

Community Studies in Wales

An Overview

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The author, after a brief discussion of their precursors, examines the community studies dealing with Wales which appeared before 1972. Alwyn D. Rees's pioneer study is analysed in terms of the historical and geographical scope of his findings. The four studies carried out by his students and published in a single volume reflect the use of varying sociological and social geographical approaches rather than a systematic development of the themes taken up by Rees. Two studies by anthropologists writing from outside the culture which paradoxically contain more detailed information on contemporary social processes are examined as well as a second study (by David Jenkins) in a historical context distinguished by its effective use of oral sources.

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The Community Study approach is no longer in favour among sociologists working in Britain. Despite its obvious early attraction as an economical research method capable of being undertaken by a single investigator – the equivalent of taking the subway to the ethnic quarter – it has fallen into disuse, if not disrepute, during recent years. Community has come to be regarded as a somewhat intractable concept despite the sociologist's obvious concern with social bonds in everyday life. George Hillery's identification of no fewer than ninety-four different sociological definitions of community, sharing the vague assertion that community has to do with people and places, has discouraged not only sociologists but also historians, who are less preoccupied with theoretical matters, from using the concept (Hillery 1955, Macfarlane 1977). Some sociologists, like Stacey, emphasising the discipline's preoccupation with the study of social relations and institutions, have minimized the importance of the geographical dimension. In its place 'local social system' has been put forward as a more fruitful alternative to the mythical 'community,' thus allowing both the replicable investigation and systematic comparison which

are necessary for the cumulative building of theoretical knowledge expected of a scientific discipline (Stacey 1969). Community studies, it has been alleged, are too idiosyncratic and subjective in character and, therefore, nearer the art-form of the novel than the scientific treatise. Other sociologists such as Carter and Newby have rejected the inadequacies of the community study in favour of approaches which emphasise the analysis of the social relations of agricultural production and the class structure of the countryside, respectively (Carter 1976, Newby 1977). Even anthropologists who have not disparaged or forsaken the community study recognise the need 'to attempt to move beyond the community, beyond the rather ahistorical, village-focussed studies which have characterised much of European anthropology to date' in order to 'deal with the effects of such familiar processes as increasing industrialization, geographical mobility and urbanisation' (Boissevain and Friedl 1975).

The Welsh community studies discussed in this paper belong to the period before this disillusionment with the approach, and any discussion of their methodology is, perforce, historical in character. Their publication occurred

between 1950 and 1971 but, for the most part, the fieldwork on which they were based was carried out during the 1940's and 1950's with the result that they are historical in content also (A. D. Rees 1950, Davies and Rees 1960, Frankenberg 1957, Emmett 1964, Jenkins 1971). As they were all essentially studies of rural communities they relate to social conditions which prevailed during the years of agricultural prosperity which came in the wake of the Second World War. The exception is David Jenkins' second study which deliberately set out to deal with an even earlier period, the social life and culture of a rural area at the turn of the present century, a time, as it happens, during which the first contribution was made to the sociology of the Welsh countryside.

This early contribution took the form of a government report by the Royal Commission on the Agricultural Labourer prepared by Daniel Lleufer Thomas and published in 1893 (Royal Commission on Labour). This was the first attempt to describe systematically the social conditions of rural Wales. For the purposes of the Report eight Poor Law Unions were visited. The units selected each had a population of about 20,000 and were fairly evenly distributed throughout the country. In each district witnesses were examined, submissions received and a certain amount of statistical data assembled. Each Poor Law Union was dealt with in a separately written report covering such topics as the supply of labour, conditions of engagement, wages, accommodation (in cottages and farm buildings), trade unions and benefit societies. In a general summary Thomas drew attention to several differences between the districts visited, for example, the scarcity of labour in the vicinity of the south Wales coalfield and the consequent influx of farm labourers from Somerset, immigrants, who, in their turn, left the farms of the Vale of Glamorgan for the mining valleys. He also noted the migration of harvest labour in northern and western parts of Wales, the varying degree of specialization in farm work in different localities, as well as regional differences in social distinction between farmers and their servants. Lleufer Thomas was subsequently Secretary of the Royal Commission on Land in

Wales which dealt with agrarian problems such as land tenure, depopulation, housing conditions etc., and whose report was published in 1895, together with five large volumes of the evidence received by the Commission during its meetings in various parts of the country (Royal Commission on Land 1894-96). These two government reports are a key to the rural life of nineteenth-century Wales and contain a vast amount of information, much of it miscellaneous, about social conditions. Despite their importance, however, they were compilations rather than studies, collections of facts rather than analyses of processes. However, it is interesting to note that two members of the Royal Commission on Land, Sir John Rhys, Principal of Jesus College, Oxford, and Professor of Celtic at Oxford, and David Brynmor-Jones, a barrister and Member of Parliament, published a volume entitled *The Welsh People* in 1900, incorporating five chapters originally drafted by the authors for the Commission's Report and a chapter on the history of land tenure in Wales by another eminent member of the Commission, Frederic Seebohm (Rhys and Brynmor-Jones 1900). Six new chapters, mainly on archaeology and legal history, were added by the two authors, and the resulting book may, in some ways, be regarded as an early precursor of the Welsh community studies published after the Second World War.

Life in a Welsh Countryside

The first academic study of Welsh rural society was Alwyn D. Rees's *Life in a Welsh Countryside* which appeared in 1950. Rees was a student of C. Daryll Forde who was, for several years, Gregynog Professor of Geography and Anthropology in the University College of Wales, Aberystwyth. Rees' book described both as a 'social study' and 'a survey', was, essentially, an attempt to adapt the approach of the anthropologist to the study of contemporary Welsh life. The chapter headings – the economy, house and hearth, farmsteads, family, kindred, religion, status and prestige, etc. – could equally well have occurred in an anthropological monograph on a primitive society published in the inter-war period. The work

was carried out with no particular methodological approach in mind and is an example of what Daryll Forde described in another context as 'integrated description.' Few ethnographical studies of Western rural life had been published hitherto, and it is apparent from the citations in the text that Rees was familiar with the pioneering work of Arensberg and Kimball in County Clare, George C. Homans on *English Villagers of the Thirteenth Century* and Horace Miner's study of a French Canadian parish, all of which appeared between 1937 and 1943 (Arensberg 1937, Arensberg and Kimball 1940, Homans 1942, Miner 1939). None of these, however, served directly as a model for Rees's study, although certain influences may, perhaps, be discerned. Arensberg's *The Irish Countryman* was probably the volume which appealed most to Rees' deep interest in Celtic folklore. There is a general similarity of approach, but with the important difference that Rees' work contains far more statistical information about the community which he studied. Unlike any of these predecessors, too, Rees used questionnaires completed by every household in the parish for the collection of the data which he subsequently employed in his discussions of the economy, the family farm and demography generally. Since he did not adopt any form of sampling the complete data which he had assembled could be presented in the form of both maps and statistical tables. Moreover, the selection of a parish as a suitable unit for his study enabled him to draw upon census data, agricultural returns and historical documents, such as the 1842 Tithe Survey, in order to give an historical perspective to his work which, in these respects, is very much in the tradition of the social survey.

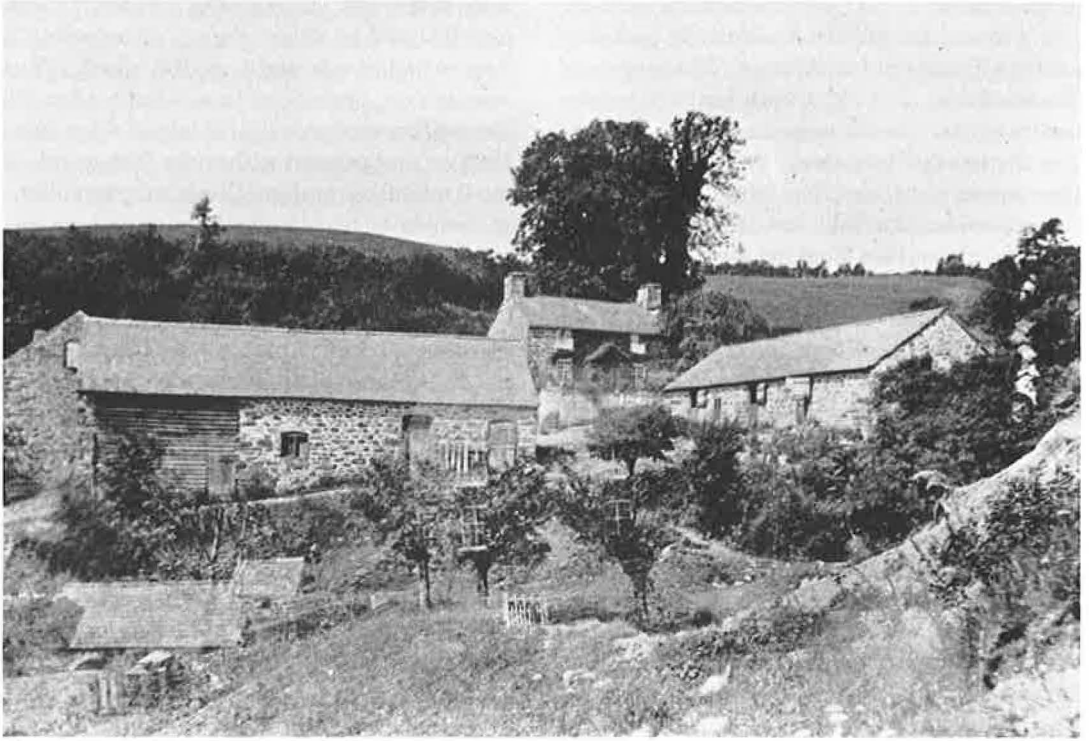
One of the major difficulties in applying an anthropological approach to the study of Western society related to the unit which was to be studied by the recognized methods of participant-observation. The Andaman Islands, the Trobriand Islands, Tikopia and other subjects of the classical monographs of the formative period of modern anthropology were all small-scale societies clearly delineated by physical features. Even where the units studied were not so small and not so well-defined, they were

