

to on page 457, might wish for a rather fuller explanation of some of the vocabulary than is provided by the editor's selection of the less common words found in the text. This, however, is a small criticism of a work which has been meticulously edited to the highest scholarly standards and one which will be a treasure trove for an unusually wide range of scholars.

Aberystwyth

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THE PLACE-NAMES OF CARDIGANSHIRE By Iwan Wmffre. 210 × 297 mm. cxxx + 1403 pp. 3 volumes. British Archaeological Reports, Oxford, 2004. ISBN 1 84171 665 0. Price £105.00.

This is a monumental work, the largest single publication on Welsh place-names to date. It covers the whole of Cardiganshire (Ceredigion since 1974), 81 parishes, and deals with some 15,000 head-names. Most are supplied with a six-figure national grid reference, early forms from a wide range of published and unpublished sources, linguistic analysis and, where appropriate, discussion, and, very importantly, modern local pronunciation recorded in the International Phonetic Alphabet. Sometimes more than one pronunciation is given, and always the name of the person from whom the pronunciation was collected is supplied. This is exemplary and, in his Introduction, Wmffre is eloquent and convincing in his plea for local pronunciation to have as important a place in the toponymist's tool-box as early forms.

I am not an expert on Welsh place-names, so it is reasonable to ask why a Scottish academic based in Scotland is reviewing this work. First and foremost I am a toponymist (that much is correct in the details which are given about me in volume 1, page xvi, footnote 10; unfortunately all the other details are wrong). My main justification as a reviewer is that I am in the throes of preparing for press volume 1 of what will be a four-volume work on the place-names of Fife, an area of east-central Scotland consisting of about 60 parishes. I am therefore in a relatively good position to evaluate the methodological problems of presenting a large toponymic corpus such as the one under review. While I have chosen some different strategies, conventions and approaches from those adopted by Wmffre in *The Place-Names of Cardiganshire*, I can say that I am very impressed by his awareness of the problems, his robust defence of his methodology, and his consistency in its application.

My own position makes me acutely aware of the adage 'people in glass houses . . .', but this does not constrain the author from some fairly harsh criticism of fellow Welsh toponymists, for example in their adherence to the model of the English Place-Name Society County Surveys (which he accuses in one place of being 'indeed almost static' since the 1920s (page xix), while admitting in another place 'the methods of the EPNS have not remained static, but have continued to develop' (page xxi). But the reader is left in no doubt that Wmffre cares deeply about the toponymy and language of Wales, and his sometimes barely concealed annoyance and impatience chiefly seems to stem from the fact that he wants only the best for a subject which is so dear to his heart and his intellect.

Within this overarching objective he does not spare even himself from criticism: over his failure to deal with so-called lost names (and I would agree with him that these are just as important in elucidating a settlement and linguistic history of an area as are those names which have survived); and over his use of the modern parish as his basic unit of organisation.

On this second score I would be less harsh on him than he is on himself. The last stage of civil parishes provides a stable, synchronic and transparent structure for the organisation of place-name material. In my own work on Fife I did consider using the earlier 'non-rationalised' parish, but found it too complex and protean, with major changes happening from the late sixteenth century till the national legislation of 1889-91, and even, in some cases, thereafter. So I reverted to using the modern (pre-1975) one. What I

have done, in contrast to Wmffre, is preface every parish with a brief ecclesiastical and administrative history, in which all boundary changes are described, as well as illustrated on accompanying maps.

As with any complex reference book, readers have to familiarise themselves with the conventions and layout: these are clearly presented, although I could not find an explanation of his elaborate (but efficient and logical) way of dealing with hydronyms (watercourses). Space seems to have been left to describe this on p. 1221, under the heading 'Hydronyms: orientation', but in fact most of this page is blank. As already mentioned, the book's basic unit of organisation is the pre-1974 civil parish, each parish being assigned a number from 1 to 81, and then dealt with numerically. The 78 parishes (the '77 civil-parishes' which the author mentions on p. xiii I assume to be an error) are grouped together under ten commotes and are numbered in a roughly north-to-south and west-to-east progression, excepting nos 79–81 (the three Llandydoch parishes), which belong historically to Pembrokeshire. Within each parish the names are divided up into two (sometimes three) subsections: 1 settlement-names, 2 'hodonoms' (defined as urban names), and 3 'geonyms' (defined as natural and other features, which for indexing purposes he somewhat confusingly labels a, c and b respectively), and alphabetically within each subsection. Following the 81 parishes, is a section on hydronyms (d), and finally a section on what he terms macrotoponyms (e), mainly administrative names such as commotes which include more than one parish. Such a fragmented lay-out (inevitable in such a corpus) can only work if there is a continuous index of all the names dealt with, and this is supplied on pages 1352–1403, using section numbers and subdivisions rather than page-numbers. I was initially sceptical about this, but in fact, with a little practice, and with the book's running headers, it works fairly well.

The Introduction includes a detailed exposition on the Welsh spelling system, especially as it relates to place-names, and is a valuable contribution to the on-going debate on the correct representation of place-names of both Welsh and English origin in Welsh orthography. I had not realised just how contentious a hyphen could be!

Although the main language of the book is English, any reader with little or no Welsh is going to find it hard-going in places. Each name is broken down into its constituent words, with no translations given if the words are Welsh; and in this part of Wales most of the 15,000 names are of Welsh origin. It would have made this large and expensive book slightly larger, but also much more user-friendly, if a glossary of basic elements had been included. However, the author informs us that he hopes to publish a separate book under the title *Welsh Place-name Elements* which will include such a glossary, and this will be very welcome.

Another, and more serious, disadvantage for the non-Welsh speaker is that in many of the discussions of individual names, previous authors are cited in the original language, mostly Welsh, with no translation given. This is a pity, as the book is of importance to toponymists, linguists and historians well beyond the borders of Wales, and it is unrealistic to expect all such readers to have a good command of Welsh. This contrasts with the more non-Welsh-speaker-friendly approach Wmffre adopts in the Introduction, which translates into English most of the Welsh quotes.

My most serious criticism I reserve for the publisher. *The Place-Names of Cardiganshire* is a reference work which will deservedly be heavily used. To contain such a work in a flimsy paper-backed binding is unfair, both on the contents and on the reader (who has, it should be remembered, paid out over £100). Already volume 1 of my review copy is beginning to come unstuck.

This book will long outlast its binding. Iwan Wmffre has carefully collected and systematically presented the raw data for in-depth studies and analyses of manifold aspects of the language, landscape and history of Cardiganshire and beyond, and for this scholars, both amateur and professional, from many disciplines, and for generations to come, have much reason to be grateful.