have married local people in the last thirty years have been women. The following is an extract from a conversation with one of these women:

Yes, I regard myself as a local now. I think that if you marry a local man and bring up a family here then you're entitled too. I suppose I'm really an incomer but, if you think about it, most people here are.
A male incomer who married a local woman had this to say:

I've been living here for seven years now but I know that half the people don't think of me as a local. They probably never will. It doesn't seem to matter that I'm working here and trying to bring up a family ..... I think it must be easier for women ...... You couldn't really call a name like mine local could you? If I was a 'Macleod' or something it would be O.K.. Look at (Shona) Macleod - I've been here nearly as long as she has, but I bet if you asked people who was more of a local they would say it was her.

That females are more readily accepted than males is a reasonable hypothesis. Although kinship in Fearnbeg has already been referred to as bilateral, a patrilineal ideology is frequently apparent. Local people are pleased when a local man perpetuates a family name. Well known local names are symbols of belonging in Fearnbeg from which people take meaning, and their continuance
is a bulwark of identity. When a man marries into Fearnbeg his family of descent is irrelevant to the conceptualisation of local relations. His children, therefore, are allocated to their mother's family and the traits attributed to them are those of her descent set. (Particularly unfavourable actions, however, may be blamed on the unknown family of the father). It is also interesting that in Fearnbeg as, for example, in Whalsay (Cohen, 1982); Elmdon (Strathern, 1982); and Hartland (Bouquet, 1986), where a woman is from a local family she may still be referred to by her maiden name after marriage. If her maiden name is not used then she might be known by the nick-name already bestowed on her parents - e.g. 'West'. The cut-off point comes with the children of the woman, but they may still occasionally be referred to as, for example, "one of the Wests". Marriage and name sharing do not obliterate the different birth origins of any new conjugal pair. Each remains a separate source of identity to their children.

More important than name sharing is the behaviour of the incoming spouse, who is expected to learn and adapt to local ways. In Fearnbeg it is striking that spouses from elsewhere (who may be
included in the collectivity of locals) can be
designated by the term 'incomer' should their
behaviour deviate from expected local standards.

One example of this negotiation of the
local/incomer boundary came on a day when a number
of people gathered at the fank of a local man to
help with work on sheep. At a certain point in
the proceedings the man asked his wife, an
incomer, to go and get more food and drink to
replenish the depleted stocks. She returned with
what one young local woman described as:

.... one shabby half-bottle (of whisky)
and a few measly sandwiches cut into
quarters.

She continued:

When it was my mother doing the food
for the fank she would always make a
huge pan of soup and enough sandwiches
to feed an army. Some of the people
who move up here just don't have a
clue.

There are expected and accepted modes of behaviour
on the part of locals which incomers do not always
appreciate. The incomer who was sent home for the sandwiches had gained acceptance into the everyday life of Fearnbeg but, although she has lived there for nearly fifteen years, is still not thought of as a real local.

5:6 Length of residence and 'acculturation'

It is notable how such a character as length of residence may or may not make a difference as to how an individual in Fearnbeg is classified. Time spent in the locality does not predictate localness if it does not go hand-in-hand with 'acculturation'; absorption of the cultural norms, values and behaviour of the local population. (Jansen, 1969; Fitzpatrick, 1976; McGloughlin, 1982) The fact that some incomers are accepted as 'locals now' after a relatively short stay in Fearnbeg, while others are not, suggests that it is acculturation rather than length of residence that is the deciding factor. The ability to 'fit-in' and maintain acceptable norms of behaviour is an essential prerequisite to any negotiation of the social boundary that exists between the primary associational categories. By gaining the favour of the local population and "mucking in"
(Phillips, 1986) incomers are more likely to be regarded as belonging.

In many respects Fearnbeg is similar to other isolated rural settlements. (see Chapter Four) Adrian Peace's Irish community of 'Clontarf' (Peace, 1986), for example, includes a number of 'blow-ins'; i.e. people who are not born locally and who have entered either individually through inter-marriage or as entire families; either to retire or to commence new working careers, and so forth. Some of these 'blow-ins', even after a decade or more, are considered, and consider themselves to be marginal to the mainstream of Clontarf life: others, within a shorter period, have become actively involved in that mainstream. The same is true in Fearnbeg; where some incomers actually prefer to remain outsiders and make no effort to integrate with the host population.

Extreme examples of this type of settler are two elderly English ladies who have lived together in Fearnbeg for over thirty years. They make no effort to mix with other people who, consequently, have never regarded them as anything other than outsiders. They maintain their incomer status through personal choice; unlike those who try hard
to be accepted as locals but are not. Some find it impossible to gain the affection or goodwill of local people and incomers of long standing in Fearnbeg. Attempts to ingratiate themselves, or even an over-sensitivity of the need to 'be liked', can often appear to be patronising and unnecessary. For some incomers who arrive full of good intentions and hoping to enjoy the social intimacy of an integrated 'community life', the reactions of the local population can often be mystifying. Failure to appreciate the consequences of their efforts to integrate themselves in the lives of local people can entail disappointing results. A local woman said about one such incomer:

He really rubs me up the wrong way. I know he's harmless and he means well, but he can be a real pain in the neck. I think he tries too hard. If he'd just let people get on with their own lives instead of trying to organise everything he'd get on a lot better. We can do without people coming up here and telling us what to do.
The implication behind this arraignment, and many other interviews and conversations held with local people, is that incomers, although not expected to continually remain on good terms with everyone, should 'know their place'. It is all very well and good to 'take part', but not to try to 'take over'.

Some incomers find the negotiation of social boundaries, or acculturation, easier than others. Tracy Potter, for example, has 'fitted-in' to Fearnbeg life since her arrival there in 1984. Always a popular figure, she enhanced her status in 1988 when she married a local man. She proves the point that some people do not have to be born and bred in Fearnbeg to be thought of as local in everyday situations. One can 'become' a local by virtue of marrying-in to Fearnbeg, or by gaining the favour of the local population and 'mucking-in', or by having lived there since childhood. But fulfilling such criteria is not always enough to gain the acceptance of the whole population.

There are those who are regarded as being local by some Fearnbeg people but not by others, and in certain social contexts but not in others. Sandy Mitchell, an incomer who works on one of the local
fish-farms, is another good case in point. Sandy's best friend, a local man, works on the same fish-farm. In Sandy's company this friend will credit him with the status of a local; but when talking to other locals, if Sandy is not present, he may refer to him as an incomer. Local people who do not work with Sandy, or do not know him particularly well, never think of him as anything but an incomer.

Although there is a real division between locals and incomers, it is impossible to draw a neat dividing line between the two groups that would be accepted by all the people in Fearnbeg all the time. The boundary between the two is open to manipulation; people like Sandy constantly moving from one side to the other depending on situation and context. There are degrees of localness and degrees of incomers, and the distinction between the two can change quickly and radically. For example, in 1989 a visiting folk-singer got drunk and broke the windows of the hotel-manager's car. The hotel-manager is very unpopular and, although he has lived in Fearnbeg for over twenty years, is still regarded as an incomer. However, local people, angry at the behaviour of the folk-singer, took his side on this occasion. He was seen as
'one of us' who had been wronged by an outsider and social boundaries were redrawn for a short time.

There is then a recognised social division, albeit a hazy one, between locals and incomers in Fearnbeg, but how is it to be explained? Is it merely a phenomenon used by Fearnbeg people to deal with other, more fundamental, underlying issues; or are the two categories important independent variables? To answer these questions some other social issues must be examined.

5:7 Economic factors in social differentiation

The changes taking place in Fearnbeg today reflect a changing set of conditions in society as a whole. The process of diversification in the labour market, for example, has considerably altered the structure of the place. (see Chapter Four) Changes in employment, income and welfare benefit have eroded much of the previous need for mutual aid between neighbours and relatives, and undermined the communal aspects of croft production. A diversity of occupations, unrelated to any local particularity, and not providing any
social bond for the life of the place, has come to prevail. Work now takes its character from the general economic life of the nation and makes for differences rather than fostering common bonds of interest and cohesion. Yet, unlike most places, where work operates to differentiate between various categories of the population, the employment pattern in Fearnbeg is not seen as a basis for division between the primary associational categories.

The increase in the number of locally available jobs has certainly attracted people to the area, but full employment means that there is very little competition with local people for these jobs. Rather than driving a wedge between the two groups, work actually serves to bring locals and incomers together. One of the local fish-farms, for example, employs six incomers and five local people. In the small food-processing factory incomers fill six of the ten full-time positions; and there are six locals and eight incomers who rely on inshore fishing as their main source of income. These figures correspond with the higher number of incomers than locals in the total population (see Table 5-2, above), and the similar age and gender structure of both groups are also
reflected in the labour market. Incomers are, in fact, seen as an asset to the Fearnbeg economy; not only through their availability for work, but through the jobs they generate, their need for local services, and the jobs they create. (see Chapter Four)

Housing is obviously a crucial issue, but it causes no real social division between Fearnbeg people. One local man neatly summed up the attitude of the majority of those in the receiving population when he said:

You can't blame them (incomers) for wanting their own place to live. If they get a house then it's our own fault for selling it to them or letting them build it in the first place. Once they're in there's nothing you can do about it, so there's no point in complaining.

Of the one-hundred-and-five permanently occupied dwellings in Fearnbeg, fifty-one are the homes of incomers or incomer families. Several of these houses are rented from local people; others 'come with the job', e.g. fish-farm cottages, the
school-house, the nurse's cottage; and twelve are council houses. The total number of homes actually owned by incomers is less than sixty per cent of the number of dwellings they occupy, so they cannot be accused as a group, of buying up all the available property in the area. The number of households in the locality is about the same as the number of permanently occupied dwellings: the fieldwork discovered no 'hidden households', i.e. those which would separate out if housing were available. Nor were there reports of young couples or others having to leave Fearnbeg to obtain accommodation. Four of the nineteen council houses are rented by local people and, should the situation arise, a local person would be given the opportunity to receive council accommodation before a prospective incomer. The availability of chalets, caravans and winter-lets helps to ensure a balance of supply and demand. (see Chapter Four)

What does cause resentment in Fearnbeg is the fact that over forty per cent of the total stock of one-hundred-and-eighty-seven habitable houses are 'holiday homes'. (6) Such resentment is understandable in light of Highland Regional Council's Community Survey Report (1981) which
commented that holiday homes are a problem where they constitute more than twenty per cent of the local stock. Fearnbeg people draw a distinction between the thirty-seven 'cottages-to-let', owned predominantly by local people, and those houses that lie empty for the greater part of the year. The first are seen as tourist attractions that provide employment and income for Fearnbeg people, especially during the busy summer months; the second are seen as expensive 'havens' for wealthy people who contribute little to the social and economic life of the place during the few weeks they spend there each year. It is these people, not the incomers, who are seen to boost house prices and severely restrict opportunities for 'ordinary folk' to contribute to Fearnbeg life by coming to live and work in the area. Fearnbeg people's resentment of holiday home owners is reflected in their use of the derogatory "White Settler" label to describe them. (7)

5:8 White Settlers?

In other parts of the Scottish Highlands and Islands the term "White Settler" has been widely adopted as a label for a colonial type of incomer
stereotyped as English, affluent and arrogant. Such incomers are thought to have made their fortunes elsewhere before retiring to 'pleasant havens' where they bid up house prices and adopt patronising attitudes to 'the natives'. But the exploitative, elitist stereotype does scant justice to those who come to live in Fearnbeg on a full-time basis, and their arrival needs to be evaluated on rather more than this impressionistic and anecdotal level. It is readily apparent, for example, that these incomers are not displacing local people by buying up houses and property. (Here the Highlands and Islands differ markedly from other rural peripheries in that access to the agricultural sector has been restricted by the institutional peculiarities of large estate management and crofting, which prevent the operation of anything like an open market for land in which wealthy incomers could be expected to outbid locals. Crofting regulations ensure that local people retain considerable control over this crucial resource).

The "White Settler" stereotype is further discredited in that the majority of incomers to Fearnbeg are not English but Scottish. Table 5-5
gives the nationality and previous residence of incomers to the area since 1960:

Table 5-5: Nationality and previous residence of incomers (still resident) to Fearnbeg, 1960-1989

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nationality</th>
<th>Previous residence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Scottish</td>
<td>Highlands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lowland Scotland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>England</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outside U.K.</td>
<td>Outside U.K.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>52</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>52</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

120 120

(source: fieldnotes)

The Table shows that not all incomers to Fearnbeg are "urban refugees". Many come from other parts of the Scottish Highlands, and some from rural localities as far afield as Cornwall. Neither anti-English sentiment nor the rural/urban dichotomy can adequately explain the division between locals and incomers in Fearnbeg. Nor is it the case, as protagonists of the "White
Settler" stereotype often imply, that the majority of incomers are retirees. Of the sixty-nine adult (16+) incomers to Fearnbeg between 1980 and 1989, only nine were aged over sixty. The age structure of the incomers is similar to that of the receiving population, as is the percentage of males and females in either group. (see Figures 5-1 and 5-2)

So, if the division between locals and incomers cannot be explained in terms of any of the well recognised divisions already mentioned, how is it possible to distinguish the primary associational categories? It is obviously only in terms of the principle characters themselves that explanation is possible, and in symbolic rather than structural terms.

In order to assert and preserve their own identity local people distinguish between their own culture and that seen to be confronting it. This kind of distinction has been described as 'cultural totemism' or 'ethnognomony'. (Schwartz, 1975) In taking these terms on board it is suggested that the primary associational category of local people marks what it is, and what it is not, by emphasising traits and characteristics
5-1: Age structure and gender distribution of incomes in Fearnbig, Aug. 1989

![Bar chart showing age distribution and gender of incomes in Fearnbig, Aug. 1989.]

5-2: Age structure and gender distribution of born-and-bred locals in Fearnbig, Aug. 1989

![Bar chart showing age distribution and gender of born-and-bred locals in Fearnbig, Aug. 1989.]

* M = Male
  F = Female
at once emblematic of the group's solidarity and of the group's contrasting identity in relation to the groups within its ambit of comparison. (Schwartz, 1975, 109)

Such contrastive marking is exactly what makes the notion of 'social boundary' so central to the understanding of relationships between locals and incomers in Fearnbeg. Local people emphasise their own and collective identity by using this notion to differentiate between those who they see as 'belonging' to Fearnbeg and those who, by virtue of being 'outsiders', do not. The awareness and idiomatic expression of this differentiation is how Fearnbeg people distinguish between locals and incomers. But, as illustrated above, the boundary between locals and incomers is not so hard and fast that it continually cuts through everyday social relationships - it can be negotiated and even crossed from time to time. Chapter Seven goes on to give some examples of how the boundary is maintained. Before that, however, Chapter Six provides illustrations of how people from different primary associational categories are brought together.
NOTES

1) This sense is always tenuous when the physical and structural boundaries which previously divided the place from the rest of the world are increasingly blurred. It can therefore easily be depicted as under threat: it is a ready means of mobilising collectivity. Thus, one often finds in such places the prospect of change being regarded ominously, as if change inevitably means loss. A frequent and glib description of what is feared may be lost is 'way of life'; part of what is meant is the sense of self.

