Framework for Content of VCH Volumes

Introduction

The general principles of this Framework will be applied to the VCH across the board. Whereas accounts of townships and villages will normally take the eight sections in the order given here, with the intention of providing a single, integrated and consecutive account, there will be variations on this practice. In some cases, topographically defined districts or regions will be treated at this level in extended volume introductions. In volumes on a single town or city the account may be presented in discrete chronological periods. The definition of VCH volume projects will take account of hundred boundaries but not be ruled by them. In some cases it may be that material will be presented in dataset form to accompany analytical text. In every case the final decision on the format and approach to be adopted in a particular project will be a matter of discussion between county staff and the Directorate.

The Guidelines

1. Introduction: a chronological account of boundaries, landscape and communications, followed by a chronological account of settlement, population and social character.

2. Manors and Other Estates: indicating the pattern of landownership over time.

3. Economic History: an integral chronological account of the whole economic development of the parish, making reference when appropriate to relevant aspects of the working life of the population and to retail activity.

4. Social History: an account which should start with social structure and go on to charities of all kinds, education and community activities.

5. Religious History: to include the role of churches, chapels, Roman Catholicism, nonconformity and other religious groups in the life of the parish.

6. Local Government: an account of how the parish was run, the maintenance of order, the poor law and the administrative work of the parish officers.

7. Local Politics: political tensions within the community, the dynamic of the community relationships, and local manifestations of national politics.

8. Buildings: a chronological survey of all the significant buildings indicating the built character of the parish and analysing the development of particular building types.

Notes

1. We would expect to find a good deal of cross referencing.
2. Decisions in every case about subheadings will be for negotiation with the central office and there is no assumption that these will be consistent between volumes.
3. Section seven will normally be needed for market and small towns and sometimes for rural places. In rural parishes, political tensions revealed by the sources will often best be treated in the appropriate sections of the parish history and not in a separate section seven.

Volumes about a town or city

The approach to urban volumes will remain under review for a short period. The VCH Academic Advisory Panel will be asked to comment specifically on reports received during this year on the conceptualisation and framework of all the urban volumes currently being researched or planned.

Victoria County History Guidelines

Section 1a

INTRODUCTION

AIMS AND APPROACH

The main aims of the introduction should be to give some sense of the general character of the parish in question - of its physical characteristics and the layout and nature of the built environment. It should offer a clear account of the main features of the history of the parish and its settlements, with especial emphasis on topography, the main driving force of any VCH article.

It is very important that it should, as far as possible offer a clear and coherent framework for the article as a whole. Readers often complain of the fragmented and non-chronological nature of VCH accounts, divided as they traditionally have been into sections that reflect the dominant institutions and activities of a parish. The introduction offers the best means of pulling everything together. Wherever possible its subsections should be treated chronologically or at least try to give some sense of development over time. The introduction is **not** a repository for information that cannot be fitted in under any other heading; nor should it end with a collection of miscellaneous facts relating to worthies or national events. If such items cannot be worked into some larger narrative they are best omitted.

STRUCTURE

Introductions - like parish histories as a whole - have got longer and longer. Even without the constraints imposed by writing text in a form which is readily digestible on the World Wide Web, it would have been necessary to articulate the introduction with headings which flag its structure and render it comprehensible to readers. In all except the very briefest accounts therefore, it will be necessary to introduce at least one level of subheading.

Scope and Arrangment of Material

Although the order and combination of subsections may vary, it is desirable that there should be a degree of uniformity of treatment in any particular grouping of parishes. In some cases, a dominant feature, such as a country house or park, may be separated out into a distinct subsection.

The subsections which follow provide an indication of the subheadings appropriate to a substantial introduction.

Introductory Section: The introduction should open with an introductory sentence or two characterizing and locating the parish. Where appropriate attention can be drawn to some particular feature, building, product or event with which the parish is especially associated and which will very probably be discussed in greater detail elsewhere.

Boundaries and Extent: Where information is available, the following should be mentioned:
- the origin of the parish and the emergence or establishment of its boundaries
- the shape and acreage of the area enclosed
- the nature of the boundaries, especially if they follow identifiable natural or man-made features; any changes to the boundaries.

Landscape: This subsection should include:
- discussion of geology, soils, relief, and drainage

- some impression of the landscape and the impact of man's exploitation, referring, as appropriate, to the presence and distribution of uncultivated land, open fields, meadows, common pastures, woodland and parks.
- modern forms of land use, e.g golf courses, airfields, reservoirs.

Communications: The main concern here must be the way in which communications situate the parish in relation to the outside world, to larger settlements and to its neighbours. The main topics are likely to be:
- Major roads and through routes, together with details of turnpikes
- River transport with details of fords, ferries, bridges, and wharfs
- railways and railway stations

It may also be desirable to mention:
- buses
- post and telecommunications

Settlement: This is a crucial and major subsection which may itself be subdivided. If a settlement is complex then it may be necessary to introduce it with some general statements about its nature, e.g if it is divided into a number of villages or hamlets.

Settlement is best approached chronologically and should provide a comprehensive introduction to many of the major sections of the parish account. It should provide:
- an account of the origins of settlement in the parish, including the prehistoric, Roman and Anglo-Saxon evidence and the emergence of the historic settlement pattern
- a chronological treatment of the development of the lay-out of existing settlements. Their general architectural character at varying periods should be mentioned here with cross-references to Buildings (*section 8).* Public buildings and other crucial buildings such as manor houses, parish churches and inns need to be mentioned as part of this pattern with cross-references to where they are treated more fully. If there is more than one major settlement this section may have to be subdivided.

Population: This subsection should provide a chronological account of the size of the settlement, starting as early as possible (e.g. with some kind of estimate derived from Domesday), and for later periods making use of sources such the hearth tax and census returns.

Social Character: It may be desirable to offer some general comments on the evolving social character of the village, relating it to a resident lord or squire in a big house, to significant local customs, to inns and alehouses, to suburban and industrial development, and to dormitory functions for nearby urban centres. This section will require considerable cross-referencing to Social Life (*section 4).*

RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER INTRODUCTORY MATERIAL
These guidelines relate most easily to parishes consisting of one or relatively few townships. They will also apply to individual townships in extensive parishes, comprising many townships, settlements and chapelries. In such instances, however, it will be essential to introduce the ancient parish as a whole, to give an account of its location, extent, boundaries and origins.

For the relationship of parish introductions with other introductory material see Introductions to Volumes etc (*section 1b).*

Section 1b

INTRODUCTIONS TO VOLUMES, HUNDREDS, OTHER DISTRICTS AND SPECIAL TOPICS

AIMS AND APPROACH

These guidelines relate to introductory material other than that which forms the `Introduction' section of parish accounts. Such material may well affect parish introductions and indeed in exceptional cases almost supersede them. Obviously the contents of such introductions will be very varied and cannot be prescribed. These guidelines will simply offer some examples of a variety of approaches, based on VCH work that is shortly to be published or is currently in progress. They are above all intended to be permissive, to encourage colleagues to make use of their unique expertise to produce analytical and interpretative essays which will highlight what is distinctive or unusual about the area they are covering. Such essays might relate to landscape and settlement, an ancient administrative unit, recent development (e.g. seaside development), the influence of a particular family or estate, the rise of a particular occupation or commercial activity – or indeed most or all of these subjects. We envisage introductory material taking a variety of forms. At one extreme it may focus on a single theme, such as one of the subjects just listed; at the other it may form a general survey of the common characteristics of a discrete and identifiable area. If the latter, it is particularly likely to make a considerable impact upon the content of individual parish introductions.

HUNDRED INTRODUCTIONS

Although there are exceptions, such as some of the North-Western hundreds coterminous with a single parish or with ancient administrative units, in general the hundred is not the most promising basis for an extended introduction. In many counties hundreds have no particular coherence, and in some they are so small and intertwined as to be more or less useless as a unit for organising parish accounts. In such instances, the present practice of offering a brief history of the hundred as an administrative unit will be all that is necessary.

VOLUME INTRODUCTIONS

The requirement that as far as possible all new volumes should try to focus on identifiable topographical or economic entities, means that volume introductions will become increasingly significant and considerably longer than has been customary up to now. At present our approach is an experimental one. Examples of recent introductions are given below; these, it should be stressed, are intended as illustrations of the variety of approaches currently under consideration rather than as models to be followed.