at least not unmanageable and did not present insuperable difficulties. The problem of adapting the intensive methods and holistic approach developed in such small-scale entities to the study of large-scale societies was overcome, but only in part, by the adoption of the community study. An obvious factor in the use of this approach was the choice of a suitable community which was, in some way, representative of a larger unit or of a particular complex of social phenomena. Arensberg, in his Irish studies, wished to deal with the smaller farmer and his social life and chose the two small communities of Luogh and Rynamona in Co. Clare where he could study in direct detail what he had also observed in a more general manner over a larger region. Alwyn Rees' choice of Llanfihangel-yng-Ngwynfa was partly for reasons of personal convenience – he was a University Extra-Mural Tutor in the same county – and partly because it was 'a relatively secluded and entirely Welsh-speaking area which could be expected to have retained many features of the traditional way of life' (A. D. Rees 1950:v). One is reminded of Arensberg's statement to the same effect: 'when I first came to Luogh I knew only that in this remote little community of small farms I should find something of the old tradition still alive' (Arensberg 1937:22). Like Arensberg, Alwyn Rees was faced with the problem of typicalness: 'This book,' he wrote in his Introduction, 'is a survey of Welsh life as it exists in Llanfihangel-yng-Ngwynfa,' suggesting that here was a microcosm of Welsh society open to the anthropologist to interpret. Further on he added 'the social organisation of the area remains fairly representative of the Welsh uplands generally,' suggesting that Llanfihangel was not typical of Wales as a whole but, nevertheless, represented something more than Llanfihangel itself (A. D. Rees 1950). This dual standard of relevance helps to explain some of the characteristics of his study. As was suggested above, the statistics which he assembled, and many of the illustrative examples which occur in the book, were drawn from Llanfihangel parish and had a valuable particularity, but the discussion itself was framed in more general terms and was, in fact, based

on a familiarity with a much larger geographical area. The dualism was reflected, on the one hand, in the intensiveness and geographical limitation of the statistical and factual material and, on the other, in the much broader area of north Wales for which the generalized discussion was valid. The distinctiveness of the individual community and the vividness of its life, despite adequate documentation, did not fully emerge, as they did, for example, in the Welsh community studies by Frankenberg and Emmett. One feels that these two latter authors, because they did not possess a general background knowledge of Welsh life when they embarked upon their field work, based their analysis more exclusively on their direct observations in Pentreidiwaith and Llan respectively. Rees, incidentally, unlike these two authors, saw no need to conceal the identity of his community in order to feel free to present intimate and possibly embarrassing material. Unlike them, too, he made no great use of actual events which occurred in the community during his stay. Instead he relied upon the more impersonal statistical data in the recognized tradition of the social survey.

It is important to realize that Alwyn Rees' 'social study' dealt not only with social life and social structure – although admittedly not in a most intensive way – but also with Welsh culture, in the normal anthropological use of that word, as that culture was exemplified in the parish of Llanfihangel. He thus included a description of the material culture as something of intrinsic interest, and not merely to elucidate social relationships. Sociologists have naturally placed less emphasis on this aspect of his ethnography and it is frequently forgotten that Alwyn Rees' study was the first serious treatment of the material culture of a community in the British Isles. The houses of the parish were classified into distinct, if rather crude, morphological types, consisting of the various categories of 'oblong' and 'square' houses and of cottages. Rees' was also the first description of the layout of farm buildings which, characteristically, he saw mainly in terms of agricultural functions. Llanfihangel farmsteads, he pointed out, were arranged in a

particular way because that was the most convenient and labour-saving way which had evolved by local tradition. Similarly, in describing houses and cottages his ultimate concern was with the material culture as the setting for social behaviour. He recognised that the parish was too small a unit for dealing satisfactorily with building types and their evolution and pointed out that 'the history and distribution of housetypes in Britain requires much more detailed study before any definitive conclusions can be drawn as to the antecedents of those which characterise Llanfihangel today' (1950:38). He turned to the use of the various rooms by the family and, in particular, the layout of the *Cegin*, or living room, dominated by the hearth and typified in the larger farmhouses by the two tables for the family and the servants respectively. This practice he saw, following E. Estyn Evans, as belonging to the 'open hearth' tradition of western Europe as distinct from the 'oven tradition' of central Europe where the social centre was the table and not the hearth. Again, he was interested in the settlement pattern of the parish not for its own sake, as a geographer might be, but because the dispersed nature of farmhouses and cottages was to him a dominating feature of social life in the parish. What he was really interested in was the absence of a focus and of a village tradition on the English pattern. Here, he said, was a tradition which actually thrived on the absence of an organizing centre, a tradition in which funerals and weddings were more important than villages in bringing people together. Characteristically, he saw the significance of the diffuse quality found in Llanfihangel for Welsh life in a more general sense. Nonconformity thrived on this antipathy to the parish church, and even the traditional ecclesiastical centres of Wales, its four cathedral cities, were in the past little more than villages. Welsh national institutions were either shared out geographically, as in the case of University, the Library and Museum, or else became peripatetic, as in the case of the Eisteddfod, the Agricultural Show (until recently) or the administrative assemblies, courts and committees of various public and church bodies



Dolwar Fach farmstead, Llanfihangel yng Ngwynfa.

(1950:108). The history of Wales, we are made to feel, bore out Alwyn Rees' findings in his analysis of this little community.

History or, more particularly, the awareness of history, was, in certain other respects, a characteristic of Alwyn Rees' study – and this at a time when such prominent anthropologists as A. R. Radcliffe-Brown were disputing the relevance of history to the study of society. Put in crude and simplified terms, this argument, which is now out of fashion, went as follows: primitive societies had no historical records; therefore, our knowledge of their past was conjectural and unreliable. In any case, anthropologists had been able to understand primitive societies as going concerns without having recourse to their histories, so history was an irrelevant and unnecessary complication which we could do without, even where historical records existed. In contrast to this view, which was fairly prevalent at the time, Alwyn Rees, who was, after all, working in a society whose history *was* documented, was

very much aware of the past and its influence on the contemporary social life of Llanfihangel. Just as in a geographical dimension his study of the parish led him to a discussion of Welsh rural life in general, so in a historical dimension he was led to consider the vital part an age-old historical tradition had played in the creation of the community he was studying. There is hardly a chapter in the book which does not take one back to the eighteenth century, if not to the Middle Ages, to throw light on present day conditions. 'Like the solidarity of the family,' we are told 'loyalty to relatives is a heritage from the tribal past. A tribal organisation of life continued in modified form in Wales throughout the Middle Ages in contrast to the feudal system of rural England' (1950:81). One important source of information on this distant past used by Rees, as by other scholars working in cognate disciplines, was the body of legal codes and texts dating in substance from the twelfth century. Rees noted the tolerant attitude towards illegitimacy ex-

pressed in the Welsh laws in relation to succession and saw an obvious similarity in contemporary attitudes in Llanfihangel. The evidence of seventeenth and eighteenth century parish registers was seen as supporting this view, as was the general testimony of the twelfth-century writer Giraldus Cambrensis. The discussion was widened to take account of trothplight in sixteenth century England and a brief comparison of Welsh and English marriage customs in terms of historical survival. Indeed, Rees' approach here, and in other historical discussions, was that of the ethnologist rather than the community sociologist. However, he was not driven by any strong urge to record vanishing customs in detail for their own sake in the manner of the folklife researcher. His description of *y blygain fawr*, the traditional carol service, at one time held before dawn on Christmas Day but latterly on the second Sunday in January, was couched in very general terms. He was not tempted to investigate the history of this regional practice and to deal with its distinctive carols. The carol service was presented in the context of a general ethnographic account of church and chapel services (1950:126 cf.). In other words, his standard of relevance here and throughout the book was the Llanfihangel he visited and saw with his own eyes. For this reason he refrained from discussing wedding customs, which were extinct in Llanfihangel, in spite of their historical significance.