2) In fact it is very rare for a baby to have been born in Fearnbeg in recent decades. The nearest maternity unit is over sixty miles away and this means that expectant mothers usually travel to the east coast to have their babies delivered. Nevertheless, 'born and bred' is the phrase used by Fearnbeg people to designate those who were raised from infancy in Fearnbeg and that is how it will be used here.
3) Such legitimation is only required in the event of one local vying with another in an attempt to prove him or herself 'more' local. (Mobilisation of local identity is discussed further in Chapters Six and Seven).

4) There are individuals in Fearnbeg who claim to be descended from people who lived there before this time but I have not come across any genealogical records to substantiate their claims. The significance of family as a principle of association in local social relations is sustained through the knowledge that specific sets are defined by reference to particular' apical ancestors: the precise articualtion of relationships is not necessary. No attempt, moreover, was made to trace the lineage of old local families back further than the early settlers in Fearnbeg - to do so would have had no relevance for social relationships there today.

5) Information regarding Donald Fraser's family and their descendants was gleaned from a family tree compiled by one of his descendants who now lives in Australia.
6) Fearnbeg is typical of the Scottish Highlands today in being a popular location for 'holiday homes'. The main focus here is on the usually resident population of locals and incomers; not the 'second-homers' whose often harmful impact on local housing markets was well described by Skene and Sewell in the June-July 1984 issue of Radical Scotland.

The relative isolation of Fearnbeg is one incentive for people to buy or build holiday homes in the area, but it is also seen as a disincentive for commuters to set up 'base' there from which to travel to work. (see "Urban Overspill", The Observer Magazine, 11 June, 1989. The presence of commuters in Fearnbeg would undoubtedly lead to a far more rigid division than that presently found between locals and incomers - both of whom see Fearnbeg as a central focus in their lives.

7) It is an interesting linguistic point that the "White Settler" label is rarely used to describe those people who come to live in Fearnbeg on a permanent basis; but is reserved for those who usually spend only two or three weeks of the year in the place.
CHAPTER 6

LOCALS AND INCOMERS: BASES OF ASSOCIATION

6:1 'A great deal in common'

In the last Chapter it was argued that the most important division in Fearnbeg society is that between locals and incomers. It is central to the cultural identity and symbolic systems of the actors, despite not being manifest in patterns of social action. But it is equally important to recognise that individuals in different primary associational categories often have a great deal in common and that there are no obvious characteristics that an outside observer could use to distinguish between them.

Many of those who arrive in Fearnbeg have similar backgrounds to those already living there, and share similar social characteristics and values. This is true to such an extent that visitors and recent incomers are often at a loss in knowing who are the 'real locals' in Fearnbeg and who are not. Differences in normal speech, clothing and lifestyles are comparatively small for most
Fearnbeg people. Locals and incomers are members of families; they do the same jobs; they enjoy the same leisure activities; they support the same football teams; they go to the same school; and so on. The division does not systematically manifest itself in formal organisations; nor does it cut through friendships, for it is certainly not the case that incomers are only friendly with incomers and locals with locals. Chapter Seven goes on to discuss how and why the boundary between the primary associational categories is maintained; the concern here is to show at least some of the ways locals and incomers are brought together.

6:2 Change and Social Organisation

The long established pattern of social life in rural areas is often disturbed by the conflicting social norms and lifestyles of an incoming population and, depending on the size of that population and the size of the influx, the balance of power can shift in favour of the incomers who may then begin to shape the pattern of social life and so bring about change. Such change is often accompanied by a growing social differentiation, with the incomers circumscribed by their own
social habits and attitudes, and by the reluctance of long-established residents to allow these new settlers to be fully assimilated into their midst. In Suffolk, for example, Newby found that members of the former occupational community, faced with an invasion of 'their' village by outsiders have tended to retreat in upon themselves and form a community within a community, cutting themselves off from the separate world of newcomers. (1976, 166)

But this has not happened in Fearnbeg. The rate at which social change takes place is obviously of crucial significance for the functioning and structure of a locality and a failure by people to adjust can cause considerable problems and conflict. (Giarchi, 1984) But the fairly gradual influx of incomers to Fearnbeg has not been 'an invasion' and definite lines have not been drawn between the primary associational categories. A sense of belonging to one or other of these categories does affect how people act socially, but in subtle ways; it does not by itself necessarily make a great deal of difference in terms of face-to-face interaction. One group does
not share common interests at loggerheads with the other. The division between locals and incomers is cultural and cannot be explained in structural terms alone - something more is needed to explain the complexity of the social boundary that exists between locals and incomers. Indeed, it is precisely because people do not claim distinctiveness solely in terms of behaviour that the local/incomer dichotomy in Fearnbeg is so interesting.

Just as Marilyn Strathern found that, in Elmdon,

all that people can agree upon is that the village is divided into 'villagers' and 'non-villagers' (1984, 47)

Fearnbeg people agree that their place is divided between locals and incomers. Yet, although these perceptions of identity clearly exist, they are not an ubiquitous feature of everyday life. Residents do not make continuous reference, either consciously or unconsciously, to collective values or qualities deemed to differentiate between locals and incomers. Over and against any differences between the two groups there exists a range of idioms whereby they can, and do,
transform their sense of difference into one of social integrity. Through such practices as, for example, acknowledging, neighbouring, and "mucking-in" (Phillips, 1986) - acts constitutive of a local boundary within which both locals and incomers are included - they experience and express their collective notions of belonging to Fearnbeg. Secondary categories, like 'neighbours', 'friends' and 'workmates', inform and pattern everyday practises which stress some degree of solidarity. In other words, people divided by their location with reference to primary associational categories are united by their location relevant to secondary ones. Every Fearnbeg person belongs to a number of secondary categories and, at different times, membership of one or other of these is definitive for what he or she does. The cross-cutting ties generated by such membership means that the social location of each person locks them into a series of social relationships (1) and this serves to defuse potential conflict.

It is not unusual in rural areas to find dense social networks. (Frankenberg, 1966) People are linked together on the basis of family, neighbourhood, work, etc.. But what is the social
Figure 6.1: Connections diagram for social relationships between a random sample of locals in Pearnbeg, August 1989.

Murdo Maclean \( W \) Ian Macleod

\( K \)

Fiona Maclean \( W \) \( K \) Ian Mackenzie

\( K \)

Betty Maclean \( W \) N

\( K \)

Sheena Ross

\( K = \text{kinship} \)
\( W = \text{work} \)
\( N = \text{neighbouring} \)

source: fieldnotes
Figure 6-2: Connections diagram for social relationships between a random sample of incomers in Fearnbeg, August 1989

John Smith

W

Karen Bolster

K

Evelyn Fraser

K

David Dawson

Maureen Grant

\[ K = \text{kinship} \]
\[ W = \text{work} \]
\[ N = \text{neighbouring} \]

Source: Fieldnotes
significance of these ties? How is their significance to be recognised and measured? On what criteria is this significance to be decided? There are two aspects involved in answering these questions. First, it needs to be shown that kin relationships, for example, have some significance in the way people organise and run their everyday lives. But to understand more fully the significance of kin relationships it is necessary to go a stage further and compare them with other types of relationship that common knowledge and experience suggest are functionally similar. In this way some standard by which to judge the significance of kin relationships can be achieved. As Bell notes:

we do not really know how important kinship is unless it is studied in relation to other systems of interaction like those of friendship, work and neighbouring. (1971, 131)

Rather than concentrating on the significance of any particular secondary category for all of social life in Fearnbeg, the aim here is to display ethnographically some of the processes that associate individuals in the place. Examples
of informal personal care (2) and support are used to illustrate the interplay of the social relations between locals and incomers that are sustained or promoted by secondary categories. The central issue is whether variations in Fearnbeg people's experience of care and support or mutual aid is attributable to membership of one or other primary associational category. (It should be remembered, however, that no social organisation is static. Although the patterns of social relations described here are as found at the time of field research, incipient changes will inevitably act to alter them).

6:3 Informal Social Support and Social Care

Living in Fearnbeg - as elsewhere - entails being involved in a set of relationships that transcend the boundaries of individual households. People are linked together by patterns of co-operation and reciprocity, and social relations between them are a significant form of social exchange. (Bulmer, 1986, 106) In addition to sociable contact, they provide tangible assistance for each other in the form of tasks performed or services rendered. In certain cases they may be a source
of social support and provide some types of social care. This section will show how belonging to particular primary and secondary associational categories influences or dictates who Fearnbeg people turn to for help when they need it, and — the other side of the coin — to whom they are likely to offer help. The discussion is organised around the central question: "who does what for whom in Fearnbeg?"

The individual belongs to different groups for different purposes, and different situations activate appropriate loyalties: to kin, to neighbours, or to friends. This can be illustrated by an example. Murdo Maclean looked to his friends and neighbours when he wanted help to shift building materials from the back of a lorry on to the site for his new house. However, when his wife was seriously ill and he could not provide the constant attention she needed, he turned to his relatives. When people live close to their parents or other relatives they can be, and often are, an important source of social care, usually playing a greater role than unrelated neighbours and friends. Nor was this just a question of gender determining the type of aid sought and the people from whom it was
forthcoming. Had it not been for the support provided by his father, his brother, his sister-in-law, and his own children, Murdo would not have been able to hold down his job during the time of his wife's illness. They would sit with her and keep her company, and make sure she had everything she needed while Murdo was at work. The fact that Murdo's sister-in-law is an incomer was not significant: she was, first and foremost, a member of the family who both expected, and was expected, to help. This example is both typical of how care in illness is handled, and also of the way membership of a secondary category in certain circumstances is more important than membership of a primary category.

Kinship and friendship are usually seen as the twin foundations for close personal relationships and for sociability, but whether friendship is as important as kinship in providing practical assistance is less clear. (Allan, 1979) Despite the important social role of friendship, most Fearnbeg people turn to their family and relatives rather than friends when serious continuing demands are placed upon them. Friends are relatively unimportant in terms of long-term personal care. This does not mean that they are
not important sources of help and support, only that there are limits to what they can be expected to do. Not only are different people looked to for help with different kinds of problems, but the types of help given by Fearnbeg people to each other varies widely - not least because some people obviously need more help than others.

In general, elderly people are more likely than most to need personal care and help with domestic chores and to do so on a continuing basis. Much of this help is provided by individuals in formal agencies, such as the district nurse, the 'Crossroads' care-attendant, the 'home-help'; but, for the most part, it is provided by their own families. The family is basic in the structure of our society and is the major provider of community care in Britain today. (Kiernan and Wilis, 1990)

According to Bulmer:

something like nine-tenths of the care given to those who in various ways cannot fend for themselves in our society is given by spouses, parents, children and other kin, (1986, 233)
and this rings true for those Fearnbeg people, locals and incomers, who need care and have family and relatives living in the area. (3)

Although interaction with kin is not the organising principle of social life that it is purported to be in Whalsay (Cohen, 1982) or Tory Island (Fox, 1982) it is still 'natural' to turn to one's kindred first for help, and 'natural' to tender help in return in certain situations. At crucial stages in life kinship continues to play a central role and remains the predominant source of care for locals and incomers. It creates a field within which members recognise rights and obligations and, although there are no binding rules with regard to such relationships, they are reinforced by powerful social norms. Receiving personal care, although not seen as an automatic right, is expected from close relatives. Clearly, assistance is not given to all kin invariably, whatever the circumstances, but there are certain relationships where it is given almost automatically. (4)

The marriage relationship takes primacy, so that one's spouse becomes the first source of support for married people. (5) In Fearnbeg today there are three incomer and two local couples with one
partner who relies to a large extent on the other for personal care. (6) The parent-child relationship is another important source of personal care and there are five Fearnbeg people, three incomers and two locals, who take care of a dependant parent. Elderly people without children tend to form equivalent ties with whatever kin are available, typically a niece or a nephew, although there is some doubt as to whether such a person can properly be expected to provide such extensive or reliable support as a 'real' child. (Townsend, 1965; Allan, 1983; Wenger, 1984)

Including the niece/nephew cases, a total of six households out of the one hundred and twenty in Fearnbeg (i.e. five per cent) involve substantial kin-based care support. It is not easy to say whether five per cent is high or not, because there is no systematic basis for national comparison. The work of Wenger (1984), Bulmer (1986), Finch (1989) and Giarchi (1990) would suggest that five per cent is not distinctive, but rather that Fearnbeg is similar to other places. In other words, the cultural values of Fearnbeg kinship are not special: the pattern of care-giving reflects the availability of key kin to give care (just possibly higher in rural than urban settings in which the latter is associated
with high residential turnover), rather than the significance of kinship within the culture. In other words, whereas Cohen (1982), Fox (1982) and earlier researchers trained in social anthropology (e.g. see Frankenberg, 1966) have treated kinship as the organising principle in rural life, this probably in part reflects their training rather than the unique features of rural settings per se. Kinship in Fearnbeg certainly is an organising principle, but it is equally important to recognise that it is a contingent one, and one that has real limits.

These limits apply both to what one can reasonably expect relatives to do, and to what a person would want to rely on relatives for. (7) This was made clear in the case of Joan Maclean, a local woman in her seventies, who went to live in the 'old folks home' in Dornie in 1988. Joan had never married and had lived with her brother up until his death in 1978. As time passed and she grew less able to look after herself Joan came to rely increasingly on her relatives in Fearnbeg for care and support. Her niece, Fiona, or Fiona's husband, would call to see her every day to make sure that she was alright, often taking her a hot meal. They drove her to church on Sundays; they took her shopping or collected whatever groceries
she needed; if she got sick they took care of her; and so on. In an interview conducted before she left Fearnbeg Joan said that she felt she was "becoming too much of a burden" on her niece and her family:

I know they don't want me to go to (Dornie), but I think it will be best for all concerned. I'm getting too old to be living on my own. (Fiona) and (her husband) worry about me far too much. They've got their own family and their own lives to lead. They wanted me to move in with them you know but I put a stop to that idea. I know myself that the older I get the more attention I'll need, and now I've made up my mind to go.