1. A general survey of the main themes of the whole volume, which also corresponded with a hundred.

The hundred in question was a fairly coherent unit, almost wholly rural and dominated by a group of important estates. Topics covered in an extended introduction of some 8,500 words included:

- Landscape and Early Settlement (*from earliest times to Norman Conquest - includes discussion of physique, prehistoric Roman and Anglo-Saxon sites, early parishes and estates*)
- The Medieval Hundred (*significance of hundredal name, meeting place, emergence of parishes, villages and village layout etc, manors and manorial families, domestic buildings*)
- The Hundred in the 16th and 17th Centuries (*includes new estates, manorial and other domestic buildings*)
- The Hundred from 1660 to the Early 19th Century (*includes changes in estate and farm management, new building, early industrial development*)

- The Hundred in Victorian and Edwardian Times (*includes developments in agriculture and industry, emergence of nonconformity and of parish government*)
- The Hundred in the 20th Century (*the break-up of local estates, changes in agriculture and farm changes, the impact of new housing, new roads and industrial development, economic and social changes in the village communities*).

2. A volume introduction covering several hundreds

The area in question was fairly disparate. It contained at least two coherent topographical areas, defined by topography and economic activity, neither of which fitted very comfortably with the hundredal divisions. The topics covered in the extended introduction (some 14,000 words) included general surveys of relatively standard topics, such as early settlement, aristocratic estates and houses, economic and social life, and some special topics relating to themes distinctive to the area, such as fen drainage and horse-racing. The piece was subdivided into numerous sections, arranged roughly chronologically. The full scheme was as follows:

- Prehistory to the Romans (5000 BC to 400 AD)
- Anglo-Saxon Settlement and Society (500-1100)
- Aristocratic Landholdings and Dwellings (1100-1500)
- Medieval Religious Life (1100-1500)
- Economic Growth and Settlement Patterns (1100-1600)
- Agriculture and Standards of Living (1100-1600)
- Communications and Industry (1100-1600)
- Fenland Economy (1100-1600)
- Fen Drainage (1650-1850)
- Gentry, Aristocracy and Their Residences (1500-1900)
- Communications (1700-1900)
- Inclosure and Modern Agriculture (1700-2000)
- Economic and Social Life (1700-1900)
- Religion, Education and Charity (1600-2000)
- Communications (1900-2000)
- Industry (1900-2000)
- Horse-racing and Other Leisure Pursuits (1600-2000)
- Social Developments (1900-2000)

3. A volume comprising a single extensive wapentake, and divided into three distinct districts, characterised by patterns of settlement and estate holding.

The wapentake in question is highly rural, with numerous small parishes, and two areas dominated from at least the 16th century by major estates. The solution adopted here was a radical one: the wapentake is to be divided into two volumes, with extensive introductions which will treat on a volume basis a number of subjects hitherto commonly dealt with in the parish accounts, including archaeology, settlement, agriculture and inclosure, religious life, and buildings. There will also be sections on the distinctive areas within the wapantake and the estates which dominated them. If such an approach is to be adopted it will be important to ensure that there is plenty of cross-referencing and indeed some repetition, in order to maintain the integrity of the parish accounts.

Section 2

MANORS AND OTHER ESTATES

AIMS
This section of the parish history should provide an overview of the development of patterns of landownership and landholding across the parish. These new guidelines are intended to establish a structure and approach that will enable the reader to grasp the overall picture from the outset and to relate it as far as possible to the local topography, before tackling the detail of a specific descent. An opening section on the pattern of landownership will provide an overview for the parish as a whole, but in all but the simplest cases it will also be necessary to provide an introductory analytical for each major descent (*see below, Structure*).

Manorial and estate buildings will henceforth be discussed in the appropriate subsection of Buildings (*section 8*).

DEFINING THE CATEGORIES OF LANDHOLDING
The VCH has traditionally distinguished between manors and other forms of landed estate and that distinction has been retained in the structure recommended by these guidelines. It is, however, worth noting that such distinctions are much more important up to the 17th century than afterwards. Feudal tenures were abolished in 1660 and all remaining manorial incidents in 1926. Increasingly the nominal lordship might be divorced from the landed estate. In such circumstances, where a substantial estate continued, it is the descent of that estate which matters rather than of the lordship. The latter need only be given in exceptional circumstances, e.g. where the lord maintained some personal link with the parish in which his nominal lordship lay. Obviously, too, major estates established in the post-manorial period need to be given a similar treatment and emphasis to those with a much longer history.

The Manor
The manor may be defined as an estate of which free or customary tenements were held, for whose tenants a court sat, and to whose lord services were owed**.** An ideal manor might contain land farmed directly by the lord (demesne - in effect the home farm) and by tenants holding their land by a variety of rents and services. In practice, however, many manors contained no demesne land and the only tie between lord and tenant might be the payment of rent.

Where a lord has jurisdiction over tenants in several parishes that jurisdiction is best discussed in the parish in which that lord's main property and manor house lay, with appropriate cross-references in the other parishes.

In the Middle Ages manors were units in the feudal hierarchy, and as such might have a variety of lords. Most were held of a tenant-in-chief, whose honor or barony was held directly of the king. There might however be several layers of tenants interposed between these personnages and the lord of the local manor; an estate might therefore be held of one or more intermediate (or `mesne') tenants rather than directly of the lord of the honor. It is worth stating very briefly the honor or barony to which a medieval estate belonged but the descent of that honor should not be traced in detail, nor is it worth researching after the abolition of feudal tenures in 1660. Intermediate tenancies may be worth mentioning in so far as they impinged upon the history of the estate, e.g. if a mesne lord had wardship in the case of a minority or exercised a superior jurisdiction

which intervened in the business of the local court. They should never, however, be analysed in detail.

Other Estates
An accumulation of property, whether freehold, copyhold, or leasehold or a combination of all of these, might play a highly important part in the history of a parish, even if it was never formally designated a manor. In many cases such important holdings might be styled a manor even though they held no court and had no place in the formal feudal hierarchy. It is worth noting if they were so styled, but even if they were not, they should be included in the section Manors and Principal Estates (*see below, Structure*).

STRUCTURE
The Manors and Estates section should contain the following subsections:

1. Pattern of Landownership
This opening subsection should provide an account of the overall structure of landholding in the parish and chart its development and change over time. It should begin with observations on how many manors there were in each parish and whether the pattern remained stable. A brief survey of any changes, for example the consolidation of groups of manors and estates to form new holdings or the disintegration of a large manor, should follow. It is important to bring these remarks down to the present day with brief comments on any sale or disposal of major estates in the 20th century.

Wherever possible this subsection should also relate the pattern of landownership to the topography and social development of the parish. It should, for example, review the size and location of manors and estates, the wealth and status of their owners, and whether or not those owners were resident or at least maintained substantial houses on their holdings. The effect of such ownership on the structure of landholding and the buildings of the parish should be briefly mentioned with cross-references to its fuller treatment in the appropriate section, such as Social Life, Economic History or Buildings. References to buildings should make clear what survives and what has been demolished.

2. Manors and Principal Estates
This subsection should cover all genuine manors, together with any significant later accumulations of property whether styled manor or not. It may be further subdivided according to the number of manors and estates discussed. It will usually be desirable to accord a separate heading to each manor, but the ordering of such sections may well be problematic. If there is an unambiguous and enduring original or principal manor it is best to begin with that. If there are a number of equal importance they may be listed alphabetically or perhaps topographically (if location can be clearly established). If there are several ancient manors of varying importance later subsumed into a later enduring estate, then it is probably best to begin with some suitable listing of the ancient manors and to conclude with the later estate. Such an arrangement has the merit of bringing a degree of chronological order to the description of the descents. Where there is complexity it is desirable to help the reader by explaining the principles on which the descents are ordered.

In each case, the account should begin with the earliest reference and with some indication of size, importance, and, where possible, location. Where it is known, it is worth indicating the size of the manor's holdings within the parish and whether they formed a compact block or were scattered. The existence and location of any manor house should also be noted. Any affiliation to an honor or barony and evidence of intermediate lordship and its impact on the parish may also be briefly described.