As an example of Alwyn Rees' general approach his treatment of what he regarded as a central feature of Welsh rural sociology, namely the family farm and its perpetuation, might be cited (1950:Chapter 5). Llanfihangel farms were small, less than half of them were over fifty acres. The ideal unit of production for the small farm was a family of father, mother, and two or three sons and daughters who were old enough to work. On some farms the children were too young and outside labour was required. This was supplied by farm families which had a surplus, lending, as it were, a son or, less often, a daughter, as a servant. Most servants lived with, and were treated as members of, the family. In all probability the farmer employing labour in this way had, at one time,

been a servant himself. The servant he employed also had every chance of becoming a farmer in his own right in due course. Thus even the employment of farm labour, after the decrease in the agricultural labour force since 1900 or so, operated within the framework of the family farm system. Given such conditions as these it is easy to understand why there was little social distinction between farmer and servant, and Alwyn Rees made this point, as well as giving a sound statistical basis for the account just summarized. He was, however, also concerned to see how this system operated over a period of time and how the tenancy of the family farm, and the control of resources, were transmitted from one generation to another.

Once the sons were old enough to work at home the money hitherto paid out in wages could be set aside for the future. The son who stayed at home was unpaid. Those sons who worked out had to save their wages to provide for their futures, and if the farmer could afford it he would contribute towards their farm stock when the time came. But his chief responsibility was towards the son or sons who remained at home.

The son who was to succeed to the farm could not marry while there were brothers at home or while his mother was alive. Those who married were set up as farmers elsewhere and automatically eliminated themselves from the succession. Usually it was the eldest who went in this way, leaving the youngest son at home to help his ageing parents until the day finally came when he could take over the farm and get married. Alwyn Rees showed how this influenced the age of marriage and how the ideal pattern outlined above could be upset or short-circuited, as it were, by the premature death of the father when the youngest son was too young to take over and his elder brothers had not yet been set up on their own. Again, with ample documentation, he showed how, despite these accidents, in fifteen out of thirty-nine farms of over twenty acres in Llanfihangel which were occupied by the same families for two consecutive generations it was the youngest son who succeeded his father. In three cases there were no sons, in seven cases there was only one son; these are not included in the

fifteen. Put in a negative way, only in fourteen cases where he could have succeeded did the youngest son not take over the tenancy, and these exceptions were explained by such upsetting factors as the premature death of the father and/or an unforeseen marriage to legitimize a child, or through marriage into a farm where there were no sons to take over.

Rees thus showed the prevalence of the succession of the youngest son, a feature, incidentally, which had been noted outside Llanfihangel, and suggests it might be accounted for by the operation of the family farm system and contingencies which might effect its cyclical development. However, to explain the origin of the system he turned to the social system of medieval Wales. The Welshman of the early Middle Ages, on the evidence of the native laws, retained control of his share of the land of the kindred until his death. His sons received equal shares of moveable property as they left the hearth, and after their father's death they inherited equal shares in the land itself; but on the final division of the inheritance the paternal homestead and the remaining moveable property went to the youngest son.

In a similar manner Rees' historical orientation was revealed when he saw a correspondence between the twentieth-century practice of allowing the farmwife a completely free hand in the housekeeping expenditure financed out of the sale of eggs, butter and poultry – her sphere of economic activity on the farm – and the right of the wife of a free man under medieval Welsh law to dispose of her clothing, meal, cheese, butter and milk without the advice of her husband (1950:63).

Rees' emphasis on historical continuity, it should be noted, was couched in general rather than particular terms. The medieval conditions to which Rees referred were true of Wales in general rather than of Llanfihangel in particular, of which, in any case, we know very little; and as previously noted, the present day conditions to which Rees referred are true also of other districts besides Llanfihangel. In fact, one of the fundamental criticisms which can be levelled at Rees' book is this lack of particularity – the failure to concentrate sufficiently on the local situation and on the significance of

the ways in which it is different from other surrounding parishes. Rees' preoccupation with the representative character of Llanfihangel's community and its relevance to Welsh life in general precluded a more penetrating sociological analysis. His awareness of history, too, helped to deflect him from such a course and led him to useful but perhaps less pertinent generalities.

Alwyn Rees' final chapter sought to place his study in a wider context. His 'ethnographic description,' had given prominence 'to those elements which distinguish the rural culture of Wales from that of rural England and still more from that of modern urban communities' (1950:162). Beyond this modest aim he made no attempt to relate his work to sociological theory, a field which was, in any case, quite under-developed in this country. Not until Ronald Frankenberg's study of *Communities in Britain*, published in 1966, was any serious attempt made to place the findings of British community studies in any kind of sociological framework. Rees concentrated instead on cultural-historical differences between England and Wales, again in a very general discussion. The diffuse pastoral and tribal heritage of Wales, and its dispersed settlement pattern, was contrasted with England's village-centered culture, and its weak blood ties, which prepared the English for modern urban standards in a manner which the Welsh did not experience. Out of Wales' detribalised society emerged a landowning class increasingly estranged in language, religion and politics from the rest of Welsh society, in such a way as to prevent it from performing the normal functions of a local aristocracy. Out of this situation, fired by religion, there emerged the popular synthesis exemplified in contemporary Llanfihangel and precariously dependent on direct religious experience. The greater society of England and Wales was poised to engulf the local community as this synthesis dissolved, its effects exacerbated by the pervasive results of industrialisation imported into Wales through England. Llanfihangel, furthermore, was on the verge of a dramatic social transformation with the disappearance of the historically important and dominating local landlord as ten-

ants became owner-occupiers. Paradoxically, a class solidarity which first appeared among English farmers was spreading in the Welsh hills but remaining 'unintegrated with the wider complex of traditional culture.' The 'completeness of the traditional rural society ... and its capacity to give the individual a sense of belonging, ... phenomena that might well be pondered by all who seek a better social order' were threatened by an insufficient urbanism with its 'disintegration into formless masses of rootless nonentities' (1950:170). The note of pessimism and subjective judgement introduced in the final pages of the book reflected Rees' refusal to remain academically aloof from the object of his studies, although scrupulously restricting his views until his summing-up. A small polemical book published in Welsh in 1943, at the time when he was working upon his study of Llanfihangel, made evident his pessimistic view in wartime of modern civilization with its lost ideals and materialistic attitudes. The book's title, *Adfeilion* ('Ruins'), reflected his disillusion with contemporary thought and his search for a new spiritual answer to the problems of society. His final sentences in that book and the deep feeling which they express are worth quoting in translation:

"No new inspiration will come unless there is a yearning for it, and in order to deepen that yearning we must completely despair of deliverance from the Old Regime and shake ourselves from the grip of its dead hand. If this little book succeeds in doing something to create this kind of despair it will have achieved its purpose. We must, as a society, go through the darkness of a kind of 'Pass of Conviction' now, or face a long period in the purgatory of fascist totalitarianism before reaching a New World" (A. D. Rees 1943:54).

What was remarkable was not the briefly expressed anti-urban and anti-industrial sentiment of the 'Epilogue,' but the fact that feelings so strongly felt at that time were so successfully curbed in the study itself. Later on Rees became deeply involved in Welsh political life as an influential social commentator and editor of the Welsh language journal *Barn*. His

polemical articles on Welsh affairs, and especially on the Welsh language and its official recognition, were collected and published in 1976 shortly after his death (R. M. Jones 1976). He was not to return to the field of community studies, except indirectly through his students. By the time *Life in a Welsh Countryside* was receiving international recognition as a pioneer study Rees had returned to his earlier love for folklore and mythology and published in 1961, with his brother Brinley Rees, a substantial work on that subject which constitutes a major contribution to Celtic Studies (Rees and Rees 1961). In many ways *Life in a Welsh Countryside* may be regarded as an anthropological interlude which, despite its limitations (which are more recognisable now than in 1950) constituted a major achievement. It is difficult to find a better introduction to the rural life of Wales as a whole in the first half of the twentieth century.

Welsh Rural Communities

Rees' study, as planned in 1938, was intended to be the first in a series of such studies of selected communities in various parts of Wales to be carried out by the Department of Geography and Anthropology at the University College of Wales, Aberystwyth. The original scheme was delayed by the War, and the four studies subsequently published in abbreviated form under the editorship of Elwyn Davies and Alwyn D. Rees in 1960 belong to the immediate post-war years. Although the studies in the form in which they appeared in the volume *Welsh Rural Communities* were largely complementary in approach and coverage, they were unfortunately not planned as a coordinated project of research. The absence of an over-all plan meant that there was no controlled investigation on comparative lines of significant variations in the pattern of Welsh rural life as revealed in the study of Llanfihangel. Two of the studies – those of Aberdaron and Tregaron – dealt with the functions of a rural neighbourhood and a small market town and, as the editors pointed out, were to a large extent complementary.



Aberdaron village.