Several months before Joan left Fearnbeg, Betty Mackenzie, an active seventy-five year old spinster, had also gone to live in Dornie. Before moving, Betty's days had been spent looking after her elder sister in their family home. Shortly after her sister died she sold the house - it is now used as a holiday home by a wealthy English couple - and left. By this time the four houses closest to her own had all been bought as holiday
homes; their owners, none of whom Betty knew particularly well, only occupying them for two or three weeks in the year. Her closest resident neighbour lived over half a mile away. Her closest friends had died. Still able to drive a car, Betty went to the local shops once a week and to church on Sunday but, apart from the postman, she did not see any particular people on a regular basis.

In a general way other Fearnbeg people, especially those locals who knew her well, expressed a concern for her welfare and 'kept an eye on her'. When they met her in public they would ask how she was getting on or, if they had not seen her for some time, they would ask others about her. Betty doubtless had people in Fearnbeg who cared about her, but the deterioration of her family, friendship and neighbouring networks meant that she spent most of her time alone. After her departure a local informant said:

I reckon if she still had family and friends living around her she would have stayed here 'til the day she died. I'm sure she didn't want to leave, but I suppose she made the right choice in the end. Old age doesn't come alone:
she wouldn't have been able to carry on like she did forever - maybe if she had people close to her, but not stuck down there on her own. At least where she's gone she knows she'll be looked after properly.

Betty's case provides a good illustration of why kinship behaviour alone cannot be used as an indicator of localness. Despite all her family and relatives being dead she was still very much a 'real local' in the eyes of those who knew her. Ironically, her case illustrates the importance most Fearnbeg people attach to kin - seeing them as the first line of support and care in times of need - but also the vulnerability of such support and the absence of an alternative normative base for the provision of care.

So what happens to those people needing care and support who live in Fearnbeg and have no kin living nearby? For some, like Betty, the answer has been to leave. In 1988 the Wilsons, an elderly retired couple who came to Fearnbeg in the 'sixties, moved to the east coast to be near their family. Others have stayed and let help come to them. Harold and Rachel Jones, a nonagenarian and an octogenarian respectively, are incomers who
have lived in Fearnbeg since the 1930s. Failing health has meant that Harold is now totally housebound and that Rachel is no longer able to look after him on her own. In 1986 the couple's niece came to Fearnbeg from the south of England to take care of them both, and intends to stay in the place. So, on the basis of this example, it can be said that locals do not differ from incomers in that the first have locally-based and caring kin while the second do not. Indeed, as more incomers settle in Fearnbeg, and second generations grow, their own kinship networks develop.

Ian and Vicky Wright came to Fearnbeg with their three children in the late 1970s. One daughter has since moved away, but the remaining son and daughter have married - (both to incomers already living in the area) - and have four and five children respectively. From a nuclear family living under one roof the Wrights have grown into an extended family making up three separate households. The Smiths are another incomer family with locally-based extended kin, in this case spanning four generations - more than can be said of any local family. Bill and Laura Smith arrived shortly after the Wrights with their teenage daughter and son. They were followed by their
eldest son and his wife who have since had a child of their own. Bill's mother and stepfather turned up next and, several years later, Laura's mother arrived. She left her home in the north of England to come and live with her daughter in Fearnbeg:

I've no family left down there - they've all either died or moved away. I never really thought I'd be living up here, but it's not the place that's important, it's the people you're with .... I think you need your family around you when you get to my time of life. (8)

So, as well as those incomers who come to Fearnbeg to look after elderly relatives, there are those who come because they need the care and support that a family can provide.

The Wright and Smith dynasties now account for almost nine per cent of the total population in Fearnbeg. Not surprisingly, they feature prominently in any local discussion of immigration. One local man said:
There'll soon be more (Smiths) and (Wrights) here than anybody else. We'll be overrun with the buggers before we know it. I remember tourists and other folk thinking that all the local people here must be related to one another - now it seems as though all the incomers are. One arrives, and the next minute the whole family's here; Grannies and all. Then they get married and have kids and it's hard to tell who's who any more.

That incomers are seen as a threat by some local people has already been illustrated. What is interesting here is that many of them belong to supportive and caring kinship networks similar to those of local people. This does not mean, however, that locals and incomers only look after 'their own', or that kinship behaviour can be used to distinguish between the primary associational categories. The helping networks in Fearnbeg - that is, the patterns in which help is exchanged between inhabitants - provide a great deal of evidence of interaction between locals and incomers.
Care and support in Fearnbeg are not confined to relatives. Neighbours too are important. Just as the terms 'natural' and 'normal', when applied to relationships among relatives, refer to what is customary in the local culture rather than to what is an inevitable consequence of biological nature, so the practises of neighbourliness are things learnt from tradition rather than the necessary products of physical proximity. It is 'natural' for neighbours to take notice of one another and to lend a hand when there is a need. While all neighbours belong to one tradition and have the same ideas about what constitutes neighbourliness, there seems no need of any explanation for it other than physical proximity. Among old local families the practice of neighbouring is a taken-for-granted activity which had to fit in with the crofting way-of-life. When, however, people of a different tradition enter, it is soon made evident that physical proximity does not, of itself, make good neighbours.

There is considerable ambiguity in the meaning and use of the term 'neighbour', resulting in widespread conceptual confusion. (Keller, 1968, 15) Much of the difficulty stems from the fact
that people themselves differ in their conception of neighbours. Some conceive of neighbours as people living next-door, while others adopt a less restricted definition. Quotes taken from conversations with Fearnbeg people illustrate this:

My neighbours are the people who live beside me.

I know (he) lives four miles away, but I still think of him as my neighbour.

I might live next-door to (them) but I don't think of them as neighbours. There are folk living in (other Fearnbeg townships) who are better neighbours to me than they'll ever be. They're not what I would call 'neighbourly'.

I couldn't wish for a better neighbour than (James)... It doesn't matter that I live in (this township) and he lives in (that one). What's important is that we're good friends and that we help each other out.
Neighbourliness, then, appears to be more of a 'role' than an 'existence'. It is a positive and committed relationship constructed between people living in Fearnbeg; a form of friendship. It is not a special type of good relationship peculiar to people living next to one another, but an instance of a larger type of relationship contingently arising, in some circumstances, between nigh-dwellers. It is about social interaction and a great deal of it is situational or context-specific. It is characterised by all sorts of practically enacted social intercourse: visiting, amiable greetings, recriminations, etc. And, by contrast, it is a matter of dispositions, of a reserve of sentiment not normally enacted but brought to life in appropriate specific circumstances.

A useful distinction to be drawn here is that between 'manifest' and 'latent' neighbourliness, proposed by Peter Mann. (1954) Manifest neighbourliness is characterised by overt forms of social relationships; latent neighbourliness is characterised by favourable attitudes to neighbours in times of crisis or emergency. These two forms can be thought to occur in combination, together capable of describing the pattern a relationship takes. (Mann, 1954, 164) Notions of
manifest and latent neighbouring have the advantage of establishing some links between attitudes and behaviour. Potential neighbourliness is no less important than neighbourly activity manifest in everyday life.

It has already been said that, in times of personal need, Fearnbeg people usually fall back on family and relatives. But those people with no family in Fearnbeg must often rely on their neighbours for care and support. Ian Macdonald is one such person. An eighty-three year old local man, he has lived alone since his wife died in 1982. Two incomer couples live beside Ian, one household on either side of his own, and the next dwellings are nearly one mile away. Ian had this to say about his immediate neighbours:

Och, the (ones on that side) are nice enough people, but I don't really have much to do with them. I see them going past in the car a lot, but I sometimes don't speak to them from one month's end to the other. They've been here eight years now and I still couldn't say I know them very well .... The (other couple) have only been there for two or three years, but they've been
grand neighbours ever since they came. They're in here nearly every day to make sure I'm O.K., and they've always time for a blether ....... I'm fine on my own you know, but it's still good to have them around. If I needed a favour I wouldn't worry about asking them. They're only too glad to help.

This is only one of the many examples of manifest neighbourliness between people in different primary associational categories. It illustrates the point that, despite the undoubted influence of long residence, it is possible for neighbouring relationships and sentiments to develop without it. When people are new to the area they are likely to have fewer connections with their neighbours than Fearnbeg people of long-standing, but if they act in a neighbourly way, and find their actions reciprocated, then they are soon accepted. Kasarda and Janowitz argued:

Since assimilation of newcomers into the social fabric of local communities is necessarily a temporal process, residential mobility operates as a barrier to the development of .... widespread local associational ties.
Once established, though, such bonds strengthen community sentiments. (1974, 330)

This argument rings true insofar as length of residence can be a key factor in influencing attitudes and neighbouring behaviour in Fearnbeg but, as the previous quote illustrated, this is not always the case. Some incomers are "assimilat(ed) into the social fabric" while others are not, and some fit-in more readily than others. What is interesting here is that neighbouring does not produce sets that correspond with the two primary associational categories. As a principle of association neighbouring, no matter how short-term, cuts across rather than reinforces the social division that exists between locals and incomers.

However, although neighbouring provides bases for close social association, the strength of neighbouring obligations and how frequently they are invoked varies according to circumstance and who is involved. For example, the Hydes, (the incomer couple mentioned in Chapter Five), normally have nothing to do with their neighbours, yet Mr. Hyde asked them for help when his wife suffered a minor stroke and he could not cope
with the situation on his own. He telephoned the local couple living next door and they responded immediately and positively. Although not manifestly neighbourly themselves, the Hydes did not hesitate to call upon their neighbours in a crisis. Whether they would have responded in the same way had the tables been turned is difficult to say, but the chances are that the fact of being neighbours would have obliged them to do so. Physical propinquity is important in that it makes neighbours of locals and incomers and all Fearnbeg people, albeit to different degrees, belong to the matrix of neighbouring networks that exist in Fearnbeg.

There is no doubt that neighbouring assumes a peculiar frequency, closeness and helpfulness in rural settings. Arensberg and Kimball (1940), Rees (1950), Williams (1956), Frankenberg (1966) and Newby (1979) have all underlined the high levels of assistance to be found among people in rural areas, and Fearnbeg is no exception. A middle-aged woman who came to live in Fearnbeg in 1977 said:

I could never go back to living in a city now. I'd hate even to have to
live in Inverness. They're all just part of the rat-race down there and they don't have any time for one another. At least here I know who my neighbours are and that I can ask them for help if I need it. We all know each other up here and we help each other out.

There is a certain amount of truth in this, but the rosy picture it conjures up should not obscure the fact that there are many instances of 'bad neighbouring' in Fearnbeg. One man has built up such a reputation for 'borrowing' tools and implements and failing to return them that his neighbours are now loath to lend him anything. In 1988 two neighbours came to blows after one accused the other of stealing from him. The conflicts, however, need not be so obvious; as illustrated by a local woman talking about her next-door neighbour who is an incomer:

I've never liked her. Ever since she's moved here she's done nothing but moan and run down other people behind their backs. She's a real bitch and if I didn't have to live beside her I would
tell her that .... It annoys me the way (her young son) is over here all the time but our kids are never asked up there. We don't get a word of thanks for looking after him and giving him meals. I suppose I should say something really, but there's probably not much point in making an issue of it - anything for a quiet life. There's no point in falling out with your neighbours if you can help it.

Relationships between neighbours are not always good; just as relationships between family and kin are not always good; just as relationships between locals and incomers are not always good. What is significant is that Fearnbeg people, locals and incomers, have relationships with one another, be they good or bad, that are not dictated by membership of one or other primary associational category.

6:5 From Primary to Secondary: Friendships

Overall it is scarcely possible for someone living in Fearnbeg not to have some form of relationship
with other Fearnbeg people although, as we saw in Chapter Three above, there are two or three households that actively follow an isolationist path. Much of social life is involved with the consequences of plural membership of secondary categories; i.e. people have neighbours as well as families and friends as well as workmates. Because social networks are so closely interwoven it is often difficult to tell whether people's behaviour is relevant to their membership of one secondary category or another. When it comes to support, for example, close friends often provide as much help as neighbours and relatives, but the different kinds of relationship are not mutually exclusive.

Friendships are important and play an observable role in structuring and shaping social life. In sociological theory the main explanation of why people become friends is what is usually described as 'social exchange theory'. This argues that decisions to become friends with others, or to maintain friendships, are based on a more or less conscious balance of advantage and disadvantage. The essential idea is that the relationship has to be of value to both parties. Nobody wants to be 'just a convenience' or to be 'used'. In every
good relationship there has to be a balance of reciprocity. This reciprocation of assistance, however, is not always completed by return of help for the same task as that which initiated the transaction. An unmarried female incomer, for example, spent several evenings looking after a local couple's children.

I was glad when they asked me to babysit because it meant I could pay them back for all they've done for me. Before I got the car they were giving me lifts everywhere and they'd never take a penny from me for petrol or anything. I know they don't expect me to help them just because of that, but it makes me feel better all the same. They've been good to me since I came to Fearnbeg and they're good friends.

Locals and incomers who become friends often go on to develop mutually rewarding relationships, but there are cases of what Burns (1953) termed the "polite fiction"; where one is friendly with someone they do not like. The difference between being 'friends' and being 'friendly' is recognised readily enough: the former involves some sense of
mutual communion, while the latter merely assumes a form of attitude that follows from acknowledged rules of propriety. The difference was illustrated by a local woman talking about her next-door neighbour, who is an incomer:

Fieldwork data shows that relationships between Fearnbeg people are quite often 'one-sided' or 'uneven' but, generally speaking, both parties gain some benefit. The woman quoted in the section above, for example, knows that her own son enjoys the company of the boy from next-door, and she is happy that he has someone of his own age to play with.

Children are an important feature of adult relationships in Fearnbeg and provide a positive link between people in different primary associational categories. Young mothers with dependant children need support from time to time and are drawn together because of this. Since they seek friends who are at the same stage in the life-cycle, and also likeable and sympathetic to them personally (9), they often look beyond their own immediate neighbours and family.
Friendship networks, although they are perhaps not so enduring, play much the same role as kinship networks, at least in the sense that they provide systems of borrowing, help, exchange, support and nurturance. Incomers who bring young children with them do not usually bring other relatives so they do not, initially at least, form part of a locally-based kinship network, and it is advantageous for them to make friends with people who are similarly placed. Local people might have more relatives around and more friends, but it is also good for them to be able to share their problems with others of the same age who are in similar positions. In this sense, and in many others, incomers have a positive contribution to make to social life in Fearnbeg.

6:6 Primary and Secondary Associations

Locals and incomers, then, are brought together through their association with various secondary categories, and it is obvious that the empirical realities of life alone cannot account for the logic by which one primary associational category is differentiated from the other. Yet, although there is no definite structural boundary between
locals and incomers, they still comprise two quite distinct groups. The boundary that exists between the two is a cultural one.