The descent itself should use plain language, while seeking economy of style, and not dwell too much on the uneventful. It will often be helpful to provide a preliminary analysis of the main outlines of a descent. This might include, for example, discussion of the status, wealth and residence of the main families concerned (if this has not been dealt with sufficiently in section 1), the main points of transmission and the means (whether through marriage, sale or forfeiture), significant periods of wardship or possession for life by a surviving widow or heiress's husband, and major disputes or uncertainties. Supplementary details, such as a full list of holders, may then be provided in the form of pedigrees or lists. Biographical information where it is relevant to setting out the descents should be included. Important building activities may be referred to with cross-references to Buildings (*section 8*).

3. Other Estates

This section should gather up the history of lesser accumulations of property, often extraneous to the main story of landownership within the parish. It might include small estates never designated manors, or the holdings of corporate bodies such as monasteries and Oxford and Cambridge colleges. It may also be appropriate to include here the rectorial estate and tithes if they have sufficient value and are no longer applied to the upkeep of the incumbent. Accounts of these lesser estates should be much briefer than those of manors and major estates. An account of their emergence and the main families through which they descended (if known) will almost always be sufficient. Very small estates of insignificant size and value should be entirely omitted. If they issued in a connexion of significance to the parish this should be noted in the appropriate section.

Section 3

ECONOMIC HISTORY

This section should provide a carefully ordered and detailed statement, as far as the sources allow, of how the inhabitants of a place have earned their living over the centuries. Every village and town has its own economy and this economy is related to those of surrounding markets and to communications networks. The account, which requires inference from and interpretation of the sources, should focus on the activities of people, their achievement of subsistence and acquisition of wealth. It should open with an overview that portrays the balance over the centuries between primary, secondary and tertiary activity, at its simplest between agriculture, manufacturing and services. It is important that this section follows logically from what has been said in sections 1 and 2 about the physical framework and the structure of landholding.

After this introductory section, each of the main sectors of the local economy should be examined in turn, divided where necessary into sub-sectors and then treated chronologically.

PRIMARY PRODUCTION

Except in studies of large towns, this section will be usually be the longest and cover the greatest period of time. It will be concerned mainly with agriculture, together (in some places) with forestry and fishing. Farming will probably best be treated under three main sub-headings (medieval, early modern and modern), possibly with some further subdivision in the modern period where individual estates are particularly well documented (e.g. 'Farming on Lord X's estate', 'Farming on Lord Y's estate', or 'Farming elsewhere in the parish').

Within each chronological period treatment will vary depending on whether the parish is dominated by landlord and tenant farming or freehold owner-occupiers, and in the former case on the size of the estate. With tenanted land, it should be possible to say something about farm size, tenures, and movements in rents, all of which change over time. Where an estate was wholly or largely confined to a single parish, it is worth discussing its overall performance, including changes in gross and net income, fluctuations in arrears, expenditure on repairs and renewals (including new building), acquisitions and disposals of land, and the proportion of the estate kept in hand. Where an estate had land in a number of parishes in the same volume, it may be worth discussing these topics in the volume introduction, rather than making similar statements under several parishes.

Most accounts of estate farming will end with the break-up of the estate, most commonly in either the mid 16th century or the early 20th, although estates owned by religious houses may remain largely or even wholly intact if acquired by a single lay successor.

In parishes where most farms were owner-occupied, at least in the post-medieval period, or belonged to estates whose muniments have not survived, it will not usually be possible to examine farming and land management in such detail. It should, however, be possible to discuss whether the farms were mainly arable or mainly pastoral, what crops were grown, the chronology and consequences of the inclosure of common-field arable and meadow or of common waste, the periods in which most renewal of buildings took place, and the impact of the major fluctuations in the agrarian economy since the Middle Ages. These general topics can, of course, also be considered in the case of parishes dominated by landlord and tenant farming. Most accounts of farming will end with some

reference to the decline in agricultural employment in the countryside since 1945 and the consolidation of farms into larger units.

In some districts, there will be little variation in farming technique between the parishes in a volume. In such cases, it may well be sensible to discuss farming in the district as a whole in the volume introduction, and concentrate on estate management in individual chapters.

MANUFACTURING

In rural parishes there may be little to discuss under this heading apart from the history of milling. All references to both water- and windmills should be collected, and any mention of horse-mills in the medieval period. Water-mill sites originally used for cornmilling were sometimes reused by other industries and in such cases it will usually be best to consider their history in two sections, first as part of an account of cornmilling and then in discussing other industries that used the site.

All but the smallest rural parishes had a fairly standard range of village craftsmen, certainly in the post-medieval period, and there is normally no need to refer to blacksmiths, wheelwrights, carpenters and the like, unless one of the businesses was of special interest, for example where a smithy evolved into a foundry or engineering works. Similarly, in accounts of districts containing a distinctive craft that was ubiquitous within that district, such as textiles or hosiery, with little variation in chronology or scale between adjoining villages, it is probably better to discuss its history in the volume introduction rather than refer to it under each parish.

In rural parishes with more distinctive industrial activity, or in towns, each industry should be considered in turn, drawing together references in chronological order. Sometimes this will involve discussing a series of individual entrepreneurs or single businesses; elsewhere an industry may be represented by several firms. In either case, an attempt should be made to trace the origins, growth and (where appropriate) decline of a particular activity. This should include something about the origins of those involved, their sources of capital, the organisation of the business (sole proprietorship, partnership or limited company), its products, markets and number of employees. Something should also be said, where appropriate, about the transition from domestic to factory production or from the use of water-power to steam-power, or other technological changes appropriate to a particular industry.

Quantification is highly desirable in work of this sort: how much capital, how many employees, the total value of sales, the wealth of the principals at death. In the case of limited companies, were the shares held by members of one or two families or were they marketed more widely? Were such companies the result of the timely conversion of established family partnerships or were they speculative ventures by itinerant company promoters? What profits were earned and what proportion of those profits was distributed as dividends? When did such companies cease to be locally owned and became part of larger groups with headquarters elsewhere? Why did some companies fail and others succeed?

In a town with a number of different industries, it is worth trying to rank their relative importance at different dates and look at changes over time. When, say, did tanning and shoemaking outstrip the textile trades in a 16th-century town? When did agricultural ironfounding come to employ more people than brewing and malting in a 19th-century town?

The order in which different industrial activities will be discussed will vary from place to place, but in general it is desirable to start with extractive industries (mining and quarrying), continue with the manufacture of producer goods (iron and steel, engineering, tanning etc.) and conclude with the production of consumer goods (textiles, hosiery etc.) or industries that date only from recent times (electrical and electronic engineering, plastics etc.). The Standard Industrial Classification, used by the Government for the collection of a variety of economic statistics, is helpful is describing the structure of industry (and other sectors of the economy) in a systematic way (the SIC is issued as an HMSO booklet and readily available in most reference libraries).

THE SERVICE SECTOR
Historically, this branch of the economy, which is now overwhelmingly the most important of the three considered here in all but a few parts of the United Kingdom, was concerned mainly with the distribution and sale of agricultural and manufactured goods. It is desirable, though not always easy, to establish what shops existed in a rural community from how early a date, what other retail traders (perhaps itinerant) served the community, and where such people obtained their goods. In market towns, it is obviously important to assess the vitality of markets and fairs at different periods (rather than merely narrate the chronology of grants), to discover from what distance buyers and sellers travelled to both weekly markets and annual fairs, and to discover something of the range of goods sold. Something should also be said of the history of wholesaling as well as retailing and how both trades obtained their stocks.

Closely allied to distribution is the provision of transport services. Roads, canals and railways will be mentioned in the introduction to each parish account as features in the landscape; they should reappear in the economic history section as the arteries along which local (and national) commerce passed. Road carrying services (always far more important than passenger traffic on roads) should be mentioned, as should the main traffic flows on canals and railways. Roads themselves were not large employers but the inns that formed staging posts along main routes were, and innkeepers were often involved in other businesses connected with road transport. Canal companies employed a few people in each parish in which there was a public wharf but the railways, by contrast, were major employers in many parts of the country, rural as well as urban, between the mid 19th century and the mid 20th. Even small country stations had a staff large enough to make an impact on a rural community, and in industrial areas served by several competitive lines, with extensive goods yards as well as passenger stations, the railways were generally among the most important (and most secure, if poorly paid) sources of employment. Their impact was heightened in places with engine sheds and workshops, not to mention independently owned but closely related activities such as the manufacture, repair and hire of railway wagons.