T. Jones Hughes' (1960) contribution on Aberdaron, situated at the tip of the Llŷn peninsula in south Caernarfonshire, was subtitled 'The social geography of a small region' and had a somewhat different emphasis from that of Alwyn Rees. Geography was concerned with spatial relationships rather than social relationships, or, at least, with social relationships in their spatial dimension, if it dealt with them at all. Geography was also interested in man's adaptation to his environment – in how farming, settlement, housing, social groups and so on, were related to the physical setting in which they were found i.e., to the nature of the earth's surface, to climate and vegetation. Professor Hughes approached Aberdaron from this broadly ecological viewpoint. To use a comparison drawn from the world of the theatre, he was especially interested in the layout of the stage, in the scenery among which the action of the play took place. He was also interested in the plot and in the roles of the participants, but only to the extent it was neces-

sary to invoke their assistance to account for the existence of particular kinds of stage props and to explain why the action took place in one part of the stage rather than another. The vicissitudes of the farming economy and demography were dealt with in accordance with this approach. In the author's words, 'The emphasis has been laid wherever possible on the distribution of the material and non-material elements of the culture' (1960:123). In this study local topography featured more prominently than in Rees' book. One gets the impression that there was a more frequent use of place-names, for example, and micro-geographical divisions loom large: individual neighbourhoods were described in a fair amount of detail, the emphasis being placed on the differences between them in very concrete terms. One neighbourhood has two chapels belonging to different denominations, the smallholders supporting one, the other being the affair of a single family; a corrugated shed near one of the chapels had become a general stores serving

the neighbourhood. In this instance the chapel was the first manifestation of the existence of the neighbourhood; the shop came later and gave it a further nucleus. Another neighbourhood was the village of Aberdaron itself which was growing at the expense of the surrounding countryside; villagers were tenants and there was no continuous occupation by village families; Wesleyan methodists predominated. Geographical variations within the parish, in terms of what appeared to be rather superficial social categories, were chronicled at length, and one feels that the author was asserting that even the parish, which we usually take for granted as a basic unit, was a world in itself and had its own divisions and diversity which were important at a local level.

To give another example, within this small region six miles long by five miles across, Hughes saw a dichotomy between the eastern and western parts in terms of nineteenth-century tenurial conditions which he is able to trace back to medieval times. In the east there were compact and continuous farms on the sites of earlier hamlets of the same names, for example, one farm where many centuries ago there were a group of small holdings with in-

termingled fields. In the west these medieval conditions survived in part: there were still small holdings of a few scattered acres providing a meagre livelihood. This division was significant in terms of social geography, but although Hughes referred to the near-peasant nature of small-farming in Llŷn, and to its almost scavenging economy, he did not describe the ramifications of these features in the community's social life. How did the small farmer co-exist with the large farmer and what economic relationships were there between them; how were these reflected, for example, in stratification, prestige and leadership? Hughes stopped short of presenting an analysis of the community beginning with its ecological basis in the land and, to a lesser extent, the sea. He would probably have argued that this would take him beyond the limits of social geography and away from his legitimate preoccupation with the micro-region.

Emrys Jones (1960), in his contribution to the volume, dealt with the small town of Tregaron in central Cardiganshire. His analysis of the functions of this market town in many ways complemented Hughes' study of a country neighbourhood. Tregaron had a population



Townhouses, Tregaron.

of only six hundred, but was essentially urban in function. 'In rural Wales,' we were told, 'size is not an important criterion' in defining a town (1960:87). Rural Wales in this respect resembled Ireland rather than England. Even in industrial Wales many of the populous settlements were hardly towns in the usual sense, and geographers not surprisingly found it difficult to classify Welsh urban settlements with hierarchical arrangements worked out on the basis of English criteria. Emrys Jones in this study did not seek to see Tregaron in relation to any hypothetical urban hierarchy as other geographers had done; instead, he concentrated on the life of this little market town and asked himself what kind of social differentiation existed in what he emphasised was an urban settlement, despite its small size.

He distinguished four neighbourhoods in the town and was able to correlate these with periods in the economic development of the settlement. First, there was the *Llan*, the old village around the church, which from the thirteenth century had a right to a yearly fair and subsequently to other fairs and markets. Because of a toll-free route leading eastwards, cattle droving to the fairs of Barnet, Banbury and Kent added to the importance of the little village in the eighteenth century. Blacksmiths and innkeepers flourished, and a new neighbourhood around Chapel Street emerged. A third neighbourhood of small cottages built on a drained common came into existence in the mid-nineteenth century with the establishment of a hosiery trade, and Station Road, with its air of suburbia, came into being with the coming of the railway in 1866. The cattle now went by train, but the link with London established by the drovers survived the change from cattle trading to milk selling, hence the traditional mid-Cardiganshire predominance among London Welshmen, including millionaires and multi-millionaires. With this change Tregaron reverted to a small market town serving the surrounding countryside in a manner described in detail by Jones, its existence based on the inflow and outflow of goods, services and people. Within the community there was surprising differentiation in terms of occupational groups. Forty-five percent of all

employed persons were in administrative, professional, managerial and proprietorial jobs. Fifteen and one-half percent were craftsmen and specialized workers, thirty-nine and one-half percent were unskilled workers and labourers. Yet any stratification was restricted by the smallness of the community, by the face-to-face character of social relationships, and by the sectarian organisation which cut across other divisions. Family connections were important, for example, in local elections, the results of which, in terms of the votes cast for each candidate, could be calculated by any one with a sound knowledge of local families. Emrys Jones did not pursue the implications of its small size on the social structure of Tregaron beyond citing interesting examples. His aim, rather, was to present a comprehensive portrait of the town's social characteristics which could be compared in general terms with other portraits of communities.

The contribution by the present writer to *Welsh Rural Communities* (Owen 1960) dealt with a single aspect of the life of a community, Glan-llyn, located only fifteen miles northwest of Llanfihangel but separated from it by the geographical barrier of the high moorlands of the Berwyn. Much of the formal social life of Glan-llyn in 1949 took place in the fifteen small neighbourhood chapels: there was one chapel for every sixty-three inhabitants in this overwhelmingly nonconformist community and each chapel was a centre for meetings on week nights as well as on Sundays. I found myself asking why it was that these nonconformist chapels which had been expressly founded to house congregations which had turned their backs on the world had become the scene of so much of the community's formal social life. One way of answering this question, it seemed to me, was to turn to the history of Llanuwchllyn, for which, as it happens, there exists a fair amount of relevant documentary material. In the eighteenth century and later the district was well known for its stocking industry which was carried on in the farmhouses during the winter evenings. Neighbours assembled on the hearth, each bringing his or her needles – men knitted, too, in those days – to knit stockings and to enjoy a sociable evening spent in sing-



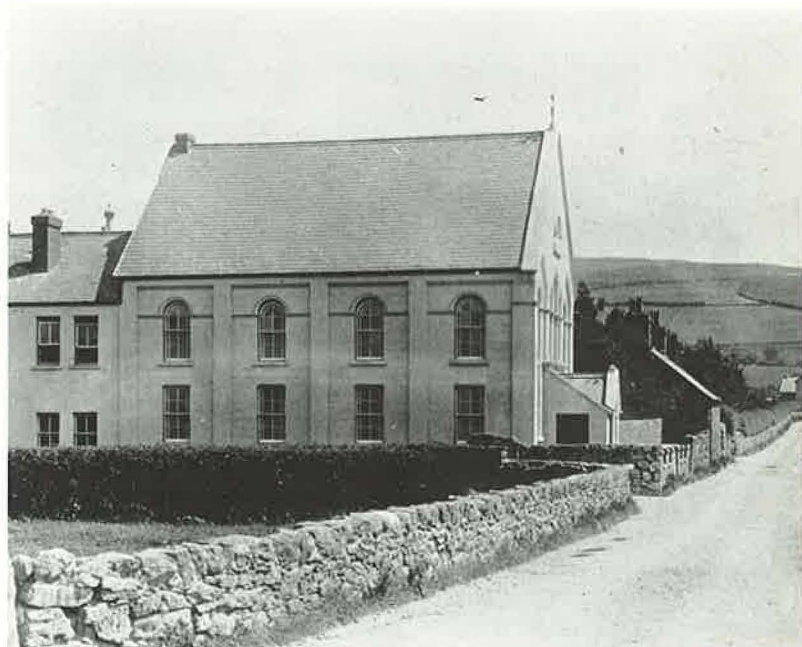
Hay-making, Llanuwchllyn.

ing impromptu verses, gossiping and telling stories. These informal meetings were held in different houses on different evenings and were an important part of the social life of the community. The eighteenth-century nonconformists took advantage of these 'knitting nights' and turned them into preaching meetings and prayer meetings. This proved extremely successful, and in the early nineteenth century numerous small chapels were built in the various neighbourhoods to house the growing congregations and the increasingly frequent activities. But it was not only the religious meetings that were transferred from the isolated farmstead. Some of the harmless competitive entertainments found on the hearth were also transferred and incorporated in the secular side of chapel life where they took root. Thus it is possible to explain in historical terms how the situation in Glan-llyn came about; but this, of course, tells us nothing about the significance of this alignment of formal secular activities with religious organisation, nor, for that matter, does it help to explain why, in the first place – and quite paradoxically – an originally puritanical system

came to embrace such wordly activities. These features called for a sociological explanation which took account of the nature of religious sects and their transformation over a period of time.