From a sociological point of view the most important interactional aspect of associational categories is that which concerns the meanings that people attribute to them. It is obviously wrong to say that family life, or friendship, or neighbouring, are the 'same' for all those who experience them. They are experienced differently by different people in different circumstances: their very meanings differ. It must also be wrong, then, to say that local people always attach the same meanings to their behaviour, or to the associational categories to which they belong, as do incomers. The similar structure of people's lives should not be confused with their responses to it. Any assumption of cultural homogeneity among Fearnbeg people is false. Visible evidence of the division between locals and incomers might be faint, but there is no doubt that the reality of the cultural boundary between the primary associational categories exists in the minds of the subject population. By focusing on the symbolic the following Chapter will show how Fearnbeg people 'use' referents of identity to
distinguish between locals and incomers and maintain the cultural boundary.
1) I take the term "social relationship" to include all those that an individual enters into purposefully and voluntarily for primarily non-instrumental reasons. This is not intended to be taken as an authoritative and conclusive definition, but as an adequate working one in the present context. Indeed, giving a precise definition of social relationships is probably impossible. Various elements, such as enjoyment of interaction, intention, non-instrumentality, lack of constraint, etc., are involved which do not necessarily relate to one another in any consistent manner. Thus, while some relationships are quite evidently sociable and others are equally obviously not, at the boundary there are no clear-cut objective criteria. Take work relationships as an example: to the extent that the people one works with are not freely chosen but are interacted with because of the contingencies of work, the relationships one has with them are not sociable ones. To the extent that one purposely interacts with them out of choice in
a way defined as peripheral to the work situation, they are.

2) By "personal care" I mean caring for someone who cannot fully look after themselves, and/or performing domestic tasks which they are unable to undertake. This may or may not entail living together in the same house.

3) "Family" provides a principle of association that defines a social set to which people belong. "Relatives", on the other hand, provide the means through which kinship is recognised and mobilised.

4) It is clear from the evidence on British kinship (e.g. Allan, 1985; Finch, 1989) that people acknowledge a wide range of uncles, aunts, nieces, nephews and cousins as forming part of their kin network in some sense, but whether these people play a significant part in structures of support is quite another matter. Simply knowing that two people are linked in a particular genealogical relationship does not necessarily mean that they will acknowledge any responsibility towards each other, or even that they will socialise at a minimal level. There
are bound to be variations in people's experience of support between kin, and which relatives offer each other assistance.

5) Wenger's (1984) study of elderly people living in rural North Wales showed that married and infirm people had distinctive patterns of personal support, where the spouse was the main helper for every task mentioned.

6) Feminists writing about family life have suggested that women and men see the family in quite different ways. They argue that women's social relationships are much more firmly rooted in the family than are men's and that women play a much more important role in helping their relatives. (Dalley, 1988; Finch, 1989) Certainly some of the existing research into kinship in Britain has suggested a strong gender orientation. (Willmott, 1957; Firth, Hubert and Forge, 1989) Interestingly, of the five Fearnbeg people who provide substantial care for a spouse, only one is a female; so it is obviously not the case here that care in most cases means care by a female. (Gilhooly, 1982; Parker, 1985)
7) This sense of boundary is graphically expressed by the phrase "intimacy at a distance" which was first applied to the British context by Townsend (1957) in his study of the family life of young people.

8) Shortly after this interview Laura's mother left Fearnbeg to live in Australia with another of her daughters.

9) Exchanges are the medium through which friendship is expressed and maintained, but the tangible exchanges are not usually the sole reason for the friendship. Those of companionship, concern and mutual regard are at least as important. The pleasure of a friend's company, the enjoyment of being together, of conversation, of shared laughter - all of these constitute forms of support.
CHAPTER SEVEN

USING SYMBOLS TO MAINTAIN THE BOUNDARY

The last Chapter showed how locals and incomers are brought together through their association with various secondary categories, and how the empirical realities of life alone cannot account for the logic by which one primary associational category is differentiated from the other. Yet, locals and incomers still comprise two quite distinct groups. This Chapter will explore some of the processes involved in marking and maintaining the cultural boundary between the two by, first, looking at how a certain 'public issue' was handled and, secondly, by examining some of the controversies surrounding crofting in Fearnbeg.

7:1 The Hall as a Symbol

The Village Hall has provided an important focal point for Fearnbeg people for more than seventy-five years. Built in 1912 as a drill-hall for the Territorial Army, it was purchased by the
people of Fearnbeg shortly after the Second World War. The long, narrow building - originally designed to accommodate an indoor rifle-range - has been improved considerably since that acquisition. In 1975, for example, a small extension was built, providing two extra rooms, one of which houses the local library. It remains, however, an austere building and, according to the Chairperson of the Hall Committee in 1986:

falls a very long way short of what would be reasonable for the 1980s.
(quote taken from minutes of a Hall Committee meeting, 12/8/86)

In January 1986 the Hall Committee decided that it would be of considerable benefit to Fearnbeg people if plans to build a new hall were set in motion, and permission for such a building was granted by the local landlady and Highland Regional Council that same month for a site some distance from the existing one.

The Committee set about raising funds for the project with remarkable success. However, in 1988 the Regional Council intimated that no grant to
build a new hall would be forthcoming for as long as the existing one was retained. With no mandate to dispose of the old building, the Committee arranged a public meeting in July 1988 to discuss the new circumstances. The draft resolution to be considered at the meeting stated:

A decision is required as to whether the resolution ... (to build a new hall) ... should be pursued or whether the present Hall should be modified and improved on its present site. (quote taken from minutes of a public meeting, 7/7/88)

It was agreed at the meeting, by a fairly large majority, that the new hall should be incorporated into the existing one, provided land could be made available for both the building and a playing field on that site. This latter proviso proved a stumbling block. In her written reply to the request for land adjacent to the Hall on which an extension could be built the London-based owner of the land in question stated:

Whilst I very much welcome the idea of providing extra amenities ... there are
certain constraints. (I) would in principle be happy to make the land available for the extension of the Village Hall, but not for the provision of a playing field - you will appreciate that one of the most appealing aspects of (the site of our house) is the peace and isolation it provides, and we consider that a playing field would seriously detract from this. (quote taken from Hall Committee minutes, 11/11/88)

In response to this denial both locals and resident incomers in Fearnbeg could assume a collective identity in their position of powerlessness against the dictates of an absentee landowner: a "White Settler". One resident, an incomer, voiced the feelings of many:

People like that don't give a damn about the folk who live here. All they want is a nice place to come on holiday and they couldn't care less about what's going on in the place when they're not here. It makes me sick!
The landowner's response had the short-term effect of creating a communal identity reflecting concerns of common residence and association between locals and incomers. The amount of interest generated was reflected in the fact that over one hundred people, the vast majority of the adult population, turned up at a second meeting to discuss what steps should be taken next. It was decided, by a substantial four-to-one majority, that a new hall should be built, but that the old Hall should be retained and not sold to anyone outwith the area.

When first rumoured that use of the old Hall might be discontinued local feeling was strongly against the idea. Its loss would represent more than just the loss of an important institution: lack of success in maintaining the building would also represent some weakness in the ability of local people to engage in collective action at a critical time. The initial fear was that the building would deteriorate rapidly and become just one more ruin on the Fearnbeg landscape. The Hall Committee, in line with the vast majority of local people, emphasised that it was not their wish to abandon the old Hall to the elements. Rather, on completion of the new building it should continue
serving Fearnbeg as, for example, a museum. If the old building were to continue as a focal point run by Fearnbeg people this would go some of the way toward fulfilling its former practical and cultural functions. Control would be secured of a centre of place that belonged to the people of Fearnbeg.

To understand why so many local people were, and are, keen to retain the Hall under their own control two interrelated factors must be considered: firstly, the total inappropriateness, in terms of local cultural values, of uses to which the Hall might be put were its future to be taken out of their hands and, secondly, the local evaluations of institutions like the Hall as vital 'centres of place' - not just focal points in Fearnbeg topography, but as symbols of communal and domestic continuity of culture that straddle change and the passing of generations.

7:2 Reactions to background events

Physical landmarks, as well as the place itself, can act as reminders of the locality's cultural heritage and significance as they identify areas
and provide distinctive descriptors for local people. Because Fearnbeg has no 'natural' topographical focus these landmarks function as focal points of attention and discourse and are used as a primary medium for expressing and reinforcing identity and values within a context of change. The formulation of these values reflects features of local historical development - local imagery has a history that influences the contemporary significance of local values. In an informal interview a local man in his late sixties said:

They can't get rid of the old Hall - it belongs to the place and it's part of the history of the place ..... I've being going to that Hall all my life and I've got a lot of happy memories of it.

To this man the hall represents a stable reference point and a repository of valued tradition. It is seen as a symbolic institution that should be preserved as part of Fearnbeg's cultural heritage. The respondent maintained that the building should retain as much as possible of its original character - even expressing regret at the
extension that had been built in 1975. One of the reasons he gave for this uncompromising stance was that the Hall had been used as a recruiting office for the young men who left Fearnbeg to fight in the Second World War and that it should be preserved as a memorial to them:

I knew all these boys. It's not right that they should be forgotten.

The past here is being used as a resource. The manner in which it is invoked is strongly indicative of the kinds of circumstance that make such a 'past reference' salient. The fact that local people were born and bred in Fearnbeg helps to keep alive a very personal sense of a 'lived with' history, and this sense of history reinforces their feeling of attachment to Fearnbeg. The past does not hold the same meaning for incomers. Because some incomers were opposed to a new hall, expressing as much concern over what would happen to the old building, and because they are as much involved in 'social life' today (the library, dances, etc.) as local people, the latter look to the past to point out identity descriptors that clearly distinguish them as a social group.
Symbols of the past are particularly effective as cultural anchors during periods of social change, and often become saturated with emotion. Inherent in nostalgia for the past is a tendency to glorify, and forget the unpleasant, when presented with the choice of the new - 'selective forgetting'. (Ogburn, 1922, 145-6) The past is transmitted selectively according to contemporary circumstances. Even without the intention to distort, its recollection always rests upon interpretive reconstructions, as the respondent quoted above made abundantly clear. His views on the Hall altered quite dramatically following a discussion with his daughter about the benefits a new hall would bring to the young people of Fearnbeg. After some reflection he formed the opinion that a new hall was indeed necessary - not least for the sake of his own grandchildren - and his argument turned full circle:

We shouldn't be trying to preserve the place where all those boys were called-up just so they could go and get killed in the trenches in France. It's not something to be proud of. If people want a new hall then they should
go ahead and build it and forget about the old one.

By choosing to remember what he had previously 'forgotten' the respondent showed how wonderfully malleable history can be and how the past, like social boundaries, can be manipulated. It is the very imprecision of references to the past that make them so apt a device for symbolism and for expressing symbolically the continuity of past and present; and for reinforcing the cultural integrity of the local population in the face of changes emanating from outside.

It is not the history of the Hall, however, that concerns most Fearnbeg people today, but it's future. The public meeting mentioned above sparked off some emotive issues, as evidenced in the following quotes, between those who want to maintain the old Hall and the majority who would rather see a new one being built.

What's wrong with the Hall where it is? A lot of old folks live (beside the Hall) and they'd be the ones to suffer the most if it was moved. You have to remember that these people use the Hall
a lot - they go to the library and the doctor's surgery, and they go to all the 'coffee-mornings' and 'sales-of-work' and what have you. If they move the Hall it will be far more difficult for those folk who can't get around so easily to make use of it. It's crazy! They should spend the money on doing up the old Hall and forget about building a new one.

I don't want my kids to have to travel miles to the Hall every time they have a gym class, or when they need to go to the library. It's far better to keep the Hall close to the school so the kids can have easy access to it.

It's past time we had a new hall. Why should we have to 'make-do' when we could easily have something better? .... It's just daft to carry on using that old run-down building if we've got the opportunity to build a modern hall with all the proper facilities.
I can see why people want to keep the old Hall but I think we should be allowed to move with the times. There are a lot more young children and teenagers here nowadays and they need somewhere apart from the pub where they can get together and enjoy themselves. The old Hall just isn't suitable. If we're going to get the grant to build a new hall then we should go ahead with it as quickly as possible.

In the dispute over whether or not to do away with the old Hall the two sides were made up of both locals and incomers: - (the first two respondents quoted above were locals; the second two were incomers).

Many of the inherent issues reflected particularistic concerns rather than differentiation between the primary associational categories. Divisions of interest within one group prevented it from standing in absolute opposition to the other. This warns against any generalisations of local social organisation. Relationships between interests in Fearnbeg reflect clearly what several studies have already
shown: that a consideration of relationships between groups within localities illustrates that statements of collective identity and reputation frequently provide a vehicle for the pursuit of personal or sectional advantage. (e.g. Tilly, 1964; Aronoff, 1974; Strathern, 1981) What is interesting here is that local people, although divided among themselves, were better placed than incomers to take advantage of the symbolic significance of the old Hall.

There are two important things going on here. For locals, the Village Hall has a different symbolic meaning because of its use by them in their past lives. They have always made use of the Hall and taken considerable interest in it, and have enjoyed some element of control—through subtle expression of approval, censure, and so on—of what takes place there. They have 'lived' the Village Hall, and see it as belonging to them. They see themselves as being more entitled than incomers, despite the latters becoming gradually more active in Hall affairs, to determine its future. In an issue such as this local people can find common cause in complaining about the interference of incomers in what they see as 'their' affairs.
7:3 For better or worse?

In small places like Fearnbeg it is almost inevitable that some organisations will depend on the drive and energy of one individual or a small group, but when this occurs there is usually an unfortunate tendency for the rest of the population to withdraw its participation, leaving the burden on the shoulders of a few. Such a typical situation prevailed in this case: although the majority recognised the need for better recreational facilities, it was left to an incomer, the Chairperson of the Hall Committee, to forward the controversial proposal that a new hall be built. Ironically, there often appears to be resentment that the initiative in leadership in Fearnbeg has slipped from local hands, and this is sometimes voiced where it is felt that the incomers are trying to do everything their own way and to 'take over'.

That incomers play a prominent role in public life and carry a considerable share of the collective load is reflected in the fact that six of the nine members of the Hall Committee at that time, including the Chairperson, were incomers. (In October 1991 five local people and four incomers
were elected representatives of the present Village Hall Committee) (1) This reflects the intermingling of long-established interests and 'new blood' from outside that takes place in Fearnbeg society.