All towns have a range of commercial and professional services, varying in date of origin according to the size and character of the town, and only the more interesting points need be picked out. The first appearance of various professions (the law, medicine, architecture etc.) is worth mentioning but thereafter only the most important practitioners, or most important professions, are worth pursuing. Similarly, the history of local banks are of interest but not usually the local branches of national concerns.

By way of conclusion, something should be said of the dramatic changes that have affected all communities during the second half of the 20th century, as the service sector has come to dominate the economy.

In rural areas, alongside the decline in agricultural employment (and employment closely connected with farming), home and workplace have come to be separated (often by a

considerable distance) as increasing numbers of professional people have chosen to live in the countryside while working elsewhere. The nature of their employment, overwhelmingly in the service sector, is as much part of the local economy as was the work of farmers and farm labourers at an earlier period.

In former coalmining areas, the whole economy has changed out of all recognition since the 1960s, and more especially since the strike of 1984–5. Alongside very high levels of structural unemployment, especially in the older coalfields, there is now widespread employment of women as the principal or only breadwinner in a family, often in poorly paid, low skilled work, together with limited opportunities for male employment, also poorly paid and unskilled, for those prepared to travel some distance each day.

A similar transformation has taken place in what were, until the 1960s, towns that lived by heavy industry. The large manufacturing concerns that still exist employ a fraction of the number that once worked there; many companies that were once household names and, in their communities, major employers, have disappeared without trace, together with the network of subcontractors and suppliers that employed thousands more. In their place have come small-scale manufacturing concerns, low-wage, predominantly female service-sector employers such as call-centres, distribution companies that occupy a large acreage but employ very few people, and endless attempts by local authorities to secure a share of the diminishing manufacturing sector of the economy. In most such places, the local authorities (together with the National Health Service) are themselves the largest local employers.

By contrast, the prosperous market towns of rural England have become even more prosperous, as high-tech manufacturing companies as well as those in the service sector prefer to locate on greenfield sites close to attractive countryside and towns with good communications, retail and professional services, and schools. The same factors also attract business and professional people who work from home part or all of the time, who need to be within easy reach of Heathrow Airport or a central London office but can otherwise choose where they base themselves.

Section 4

SOCIAL HISTORY

It is reasonable and logical to expect that treatment of place, land tenure and economy be followed by further information, wherever this is available, about the social structure and institutions of a community and how these have developed over the centuries. In many cases this will involve reference to points made earlier and use of the same sources in a slightly different way. The topic will probably best be treated under three main sub-headings.

SOCIAL STRUCTURE

Rural Parishes
Even in the smallest parishes, and certainly in places with a 19th-century population of a few hundred or more, it should be possible discern something of social structure. Topics worth discussing for rural parishes for all periods include the presence or absence of a resident lord of the manor or major landowner, and, in the case of an absentee owner, which families provided social leadership in the community; whether landownership was dominated by a single family or by two or three, or was much divided between freeholders; whether the land belonging to such families was mainly farmed in hand, let to a small number of relatively large tenants, or divided between numerous small farms; what proportion of the population was deemed to be `poor', or at least was excused from paying tax; whether there was a sharp divide between the status of owners and tenants, or between tenant farmers and landless labourers, or whether the classes merged into one another; and whether there was a distinct class of tradesmen and craftsmen not employed on the land. All these questions should be treated as variables which change over time, perhaps especially the number and size of farms in a community.

Change will usually become more marked (and easier to discern) in the 19th century or the 20th, with the coming of the railways, industrialisation, the break-up of landed estates and of landlord and tenant farming, and the colonisation of much of rural England by the middle class since the 1950s.

Within a volume, it should be possible to compare the social structure of different parishes and to discuss change over time. Some rural communities have been favoured by the new rich of neighbouring towns since the 17th century if not earlier, whereas others have only come into fashion in recent decades. Relevant issues include: why have some villages always seemed nice places to live and why do so many middle-class families now wish to live in the countryside, even though breadwinners work some distance away? Why do some parishes have a much higher proportion of poor than others only a few miles apart which otherwise seem similar in character? Why does the proportion of poor in different villages in the same district fall at different dates? Are villages with a resident major landowner really so different from those dominated by an estate with an absentee owner? In what ways do villages dominated by resident freeholders differ from those where social leadership fell on large tenant farmers?

Towns
All towns, however small, appear to have had a more varied social structure than villages. It is usually possible to identify the leading families who dominate economic, political and administrative life from the 13th century onwards, and to say something about the proportion of the poor from the 16th or 17th century. It is worth trying to establish

whether there was a relatively smooth gradation of wealth and social status, or whether there were marked gaps between the wealthiest and the slightly less wealthy, or between the poorest and the not quite so poor (or between any other steps in the hierarchy).

Some attempt should be made to relate social status to urban morphology. The questions here might include: which were the districts favoured by the wealthy? Did their location change over time? Have the poorest always been the poorest? When do residence and workplace part company for the merchants and manufacturers? Why do some residential areas rise and fall in esteem? What was the impact of the coming of public transport on social geography? Why were some council estates originally less rough than others? Were the aspirations of those who planned new estates for families moved from slums realised? What effect has the relative esteem of different local authority schools had on patterns of middle-class residence since the 1960s?

EDUCATION

Perhaps the most important point to bear in mind here is that we are seeking to write a history of education in a community, not a history of the school or schools in the parish. Places with no school of their own nonetheless educated their children and in modern times most children from rural communities have attended secondary schools outside their own parish. An account should also be given of private schools and, where it is particularly long established or otherwise of interest, of what is now called lifelong learning or continuing education. The text will usually divide naturally into sections defined by the major legislation of 1870, 1902 and 1944.

Education up to 1870

Most rural parishes had a school of some sort by 1870, most of them National (i.e. Church of England) schools administered by the incumbent. The Nonconformists also set up a large number of day schools, as well as Sunday schools, in the first three-quarters of the 19th century, often (but not always) known as British schools. Even quite small villages had dame schools and larger places had more ambitious private schools, particularly for girls. Many workhouses also ran their own schools until after 1870.

1870-1902

The 1870 Elementary Education Act divided England and Wales into `school districts' (usually civil parishes), in all of which existing provision was assessed. Where the number of places, or the standard of accommodation or staffing, was inadequate, the Education Department of the Privy Council required the deficiency to be made good. Either an existing school was improved or an elected, rate-funded school board was set up, which could either take over and improve an existing school or build a new one, or both. This period also saw the reform of secondary education, as endowed grammar schools were remodelled. Many private schools were killed off by the higher standard of grant-maintained schools after 1870, although in towns both girls' and boys' schools survived, catering for the children of middle-class families. Technical education also developed in towns in this period.

1902-44

The 1902 Education Act abolished school boards and made county councils and county borough councils the local authorities, with greatly increased powers and duties. On the other hand, the Act failed to achieve a settlement between Church and State and allowed most municipal boroughs and the larger urban districts to retain their own elementary schools as 'Part III' authorities. All the larger local authorities erected new schools, both before and after the First World War.

Although most children still spent the whole of their career under the elementary code, larger schools tried to provide a different curriculum for older pupils, including more practical work. The Hadow Report of 1926 recommended the establishment of separate `senior' schools for 11 to 14 year-olds who did not secure places at secondary schools, although only the more enlightened LEAs fully implemented the policy. All authorities established new secondary schools after 1902 (or took over existing endowed schools). In particular, large numbers of secondary places for girls became available for the first time. So did free places, awarded on the basis of the 'Annual Schools Examination' (i.e. the 11+). Technical education continued to expand in this period.

1944 to the Present
The 1944 Education Act succeeded where the Balfour Act failed in settling relations between Church and State, and where the Fisher Act of 1918 failed in raising the school-leaving age to 15. Church schools became either 'aided' or 'controlled'; secondary schools became free to all. Some Part III authorities survived as 'Excepted Districts', but in general the period after 1944 was the heyday of the county and county borough education committees, then at the height of their prestige.