It was possible to compare the situation in Glan-llyn with that in a Hebridean community which resembled it in many ways but which did not have the same close connection between religious and secular social life (Owen 1956). In fact, so far as it is possible to judge, the Hebridean community, in this respect, resembled the Glan-llyn of the early nineteenth century. The social rift between church and world was basic to the Hebridean situation. Secular entertainment remained wholly outside the influence of the church, and the continued existence of traditional forms such as folk-dancing, story-telling, and bagpipe-playing was largely to be understood in terms of this factor. In Glan-llyn, where secular entertainment had been brought within the sphere of the chapel's activities, these forms had been eliminated a century ago. Since church leaders in Glan-llyn actually organized entertainment their control over its content was much greater

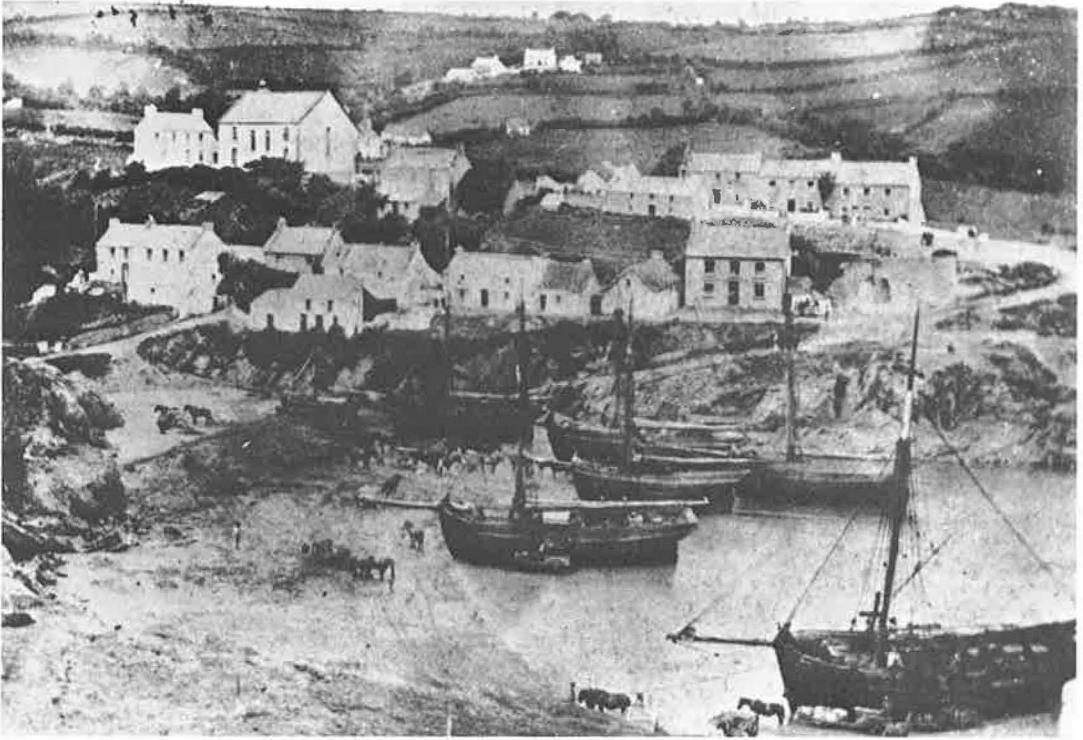
Methodist chapel,
Llanuwchllyn.



than that of the Presbyterian elders of the Hebrides who condemned something which they were powerless to influence. Even in wider terms the leaders of the Hebridean churches had less influence in the life of the community at large, whereas Glan-llyn's county and local councillors were all deacons or elders in their local chapels. Perhaps most important of all, in Glan-llyn and similar communities denominationalism was a far stronger element in social life, probably because of the way in which the original religious cleavage had been re-emphasised by the alignment of week-day secular activities on sectarian lines: one tended to vote for a fellow Methodist, to buy from a fellow Methodist, to canvas for a fellow Methodist, to let a farm or a house to a fellow Methodist – other things being equal. In Glan-llyn, the lines denoting significant differentiation in the community in this respect were vertical: they separated parallel social systems each of which had a balanced pattern of social relations covering both religious and secular activities. In the Hebridean community, while vertical lines existed, they were less important than the horizontal line which cut across each of the so-

cial systems separating church members from mere adherents. Within each social system the relationships above the line (that is, among members) were much more intensive, and those below it much less intensive than in the corresponding social systems in Glan-llyn. Secular recreation, in fact, was incorporated in the social life of the chapels at a time when, in the mid-nineteenth century, the religious organisation of Glan-llyn was changing from that of the Hebridean pattern to that of modern Wales. At this particular stage, now that the doctrinal 'charter' of the religious groups no longer emphasised the separateness of sacred and secular, the new alignment emerged.

David Jenkins' (1960) study of Aber-porth, a coastal village in south Cardiganshire, touched on a similar aspect of social life, but he found a rift in the community, not on denominational grounds, but on lines not unlike those found in the Hebridean community. Whereas the cleavage there was in formal terms between members and non-members of churches, the cleavage in Aber-porth existed within a social pattern similar to that I have just described in Glan-llyn. Jenkins began by examining the



Aber-porth in the last century.

terms used by the inhabitants of Aber-porth to describe categories of people in their midst. A classification based on the sociological convention of dividing people into upper, middle and lower classes, he suggested, was unreal and unrecognized in the behaviour of local people. The categories used locally were quite different and had distinct moral overtones: on the one hand there was *Pobl y chapel* ('chapel people') and, on the other, *Bois y pop* ('the pop boys') and *Pobl y dafarn* ('pub people'). To describe these two contrasting groups he used the terms *Buchedd 'A'* and *Buchedd 'B'*, *Buchedd* being a Welsh word denoting behaviour and, more particularly, a 'life-style' with certain moral overtones.

The two *Buchedd* groups were differentiated on the basis of social interaction, but Jenkins stressed that the common interests originate in the group and not vice versa. *Buchedd 'A'* people tended to be regular chapel-goers, teetotallers and thrifty. Here it was the pattern of expenditure and not of income which was sig-

nificant. 'Thrift,' said Jenkins, 'is compatible with high or low earnings' (1960:15). House ownership statistics did not correlate simply with earnings, but also with values and attitudes governing how the earnings were spent. Eighty four percent of *Buchedd 'A'* members were owners of the houses they occupied, as compared with only forty-six percent of group 'B.' *Buchedd 'A'* people, too, respected education both for its own sake and as a means of 'getting on in the world.' *Buchedd 'B'* had the reverse of these features: *Buchedd 'B'* people were neither sabbatarian nor teetotallers; they spent more on immediate pleasure and wanted their children to go out to work so that they could earn money. The distinctions between the two groups were rather more subtle than suggested here, but David Jenkins – who, unlike his co-authors, was a native of the area he studied – knew the inhabitants sufficiently well to classify them all into these two categories. Sixty percent of them were in the *Buchedd 'A'*, forty percent in *Buchedd 'B.'* What is

more, whole families lay within each of these two categories and tended to marry within their appropriate *Buchedd* groups. Kinship thus did not cut across these groupings, creating conflicting allegiances, although it did provide an element of differentiation within the groups. Occupation, however, was tied up with the *Buchedd* structure, but not in a straightforward manner: *Buchedd* 'A' people attached importance to prestige occupations, though these were not necessarily thought of in simple financial terms. But of the *Buchedd* 'A' people only a third were in such prestige jobs, the remaining two-thirds being what Jenkins described as the most characteristic Welsh group – i.e., manual workers who were also Sunday school teachers and deacons and whose ambitions for their children were that they should find jobs in such prestige occupations as the professions, teaching and banking. Among the *Buchedd* 'B' people nearly all were in non-prestige jobs, and their children usually followed suit. Jenkins cleverly showed how the system of values represented by this *Buchedd* structure influenced the pattern of emigration from that area. *Buchedd* 'A' people, he pointed out, could usually satisfy their ambition to put children in prestige jobs only by sending them outside the community, especially now that the Merchant Navy connection – and the possibility of becoming a captain which this once offered – had declined. The rural exodus, he suggested, was proportionately a far heavier drain on the intelligentsia than on other groups. It was the potential leaders, the potential supporters of the whole pattern of activities of *Buchedd* 'A' ideals – the debating society, the local eisteddfod, etc., who were drained away, ironically because of the ideals themselves. The *Buchedd* 'A' ideology, one might say, contained the seeds of its own impoverishment, if not of its own destruction.