Feelings about incomers who get involved in social life in Fearnbeg run the entire spectrum: from the expression of praise and gratitude at one end, to statements of rank disaffection at the other. What some find a positive asset to the place, others find an intrusion. What some regard as community leadership that brings new life, others see as outsiders imposing their own ways. There are many in Fearnbeg who agree that the place would not have been the same, (i.e. that it would be worse), without the incomers; but some claim it would be better without them. That incomers are expected to take their behavioural cues from the locals, and that they should not presume to alter local ways, indicates the implicit asymmetry of the relationship. Yet, despite the resentment, if incomers make a sympathetic effort to lend support to the existing traditional patterns their efforts are usually appreciated. One local man said:
Lots of folk run down the incomers for sticking their noses in where they're not wanted and taking things over, but who else would be willing to do all they're doing for the place? There's a lot of hard work involved in running these committees, and you get precious little thanks for it. The locals are quite happy to complain about what the Hall Committee does or doesn't do, but there's not that many of them that will get off their backsides and do something themselves. And you often find that it's the ones who complain the loudest that do the least.

The efficacy of symbols, like the Hall, in distinguishing between locals and incomers is their capacity to express in ways which allow their common form to be retained among the members of a group whilst not imposing upon these people the yoke of uniform meaning. That people share symbols of identity glosses over the fact that individuals can impute different meanings to common forms. The very invisibility of these differences of meaning protects them and thereby creates the conditions in which they can be
erected into symbolic boundaries. Symbols, being malleable in this way, can be made to 'fit' circumstances. They thus provide media through which individuals and groups can experience and express their attachment to a society without compromising their individuality, or their identity.

When there is conflict over the future of the Hall, for example, locals can invoke their own localness as a weapon against change. Some say "it's the incomers who want a new Hall", thereby delegitimating the arguments in favour of change, and signalling that all 'real locals' should unite in one group to stop it. This is not to say that local people are against change; only that they want to have, and be seen to have, some control over what happens in Fearnbeg. They see themselves as the inheritors, and the 'caretakers', of the Fearnbeg tradition, and a measure of the importance of that tradition is the contemporary responses to events which can be interpreted as a threat to it: e.g. the possible loss of the old Village Hall, or the sale of crofts to incomers.
The symbolism of the croft

People who get starry-eyed about the 'good old days' when every croft in Fearnbeg was worked (see Chapter Four) are inclined to overlook the extent to which the nature both of crofters and of crofting has changed; most particularly they neglect the fact that crofting is necessarily geared almost wholly to the requirements not of the crofter's household, but of the wider market place. Living costs are constantly rising, but the returns on sheep production are much less in real terms than they were several years ago. (ibid.)

Fearnbeg is experiencing pressures of the sort which have already transformed so many other rural localities in more southern parts of Britain; pressures which have been produced by the growing interest in setting up home in the countryside. Fearnbeg is sufficiently far removed from urban centres to have so far escaped the fate of innumerable English villages that have been changed into commuter settlements, but similar processes are now in evidence there. Small crofts equipped with far from lavish houses have recently been sold in Fearnbeg at prices in excess of...
£90,000. On an acre for acre basis such crofts are selling for far higher figures than the best farmland in East Anglia, and there is no way that local people can raise sums of that kind. Even the most expensive crofts, however, readily find purchasers.

Notwithstanding the decline in crofting agriculture in Fearnbeg, there remains a continuous demand for crofts among local people. The apparent paradox may be resolved by seeing crofting and its associated activities as being more than merely economic; as having in addition a powerful symbolic dimension which 'condenses' a sense of the valued past and the continuity of the present even in a context of change. Although the agricultural aspects of crofting are no longer as important as they were it still has strong ideological associations. It means a particular social attachment to the place. The croft has long family and historical associations and is a fundamental referent of identity. It is a symbolic resource through which social identity can be stabilised.

Crofting is a way of both masking the cultural distance which has been
travelled, and of reinforcing commitment to the ideals of the community ....... The croft is the repository of that valued tradition in which resides the idea of community. (Cohen, 1979, 263)

Association with crofting connects individuals ideologically and culturally to Fearnbeg. The similar physical setting of the crofts, and the fact that the same physical factors bear upon all of them, still works for a strongly marked consciousness of kind among Fearnbeg crofters, although this has been dissipated somewhat in recent years due to the acquisition of crofts by incomers. At one time, to be the tenant of a croft in Fearnbeg was to be a local but, with more than twenty per cent of Fearnbeg crofts now occupied by incomers, this is no longer the case. The sale of crofts is seen by most local people as the short-sighted disposal for gain of the very asset which has underwritten their livelihood and their experience of belonging, and as a betrayal of local identity. One local man said:

If somebody's got a house or land they should hold on to it - once you sell it
or give it away you can never get it back. It's nothing short of criminal if you ask me. I don't blame the ones who buy the crofts; I'm sure I would do the same if I lived in a big city and got the chance and was able to move to a place like this. It's the buggers who sell the crofts who are in the wrong ...... (Murdo) thought he made a good deal when he sold the croft and the house, but he's regretting it now. He gave up his birthright for the sake of a quick profit and he's got nothing left to show for it, and his kids won't get anything either. I'd never dream of selling any of my crofts. I'll give them to (my family) when it's time, and some day I hope they'll pass them on to their own children.

The resentment Murdo caused among other local people by selling a croft to an incomer was further reflected in an interview with his own son:

The old man was a bloody fool to sell the croft. He had no right to get rid
of it really. It was passed on to him and he should have passed it on to me or (one of the others in the family). All he was interested in was making a few thousand quid to build the new house, but we'd all be better off today if he'd kept the croft.

This was the response of a young man who saw himself as the rightful inheritor of a 'valued tradition' to events that threatened that tradition.

Fearnbeg differs from, for example, Tory Island in that there is no

perfect articulation between the system of geneological reckoning, the reckoning of relatedness, and the rules for the inheritance of land (Fox, 1982, 63)

but the traditional mechanism of croft inheritance from father to son remains an important vehicle in most cases for ensuring that local people can maintain their local status across generations.
Ever since the Crofter's Act of 1886 the status of crofts and crofters has been consolidated through legislation. (Wigan, 1991, 43) A croft provides an anchor for a family and, however agriculturally insignificant, is socially very precious. It remains a home and a means of subsistence. It follows that the successful entrant to a croft tenancy should not regard such entry only as something that brings privileges, (see Chapter Four) but should also acknowledge the profound moral duty attached to such inheritance to ensure that these privileges are passed on to the next generation of local people - thus ensuring a continuing nucleus of local people in the crofting townships.

The traditional crofting way of life can be argued to be an academic construction. But this should not mask the importance of the construction of tradition by Fearnbeg people themselves. The myth of past coherence performs a vital social function; providing a thread of coherence against the contrasting sets of norms which their present existence presents. The sale of crofts and houses to incomers, and the concomitant growth in the number of houses used as holiday homes, are viewed harshly by those who wish to preserve, or at least
salvage as much as possible, of Fearnbeg's culture. In line with what was said earlier, their frustration is not vented directly on those incomers who buy the properties, but on the local people like Murdo who sell them, for whatever reason they might have, and this often leads to friction and sectional dispute within the local population itself, and even within local families.

In 1988 Robin Marsh visited local man Simon Ross to ask if he would be willing to sell her one of his crofts so that she would have some land on which to build a house. Robin was then aged thirty-six and had been a regular summer-visitor to her parent's holiday home in Fearnbeg for thirty years. During that time she had got to know neighbouring Simon and his family so well that when she forwarded her proposition he was initially reluctant to say "no" without at least appearing to give the matter some thought. He said that he would think it over and discuss it with his family before giving a definite answer. Simon's eldest son, Alex, also a crofter in the same township, did not see any need for hesitancy:

I don't know why you didn't just tell her to bugger-off straight away.
There's no way that she will get any land in (this township) so long as I've anything to do with it. The bloody cheek! They've got a house here already and that should be enough for them - they shouldn't even have that if you ask me. What would happen in a few years if one of my kids wanted to build a house here? I'd have to turn round and say they couldn't because we'd given one of the last crofts in (this township) to a bloody incomer ..... Haven't you had enough of people coming up here and trying to take over the place? If you let them take over the crofts there'll be no stopping them. These crofts have been ours for generation upon generation and we can't just give them up to the first person who comes and asks for them. .... Apart from anything else they're our heritage, and if we lose them there'll be no way of telling who are the locals here and who are the incomers.

The upshot was that Robin did not get the croft.
Alex legitimated his policy of denial by reference to an asserted local identity; by arguing that the fact of owning or renting a croft is one of the last bastions of that identity, and that it can only be preserved if incomers are not allowed to take crofts out of local hands. To him, and to the majority of local people, the croft is a symbol of localness and can only remain so for so long as the majority of crofters in Fearnbeg are local people. Insofar as the laws that surround crofting are geared towards the local population rather than incomers (Wigan, 1991) the ball is still in their court but, as will be suggested below, they might have to struggle to keep it there.

An interesting point to raise here is how certain symbols of identity can be important at certain times while others lose their saliency as practicality wins out. Although Alex, for example, is strongly against diminishing local identity by selling crofts to incomers, he did not balk at demolishing the stone-built 'stable' next to his house where his father had been born. He argued that it was in such a state of ruination that it was not worth preserving; yet, before he had decided to build a new garage on the same site
he had viewed it as a symbol of his family's localness. We saw the same kind of manipulation of symbols earlier in relation to the old Village Hall.

The point that is being made is that local people, because of their long history of attachment to Fearnbeg, are better placed than incomers to use and manipulate symbols of identity for their own ends. By laying different emphasis or interpretation on the meaning of these symbols they maintain their own individual and collective identity despite the social changes that are taking place around them. In the same way, they attach meaning to certain kinds of behaviour to discriminate between themselves and 'outsiders' from different cultural backgrounds - i.e between the primary associational categories - and it is this kind of behavioural differentiation that is discussed in the next Chapter.
NOTES

1) Writing about a village on the border between North Wales and England, Frankenberg reported having found that strangers or outsiders were chosen to take leading positions in organisations, in part so they could bear some of the responsibility for conflict which might occur when a decision between two differing proposals had to be made. 'Pentre' people used strangers in local organisations for making decisions, thereby reducing tensions and the possibility of ill-feeling among themselves. (Frankenberg, 1957, 17-18)
CHAPTER EIGHT

COLLECTIVE IDENTITIES: SECONDARY CATEGORIES OVER AND ABOVE PRIMARY?

The agenda set by Cohen in his series of studies of Whalsay is taken up in this Chapter to explore certain kinds of collective identity that are important to the people of Fearnbeg. It examines the extent to which they relate their own and others' behaviour to the collective identities of 'locals' and 'incomers' and the kinds of meaning that such identities have for them. There are innumerable situations in which Fearnbeg people, like people everywhere, relate their behaviour to collective identities: so many that there is not the space here to sketch more than tentative outlines. It is the religious and social events surrounding church-going, and marriage and funeral practises - events and occasions that can bring together locals and incomers from a multitude of different secondary categories - that will be concentrated on in this Chapter.
8:1 The Church in Fearnbeg

It was mentioned in Chapter Five that religion cannot be used as an independent variable to distinguish between the two primary associational categories, but the place of religion in Fearnbeg society should not be underestimated. Although no longer fundamental in the lives of the vast majority of Fearnbeg people, it still touches and influences the behaviour of all of them in one way or another, whether they are aware of it or not.

Today the allegiance of the majority of local people in Fearnbeg is to the Free Church - the only remaining Church in the area - but some belong to the Free Presbyterian Church, and several to the Church of Scotland. All three Churches are Protestant, Presbyterian and Calvinist, although the Church of Scotland has shed the more conservative aspects of its Calvinism. The Free Presbyterian Church (the 'Wee Frees' or 'Seceders') is the most retentive of fundamental Calvinism and the most demanding in terms of rigid adherence to its strictures.

The Free Presbyterian Church in Fearnbeg was forsaken in the 1940s and those in that
denomination now make use of the Free Church rather than travelling the twenty-five miles to Dornie every week to worship in 'their own' Church. This is not to say that the Free Church is the only place of worship in Fearnbeg. The Church of Scotland Minister comes from Dornie and delivers occasional sermons in the Village Hall, as does a Catholic Priest. Services are also held in private houses from time to time.

One consequence of the heavy influx of incomers to Fearnbeg in recent years is that there are now several Catholics and Catholic families living in the area. For the most part their faith has not proved a bar to their acceptance in the place and there have been no signs of prejudicial behaviour on the part of the receiving population but, as is usually the case, there have been exceptions.

Francis Friel married local man John Maclean in 1979. They planned to erect a house in Fearnbeg and live with John's parents until the building was completed. At first this posed no problem but, shortly after their arrival, John's father decided that he did not want a Catholic living under his roof and the couple were forced to find temporary accommodation in Dornie. They returned
to take up permanent residence in Fearnbeg a short time later but, although Francis and her father-in-law appear to get on well enough, one can still detect an undercurrent of ill feeling between the two. All of those local people interviewed in this connection during the fieldwork period who know of Francis's past and present relationship with her father-in-law - (and not all of them do) - think that the latter behaved wrongly in putting personal prejudice before the good of his family. One respondent is quoted as saying:

It was an ignorant, selfish and petty thing to do. What difference does it make if she's a Catholic or a Protestant or anything else? The important thing is that his son got married to her ... I know most of us belong to the Free Church now, but if you go back in history you'll see that the people who lived here at one time were all Catholics; so what right do we have to say that we're better than they are?

Even taking this exceptional incidence into account, there is no evidence to suggest that
religion itself is a source of divisiveness between the primary associational categories. If, for example, a local person comes into conflict with Francis, the likelihood is that any derogatory comments directed at her would be couched in terms of "incomer" rather than "Catholic".

Despite this, however, there is no doubt that the Free Church itself is an important symbol of local identity in Fearnbeg. It is part of the 'lived with' history of the place, and an institution that local people regard as their own. Church activism was high in Fearnbeg within living memory and residents in their sixties and seventies recall more than a hundred people attending English services on Sunday mornings and returning again in the evening to be preached to in Gaelic. (There are no longer Gaelic services held in Fearnbeg).

Up until the 1940s it would be fair to assume something like universal involvement in the Church on the part of all the families in the area, and probably regular attendance by most who were not too young, or too old, or too ill, or living too far from the building to come each Sunday.
Nowadays weekly services in the Free Church involve only between ten and fifteen worshippers, or about five per cent of the resident population. Most are older men and women (in their fifties to their eighties) and the proportion who have recently settled in Fearnbeg is small, with only three or four attending on anything like a regular basis, though those who do participate are important to the Church.

Church faithfuls are aware of the declining interest in practising religion and the consequent vulnerability of Fearnbeg Free Church. One communicant said:

I don't know what's wrong with the people here anymore when they don't go to Church. I suppose it's just because the youngsters aren't being brought up in it. They want the Church here but there's only a few of us left who bother going to it. When the older generation pass on there will be nobody left to go to Church at all.