The 1944 Act required LEAs to produce a development plan for their area, even if the plans took much longer to implement than was hoped. Far more working-class children secured grammar school places than before the war, but some of the new secondary modern schools barely differed from the old senior departments of elementary schools. From the early 1960s the principles behind the Act began to be questioned and some aspects of the development plans, such as the closure of small rural primary schools, were never carried through. More fundamentally, the three-fold division of secondary education came to be discredited and was replaced in almost all counties by 'comprehensive' schools open to all children aged 11-18 in a particular area. One consequence of the disappearance of the grammar schools, coupled with the abolition of the 'direct grant' status accorded to the most prestigious by the 1944 Act (almost all of which became fully independent when the grant was withdrawn), was a great increase between the 1960s and the end of the century in the proportion of children attending independent schools.

CHARITIES
Most older endowed charities had one or more of three objects: the maintenance of the parish church (or part of it) or a chapel elsewhere in the parish, the relief of poverty, or the provision of education. In recent times charitable status has also been accorded to organisations running village halls, playing fields, play-groups, old peoples' clubs, and similar bodies. All charities should be mentioned in this sub-section, but details of those wholly or partly associated with either the church or education should be discussed in full under those headings. Most of what appears here will be concerned with charities for the poor and with modern voluntary organisations.

Endowed charities for the poor were usually established by the will of the founder, or a deed executed in pursuance of his will; less commonly, founders established a trust during their lifetime. The founder usually conveyed either real property, or money to be invested in real property, to trustees, or left a rent charge (also a type of real property), or provided a sum from his personal estate which was to be lent at interest.

Sometimes the original trustees neglected to appoint successors; money might also be lost through default by borrowers. The problem of succession could be avoided by making the incumbent, churchwardens or overseers the trustees; the problem of defaulting borrowers disappeared as government stock became available; and the cost of

conveying real property to new trustees was avoided with the advent of the Official Trustee, in whom charitable estate could be vested.

These reforms followed the inquiries of the Charity Commissioners in the early 19th century, who sought out the origins of all endowed charities, and ensured that all charities had trustees and that income was used for its intended purpose. A permanent Charity Commission was later established, which continues to supervise the work of trustees. The 1894 Local Government Act transferred control of non-ecclesiastical charities to parish councils.

The majority of endowed charities for the poor disbursed their income in one of three ways (or a combination thereof). They might give cash doles, hand out bread, or provide either garments or cloth. Less commonly, a charity might give coal to the poor. In the 19th century the Charity Commission gradually remodelled charities, so that they were no longer seen to be encouraging pauperism, and directed that money be used to help young people with outfits, tools or further education, or to pay for hospital treatment for old people. Charities of this sort that survive today appear mostly to favour making small cash grants to those in distress.

Only the most ambitious benefactors, mostly in towns, left sufficient funds to enable their trustees to build almshouses. There was a decline in demand for such accommodation after the Second World War, when county council old people's homes appeared to offer a more attractive alternative, and while some almshouses were modernised others were demolished. A few almshouse charities have extended their provision to include retirement homes, nursing homes, sheltered accommodation and the like.

Some charities endowed with cottages (not specifically intended as almshouses) made them available to the overseers to accommodate poor people, instead of letting them and using the income to help the poor.

Where a charity was endowed with cultivable land the estate appears normally to have been let to a farm tenant until the second quarter of the 19th century, when many such pieces of land were converted into allotments. The tenants paid rent but the surplus income was given in cash once a year to the poor, in effect as a rent rebate.

From as early as the sixteenth century charities merely supplemented statutory provisions for the poor and by the eighteenth century if not before, expenditure funded by the poor rate greatly overshadowed charitable giving. The administration of poor relief , whether by the overseers before 1834 or by officers by the poor law unions by then and 1930, will be considered in the section on local government. Where the sources allow, it will be desirable also to say something about how the poor were relieved in an account of social history. It may be possible to establish whether the poor in a particular community relied mainly on in-door relief or out-door relief, or to determine the relative importance of public funded relief and private charity. In some parishes the two systems worked closely together [leading to accusatioins that charity was being used to reduce the poor rate], in others they remained largely or entirely separate with charities given only to those who did not claim poor relief. After 1834 day-to-day poor relief was taken out of parish hands and became the responsibility of relieving officers, who were themselves subject to close regulation by both the unions and central government, leaving the local community with direct control only of its own charities. It may sometimes be possible to see a change in the policy of charity trustees as a result of this. A further change may also be apparent after the establishment of the National Health Service, which reduced local involvement in social welfare and rendered some of the objects for which charities were orginally

established largely or wholly redundant. How did charities adapt to this a further change in state provision. What useful role have they retained over the last half-century or so?

COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES

Guilds

Most medieval towns had at least one guild that seems to have provided a focus for social activity, if only an annual dinner, as well as maintaining a chapel or altar in the parish church. Large towns had an elaborate network of such bodies, some confined to members of one trade, others open to the community at large. As well as their work in the Middle Ages, it is worth tracing the fate of guilds and chantries (and their estates) after the Edwardian Dissolution. Questions to ask include: did the townspeople try to retain the guild lands in public hands or were they granted off to local gentry? If a chantry had supported a schoolmaster, was there an attempt to use the income and premises for a grammar school? Did trade guilds simply become dining clubs or did they continue to take any interest in their craft? Did membership continue to be linked to that craft?

Community Organizations to 1945

The earliest modern community organisations will often be friendly societies established in the second half of the 18th century. They were joined in 19th-century towns by a wide range of voluntary organisations, some charitable, some educational and some purely social. The later 19th century also saw a great extension of the work of both the Church of England and Nonconformist congregations, especially for young people. Indeed, in many rural communities, the church (or church and chapel together) may have provided virtually all the outlets for people's spare time.

The structure that grew up between about 1870 and 1914 survived largely unaltered until after the Second World War. The major new organisation that came into existence during the First World War and after 1918 was often central to the life of a village was the Women's Institute. By contrast, men's organisations such as Rotary and the Round Table have remained largely urban, as have the Freemasons.

Although some parishes had `institutes' before the First World War, pressure for village halls arose mainly after 1918. Halls could not in that period be provided by parish councils and were usually established and managed by a separate voluntary committee, as were playing fields. In recent times the two have sometimes merged with the building of a community centre in one corner of a playing field, providing changing rooms and facilities for indoor sports as well as meeting rooms. Another recent development has been the willingness of the Charity Commission to grant charitable status to bodies responsible for halls, playing fields and community centres.

Amateur sport became organised in its modern form in the later 19th century and by 1914 most towns had a network of football and cricket clubs, some associated with a particular works or church, others open to all. Both games were also popular in mining villages, with clubs often heavily subsidised by employers and seen as socially integrative bodies. In rural villages, the squire and parson might take a similar view, especially of cricket, which was played by a wider range of classes than either association or rugby football.

Community Organizations since 1945

Although the Second World War disrupted both amateur and professional sport, it may have breathed new life into other organisations, especially the WI, as everyone not in the

Forces was enjoined to take up some form of voluntary work, and attendance at churches and chapels revived. Many women also enrolled in the Women's Voluntary Service.

The deeply held feeling in 1945 that everyone had a part to play in building a better society led to a considerable growth of voluntary activity in the years following. Some of this was organised by the National Council for Social Service, which through its county committees particularly encouraged amateur drama and the establishment of local history societies. Other community activities were focused on particular events, notably VE Day and the Coronation of 1953.

Amateur sport revived as men returned from the war, both in rural villages and in urban and mining areas, where the tradition of the works team continued to flourish in an age of heavy industry dominated by large, paternalistic companies. Saturday night at a company sports and social club, or the miners' welfare, remained a familiar feature of working-class life.

Since the 1960s the pattern of community activity has changed. Far fewer people now work for large companies; in particular an entire way of life has imploded with the virtual end of deep coalmining. Almost all women of working age now work outside the home, thus removing much of the support on which a host of organisations traditionally relied. Far fewer people attend church than fifty years ago. Some amateur sport, for example cricket, has suffered from the decline of the game in local authority schools; the traditional works team has all but vanished. People seem to be busier with their work, families and homes than two generations ago, and less inclined to give up time to run clubs and societies, at any rate until they retire.

In any parish, it is worth asking when and why communities activities decline or cease, as well as when and why they were established. It is also worth comparing one community with another, and trying to decide why one village has a flourishing WI and its neighbour does not, or why one village's playing field is fully booked every weekend, whereas another is little used. Rural parishes, especially in midland and southern England, may be more prosperous today than they have ever been, but have they lost the sense of community they had fifty, a hundred or two hundred years ago? If so, why?