Turning from the present to the past, David Jenkins sought an explanation of the *Buchedd* 'A' group and its ideals in the nonconformist movement of the last century, and stressed the importance of the religious 'society' (*Seiet*) created by the Methodist revival. The *Buchedd* 'A' group, he suggested was a much secularized modern descendant of the religious society –

the society of believers which kept itself aloof from the world. There had been no religious revival since 1904, but the *Buchedd* pattern had perpetuated itself beyond the original religious impetus, despite its indirect encouragement of emigration to get on in the world. The *Buchedd* 'B' group was the old 'world' in the theological sense, leavened to some degree by the yeast of the Elect. In 1949, both *Buchedd* groups existed within an environment of Christian values – the chapel was still there in the background even if one did not attend regularly. In terms of a social hierarchy, Jenkins suggested that nonconformist values provided a status system of its own, based on a *Buchedd* or partly moral style of life, which operated quite apart from that of the society at large. Beneath the landowning gentry in the accepted social class hierarchy there was the *Buchedd* status group arrangement which, in Jenkins' view, submerged distinctions based on other grounds (such as occupation) although it did not obliterate them. In Aber-porth, he concluded, the latter constituted secondary differences within the overall *Buchedd* group structure.

Of the studies included in *Welsh Rural Communities* David Jenkins' Aber-porth, particularly his treatment of the *Buchedd* division, has attracted most attention among British sociologists. On the one hand, it has seemed to other writers with an intimate knowledge of Wales to possess a wider application to the study of Welsh society in general. In an interesting discussion of the 'Folk of Wales: Fact and Ideal' Dr. Prys Morgan (1967) suggested that in other areas of Wales the consistency of the status group might vary internally, giving a *Buchedd* 'A' minus or a *Buchedd* 'B' plus, as it were, as well as in the relative strength of the two groups. Jenkins' estimate that sixty percent of the people of Aber-porth belonged to group 'A' and forty percent to group 'B' might well not hold for other communities where the local 'mix' might reflect different historical developments and circumstances. In an industrial setting no doubt the class differences underemphasised in Jenkins's study would come to the fore. In relating the Aber-porth evidence to social stratification in British society as a whole, Graham Day and Martin Fitton (1975)

made the important point that the people of Aber-porth existed within the class structure of the engulfing society, even though that structure might not be observable.

Village on the Border

Ronald Frankenberg's study *Village on the Border* was published in 1957 and thus appeared before *Welsh Rural Communities*, although the fieldwork was actually carried out in 1953–54. The village in question, Glyn Ceiriog, Denbighshire, was concealed under the name 'Pentrediwaith,' literally 'village without work,' pointing to the fact that the community had lost the economic basis of its existence when its slate quarries were closed before the Second World War. This characteristic was central to Frankenberg's analysis, but we are not told whether the choice of Glyn Ceiriog was governed by it or whether this was a pure accident which came to light during the field investigation. Glyn Ceiriog was not typical of rural Wales, but the selection of a representative community was far from being Frankenberg's purpose. His concern was with the study of social processes observable in a single place studied over a single year although the findings might have a wider relevance.

Frankenberg appeared to have been strongly influenced in his approach by the work of Professor Max Gluckman of Manchester who, in fact, contributed an Introduction to the book. Gluckman's theoretical leanings are apparent in all his published work, the best known and most accessible of his books being *Custom and Conflict in Africa*, published in 1955. As the title suggests, Gluckman (1955:2) emphasises conflict as a fundamental process in social life:

"Men quarrel in terms of certain of their customary allegiances but are restrained from violence through other conflicting allegiances which are also enjoined on them by custom... Conflicts are a part of social life, and custom appears to exacerbate these conflicts, but in so doing custom also restrained the conflicts from destroying the wider social order."

Even the conflicts conflict and paradoxically lead to cohesion.

The emphasis in this approach lies in a dynamic view of social life: decisions taken in actual situations, or behaviour observed in the course of a sequence of events, are capable of being analysed in terms of the relative strength of conflicting allegiances. One anthropologist, J. A. Barnes (1959:13–15), described Frankenberg's book as the observation and analysis of politics round the village pump, politics being used here in the sense of action seeking to influence the decision of policy, or actions associated with competition in terms of power. These topics, in fact, were Frankenberg's main preoccupation, and he found his raw material in his own direct and detailed observation of events which took place in Glyn Ceiriog during his year of residence there. His descriptions of the culture of Glyn Ceiriog were minimal, attitudes were described because they helped to explain the moves made by people on committees in terms of contrasting allegiances, and even social structure in formal terms was not followed up in detail. To use Barnes' words 'we can see a community in action and not merely a set of role-playing, norm-oriented persons going through their paces' (1959:13–15). The cultural detail was left out because it was either familiar – e.g., the rules of football, or of committee procedure – or because it had been dealt with in general terms by writers such as Alwyn Rees and did not need to be repeated, since it was not of direct concern to the anthropologist's purpose as he saw it. Studying a community with a known history and environment enabled him to dispense with much of the introductory material on ecology and general background which normally prefaced social anthropological analyses (Frankenberg 1957:148). His main interest was in the social processes stripped of their cultural idiom and reduced to functional terms.

Glyn Ceiriog, as was noted briefly, could not offer any work to its menfolk who, therefore, had to make a daily journey down the valley to miscellaneous jobs in nearby towns and on building sites. Thus Glyn Ceiriog women who remained at home interacted with each other more than did the menfolk, and there was a

Eisteddfod committee,
Glyn Ceiriog.



rift in the village between the sexes. This was reflected in several ways: the womenfolk could discuss local affairs together and come to a decision as a group much more easily than could the men; such organisations as the British Legion and the Football Club had separate women's sections which were powerful; pubs were the men's territory, the women had their sewing classes; women's organisations on the whole flourished, men's did not. In peasant societies the division of sex roles forges the family into an organic unit because of the complementary nature of the male and female roles, a point emphasised in Arensberg's study of the Irish countryman. In Glyn Ceiriog this division had extended outside the elementary family and created a real division within the community. Apart from this, Frankenberg saw further divisions on class and economic lines, for example, between local people and outsiders who had moved in – this had a key significance as we shall see – between church and chapel, between English speakers and Welsh speakers. These, however, were bequeathed to Glyn Ceiriog by divisions derived from its past and from the larger society in which it existed, i.e., they were national divisions found locally. All these divisions, of course, cut across each other, and conflict balances conflict to produce order rather than chaos. However...

'despite such cross-linkages between groups there is always a danger that their mutual hostility may awaken. The attempt to avoid such open conflicts which disrupt social relations within the village is a very marked feature of the social life of Pentredeu. This has several minor effects on the day-to-day behaviour of villagers. Thus Pentre people rarely give the lie direct to statements made in public, or even to those made in private by people with whom they are not on very intimate terms. Villagers rarely refuse a request, but delay indefinitely fulfilling one of which they disapprove. Committee minutes often leave out names and details, for committees of the village, like the village itself, must maintain an appearance of impersonal unanimous even leaderless unity' (Frankenberg 1957:18).

To avoid awakening dormant hostilities, 'strangers' were brought into an activity to take the responsibility for decisions and withstand the unpopularity of leadership. 'Stranger' was a shifting concept, and a 'stranger' in one context was not a 'stranger' in another. Even Frankenberg was not a stranger in certain situations. A local person who was not actually born in the village might be a stranger in certain other situations, but outsiders, of course, made ideal 'strangers' in this sense, and were often made scapegoats.



Baptist procession, Glyn Ceiriog.

In this view of community life as a perpetual state of concealed hostility combined with an obsession to prevent, at almost any cost, an open breach, two aspects of social activity were of great significance: first, committee practice, when participants did their utmost to avoid committing themselves in situations of almost open conflict; and, second, gossip, which was informal and which both united and divided the community. 'Gossip,' said Frankenberg (1957:21) 'was used as a vehicle through which criticism and conflict could be expressed without ripening into open hostility. Private gossip was, in a sense, a licensed method of airing public grievances in private.' 'Gossip, and even scandal,' said Gluckman in an article on these two features, 'unite a group within a larger society, or against another group.' 'By gossiping,' he added, 'we maintain our membership of a group and exclude outsiders: there is no such thing as 'idle gossip.' Disputes, quarrels, gossip and scandals have the effect of maintaining the village as a village and of preventing it

from becoming a collection of houses like a housing estate. 'Town planners,' wrote Gluckman, 'are very anxious to turn housing states into communities: they should develop scandal in them. Perhaps it is their duty to provide cause for it' (Gluckman 1963: 307–316). Gossip, as a social process, was far more central to Frankenberg's analysis than in Alwyn Rees' book, where it was described in much more general terms.

Frankenberg's investigations involved looking for the way in which such social processes operated in the activities which were prominent during his period of residence in the community. In one chapter he dealt with the role of the parish council in its attempt to bring work to the village and to oppose the alteration of a scheme for a bilateral secondary school (1957:Chapter 3). In relation to the outside world the parish council was impotent; nevertheless, its members were drawn from among the village's working population and could fairly be said to represent it. The rural

district council and county council which possessed power consisted of partial outsiders who had an ambivalent position, explaining the community's wishes to the council and vice versa. The squabble over the new school described by Frankenberg, incidentally, brought into prominence the dormant church/chapel division.