Religious fervour has undoubtedly faded, and the Church is no longer the vital, inclusive
institution it once was. Yet, as the respondent quoted above intimated, the people in Fearnbeg want a Church there, whether they use it or not, because they feel it would simply not be a 'complete place' without it. One local man said:

I never go to Church myself but that doesn't mean that I wouldn't be sorry if there was no Church in (Fearnbeg). I think it's important to the people who use it, and I think it's important to the community as a whole. It's part of the history of the place ... I think all small places like this need a Church. It's one of the things that makes a place more than just a collection of houses, isn't it?

It is fair to say that similar views are held by the majority of locals but, as another informant illustrated, not by them all:

I wouldn't give a damn if they knocked down the Church tomorrow. It's all very well for people to go around saying what a great institution it is and that it should be preserved as part
of our cultural heritage, but they didn't have to walk the six miles there and back twice every Sunday to be called a heathen by a religious zealot breathing fire and brimstone like I did when I was a boy ... It's part of our history right enough, but not one we should be proud of. Whose side was the Church on during the Clearances, eh? ... I don't blame people for not going to Church. Why should they waste their time if they've got something better to do with it?

If the Church should ever cease to function in Fearnbeg it would be sorely missed by a few and would be a source of nostalgia for others. The vast majority would be sorry to see it go; as they would were the old Village Hall to be abandoned to the elements. (see Chapter Seven). The Church, like the Hall, whatever certain individuals might think, is an important symbol of Fearnbeg life and one that still has an important role in the place.

That there is concern over the future of the Church in Fearnbeg was amply illustrated recently when some extensive repair work was required on
the outside of the building. Several of the younger local men who never go to Church, volunteered their services to get the job done. One of the regular church-goers observed:

It's really good to see these young fellows working on the Church. It shows that they've got a community spirit and that they care about the place ... It's a pity none of them ever use the Church themselves. I'm sure it wouldn't do them any harm if they spent a bit less of their time in the pub; but I suppose it's really up to themselves how they lead their lives.

In general, religion has little restrictive effect on social life in Fearnbeg. Older local people remember the days when, as children, they were taken to Church twice every Sunday and it was blasphemous even to be heard whistling on the Sabbath. Nowadays it is the norm for there to be at least twice as many cars in the pub car park on a Sunday afternoon than there are outside the Church. During the summer months, if the weather is good, it is quite common to see some of the
more energetic Fearnbeg people, locals and incomers, leaving the pub on a Sunday afternoon with large 'carry-outs' of beer and spirits, on their way to play football on one of the nearby sandy beaches. Nobody has ever publicly voiced any strong objection to this pastime, but it has been suggested that the players be a bit more discreet. An elderly local man said:

I don't mind them playing football on a Sunday at all - it's not doing anybody any harm. But I don't think they should make their pitch where people on their way home from Church can see them. There's plenty other places they could play and I think they should show a bit of respect and keep out of sight.

Here is one indication that the strict sabbatarianism characteristic of many places in the west Highlands is no longer apparent in Fearnbeg. What is not seen in public is not deemed to hurt convention (or conscience) and common sense prevails, emphasising the fact that many of the formal aspects of behaviour are merely conventional. They add up to 'respectability'.
But convention still frowns upon certain activities; such as people engaging in paid work on Sundays or doing unessential work that could be done on another day. In the early 1980s Bruce Davidson, an incomer who owned a fishing boat, decided to boost his weekly income by taking out fishing parties of tourists every Sunday during the summer season. He made two trips before the vociferous disapproval of some members of the local population made him decide it was not worth the bother. A local man said:

He should have known better than to go out fishing on a Sunday. It wouldn't have been so bad if he was just going out to catch a few fish for himself - some of the locals do that themselves - but to go out to make money shouldn't be allowed. It's never been done here before and these people have no right to come up here and try to change the ways of the place. If they don't like the rules we live by up here then they should go back to where they came from.

This case provides a good illustration of how local people can, to a certain extent, dictate the
behaviour of incomers. Bruce could have carried on conducting business on a Sunday, but knew that it would lead to serious friction between himself and local fishermen and the local population in general.

We can see from this example and others that local people - just as they have overriding say in the importance attached to certain symbols of identity in the area - can also influence people's behaviour by virtue of the fact that they have a longer history of association with Fearnbeg culture and tradition than others. Incomers will try hard to respect these traditions but are sometimes bemused by the fact that the local people themselves flout them. One such incomer was quoted after an informal chat as saying:

I took a run up to (one of the townships) today and they were dipping sheep. I didn't think that anybody up here did work like that on a Sunday. I can't see anything wrong with it myself, but I was surprised that they didn't do it on a Saturday or a week day like everybody else.
In actual fact the crofters in the township in question will often be seen working at the fank on a Sunday. They justify their actions by saying that if they are to make a living they have to do their work on whatever day they can, but local crofters in other townships have no sympathy with this argument:

I've been crofting here for the last sixty years and I've never worked at a fank on a Sunday during all that time. If you ask me the buggers up there are just doing it out of wickedness. They know it annoys other folk in the place and there's no need for it. Most of them have got more time on their hands during the rest of the week than we do down here to do work like that. I'm not all that religious myself but I think it's hellish that people who were brought up here all their lives shouldn't give a damn about the traditions of the place and how we used to live here.
Ironically, the respondent quoted above does not balk at having a few drams in the pub on a Sunday afternoon or at buying Sunday newspapers.

Two interesting points emerge from this discussion of Sabbath observance and non-observance. Firstly, local people of long-standing in Fearnbeg are better placed than incomers to say what is proper behaviour and to manipulate the meanings that are attached to such behaviour. Secondly, there is as much disagreement between local people themselves as there is between locals and incomers as to what is right and wrong. It is clear therefore that religion or religious behaviour are not independent variables that can be used to distinguish between the primary associational categories. The actions and attitudes of individuals in various secondary categories render such a simplistic division impracticable.

It should be pointed out at this stage that regular Church-goers, although a relatively small group, are in themselves a very interesting secondary associational category. Just as is the case with Gaelic speakers - i.e. that it is not a sign of localness to be able to speak Gaelic (see Chapter Five) - it is not a sign of localness to
go to Church, but to be a local and to go to Church constitutes real localness. Yet, just like the Gaelic language, religion cannot be used as an independent boundary marker or symbol of localness.

Local people who go to Church would not allow an incomer into their "exclusive club" of real local people but are happy, even enthusiastic, to welcome incomers into the Church congregation. One incomer has recently changed her allegiance from the Church of England to the Free Church because, as she said:

I have always been a regular Church-goer and it's something that is important to me. I don't see any reason why I should stop going to Church just because I moved up here ... I know the Free Church is a lot different from what I've been used to but it's still a Church and that's what's really important ... By the time (my husband) died (shortly after moving up here) I hadn't really got to know anybody in (Fearnbeg) but I've made a
lot of good friends through the Church and I really feel at home here now.

Through going to Church this quiet woman living on her own, who was until relatively recently a stranger in the place, has made friends and found an interest and role for herself and has been accepted into the social circle of other Fearnbeg people. In doing so she has bridged the gap that existed between herself and her new neighbours. But she is still an incomer and regarded as such by the host population. Having become a member of the Free Church does not qualify her for local status. She now belongs to a secondary category that is, in itself, an important part of social life in Fearnbeg - i.e. that of regular Church-goers - but it is indeed only one small part among the many that make up the whole panoply. She is involved in social life, but not in all of social life; she is a member of secondary categories, but not of all secondary categories.

There is no sign whatsoever in Fearnbeg that the 'community' is celebrated in the everyday behaviour of its people. If there is a celebration, it will be in more limited and explicit form, as in, for example, the annual
local gala day, or in the life cycle rituals of marriage and burial. An important question to be asked here is, 'do people in Fearnbeg celebrate their identity in the major events which mark marriages and funerals?'.

8:2 Getting married

A basic consideration to be kept in mind here is that group identities are not all of a kind. They may be more or less imposed or voluntary; they may be more or less definable and redefinable by those to whom they belong or are attached; they may be regarded with more or less favour by these and by others; and they may be more or less of a handicap or an advantage to the former. The local 'community' which can be embraced and celebrated by its members, such as Whalsay, finds mocking parodies elsewhere, and not infrequently in Fearnbeg. Yet Fearnbeg is not a polar opposite to Cohen's Whalsay. It is clear that there are many sides to Fearnbeg's identity. It has much to celebrate and frequently does, and its public symbols are legion.
The place has a profusion of potential symbols, but the point to be reiterated is this: Fearnbeg people have no single 'community' to preoccupy them, either in celebration or rejection. There are contexts in which they may look over their shoulders and identify themselves through a contrasting other, but this is generally a response to experienced difference or to imposed labels rather than a part of any autonomous, boundary-defining process. They sustain in daily life a rich socio-cultural universe of their own without constantly needing to make props for themselves by accounting their own distinctiveness.

In the context of getting married there is a good deal of talk of traditions and customs, of the way things are and should be done; there is rarely any indication in such talk as to the owners of such traditions, etc. Never in the course of the research conversations was any distinct Fearnbeg ownership stated, nor was an implication of any such thing discovered. It was just 'what people do', with very rarely any expressed awareness that others may have other ways of doing things. One occasional exception, however, was the characterising of 'our' practises as Scottish. It
is significant in that it does entail thinking about the characteristics of the "Scottish wedding" - a process of cultural accounting perhaps (Cohen, 1978), though it is not carried on in any systematic way. It requires a trigger and this is frequently provided by involvement with weddings in England.

It is above all the timing of the English weddings Fearnbeg people encounter which jars. Those that commonly stimulate their sense of Scottish distinctiveness are: morning services instead of afternoon; lunches which may be no more than quick buffets instead of 'your proper sit-down meal' in the early evening; breaks in the proceedings during the afternoon instead of a continuous series of events - or worse, the collapse of the whole celebration without any chance for an evening of music and dancing; and even when there is such a thing, discos which are the couple's party instead of what is in effect the bride's parent's dinner-dance, held for the couple, with live music and a bar. Unfailingly, they experience a sense of the superiority of their own ways, and this is often confirmed by the reactions of English visitors to their weddings.
Fearnbeg people therefore become aware of characteristics of their own marrying pattern, not by attaching a special community-symbolising meaning to practises which may well be common right across supposed community boundaries, but by being surprised by the direct experience of other ways. There are no comparable processes within the Scottish classification, which might distinguish Fearnbeg weddings from other varieties of Scottish wedding. Fearnbeg people are therefore seen to pass up the opportunity of asserting in this conspicuous area of life a distinctive identity. Why should they, apparently so unlike Cohen's Whalsaymen, be ready to submerge their practice here in a wider Scottish identity? This may seem the more surprising when it is remembered how distinctive and at times assertive an identity the place and it's people have.

Traditional marriages involving Fearnbeg people are symbolic forms whose continuity masks or limits the trauma of change. They provide occasions to unite the people of Fearnbeg by cutting across the boundaries and divisions which inform everyday social life. They are events in which people of quite different behaviour types are brought together. An examination of the
wedding, therefore, draws out a particularly important aspect of the categorisation of social relationships in Fearnbeg. That is, although locals and incomers in Fearnbeg are divided by virtue of belonging to different primary associational categories, they are often closely associated by other relationships that bring them together in the same event. Ascribed social relationships unite people otherwise divided and this provides a means of mitigating potential conflict in the interests of overall harmony. (Gluckmann, 1960)

Fearnbeg weddings used to have a local base, but this is a link that has been increasingly loosened in recent times. Where the bride and groom come from; the numbers attending the wedding; the attractiveness of particular churches as settings; the availability of catering and accommodation facilities; etc., are all factors in reducing the localisation of choice. (There is still no specifying in Scots law of the premises in which marriages may be conducted).

The wedding celebration is composed of three separate episodes: the Church service followed by the reception and the meal and then the dance.
The second and third episodes are usually conducted in a hotel, usually at a considerable distance from Fearnbeg. These are chosen for their availability on the required day, their price and attractiveness. The reception is a mainly secular event divorced in time and space from the Church ceremony. The religious ramifications of the marriage do not end with the Church service, however, and it is important that the minister attends the reception at least until the end of the meal and the formal toasting. He or she takes a place at the head table, gives the blessing and at the end of the meal makes a speech in which a toast for the bride and groom is proposed.

The degree of religiosity involved in the wedding decreases with each successive episode until, when it comes to the dance, all religion is excluded. In protestant areas a wedding is the only church-sanctioned occasion for such revelry. The wedding is not complete without the dance, which also heralds the commencement of heavy and sustained drinking for some. In a sense it presents an anti-religious episode in opposition to the wholly religious contents of the Church service. The fact that a wedding is properly
concluded after both a religious ceremony and a dance have been held provides contradictory episodes within the same event. Weddings display, therefore, the interweaving of religious and non-religious views of behaviour within the fabric of a single event. They also display the intermingling of people from different backgrounds and bring together people associated with different modes of behaviour.

The actual marriage ceremony is confined to invited guests and those who are present to service it. The selection of wedding guests means inviting certain categories of people irrespective of their mode of behaviour. Close relatives of the young couple, as well as those of their parents, provide the kin for whom invitations to the whole wedding are, if not compulsory, then at least expected. Long standing friends and neighbours of the families are usually in line for an invitation as well. The next priority is to ask the close friends of the bride and groom. The whole process of inviting people to weddings can be a tricky one and care has to be taken to avoid unintentionally upsetting people by omitting their name from the list. Even if they know that they will not be able to make it to the function,
people like to be asked. Because weddings are so expensive and because most hotels and churches set a limit on the numbers they are prepared to cater for, it is very often difficult not to hurt people's feelings. One respondent said:

You just can't invite everybody. Once you start asking people it's difficult to know where to draw the line. I don't think there's any way you won't end up by offending somebody. The most important thing is to make sure that all your close relations are asked. Anybody else you want to come you can just ask to the dance.

Sometimes problems are overcome by holding an 'open' dance to which everybody is welcome. Local man Ian Fraser and his fiancee Jean, who came to live in Fearnbeg in the early 1980s, decided that, rather than holding their reception in a hotel, it would take place in Fearnbeg Village Hall. They got married in the local Free Church and then went on to have a meal in one of the local pubs. This was a relatively small affair for close family members of the bride and groom - about thirty people in all. Then, in the evening, they
adjourned to a dance in the Village Hall that was open to anybody who wanted to go. This meant that nobody could complain that they had not been invited to the wedding or that one non-relative was given preference over another. Indeed, many of those who went to the dance, and nearly every Fearnbeg family was represented, felt that this was the best way to organise such an event:

I don't know why folk bother arranging big fancy weddings in places like (Dornie). What's wrong with getting married here? It's far cheaper and you don't have the hassle of having to pick and choose who you're going to ask - everybody can come. I bet if you asked all the people who were there they would agree with me.