Section 5

RELIGIOUS HISTORY

AIMS AND APPROACH
The intention of these new guidelines is to make it possible to offer an intelligible, broadly chronological, and interpretative analysis of religious activity within the parish, giving especial attention to crucial periods of change or transition. It is intended to be an integrated account; authors should analyse the interaction of varying religious groupings within the parish and to bring out their impact on parish life in general.

This broad account of religious life as a whole is to be followed by institutional appendices that will ensure that the VCH continues to offer authoritative reference material. Where appropriate such material can be presented in note form or as lists.

The building history of all religious buildings, including the parish church, will henceforth be placed in the appropriate subdivision of Buildings (*section 8*). Clearly, however, there will be plenty of cross-referencing. It will, of course, be essential to note and comment in this section on all aspects of those buildings and their fittings as they relate to religious life.

These guidelines are intended primarily for those writing about rural parishes or small towns. The general approach and format can, however, easily be adapted for larger settlements.

STRUCTURE

Origins of the Parish Church
This subsection, which if necessary could be further subdivided, should provide an account of the earliest evidence for the existence of a church – whether documentary or archaeological/ architectural. If there is evidence that the church is, let us say, 11th or 12th century but the first occurrence in the record is 13th century, then it is important to draw attention to the physical evidence in this opening subsection. The dedication, if known, and the earliest reference to it could also be mentioned here.

The subsection should also offer a brief account of the extent of the early parish (if it differed from the medieval one) and the status of the living - whether it was a rectory or vicarage, whether it had been granted away to a monastery and was served by its nominees (appropriation). Was the church a minster? Did it have any dependent chapelries or chapels of ease? Were there any ancient burial rights over a wider area, or dues payable to it from neighbouring churches, all of which could be evidence of superior status? There should also be a sentence or two on the early wealth and property of the living, including any early notice of a parsonage.

Religious Life
These subsections will be primarily concerned with the local clergy and their pastoral relations with their flock. The nature of the liturgy and ritual, local cults and other local ceremonies and observances are all relevant here. After the Reformation these subsections should also seek to convey some sense of the interrelationship of the Established Church with any nonconformist or recusant communities within the parish. Where appropriate the surviving fabric, the monuments, stained glass, and fittings should be used to illustrate religious life.

The following chronological scheme is suggested as a possible model for a medium-sized rural parish. It is **not** intended to be rigidly prescriptive or exclusive.

The Middle Ages

The main thrust of the medieval subsection should be an attempt to assess the impact of the church in the parish.

- If not discussed earlier any appropriation and its effects should be mentioned here.
- Were the incumbents resident, did they hold the parish in plurality? What, if anything, is known about their status, education, social contacts etc. Was there a parsonage (if known and if not mentioned earlier)?
- What if any cults were associated with the parish – as revealed by shrines, altar dedications, and (in the later middle ages) images and lights? Local saints could often be celebrated not only through the liturgy but by fairs or special customs held in association with the feast day.
- What guilds or chantries were located in the church? What were their religious activities?
- Where possible physical evidence of cults, guilds and chantries should be noted and used.
- Evidence of official lay involvement in church life, e.g. through church wardens should be noted.

From the Reformation to the Interregnum

- A subsection or subsections should deal with the effects of dissolution of the monasteries and the chantries (if applicable) – e.g if an appropriated living passed to a lay impropriator or a chantry or guild was dissolved. Did the living change in status – e.g did it acquire a new house or a close association with new lords of the manor?
- Where there is evidence (such as the survival of churchwardens' accounts), doctrinal and liturgical changes should be discussed. Some indication of these can be offered by a brief survey of what fittings, vestments and plate were retained for the use of the parish or removed and sold off. Especially significant are the removal of stone altars, roods etc. in the mid 16th century; any further iconoclasm (destruction of stained glass, images etc) thereafter; Laudian innovations in the earlier 17th century, if any. Any physical survival of these innovations should be mentioned.
- This or a separate subsection may also discuss any early evidence for dissent or recusancy and the relations of any such with the established church within the parish/diocese. Lectureships are relevant here.
- Where there is evidence, particular stress should be laid on clerical-lay relations in this and the succeeding section.

The Interregnum

Here, if there is sufficient information, it is desirable to discuss:

- Changes in personnel - whether the local clergy conformed or were ejected.
- Did the church become Independent in its pattern of worship? Is there any evidence of dissenting groups (eg. Quakers) in the parish?
- How was the building treated and used? Fonts and any surviving images, glass, etc may have been removed. Were local ceremonies, feasts and customs suppressed?

1660-1840s

- This subsection, which again might be divided, should open with some account of the transition from the arrangements of the Interregrum to the those under the re-established Church. Did the clergy conform or were they ejected? If they were ejected did they remain active in the parish and set up (in effect) a nonconforming congregation? If there was a change did it represent the restoration of a former incumbent or a new man? If he was new what was his background - i.e. had he

suffered for Anglican beliefs or conformed during the Interregnum? Again, if there is evidence there may be something to say about changes to the fabric reflecting the teaching and worship of the new regime.

- The subsection might then continue with an extended look at the Established church and the standards which it offered, up to, say the early/mid 18th century.
- If applicable, the formal establishment and licensing of nonconformist congregations should be considered, together with their early history and relationship (if known) with the parish church.
- Any early evidence of Roman Catholicism, recorded for example in bishops' or archdeacons' visitation records, should be noted here.
- A further subsection should take the Established Church through to the earlier 19th century; various later 18th-century diocesan episcopal surveys or visitations often provide detail about services, attendances and the general condition of church life at this time
- An allied subsection should consider fluctuations in the fortunes of old Dissent (including the impact of Unitarianism) and any sign of Methodism - again all this will obviously relate to and have implications for the parish church.
- Where appropriate the physical impact of all nonconformity should be mentioned briefly.

1840s-Time of Writing

- A date-range which takes into account the evangelical revival, the rise of the Oxford Movement, the formal establishment of a Roman Catholic hierarchy and parochial system and the major fractions within Methodism would make a suitable starting point for the 19th century and Modern section or sections.
- This or a separate subsection should offer a brief overview of developments at the parish church - including types of service (e.g. was it primarily eucharistic?), the nature of alterations to the fabric, numbers of communicants and wealth and status of incumbents. It can conclude with modern liturgical reform (introduction of central altars, re-ordering of pews etc).
- There should also be some assessment of the rise and decline of nonconformity in the period– what if any chapels were built in the parish, any changes in affiliation, amalgamations, closures etc.
- It is perhaps worth noting that Roman Catholic observance is now more diverse than in the past – it might be worth noting liturgical oddities (e.g. survival of Latin mass).

Non-Christian Religions
Their religious life and contribution to the parish (e.g. the construction of places of worship) should be discussed here. Any relations with Christian churches should be noted.

Institutional Appendices
These sections should be brief but informative - possibly partly in note or list form.

The Parish Church
The institutional history should provide summary details of the descent of the advowson, the income of the living, its tithes, property etc. For important churches a list of deans/incumbents may be included.

Protestant Nonconformity

Details of all the chapels, their opening, closing, affiliations should be included here. The section is probably best organised by affiliation. Details of individual buildings, when built, the main alterations, and whether they are still standing, will go in Buildings (*section 8*).

Roman Catholicism

Details about the extent and formal organization of the parish not included in the general account are to be placed here.

Other Churches

This section will include details of when such churches were established or closed and where possible give indications of numbers.

Non-Christian Religions

Again, details of the formal establishment of any community and where possible, of membership should be noted.

Section 6

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

OBJECTIVES AND SCOPE OF THE ACCOUNT
The objective is not to tell the story of the origin and development of the institutions of parish government. It is unusual, in any case, for it to be possible to do this with anything approaching completeness and accuracy over 800 years. The story of institutional rise and decline should rather be seen as a backdrop to an analysis of the way in which the parish was run, giving special attention to unusual features of its administration, over the centuries. This backdrop will normally begin with some account of active manor courts and end with current administrative arrangements in relation to modern local government. It may be useful to make a statement about the lack of records for a particular period.

The stress should be on the work of the various administrative institutions and their officers, with comment on any particular periods of intensive governance or exceptional laxity and lawlessness that come to light. The administration of the poor law since the seventeenth century is likely to feature prominently in most cases, and interpretation in this area will benefit from an understanding of the main currents of debate among historians. A strong account will pay particular attention to how the parish matches or differs from broad national trends, documenting these where this is relevant. Overall there should be a broad focus on how effectively the parish has been governed and judgement should be offered on this with a degree of confidence that relates to the extent of the documentation.