One of the most fascinating features of *Village on the Border* is the detailed study of the significance of recreation for the villagers. The Football Club and the Carnival, Frankenberg felt, affirmed the existence of Glyn Ceiriog as a community in the eyes of the outside world and to the villagers themselves, despite the loss of the community's economic basis. The internal rifts and conflicts, however, proved too powerful, and the people of Glyn Ceiriog had to abandon their Football Club and their Carnival during his stay and shortly afterwards. Frankenberg gathered this had also happened in the past when they had dispensed with their brass band and their choir. Efforts were made to avoid conflict, but once the breach was made patent it spread through the village. The face-to-face nature of social contacts, and the multi-

licity of ties which close residence in an 'isolated' unit brings about, made this spread inevitable. After a period, the village became so divided that particular activities could not continue. Unfortunately, conflicts were carried over from one form of recreational activity to another, and new conflicts engendered in disputes over football and carnivals extended back into everyday life and caused further division within the village.

No attempt has been made to summarize Frankenberg's detailed treatment of the committee meetings and the attendance and maneuvers of members, and consequent repercussions on the community. The chapter on 'The Politics of Recreation' is well worth reading if only as an example of intensive sociological reporting and analysis. In contrast to the dualism in Alwyn Rees' work, between local detail and the general validity of his conclusions, in Frankenberg's analysis there exists a rather different kind of dualism. This is between the underlying social realities – the divisions and the processes of conflict – and the first-hand material, based on minute observation, which brings these to light. The fight for



Football team 1920–21, Glyn Ceiriog.

work, the squabble over a school, the football club and carnival episodes were all ephemeral phenomena thrown up by these processes and, in turn, exemplifying them. Had Frankenberg visited Pentre during a General Election, or during a local election year, or when the Sunday Opening battle was in full spate, or during a chapel split, then his material of observation would have been quite different. Each, however, would have presented a social drama capable of being used as a unit of social analysis. Frankenberg in another work, quotes Victor Turner's view of this concept:

"The social drama is a limited area of transparency in the otherwise opaque surface of regular, uneventful social life. Through it, we are enabled to observe the crucial principles of the social structure in their operation and their relative dominance at different points in time" (1966a:143).

His study may be said to be a vindication of this approach.

A North Wales Village

Isabel Emmett's book *A North Wales Village*, which appeared in 1964, is, like Frankenberg's, a study in depth with much illustrative anecdotal material. For the same reason the identity of 'Llan,' the parish in question, was concealed. It is not difficult, however, to identify the community as Llanfrothen situated in the foothills of Snowdonia in the old county of Merioneth. The choice of the area of study was governed by purely personal reasons, Emmett, who had been trained as a social anthropologist at the London School of Economics, having married into the community. Her fieldwork was carried out as a full participant in local life over the four years 1958-62. Having little faith in the usefulness of information gleaned by questionnaires as a means of understanding social behaviour, she forsook 'the door-to-door method because taking the role of house canvasser would have clashed with my desire to participate in parish activities as much as possible.' Her new information was gathered 'primarily in the hope that it will lead to insight

rather than for the purposes of comparison,' although it might be 'usable for comparisons with similarly intensive studies.' The 'isolated facts of the kind collected by a team of technique-laden surveyors' are not only dull, they are not true in any important sense unless they are related to each other in a general analysis of the social situation. Furthermore, as an unfamiliar society (to her) north Wales was not amenable to survey methods; instead, she sought to gain insight into it. The difficulty, of course, is that it is often impossible to test the validity of knowledge gained through insight. One can feel that it is true, just as one can feel that a poem, novel or painting is true. One of the main tasks of social anthropology, she felt, was to make meaningful to other people the apparently senseless or mischievous or strange activity of any group. To be an outsider (at the outset, at least) has the virtue of possessing an external standard of relevance to provoke insight. To Emmett such a comparison presented three paradoxes which her book set out to explain, namely the absence of class distinction, the importance of salmon-poaching which had no apparent motive, least of all economic, and the high rate of illegitimacy in a chapel-dominated society (Emmett 1964: preface).

Emmett's analysis of the first paradox led her to identify a social hierarchy in which, beneath the apex represented by the local landowners, there existed a basic Welsh/English opposition manifesting itself in the two parallel status systems or opposing prestige ladders. The English system, that of the larger engulfing society, was the familiar arrangement based on the social grading of occupations. The Welsh system was conceived in terms of Welshness, that is, climbing the Welsh ladder led one to assert Welshness and to identify oneself with native tradition - towards which Emmett, incidentally, was particularly sympathetic. It was the Welsh prestige ladder which unified the parish, and Emmett felt that her analysis of this feature might have a wider application to other parts of the world in their attempts to resist Anglo-Americanisation. Young people differed in their response to the attractions of these opposing prestige ladders: there were

those who had become anglicised in order to be in the swim; there were others who were influenced by the new ways; yet others were 'resisters' who felt that to emigrate was to betray one's roots; while another category consisted of the 'regretters' who had become anglicised and who, in their search for their roots, often became politically conscious.

In putting forward her concept of two opposing value systems Emmett rejected the *Buchedd* 'A/B' division of David Jenkins. The Welsh value system she maintained was a relatively coherent mixture of chapel and all that chapel was against. In fact, in emphasising the English/Welsh conflict she appeared to telescope the two *Buchedd* groups into one paradoxical group united only by the stress laid on Welshness. Her emphasis on the English/Welsh conflict may have resulted from the fortuitous choice of Llanfrothen which had a sizeable colony of English people living at least part of the year in the cottages left empty by depopulation, a feature which became more prominent throughout the whole of northwest Wales in subsequent years. In Llanfrothen, the landowner, Sir Clough Williams-Ellis had encouraged the settlement of a colony of English intelligentsia, thus giving the area the nickname of 'the Greenwich Village of Wales.' The constant emphasis on partisanship which Emmett made in her analysis would appear to have been exacerbated by the chance occurrence of an 'Englishry' and a 'Welshry,' to use historical terms, in what was, at the time, a rather exceptional village. In wider terms one can argue that the sociology of Llan as depicted by Emmett was the sociology of plantation.

Emmett's analysis of the second paradox, namely the prevalence of salmon-poaching without economic incentive, depended very much on her insight. It is difficult to contradict but equally difficult to find totally convincing. Poaching, which took place largely out of season when the fish could not be sold, was part of the partisan battle against officialdom. All the menfolk went poaching during the five or six weeks in late Autumn when the fish came upstream to spawn. Because it was illegal, and because both police and bailiffs were on the look-out, it became a battle of wits between

outside authority and the local grapevine which involved almost everybody in the local community. Llan people won few open battles with English officialdom in the class warfare, but this was one battle which they did win. Poaching, she suggested, was part of being Welsh, and the conspiracy which it brought about activated the community and drew people together, cutting across village quarrels, differences in income, religion, sex and age; it symbolized unity, fellowship and solidarity.

"The motives in the people's minds as they engage in the action which brings them together are non-economic. The result of their fusion is that their mutual co-operation in economic affairs is helped, and I do not think the poaching conspiracy would continue in its present strength if those involved in it needed each other's support and service less" (1964:76).

Motives, however, were not her primary concern as an anthropologist: it was the outcome of the activity to which she felt she should devote her attention, that is, solidarity. Formerly the chapel was the central symbol of Welshness which brought people together. This was no longer the case, according to Emmett participation in the salmon poaching conspiracy, and in the anti-English feeling generally had become a much more important and general badge of Welshness than the chapel.

Emmett's third paradox was that of illegitimacy in a chapel-dominated society, which, she hinted, was part of the coherent mixture of all that chapel stood for and all that it was against. The incongruousness of ideal and actual behaviour was, of course, nothing new, and she suggested that where it existed people had to pretend not to know half of what they actually knew about each other if they were to live together harmoniously in a small community. We are back again on the subject of gossip, not in its active form, as in the grapevine connected with poaching, but in the negative form of feigned ignorance and avoidance. 'Gossip is the commodity which is exchanged most in country life: it is the currency of social relationships and the Llan man saves it up to help himself and his relatives' (Emmett

1964:117). Withholding gossip, she emphasised, kept dangerous situations from breaking out and helped to reconcile the verbal adherence of the chapel and the frequent breaches of it in practice. As in Frankenberg's study, gossip had a central place in the social life of the little community.

Emmett's book, although avowedly idiosyncratic in its reliance on insight, had the virtue of relating the author's findings to other known studies, as in her treatment of Jenkins's *Buchedd 'A/B'* findings in the analysis of Llan's prestige ladders. She also examined Frankenberg's ideas about the role of the 'outsider' in Glyn Ceiriog and found that in Llanfrothen the outsider was not made a scapegoat, largely because the language difference was more prominent and because there was no threat of obliteration of the community's identity. Outsiders in Llanfrothen were intermediaries rather than scapegoats. The operation of the scapegoat principle took place on a higher level: it was England and the English – and not individual Englishmen – who were blamed for major ills. Like Frankenberg, Emmett identified one of the features of social change which were to become significant in the nineteen-sixties and seventies. The polarisation which she discerned in Llanfrothen later manifested itself in the spread of such organisations as the Welsh-speaking women's movement *Merched y Wawr* and the Welsh Language Society in response to the spread of second homes and retirement immigration, just as the economic decline, the consequences of which Frankenberg investigated in his 'village without work,' was to become true of other villages transformed into commuter settlements.