Another respondent - a young local man - said:

I got married in (Dornie), but I wish now that we'd had it at home. It's far better to have a local wedding where everybody in the place can come to the dance. That way we wouldn't have had the problem of deciding who to ask and
who not to ask and we wouldn't have offended anybody. The way it was we asked all our relations and tried to invite as many of the locals as we could; but it's just impossible to do it like that. You can't invite people just because they're locals and miss out others because they're incomers. Where do you draw the line? In the end we had to miss out a few of the local people ... I would have liked to have been there, and I'm sure half the people from (Fearnbeg) who came to the evening do were incomers.

The norm for weddings involving Fearnbeg people is that the close relatives and friends of the bride and groom and the more elderly of their family friends are invited to the whole wedding. The bulk of invitations to the dance only are for younger people who tend to enjoy themselves more at this last episode than they would at the church ceremony and reception. What is interesting is that membership of one or other primary associational category is not the overriding determinant of whether one is asked to the wedding or not, or to the whole affair or only the dance.
More important categories here are family and kin; neighbours; friends and peer groups. But, even taking all these secondary categories into account, it would be impossible to set up a template that could be used to forecast who would be invited to a Fearnbeg wedding - a situation that some traditional anthropologists might find less straightforward than they would like.

John Fraser and Lynn Macdonald, two young local people, got married in Dornie in the late 1980s. Shortly after they announced their engagement they attended an impromptu party in a friend's house in Fearnbeg. John's first cousin, Marianne, a local girl married to an Englishman, was also at the party. At one point during the proceedings she was overheard saying to Lynn:

I'm really looking forward to your wedding. I'm sure it will be one of the best nights we've had for a long time.

The conversation ended there, but in an informal interview with John some time later it was made clear that he and Lynn had no intention of inviting Marianne to their wedding.
She's got a bloody hard neck! I've never liked that woman, and Lynn can't stand her. There's no way that we're asking her or (her husband) to the wedding; not even to the dance. I know damn fine she expects to be asked; but it's up to us who we invite and she's definitely not coming. There's lots of other people we'd rather see there.

So, secondary categories like family and kin, although a good guide, do not dictate who will be the guests at any particular wedding. In December 1991, to take another example, a young local girl got married on the east coast and all her family were invited to the ceremony with the exception of her father. He had fallen out of favour several months earlier by leaving his wife and the family home to go and live with another woman. Local people objected to his behaviour but, at the same time, were surprised that his eldest daughter did not want him to be there on her wedding day. One wedding guest was quoted as saying:

She probably thinks that she's doing the right thing now, but I bet that in a few years time she'll be sorry that
she never asked him. I know it's his own fault and everything, but he's still her father.

Other guests were embarrassed by the situation and some felt it odd that the bride's own father was excluded while so many people who had only recently moved to live in Fearnbeg had been invited. One incomer who was at the dance said:

I know that it's nothing to do with me, but I really think that she should have asked (her father). Weddings are really family things I think. (My husband) and me don't even know (the bride and groom) all that well and we certainly didn't expect an invitation. It must have been awful for (her father) to have been sitting at home thinking that people he hardly knows were enjoying themselves at his daughter's wedding.

This young woman and her husband have only lived in Fearnbeg for four years, yet every Fearnbeg person to have been married since their arrival has invited them to their wedding dance. A
popular couple, well liked by the majority of Fearnbeg people, they mix in well and are very involved in the social life of the place. They provide a stark contrast to another young couple, David and Karen Black, who came to live in Fearnbeg at about the same time. David is not liked by the other employees in the food-processing plant where he works and makes no effort to socialise outwith the work situation. Karen was well liked initially but has since earned herself a reputation as a gossip and trouble maker. They have never been invited to a Fearnbeg wedding.

It is obvious from the above that there are no hard-and-fast rules about who should and who should not be asked to Fearnbeg weddings. The names on the invitation list, although determined to a certain extent by convention, are not drawn from any particular primary or secondary associational categories. Incomers may not be able to gain entry to the 'exclusive club' of locals, but they can attend their weddings, and belonging to the 'club' is not in itself enough to guarantee an invitation.
Local people do not celebrate a distinct communal identity through marriage practices. The primary associational categories are drawn together rather than pushed apart in a life-cycle ritual that differs only in detail from weddings throughout Scotland. Funerals, on the other hand, have a characteristic cultural distinctiveness. But still we see a remarkable ritual cohesion rather than any marking off of social boundaries, despite the differences in background and religious persuasion between those taking part.

8:3 Death is for the living?

Vallee (1954) has remarked of Catholic Barra that the customs surrounding death and the observance of funerals provided occasions of community solidarity which were island-wide in their significance. To a certain extent the same can be said for Fearnbeg. If there is any sense in which one can talk of the "Fearnbeg community" it is in connection with the respect accorded to death.

Funerals, unlike weddings, nearly always have a local base. It is very rare for a local person or someone who has lived in Fearnbeg for a long time
to be buried outwith the area. Again, however, there are exceptions to the rule. Local man Murdo Maclean died in 1988 at the age of ninety four. In accordance with his wishes his family transported his remains to the east coast to be cremated at a small ceremony in the presence of close relatives and one or two friends only. When local people heard what arrangements Murdo had made they were not surprised. One man in his seventies said:

I've known that man all my life and he's never been anything but a cantankerous old bastard. I'm sure he arranged his funeral (on the east coast) just to be awkward - there's no earthly reason why he couldn't have been buried here like the rest of his family ... He lived here the most of his life but he was never a popular man. I doubt if many people are sorry to see him gone. He had no real friends here.

The respondent went on to tell the tale of a factor who lived in Fearnbeg in the late nineteenth century and was hated by the people
there because of the way he treated them. Before he died he wrote his own epitaph because he knew that nobody in Fearnbeg would have anything good to inscribe on his headstone. Up until very recently it was common for more elderly local people to urinate on his words every time they entered the cemetery. The common thread between the story of the factor and Murdo's funeral is that both men were despised by their neighbours, and the latter's final gesture of refusing to be buried in Fearnbeg did not enhance his reputation.

Incomers will sometimes make arrangements to be buried outwith the area — in their place of origin or last place of residence — but it has become increasingly common for them to reserve a plot in the local burial ground. During the fieldwork period an elderly man who had lived in Fearnbeg for over a decade said in an interview:

I've booked my spot here now you know. I'd hate to think that I'd be carted away to be buried down south after having spent the last years of my life here. If a place is good enough to live in then surely it's good enough to be buried in.
There does not appear to be any resentment on the part of local people directed at those incomers who want to be buried in Fearnbeg. At the funeral in 1986 of a young man from the south of Scotland who died tragically on the fishing boat he had worked off Fearnbeg's coast for the previous five years a local man said.

I think it's good that he wanted to be buried here. It shows that he thought something of the place and that he wasn't just here for the sake of earning a few quid. He'd really made this place his home.

The number of people who turned out to attend the funeral was something of a testimony to the young man's popularity.

Death is a great reminder of family/local unity and obligation. A funeral is the occasion for a full gathering of representatives from local families. All adult males with any connection to the deceased in life are expected to attend the funeral - even should it be of someone as unpopular as Murdo Maclean. To pay the last respects to the dead is an obligation that cannot
lightly be ignored. For many Fearnbeg people, as for people everywhere, the funeral is as much an occasion for the living to pay their last respects, and to be seen to do so, as it is for the dead. Notice is taken of who is present and who is not and people who are absent from the proceedings can be very conspicuous.

In 1990 a large group of people gathered at the graveside of Betty Macrae, a local woman who had spent all her eighty years living in Fearnbeg. At the appropriate time, and as is the custom, eight men were called upon to come forward to 'take a cord' each to lower the coffin into the ground. As is normally the case, it was members of the deceased's family and relatives and close friends who were asked to carry out this final act. One of the names that was called out was that of local man Simon Macleod who had been Betty's next-door-neighbour for more than twenty years; but he was not there to hear it and someone else had to be asked. A contemporary of Simon's voiced the feelings of the majority of Fearnbeg people:

I don't know how he could have stayed away - I know for a fact that there's nothing wrong with him. He must have
known that he would have been asked to take a cord. He's known the woman all his life and lived beside her for years - surely he could have made the effort to come to her funeral. If you ask me it's a hell of a way to behave and it says a lot about what sort of selfish bastard the man is.

The man who was asked to take the cord in place of Simon was an incomer who had lived in the same township as Betty for nearly ten years. Another local respondent said:

It just goes to show that you don't really know the people you're living beside until it's too late. Betty was very good to (Simon) in a lot of ways and surely it wouldn't have been too much to ask that he came to her funeral. In a way it's probably fairer that (the incomer) was asked to take a cord because he was a better neighbour to Betty in the short time he lived beside her than (Simon) ever was. At least he had the decency to come to her funeral.
Many incomers will, like local people, go to every funeral that takes place in Fearnbeg, whether they were friendly with the deceased or not. One such incomer said that it is his way of showing 'a bit of respect', not only for the person who has died, but for the living:

I've been to funerals here of people I've never even met, but there's no harm in showing a bit of respect for the people you live beside. I plan to be buried here myself one day and I'm pretty sure that a few local people, as well as my own family, will be there to see me off.

Funerals then, like weddings, are more often occasions for drawing together locals and incomers than for accentuating the boundary that exists between them. They provide illustrations of rifts within the primary associational categories themselves, and between individuals in various secondary categories, more than any social differentiation between locals and incomers. In a way they show that Fearnbeg is anything but a single 'community' or even two 'communities' existing side by side; it is far more complicated
than this. It is often the secondary categories that people belong to that influence their behaviour towards one another more than the primary. There is no doubt that the two primary associational categories still exist in the minds of Fearnbeg people, but they are growing more and more to accept this existence as a fact of life that they all must live with. How they will continue to live with it in the future, and whether the division is one that will continue to be important to them, are points that are raised in the concluding chapter.
CHAPTER NINE

CONCLUSION: AN UNCERTAIN FUTURE

9:1 A novel approach

Sociologists and social anthropologists looking at 'the community' have, for the most part, concentrated upon the structures and forms of community organisation and life. (see pp. 25-29) They attempted to describe total social structures and tended towards accounts in which everything could be explained in the context of these structures. By contrast, the argument advanced here has been that such a focus tends to make unjustified assumptions about the meanings that structural elements have for the members of societies and, therefore, mistakes their significance. (1) In focussing on the symbolic this thesis offers a way out of the impasse created by the search for a structurally-based definition of community. As Anthony Cohen concludes:

the issue to be faced in the study of community is not whether its structural
limits have withstood the onslaught of social change, but whether its members are able to infuse its culture with vitality, and to construct a symbolic community which provides meaning and identity. (1985, 98)

To understand the phenomenon of community is to regard its constituent social relations as repositories of meaning for its members, not as a set of mechanical linkages. This study has concerned itself primarily with the meanings that Fearnbeg people attach to their identities and how these, in turn, affect their behaviour and, in so doing, has highlighted the limitations of 'conventional' community study type research. (cf. pp. 23-29) By focusing on the symbolic it has illustrated how Fearnbeg people use referents of identity to distinguish between locals and incomers and to maintain the cultural boundary that exists between these primary associational categories in a context of change. (2)

In choosing Fearnbeg as the setting for this research the candidate found that he was able, somewhat fortuitously, to study the local/incomer dimension without it being obscured by other
variables. Because of this, and because the candidate was in the unique position of being a sociologist investigating his own home, a more original perspective has evolved. (cf. pp. 60-64) With other studies of this kind having been conducted by 'outsiders' it is significant that the candidate in this case belonged to the study area. This is the first ethnographic study of the relationships and the divisions that exist between locals and incomers in a particular setting to have been conducted by somebody in this position and the first attempt to get really 'inside' the local's view of incomers.

9:2 The 'decline of community' in Fearnbeg?

The influx of incomers to Fearnbeg has, almost inevitably, raised the question of how far they have been responsible for destroying a 'sense of community' which, it is often assumed, had hitherto existed. The recent dislocation of Fearnbeg's social structure (cf. pp. 129-133; 165-167) has led to an ideology of 'community' being conferred upon its former qualities; a genuine sense of loss on occasion generating a harking back to a 'golden age' of life in the place which
can be contrasted with an apparently less palatable present. Since this is, in effect, as much an oblique comment on the present as a literal interpretation of the past, it has been handled with considerable scepticism. No attempt has been made to romanticise social life in Fearnbeg; rather, it has been dealt with very much in the context of the 'real world' - "warts and all". (cf. p. 90) Moreover, because assessments of the 'spirit of community' depend so much on highly variable subjective preferences and values, it is virtually impossible to generalise about whether there has or has not been a perceptible 'decline of community' in Fearnbeg.

Fearnbeg is not, and probably never has been, a single 'community'; it is in the nature of all human societies to be far more complex than that term would suggest. It is a dynamic society that continues to change and develop through time and to experience different kinds of social conflict to those that existed in the past. If Fearnbeg was ever a culturally homogenous society, which is doubtful, it could certainly not be classed as one today. (cf. pp. 23-25) (3) There are, as there have always been, a multitude of social divisions in Fearnbeg (cf. p. 163), but the most important
is the one that has arisen relatively recently between locals and incomers. These primary associational categories comprise two quite distinct social groups and there is no doubting the reality of the cultural boundary that lies between them.

9:3 Using the symbolic boundary to 'manage' change

In-migration has brought about many important changes to the social organisation of Fearnbeg and to the once distinctive local culture. It goes without saying that the stresses between the two primary associational categories are different to those that existed before new people began to move into the area in significant numbers. A primary concern of this thesis has been to describe the ways in which local Fearnbeg people have reacted, and continue to react, to the arrival of these incomers. The most obvious sign of any reaction is, of course, the fact that Fearnbeg people are divided, and are seen to be divided, between 'locals' and 'incomers'. The local/incomer dichotomy is a symbolic construction that local people in particular use to mark out and preserve their own social identities. They see themselves
as belonging to Fearnbeg in different ways from incomers and the expression of these differences takes the form of a symbolic boundary between those who feel their culture and way of life to be under threat and those who are seen to be posing the threat.

Having spent so much time investigating the local/incomer dichotomy in Fearnbeg (cf. p. 9), and taking into account his own background, the candidate is now able to say with some authority why local Fearnbeg people respond so assertively to what they see as encroachment upon their boundaries. They do so because they feel themselves to be threatened by an extrinsic force that has the potential to overwhelm their way of life and their culture. They do so because they find their identities as individuals and as local people through their occupancy of Fearnbeg's social space: as outsiders arrive and appear to covet that space then their own sense of self is felt to be debased and defaced.