The colour and liveliness of the account will depend on the extent to which the work of a whole succession of officeholders is documented over the centuries. It may well be that manorial government can only be outlined in terms of when particular kinds of court were held and who owed suit to them. From the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries it is possible that records relating to the work of churchwardens, constables, overseers and surveyors of highways may be brought into play or material may be available about the efforts of these officials, or their delinquencies, in quarter sessions and other supervisory bodies. Issues relating to the supervision and control of parish local government at county and national level, either through quarter sessions, the assize courts or King's Bench prior to the nineteenth-century reforms, should be tackled where possible. Material about vestry and parish meetings may permit some kind of judgement about the power and scope of such meetings at particular times.

Poor relief after 1834 should be dealt with in the Introduction to the volume, in order to avoid duplication in the treatment of poor law unions and modern local government units. A clear exposition of the administrative pattern in the district covered by the volume, making it apparent in particular whether more than a single poor law union and local government unit is applicable is recommended and the use of maps in this instance deserves consideration. Changes in rural district boundaries should be explained.

TAXATION AND EXPENDITURE
Parish records are often rich in material about taxation and expenditure and it may be puzzling how best to treat this detail. An approach which gives careful consideration to how it can be used to indicate significant findings about the impact at particular times of parish government and of the response of local officials to conditions and circumstances is to be encouraged. Clearly long runs of evidence about expenditure, that can be treated on a comparative basis, are especially to be prized and exploited.

CITY, TOWN AND VILLAGE ACCOUNTS

The general principles enunciated here can be applied to communities of any size, since the parish remains the basic unit of local government even in the metropolis. But the larger the place the more elaborate and developed are its public services and administrative arrangements likely to be. Local Government sections should take full account of this. Even the survival of good borough records for a small market town is an indication that a longer account than for a typical village of the period concerned may be appropriate. Whereas there is no intention to set limits on these accounts, the length of them must always be a matter of judgement and related to the interpretative potential of the material.

Section7

LOCAL POLITICS

This is a completely new section and one for which there can be no set agenda. The subject matter of a particular community's politics is infinitely various and the extent of source material no less so. The guidelines in this case should simply act as a prompt for staff to keep their eyes open for political tensions within the community as they survey all aspects of the history of a place. When they light on something, they should regard it as 'politics', rather than (say) local government, education or religious life, all of which can have a political dimension. Local politics can arise from tenurial, economic, administrative and religious issues and tensions, in both villages and towns. Politics will clearly be much more obvious in a town in which the local authority is divided on party lines from an early date, rather than a village in which party politics rarely impinge on the work of the parish council, but in a wider sense political tensions can be found in rural communities to almost the same extent as in towns; in both such tensions appear to date from an early period, although they may not be easily discernible before recent times.

For the medieval period local politics will presumably mainly take the form of conflict between either a lord of the manor and his tenants, or between opposing factions in a guild or other representative body in a town. In small towns which had a manor court as well as more or less fully developed corporate institutions there may well be conflict between the lord and those whom he regarded as his tenants but who themselves thought of themselves primarily as burgesses. There may also be tension, probably mainly in towns, between the tenants of two major landowners competing for influence in the community.

Conflict of this sort may equally be found in the 16th century and early 17th, although after 1660 most town corporations seem to have settled into much quieter ways than before the Civil War, and the battles of the 16th century over, say, the disposal of guild or chantry estates were a thing of the past. Similarly, the manor had in general given way to the parish officers in local government. In rural manors, inclosure of common land and the demolition of houses are obvious sources of conflict.

Even small towns appear to have become quite sharply politicized in the 18th century, from which emerges the 19th-century division between local tories, liberals and radicals, often mirrored in a divide between Church and Chapel. These tensions may become spectacularly obvious in towns which suffered rioting, but can also be seen in early proposals for public health reform, the administration of poor relief, or the provision of education for the poor. In the countryside it is again likely to be changes to old ways, most commonly parliamentary inclosure, that will lead to conflict in the 18th century. Areas of early industrialisation may experience elements of both 'urban' and 'rural' tension, often in a violent form and closely bound up with the nature of work itself in the new industries.

Between 1815 and the mid 19th century, as the economy expanded rapidly but with marked fluctuations of boom and slump, the countryside was perhaps more unsettled than ever before or since. Conflict between farmers and labourers over wages and prices could and did erupt in incendiarism, damage to property and assault; there appears also to have been constant tension concerning the best way to deal with the growing number of poor. There may also have been a bitter division in the community between the incumbent and the Nonconformists. The rift between Church and Chapel may continue up to the First World War and beyond, and in the late 19th century be focused especially

on battles over education and charity administration. The older source of tension, poor relief, was removed from parish politics after 1834, although rural unions as well as those in towns could be riven with dissent. So too could rural district councils, as they came under pressure from central government to improve public health, which was usually vigorously opposed by small property owners.

In towns, especially the larger ones, politics becomes more obviously institutionalized in the 19th century with the growth in the number of elected local authorities and the scope of their work, and also the creation of numerous voluntary bodies of a more or less explicitly political character. Apart from local trade unions or Chartist organizations, these might include both pressure groups whose aim is obvious from their title, and also quite innocuous sounding literary or debating societies, mechanics' institutes or charitable institutions. The number and character of such bodies will change in the course of the century; local authorities become more clearly divided on party lines after 1870 with the widening of the franchise and greater scope for action under both general public health legislation and local Acts. As in the countryside, religious divisions also permeate entirely secular institutions in 19th-century towns.

After 1918, and more especially 1945, most urban and an increasing number of rural local authorities had at least some members who stood for election under party colours. In mining areas the Labour party put up official candidates even in parish council elections. In rural parishes political tension can be evident in more subtle ways, between those who always wanted the parish council to do more and those who wanted the precept kept as low as possible; between old established families and those perceived as incomers; and, up to quite a recent date, between Anglicans and Nonconformists. Even if such conflict is less obvious than in towns or when institutionalized in local authorities, it is nonetheless still there, as presumably it has always been.

Section 8

BUILDINGS

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES
It has been decided to make BUILDINGS one of the 8 categories in the new VCH framework. The title BUILDINGS is being used as a portmanteau which has the virtue of being easily comprehended by the general reader. THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT is perhaps a more accurate title as the new section seeks to describe and, where there is sufficient information, to analyse the built character of a parish or town, distinct from the communications and settlement patterns described in Section 1, (the topographical Introduction). It will include not only individual buildings but building in the context of physical planning and conservation.

The new approach should seek to build on that used in several recent volumes most notably Essex X and Cheshire V. The section on the built environment cannot hope to be comprehensive and in many cases, particularly in towns, can only deal in detail with what seem to be the most important topics for a particular place. The amount of detail in turn will be governed by the exigencies of the architectural editor's workload, the interest of the county staff and by the availability of source material.

WHY WE INCLUDE BUILDINGS IN THE VCH
It is surprising how seldom buildings are referred to in the current memoranda - and how much for granted their mention and the style of their inclusion seems to have been taken in recent years. Discussion of architecture in all its aspects from 1952 onwards takes up no more than 8,000 words. Pugh's memorandum of 1952 on 'Architecture and Illustration for the VCH' provides the reason why buildings are included at all. "In general buildings are to be regarded as a type of source for economic and social history rather for the history of art and architecture.' In fact, the study of buildings in the VCH has been demoted even from that role in most counties to being used as a means of dating the continuity and spread of settlement (Memo on the introductory section of parish histories 4.4, 4.5; CRE and ATT 1994) and, in rather perfunctory entries, as additional evidence for the history of ecclesiastical and public institutions and of landownership on a large and small scale. In very few cases have buildings been used to reflect the complexity of life that pertains in most communities, however small, or discussed as the distinctive products of groups of individuals.