The Agricultural Community in South-West Wales

The final work to be considered in this paper is David Jenkins' *The Agricultural Community in South-West Wales at the Turn of the Twentieth Century*, published in 1971, based on fieldwork carried out in 1958–61, but relating, as the title indicates, to a much earlier period. The volume cannot properly be regarded as a continuation of the author's earlier study of

Aber-porth, although it deals with an adjoining district. The historical emphasis is dominant and the scope of the work is much broader. In some respects it may be described as a sequel to Alwyn Rees' pioneer contribution but relating to an earlier 'ethnographic present' and drawing in considerable detail on oral history. The approach is broadly ecological with the aim of showing 'how the form of the society was related to the needs of working the land' (1971:1) but includes a detailed analysis of religion, including the religious revival of 1904–5, the last of the great religious upheavals of the nineteenth century, which exerted a powerful influence on South Cardiganshire. The volume is, in fact, a major contribution to the historical anthropology of Wales in which the author succeeds in his aim which is 'to study the structure of the society, and the changes in that structure during the lifetime of those who are now aged' (1971:5). It is not a community study in the strictest sense, being concerned 'with the structure of a society that does not consist of discrete communities' (1971:9). However, just as Alwyn Rees used data relating to Llanfihangel-yng-Ngwynfa to provide a statistical basis for a discussion of wider application, so David Jenkins chose one parish, Troed-yr-aur, for detailed investigation while stressing the broader relevance of the work.

In his work on Aber-porth Jenkins contributed his important analysis of the *Buchedd 'A'* and '*B*' status groups in a largely egalitarian local community in which the holders of authority and owners of property were generally absent. In the broader-based historical study the landowning gentry came within the author's purview, together with the landlord-tenant system as it existed in south Cardiganshire. One of the most interesting sections of the book, however, is that which deals with ecologically-based relationships beneath the social stratum of the local gentry before the widespread introduction of harvesting machinery (1971:Chapter 2).

In south Cardiganshire the mild climate and plentiful rain gave a prolific growth of grass during the summer months. This was used by local farmers to feed and fatten calves born in

the previous spring, the surplus milk being made into salted butter to be sold in tubs to merchants in the small market towns. When the grass stopped growing in the autumn the young cattle were sold off in local fairs, but, for those which were retained on the farm fodder had to be provided locally in the form of hay, root crops and barley. To obtain these the farmer had, of course, to plough his land, and so required horses. These also required fodder, and so the farmer needed to grow oats to feed his horses as well as for human consumption in the form of traditional foods such as porridge, oatmeal and other milk and butter milk based 'spoon foods.' Since there was little money to buy artificial fertilizers, the farmyard manure which had accumulated over the winter months was the only means used to keep the cultivated land fertile, apart from the rotation of crops. Such was the ecological basis of the tenant farmers' operations.

In this local economy thirty to thirty-five acres were needed to support a married couple without a supplementary income, and a farm of this size would have had one pair of horses worked by an unmarried farm servant who was hired annually and who lived with the family. Larger farms of up to 150 to 200 acres, of which there were but a few, might have had two pairs of horses and two farm servants. Such farms also employed labourers on a weekly or daily basis for hedging and ditching. However, only one-fifth of the households in Troed-yr-aur parish fell into these two classes. There were far more smaller farms of fifteen to twenty acres which could only maintain one horse, as well as even smaller holdings of under fifteen acres which could only manage to keep a single cow. Below them came the cottagers 'the people of the little houses' who had only a garden and a pig and who usually supplemented their income with earnings from labouring or from a craft. In the course of his investigations Jenkins found that four-fifths of the household, those with under thirty acres of land, depended in one way or another on the remaining one-fifth. Even farms of between thirty and sixty acres depended on the larger farms for the services of a bull, which was an expensive but vital animal to keep in this

cattle-rearing economy. This dependence was, indeed, better described as interdependence, since the farms, including the larger farms, in turn, had to rely on the smallholders and cottagers for seasonal help during the hay, corn and potato harvests. In fact, a network of symbiotic relationships existed in the district which was basic to its social structure at the turn of the century.

This symbiosis was to be seen in many forms. All the farms and smallholdings which required the services of the bull incurred a debt which was paid in the form of free labour during the hay harvest, in most cases one day for each cow served. Similarly, small farms with only one horse needed to borrow another horse from a larger farm in order to plough, and thus owed obligations which were again repaid at harvest time. But the most significant form of interdependence involved the cottagers and the farmers, and centered on the potato field on the farm. In Jenkins' words, 'The practice of setting out potatoes can properly be said to constitute a linkage between the social and agricultural systems' (1971:54).

The form this cooperation took can best be illustrated by taking, as an example, one of the largest farms which was 220 acres in size, and which had forty acres under corn which had to be cut by scythe and bound. This required seventy-five working days and a further twenty-five working days for stooking and stacking. The staff of the farm itself, which numbered eight, could not hope to cope with this work, especially as ordinary farm routine needed attention as well. The additional labour required was, in this case, supplied by twenty-four cottager families in the district in return for the right to grow potatoes in the potato field on the farm. The arrangement was this: for each row of about 100 to 120 yards in length was ploughed and manured, closed and weeded by the farmer in his potato field; each cottager had to provide one day's free labour in the corn harvest, as well as planting and harvesting the farmer's potatoes. The twenty-four cottager families had an average of four rows of potatoes, depending on their requirements, and, therefore, provided ninety-six working days' labour during the critical period of the corn



harvest in September. In addition, the farmer applied most of the farmyard manure to his potato field, which was changed from year to year, the land being kept in good tilth in this way. The smallholder, in particular the cottager, needed his potatoes not only for household purposes, but also to feed his pigs which were kept both for his own consumption and for selling to pay the rent. Furthermore, on the basis of this form of co-operation between farmer and cottager, other links were established over the whole year and not merely during the active working season. Cottagers were invited to a meal on the farm on New Year's Day; small gifts of buttermilk, butter or bread were made and rights of gleaning and gathering firewood were enjoyed. Carriage of coal was often arranged by the farmer, and in August, between the hay and corn harvests, the farmers used to run a trip to the seaside in their carts for their potato-setting groups of cottagers.

This institution was, then, an important feature of the local society until the coming of the self-binder toward the end of the nineteenth century, which meant that the reaping party was no longer necessary on the same scale.

Previously, a large farmer, Jenkins pointed out, would be in a position to direct the labour of more than a hundred people, including the cottagers' children, not only during the corn and potato harvests but during the potato-planting as well – a reflection of his standing in the local community. The arrangement amounted to an almost feudal relationship, or an economic patron-client relationship, which had its origin in a period much earlier than that with which Jenkins was concerned, for the connection between farm and cottage was one which was continued over the generations. As Jenkins suggested, the system was probably older than the introduction of the potato, which became a staple food in the eighteenth century, and was an elaboration and regional development of earlier feudal-like harvest arrangements.

David Jenkins' volume on southwest Wales at the turn of the century marked the end of a brief tradition of community studies in Wales extending over two decades. In some ways it marked a return to the earlier pattern established by *Life in a Welsh Countryside* with its dual emphasis on parish and region and its comprehensive coverage (with the notable ex-

ceptions of status and politics). Like Rees, Jenkins is concerned with an historical setup but at a greater distance in time. His search for earlier social conditions arose not from an idealized view of the past, but from a realization that the far-reaching changes brought by technological innovation at the end of the nineteenth century could still be studied through the oral evidence of survivors of that period. Despite the significance of the historical stance adopted by Jenkins at a time when other writers, notably George Ewart Evans (in *Ask the Fellows who cut the Hay*, *The Horse in the Furrow*, and other works), were exploring the possibilities of oral history in recording rural life, his work remained squarely within the social anthropological tradition. Jenkins, in fact, made no use of the tape recorder and there are few direct quotations from informants in his book. His treatment of oral evidence, however, was meticulous and involved numerous visits to his historical witnesses before using their testimony alongside that of other contemporary evidence. His informants were not 'tradition-bearers' in the sense in which that term is used in folklife studies, the knowledge which

they imparted was based on direct participation: they were delayed eyewitnesses rather than passive transmitters of an old tradition.

The community studies carried out in Wales and published between 1950 and 1971 showed few signs of a systematic development of theory. Those carried out by Welsh researchers reflected their basic grounding in human geography and anthropology rather than sociology, the academic development of which in Wales came too late to influence their approach. The 'outsiders,' who brought with them a freshness of perception, saw the social processes, especially gossip, rather than the formal social structure, as central to community life. With the growth of sociology as an academic discipline in the University of Wales, interest extended beyond a community study method of limited application to a sociology of Wales as a whole, including studies of limited areas of social life, such as family organisation, religion and politics, carried out within local or regional communities (Rosser and Harris 1957; D. Ben Rees 1975; Madgwick, Griffiths and Walker 1973), as well as studies of language, ethnicity,



Reaping party, South Cardiganshire, 1889.

second homes and other social characteristics of sparsely inhabited areas (Williams 1978, Bollom 1978, Wenger 1980), hints of which were to be discerned in the earlier community studies.

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