People become most sensitive to their own culture when they encounter others. The apposite place at which to find their attitudes to their culture is at its boundaries. As the structural bases of the
boundary between locals and incomers in Fearnbeg becomes weakened as a consequence of social change local people resort increasingly to symbolic behaviour to reconstitute the boundary and maintain their own distinctive identity.

The boundary between the primary associational categories exists essentially in the contrivance of distinctive meanings within Fearnbeg's social discourse and provides Fearnbeg people with referents for their personal identities. Having done so, it is then itself expressed and reinforced through the presentation of these identities in social life. It is an independent variable (cf. p. 163) that Fearnbeg people use to manage change.

The use of symbolic forms to 'manage' the consequences of social change - i.e. the use of familiar idioms to adapt to and make sense of new circumstances brought about by the intrusion of an 'outside' and often dominant culture, and to limit the disruption of people's lives while allowing them to retain a distinctive identity - has been widely observed in studies of British rural communities. In these the symbolic expression of community is called for by the blurring or
weakening of the community's structural boundaries. Hence, the correlation between social change and the incidence of symbolic performance. In the case of Elmdon, this symbolic expression takes the form of an idiom, phrased in terms of kinship, to invert what are perceived as mainstream British values and thereby express the distinctiveness of the indigenous population against the newcomers. (Strathern, 1982) The symbolic demarcation of 'local' and 'incomer' appears to be prominent also in inland areas of northern England (see, for example, Rapport, 1983; Phillips, 1984) and further north in the British Isles (e.g. Forsythe, 1984; McFarlane, 1981; Cohen, 1982)

A characteristic of symbolism that provides a clue to its ubiquitous use in the defence of boundaries, particularly in circumstances of change, is that it does not carry meaning inherently. A corollary of this is that it can be highly responsive to change. Symbolic form has only a loose relation to its content. Therefore, the form can persist while the content undergoes significant transformation. We saw in Chapter Seven how local people, because of their long history of attachment to Fearnbeg, are better
placed than incomers to use and manipulate symbols of identity for their own ends. They can make virtually anything grist to the symbolic mill of cultural distance between themselves and incomers, whether it be matters of language, history, marrying or dying. By laying different emphasis or interpretation on the meaning of symbols they maintain their own individual and collective identity despite the social changes that are taking place around them. (We saw, for example, how local people used the old Village Hall as a symbol of their past lives and identity to assert themselves in the controversy surrounding the future of the building). In the same way, they attach meaning to certain kinds of behaviour to discriminate between the primary associational categories.

9:4 The relative importance of secondary associational categories.

In previous work in the field of community studies it was often taken for granted that secondary categories like class and kinship have the greatest influence on peoples' behaviour towards one another. Even those taking the local/incomer
dichotomy as their point of departure tended to explain it in terms of other dimensions. (cf. pp. 5-7) In contrast, this study was not approached with any preconceived idea about the relative importance of such 'dominant forms' (i.e. secondary categories). Rather, they were treated as sociological constructs capable of obscuring considerable variation. (Close, 1985) No social scientist worthy of that title would claim that social processes - e.g. kinship patterns, belief systems, etc. - are of equal importance in different societies. The similarity between social forms is often more apparent than real. Different localities within the same society may manifest apparently similar forms - whether these be in religion, kinship, work, politics, recreation or whatever - but this does not mean that they have become culturally homogenous. The forms themselves often become vehicles for the expression of indigenous meanings. (see Cohen, 1982)

Secondary associations then (e.g. kin, neighbours, friends), although they have not been ignored here, have been taken to be relatively less important and not of overriding concern. It has been shown, for example, that Fearnbeg people do
not attach the same importance to kinship as do Cohen's Whalsaymen. (Cohen, 1982) Nor does it constitute the framework of community life Arensberg and Kimball (1940) found in County Clare. (Arensberg and Kimball, 1940) Kinship, as with other secondary associations, is a second order principle in Fearnbeg (in comparison with those of local and incomer) and is not a category that is used regularly. It has been shown that it is not the secondary categories or forms of association themselves that are important, but how they are regarded by the people who belong to them.

The concern has been with how notions of belonging in a particular secondary category are tied to notions of belonging to Fearnbeg, succinctly expressed in contrast between locals and incomers. From this, a key idea in the thesis, it has transpired that no single phenomenon or structural characteristic can be used to explain why and how Fearnbeg people differentiate so strongly between the primary associational categories. The division can only be explained in terms of the primary categories themselves.
9:5 Local distinctiveness

This study has provided a description of the ways in which Fearnbeg people express and experience their sense of belonging to their locality. It has revealed how Fearnbeg people use the characters, or stereotypic markers, of their identity both as a 'cultural shorthand', to express a typified Fearnbeg cultural identity, and as a 'cultural longhand', to allocate individual identities within the local area. (Phillips, 1986) Furthermore, this investigation shows that the most obvious characters of local identity — 'local' and 'incomer' — constitute only two of several idioms for expressing and evaluating a Fearnbeg person's social identity. Ideas about kinship, neighbouring, friendship, etc. enable people to conceive of more inclusive modes of association. (cf. pp. 211-213)

It has also been shown that there are no objective differences between the primary associational categories; rather the categories and their markers are variable, polysemic and ambiguous. Depending upon the context, a Fearnbeg person's social identity can be either an embarrassing stigma of social marginality or a valuable
resource for the maintenance of cultural distinctiveness.

It is this sense of local distinctiveness that the candidate has tried to capture in the preceding chapters. Because of his own social background (cf. pp. 10-12) there has been an emphasis on the local, indigenous perception of the locality and, in this regard, a turning away from 'grand theoretical' analysis and cold-blooded comparative sociology. The candidate is not so naive as to claim that he offers here members' own views of their culture. What is on offer is strictly his own sociological constructions of members' views. These constructions are inevitably informed by particular theoretical inclinations and by the peculiar circumstances of the fieldwork. (cf. pp. 60-90) However, they exhibit a commitment to a view of social organisation as a means through which people order, value and express their knowledge of their worlds of experience, rather than as a structural determination of such knowledge and experience.
The thesis could stand on its own as a descriptive ethnography of Fearnbeg. It goes further than this, however, by analysing indigenous views of social association and their implications for the nature of social process in Fearnbeg. In showing to what extent social identity and membership of one or other primary associational category determines Fearnbeg people's involvement in social change and the processes of daily life Chapter Five is perhaps the key chapter. The following chapters, while putting more meat on the bones of what is a new account of contemporary rural life, expand on this theme by illustrating how Fearnbeg people 'use' the local/incomer dichotomy to preserve their identities in a structural setting. In discussing social issues (e.g. kinship, neighbouring and informal care) and special events (e.g. weddings and funerals) they serve to illustrate how the local/incomer dimension is perceived in Fearnbeg; the importance of the collective identities of 'locals' and 'incomers'; how Fearnbeg people attach meaning to certain kinds of behaviour to discriminate between the primary associational categories; and how symbols of identity are 'used' to maintain or manipulate
the social boundary that exists between the two groups. We see how the boundary is negotiated depending on context and circumstance and that it is more or less evident in different situations and different kinds of social interaction. This concluding Chapter summarises and draws together the central issues in considering the saliency of the local/incomer dichotomy in Fearnbeg today and questions what will become of the primary associational categories and the boundary that exists between them in the future.

9:7 Fearnbeg's "uncertain future"?

To ponder the future of Fearnbeg is, to a certain extent, to consider the lives of all such places. The issues upon which its life or death turn are at one level the same issues which confront and transform small places in many nations. The relatively stable population level, the full school roll, the high level of employment and its peoples' strong sense of identity and association with place are some of the many factors pointing to the fact that Fearnbeg is not a "community in decline". But for how long the outlook will remain the same it is difficult to say.
The future of the fish-farming and food-processing industries in Fearnbeg, for example, is uncertain. (cf. pp.114-118) Both fish-farms appear to be doing well as far as output of fish is concerned, but there continue to be cutbacks in staffing numbers. The food-processing business is now run on a part-time basis with only four regular members of staff. One of them said in an interview:

I couldn't honestly tell you how long there'll be anybody working there. At the moment there's not enough doing to keep the four of us going full-time. Things might pick up, but it's impossible to tell for sure. I'm just biding my time to see what happens. What else can I do? There's no other work to be had in the place at the moment and at least, this way, I might end up with a hefty redundancy payment.

Seven of the nine Fearnbeg people to have lost their jobs in fish-farming and food processing in the last twelve months have been incomers who have since left Fearnbeg. One of the locals has also moved away to take up further education. The
other is presently unemployed but hopes to start work on a local fishing boat in the near future.

In July 1991 there are still four Fearnbeg boats fishing on a full-time basis, but the future of the prawn-fishing industry - like that of crofting, fish-farming and food-processing - cannot be guaranteed. The local man who runs the cruises around Fearnbeg's scenic coastline has recently invested a great deal of money in a new boat. He will use it as a fishing vessel during the winter months but - and this reflects to some degree the changes taking place in the local economy - his main source of income will be sight-seeing tourists. (4) Tourism has increased in importance, but the short summer season is a disadvantage and the potential for the industry in Fearnbeg has yet to be fully realised. Jobs are still to be found but there is very little secure long-term employment on offer at the moment.

As we saw in Chapter Four, Fearnbeg society has changed substantially in various ways over the last thirty years. The economic pluralism of the household has gone, to be replaced by occupational specialisation; women's lives have altered considerably as modern technology has brought with
it all the usual devices to speed up the domestic chores; cash incomes have undermined the old manual self-sufficiencies; increased car ownership has created more mobility for Fearnbeg people and opportunities for regular employment outside the locality; etc., etc.. These so-called 'improvements' have all created influences to transform the local culture, yet it is the influx of incomers to Fearnbeg more than any other phenomenon that local people tend to blame for any change that they see as detrimental.

It is the requirement to absorb change that accounts for the salience of the symbolic boundary between the primary associational categories in Fearnbeg. 'Using' the incomers as easily identifiable scapegoats responsible for changes that have taken place helps to sustain a sense of continuity which is essential to local people's own beliefs in the distinctiveness of their locality and culture. To concentrate attention on the disruptive effects of the incomers alone, however, tends to divert attention from other agents of social change. It can obscure the workings of the various economic and political mechanisms that are responsible for the allocation of life chances in Fearnbeg and where the
participants might be divided along altogether different lines to those of locals and incomers. (cf. p. 163)

The basis of local/incomer conflict is far from illusory, but the social separation of the two groups and the consequent tendency for each to stereotype the other tends to magnify the conflict involved. The effect of an influx of new people to Fearnbeg has not been entirely detrimental. A comparison between Fearnbeg and any rural area that has suffered the ravages of depopulation unhindered by the arrival of incomers soon shows this. The disruptions caused by incomers have been merely a tangible symptom of change.

That Fearnbeg is changing and will continue to change is inevitable. The structures of social life will continue to alter and new divisions will continue to cut across it. As more new people arrive they will make more demands on the area and their wants and tastes will be felt as pressure for more readily available and improved services; the experiences that people bring with them of activities and organisations in other locales will continue to effect social life; new ideas will be experimented with, and some will be discarded.
while others become institutionalised; etc. Fearnbeg will be a different place in the future from what it is now, and people will continue to miss the ways of life with which they have become familiar in their lifetimes. It is conceivable that these changes will exacerbate the division that already exists between locals and incomers. But it is also possible that Fearnbeg people will come to share the ingredients of a sense of place to such a degree that differences in ways of life will be accepted, that new ways will blend with old, and that they can work through their tensions together. Whether locals and incomers will accommodate their own differences or maintain their own distinctive identities is impossible to forecast with any certainty and only remains to be seen. It is likely, however, that the social boundary between the two will exist in the minds of Fearnbeg people for a long time to come. Perhaps another study of this kind could be carried out in Fearnbeg in the not-too-distant future to assess the relative importance of the boundary and to draw comparisons with the existing situation?

It is a sad fact that, despite extensive research in several fields over the last twenty or so
years, our knowledge of contemporary life in rural Scotland is still far from complete. There still remains a great deal of scope for more incisive sociological research into social life in rural areas in the Highlands and Islands. This thesis, although a distinctive contribution to the recent revival in community study, represents only one attempt to fill an existing gap in our knowledge of our own country. More should be done to heighten our awareness and understanding of our social surroundings and to encourage others to get involved and contribute to "our knowledge of ourselves".

Carrying on from this, more should be done to protect and develop the culture of places like Fearnbeg. Ways of doing this have been thought of before, but there have been difficulties in getting ideas off the ground. (c.f. Macleod and Currie, 1992) 'Sustainability' is a key concept in the Highlands today and short-term economic or long-term conservation developments must not be put before the prospects of succeeding generations. The scenery, the natural environment and wildlife of the Highlands are certainly important, but the human element - e.g. Highland music and song, the Gaelic language and the unique
pattern of land settlement in the region - are also important. If we do not want to narrow the range of available human experience, thought and expression these elements must be preserved.

The sociologist, with a good understanding of a particular place and its people and a sound knowledge of the social and political makeup of the Highlands in general, is in a good position to get worthwhile initiatives implemented. To do so requires the commitment and involvement of development and conservation agencies such as Highlands and Islands Enterprise, Scottish Natural Heritage, the Forestry Commission, the Scottish Office Agriculture and Fisheries Department, the Crofters Union, the Scottish Landowners Federation, and selected voluntary sector groups like the R.S.P.B.. Just as it is impossible for Scotland's 80,000 Gaels to protect the language without help from outside organisations, Highland societies as we know them today can not be sustained without help from others.

It is not necessarily true that the interests of people living in places like Fearnbeg and outside agencies are divergent and cannot be resolved. The sociologist, while bearing in mind that local
opinion is important and is based on longer experience, could draw on the expertise of such organisations. Any initiatives that are taken, however, should be weighted in favour of those who live in Fearnbeg and have a long-term social and financial stake in the area. These people often feel they are pawns in bigger political manoeuvres, and have a fatalistic attitude towards fresh initiatives. They resent being patronised by outsiders who claim to know better. If for example, as very often happens, a case for any proposed conservation measures seems a gross form of interference, it is quite likely because the conservationists have made little attempt to understand the social and economic framework of the places where they wish to impose their ideas.

To act effectively as a point of contact between any outside agency and Fearnbeg people would mean living in Fearnbeg and adopting or carrying on a sympathetic lifestyle to establish or maintain credibility. A permanent commitment to the area would be crucial in any attempt to get people from different walks of life and backgrounds working together for a better future. If this piece of research does anything to encourage other social scientists to get involved in the endeavour to
combine economic, environmental, social, cultural and linguistic objectives in what would be a novel strategy for the truly sustainable development of places like Fearnbeg then it has all been worthwhile.


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