The VCH approach is still founded on the type of archaeological analysis developed by 19th-century antiquarians and architects and used by the RCHME. This of course is a valid but very labour intensive approach if worthwhile conclusions are to be drawn about a significant sample of buildings. The application of this approach to buildings relatively low down the social scale was adopted between the wars. In 1952 the Vernacular Architecture Group was founded. In 1965 (Memo on Vernacular Buildings) the then architectural editor pioneered the inclusion of vernacular architecture in the VCH with the aim of dating a wide variety of buildings and therefore the growth of settlement. This has preoccupied the architectural editor ever since, often to the detriment of more comprehensive appreciation of the built environment of a parish or town. Indeed it has sometimes involved the most important physical aspect of a place being ignored at the expense of fairly detailed inspections of fairly minor buildings, many of which have been adequately covered for our purposes by the DoE Lists and by local vernacular experts.

CURRENT APPROACHES

The study of all types of buildings has evolved since 1965, industrial archaeology following hot on the heels of vernacular architecture. Architectural history and archaeology have not only embraced a concern with a wider social spectrum but also an interest in social and political organization. So much so in fact that Will Self, an interesting observer of the architectural world, claimed recently that 'buildings are the reification of social and political activity', a point of view which is also embedded in David Cannadine's introduction to the latest book on the architecture of the Palace of Westminster. Social anthropology has been particularly influential in recent years so that the social organization, and even gendering, of space within buildings of all classes has become a major subject of study.

BUILDING TYPES

These interests have manifested themselves in several ways, one of which has been the study of country houses as social organisms and of churches as manifestations of liturgical practice. The new approaches influenced even an institution as conservative as the RCHME as long ago as the 1970s when the first of their thematic volumes was published and the inventory volumes ground to halt through lack of will to pursue the increasingly impossible goal of a complete inventory. This has led the RCHME and now EH to concentrate on a wide range of building types and to study the way these function. We too should take note of the changes in the intellectual climate that stimulated change in the RCHME and be alive to other approaches as they develop. The RCHME's recent work has given us a greater understanding of many major building types and some appreciation of the complex history of farming practices, industrial methods and of health and welfare. All this seem to hark back to Ralph Pugh's 1952 remark, with the difference that the buildings themselves are given their due cultural and artistic importance in these new studies.

There has been pressure on the VCH to take on the task of compiling an inventory but, though this was abandoned by the RCHME, it has effectively been taken up by the Listing branch of EH, whose recording is becoming increasingly rigorous. Instead we should be developing a fruitful union between documentary and fieldwork skills to interpret the significance of buildings. For example, this could lead to the identification of many more types among buildings whose purposes are not obvious; for example, not all vernacular buildings of superficially similar form are houses.

DESIGN

The missing element in most VCH descriptions is the sense of a building as a three-dimensional object in space that, whatever its age, size of status, is the product of conscious thought. All buildings are to some extent designed and the motives for changes in design - such as the improvement of circulation space, the technological ability to span large areas, the tailoring of spaces for a particular industrial process or the reordering of a church interior - should also be expressed where possible.

The personalities behind buildings have been virtually ignored by the VCH. Connection between buildings and people has been by inference, usually by cross-referring to other parts of the text such as Church Life and Manorial Descents. For most of this century the main job of architectural historians has been to show how buildings express the aesthetic intentions of their designers but, since the war, an interest has grown in the complexities of the design process - how builders, architects and communities interact to achieve the buildings they require. In the VCH patrons are usually related to their buildings only by inference. The story of individual and community involvement in building - including the economic significance of the project - should be made more explicit even at the risk of repetition with other sections.

A HOLISTIC APPROACH

A 'building use study' often forms part of an architect's education. This involves not only analyzing the development - the building history - of a particular building but how those who designed it, built it and paid for it intended it to be used and how those who inhabit or visit it, use or have used it. This, I believe, should be in the forefront of our minds when we look at the documents and the buildings themselves. And as well as seeking to convey how individual buildings work, we should also bear in mind how groups of buildings work - why town centres were planned in a particular way, how amenities are distributed in housing estates, why a school has accumulated a motley collection of extensions and buildings. In addition we have to bear in mind the whole burgeoning field of construction history. This brings us back nearer to our archaeological roots but with greater emphasis on the technological and economic aspects of the building process and perhaps a less mechanistic one.

All of this means that our accounts can no longer be restricted to list-like records of features but must convey a sense of a building's social and functional ordering, a sense of it as an artefact and an idea of its role in the wider community and the landscape. To deal with the all these themes in detail would obviously distort the purpose and timescale of the VCH but they should, I believe, be in our minds as we do the architectural work.

It is in our own interest to provide better information about the built environment. Many people are interested in buildings for a very wide variety of reasons. The VCH is not widely used by those seeking information about buildings. We could capture a whole new constituency if we improved our coverage and modernized our approach.

BUILDINGS

STRUCTURE

This section should provide a sense of the chronological development of the building stock of a parish, its layout and its visual impact. The approaches described above should form the background to all accounts.

The section should begin with a subsection on the built character and include other subsections on religious and secular buildings as appropriate to the size and architectural importance of the parish.

THE BUILT CHARACTER

This subsection should give a general picture of built character of a place, the range of building types and periods of building activity. It should show how the building types reflect economic, social and cultural activity. The provision of estate, philanthropic and community buildings should be noted and their visual impact on the character of the parish should be described. The effects of local authority planning decisions on the location and type of 20th-century development and on the conservation of buildings and townscape should also be discussed.

Overarching themes relevant to wider localities - such as plan forms, building materials, specially active periods of building activity, local authority building conventions etc. - should be included in the volume introduction (*see* Section 1b). Particular subjects, such as the extraordinary survival of a building type, an unusual or archaic material, or dominance of one architect's or one patron's work, may need bringing out in this section.

OTHER SUBSECTIONS

The Built Character should be followed by subsections which are related to the 7 previous sections of the framework. The relationships will not be rigid but should be made clear where helpful; if necessary information should be repeated, *see* eg. Religious History and Religious Buildings. Electronic searchability and the indexing based on this should obviate the need to overload the text with cross-references.

The accounts should make clear which buildings are standing at the time of writing and which have been demolished and when. It should be possible to mention most buildings within the context of a chronological or thematic account. Only major buildings with complex histories will need describing individually.

The choice of subsections can be varied to suit the particular place. In a small parish only two subsections may be needed ie. Religious Buildings and Secular Buildings, but the following themes should be covered wherever possible.

Religious Buildings

This subsection should start with comment on the provision of religious buildings in the parish and their character. Churches, chapels, mission halls, mosques etc. for which no detailed building history is necessary should be included in this introduction. Parish churches and other complex buildings should then be described individually, with furnishings and monuments incorporated into the chronological accounts. Physical evidence significant for the development of religious or social life should also be used in the appropriate sections (eg. for origins of the church; longevity of a family presence within the parish).

All other buildings connected with the church should be part of the chronological accounts under the appropriate subheadings.

Public and Community Buildings

These should include, community, leisure, welfare, educational and cultural buildings provided or adapted for public use. If they occur within the context of planned or philanthropic development this should be mentioned. If known, an idea should be given either in this section or in the volume introduction of how they relate to local and national standards. Buildings provided for distinct purposes, eg. education, or with complex histories may need to be discussed together. Public parks and open spaces should also be described.

Commercial Buildings

This subsection should be introduced by an idea of how the buildings relate to the predominant economic activities. The types should include market and commercial buildings including public houses and hotels, retail outlets and office accommodation; industrial and transport structures; and agricultural buildings. An indication of the relationship of farmhouses and farm buildings to local farming practices should be given here or in the volume introduction.

Domestic Buildings

This subsection should provide an overview of the development of the style and amenity of all dwellings within the parish. This type of treatment has been well-tried in the VCH and there are several examples in recent volumes, eg. in Essex X , that can be adapted.
Housing conditions should be indicated if not discussed in Social Life. Estate and local authority building in general may have been discussed elsewhere, but types of estate and council housing should be described here, including improvements to existing dwellings. Houses that have changed their use or have been converted to and from multiple occupancy but which retain their original form should be included.

It may be appropriate to group the houses belonging to manors and other estates and even to start the subsection with them, though, as elsewhere, only the building histories of significant and/ or complex houses need describing individually. Where possible their development should be related to ownership and to the economic and social standing of their builders; it may be useful to draw parallels with houses built by the same owner elsewhere. Major houses should be placed in their setting; parks, gardens and approaches should be discussed.

Rectories and vicarage houses can be discussed as a separate category if appropriate or included in the chronological survey if they belong to common building types.