The Place-Names of Cardiganshire, Iwan Wmffre, British Archaeological Reports (BAR) British Series 379: Oxford 2004. 3 volumes, cxxx + 1,403 pp., £105.00, A4 paperback.

This immense three-volume work is the largest corpus on any county to be published in Wales eclipsing B. G. Charles Place-names of Pembrokeshire, which itself runs to 857 pages. Professor Wmffre's study of Ceredigion runs to over 1,400 pages - the index alone occupying 51 pages - and is based on his doctoral thesis Language and History in Cardiganshire Place-names. The work, ordered by commote and then parish, lists some 15,000 headwords - comparable with the numbers recorded on the Carmarthenshire Place-name database. This then follows a familiar format consisting of a national grid reference, a break-down of elements, the phonetic pronunciation followed by historic forms with sources in chronological order. Within these forms Wmffre discusses his own interpretation of meanings comprehensively cross referenced with work of other toponomists. His emphasis on pronunciation derives from extensive fieldwork over many years where he interviewed some 200 people for oral evidence and pronunciation. These appear in the sources and are listed in the bibliography. His consumption of tea over a decade must have been prodigious! Reading the introduction one soon becomes aware of the author's passion about place-name studies in Wales and elsewhere, and his strong views on methodology, presentation and the value of collecting oral evidence.

For anyone who is writing local history a place-names volume is an essential starting point, but unless armed with the specialist knowledge of a place-names scholar, he or she might be a little daunted by these volumes. The structure of commote/parish order works well for individual names, but where a name - like that for a river - extends over a larger geographic region, then another system has to be used. There is no easy method of handling this, and Wmffre adopts separate sections within each parish for 'hydronyms' (water features) and 'hodonyms' (urban names) and 'geonyms' (natural and other features) which follow place-names that do not fall into these categories. At the end of Volume III sections are then devoted to longer hydronyms and 'macrotoponyms' - administrative names. Once mastered the methodology works well, especially because of the work's extensive index. Within the index names are flagged accordingly (a) settlements,
(b) geonyms, (c) hadonyms, (d) hydronyms and (e) macrotoponyms, which gives the reader the information needed to proceed. To find a particular name from the index one is not given a page number but is directed to a parish number (which is included on the running heads of each volume). This can lead to a bit of toing and froing amongst the three heavy A4 books. It takes a bit of getting used to, so the casual user of the work will find it hard going. I did find one lack of cross-referencing in the extensive index. Wmffre quite rightly corrects the long-errant 'Llangwyryfon' for 'Llangwrddon' but the former is still current, and is listed by Elwyn Davies/Ifor Williams Gazetteer of Welsh Place-names. Any user who is unaware of this correction would fail to find the parish in the index, a problem easily handled if there had been a cross-reference. A concordance near the front of Volume I lists all the 81 parishes with the numbers Wmffre has allocated to them with a map of these on the opposite page. The map has an inset showing commotes. I found it infuriating that this list and map is not repeated in each volume, and I soon found it better to photocopy both and have them to hand, rather than always having to pick up Volume I. Having used the work extensively on a parish where I am doing in-depth research (Llanddewibrefi) I can only congratulate the author for the thoroughness of his research which I found exemplary. If all the parishes in the volume are as good, which I do not doubt, then the work will be recognised as a quarry for its vast use of sources. There is unfortunately no section on elements. The non-Welsh speaker will therefore find difficulty without the specific knowledge of Welsh elements, since Wmffre does not translate them into English. This is a minor irritant since wordlists of elements can be found elsewhere and we understand from the introduction that Dr Wmffre is to publish a dictionary of Welsh Place-name Elements — something that we have had for Cornish for many years and has been sorely lacking in Wales.

My main quibble, and this is not with the author, is the size and weight of the three volumes. Since this is a book of reference it will have to sustain heavy use over many years. I would therefore have preferred to have seen it in a case-bound set of say crown quarto size, printed on a lighter paper, which would have made the work easier to handle. On the other hand Archaeopress and the BAR series are to be congratulated for publishing the work, albeit in their chosen A4 perfect-bound format. This tremendous work complements that on Pembrokeshire and will become an essential companion to anyone doing historical or archaeological research in west Wales let alone place-name studies. We can only hope that at some time in the not too distant future a scholar will take on Carmarthenshire, using the Society's computerised place-name database as a starting point, and develop it into a scholarly thorough-going work in the mode of Iwan Wmffre's Cardiganshire.

TERRENCE JAMES

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Every contribution to the history of Ceredigion is to be welcomed, particularly by a historian like Dr Leslie Baker-Jones, whose Princelings, Privilege and Power: the Tricoside Gentry in their Community (1991) described so thoroughly the gentry of the lower Teifi valley. Since Bethan Phillips's Peterwell of 1983, histories of Trawsgoed and Nanteos have appeared, and a good deal has been written about Hafod in addition to Elizabeth Inglis-Jones's classic Peacocks in Paradise. On the other hand, Gogerddan and the Pryse family have been completely neglected, and published knowledge of the multitudinous Lloyds is restricted to the hundred printed copies of Some Family Records & Pedigrees of the Lloyds of Allt yr Odyn, Castell Huwel, Ffoss y Bleiddiaid, Gilfach Wen, Llan Llyr and Waun Ifor by Lucy E. Lloyd Theakston and John Davies (Oxford, 1913) and the twenty-five copies of Annals and Pedigrees of the Lloyds and Edwards of Crymlyn, and other Families . . . by John Davies (Aberystwyth, 1931). So a history of Bronwydd and the Lloyds, virtually unmentioned in those two sources, is to be welcomed.

Not everyone is yet willing to concede the value of estate and family histories; their historians, unless themselves of that social class, may be seen as cynffonwr, toadies to a class whose political and social significance is minimal. But that attitude is pathetically short-sighted. The gentry of the past controlled the lives of the people and the very landscape in which they lived to such an extent that history which ignores them is purblind. Moreover, their surviving archives can be rich sources of information about so many aspects of the