1. Introduction

The main aim of the introduction is to give a sense of the general character of the parish or township in question, both its physical characteristics and the layout and nature of the human landscape. Together with the section on 'Population and Settlement', it should provide an account of the main features of the history of the parish and its settlements, with a particular emphasis on topography. It should offer a clear and coherent framework for the article as a whole, pulling together the themes explored in detail in subsequent sections. Each of the subsections should be treated chronologically to give a sense of development over time.

Your Introduction should cover the topics prescribed below; in many rural parishes or townships they can probably be grouped under three subheadings, as follows:
- Introductory description, area, boundaries and extent
- Landscape
- Communications.

1. Introductory Description; Area; Boundaries and Extent

The key elements, and the order in which they might be treated, are as follows:

- An **introductory description**, which may be no more than 'a small rural township in the ancient parish of X', and its location (e.g. 'on the edge of the Lake District, five miles west of Penrith').
- A **thumbnail sketch** of the place could be included in this opening paragraph, mentioning prominent natural or manmade features (e.g. 'embracing extensive mosslands on the Solway lowlands'; 'contains the three villages of X, Y and Z'); aspects of the local economy ('a former coal-mining village'); and perhaps major historical sites ('the prominent earthworks of the Roman fort of Old Carlisle lie close to the western edge of the township'). This section should also **locate the parish** in relation to the county town, the county boundaries, and other places of note which may be topographical (The Lake District, for example), or markets (within or external to the county).
- In the past, VCH articles contained information on 'Events' and 'Worthies' associated with each parish. These are no longer included. Exceptionally, an event might be mentioned where it was of national or international importance (e.g. the submission of the northern kings to Athelstan at Dacre in 927), as might a notable individual,

where the association represents a major part of the individual's life and the place's history (Wordsworth at Grasmere, would be an obvious example).

- The **principal settlement(s)** should be named and its/their location(s) described. Their shape (whether compact; around a village green; straggling along as road, etc) and character (agricultural hamlet; mining village, for example) should be given.
- **Acreage** of the township/parish and emergence or establishment of its boundaries. Use the Ordnance Survey 1st and 2nd editions of the Six-Inch map (available at www.british-history.ac.uk/map.aspx?pubid=270) to obtain the acreage – note that, as a result of the Divided Parishes Act 1883, detached portions of other parishes/townships were added to the civil parish within which they were physically located, resulting in changes of acreage. Such changes should be noted.
- Describe the **shape** of the area within the boundaries and the **historic boundaries** themselves. Where information is available, the origin of the parish and the emergence or establishment of its boundaries should be discussed. The **place-name**, its meaning and the significance of the name could be discussed here, as the name is often a key piece of early evidence about the 'origin of the parish'. Something along the lines of: 'The name Askham probably derives from Old Norse *askum* ('at the ash trees'), suggesting that ash woodland was a distinguishing feature of the landscape in the Scandinavian period'. For interpretation of the place-name, use the standard works of reference only (see below, under 'Settlement', <mark>p. 00</mark>);
- The **nature of the boundaries** should be described briefly (a detailed description is not needed): did they follow identifiable natural or manmade features (streams; watersheds; roads; field boundaries)?
- **Administrative sub-divisions**: where you are writing the history of the whole of an ancient parish which included several townships, mention these components and give their locations and, if possible, acreages. Some Cumbrian townships were subdivided for certain purposes, e.g. highway maintenance. These will be discussed in detail in the Local Government section but should be mentioned here.
- **Boundary changes** since late 19th century should be described. Changes are usually discussed in the printed census returns and you will need to use later editions of the Six-Inch Ordnance Survey map to chart changes. Try to ensure that your material is as up to date as possible, if necessary by approaching the parish or district council for advice over post-1974 boundaries.

2. Landscape

This subsection should include a discussion of geology, soils, relief, and drainage and give an impression of the 'human' landscape and the impact of man's exploitation, referring to the distribution of farmland, woodland and parks and the extent of common waste before

enclosure (or where it survives today). Other major modern types of land use (e.g. golf courses, airfields, reservoirs, forestry plantations, wind farms) should be mentioned.

Underlying geology, both 'solid' (the bedrock) and 'drift' (the overburden of superficial material such as boulder clay, sand, gravel or peat, for example) should be described – not in detail but in relationship to landform and to its exploitation as building material or as raw material for industry. The Geological Survey maps are the key source here.

A Digital version of Britain's geology which volunteers may find useful is now available through the British Geological Survey website. To use it, go into www.bgs.ac.uk, click on 'Discovering Geology' and open the 'Geology of Britain viewer'. This allows the user to zoom in on any part of Britain. By using the zoom facility Information is viewable at scales of 1:625,000 up to 1:50,000 (about 1" to the mile). To obtain detail on geographical location users can switch from 'no transparency' which presents geological detail only to 'full transparency' which shows underlying roads and place names. A geological key is also available which can be activated from the base map at whatever scale you are working.

For soils, use the Soil Survey of England & Wales 1:250,000 map, sheet 1 (Northern England) and the accompanying volume, R. A. Jarvis et al, *Soils and their Use in Northern England* (Harpenden: Soil Survey of England & Wales Bulletin No. 10, 1984). For places in Cumberland, some of the topographical descriptions in Thomas Denton's *Perambulation of Cumberland 1687-8* provide a vivid glimpse of soil and farming types as perceived by a 17th-century commentator.

As with British Geological Survey maps, a digitized version of soils in England and Wales is now available, this time courtesy of the National Soil Resources Institute (NSRI) at the University of Cranfield. The viewer is called 'Soilscapes' and can be viewed at www.landis.org.uk/soilscapes/. The Soilscapes viewer can be used by CCHT volunteers to produce summary soils information for specific locations anywhere in Cumbria. As with the BGS digimaps, zoom facilities are available to examine maps at different scales and information is available, for any location, on soil texture, drainage status and fertility. Bear in mind that that this information relates to the time of mapping and that mapping took place in the twentieth century.

For the human landscape, cartographic evidence will be the major source, not only successive editions of Six-Inch Ordnance Survey maps, but also the 18th-century printed maps (for Cumberland: Hodskinson and Donald, 1774; for Westmorland: Jeffery, 1770; for Lancashire: Yates, 1786) and manuscript plans (estate plans, lawsuit plans etc). Remember the value of modern satellite imagery (via Google maps, for example) in allowing you to 'see' the contemporary landscape from above.

4. Communications

The main concern here should be the way in which communications situate the parish/township in relation to the outside world, to larger settlements and to its neighbours. Cartographic evidence (Ordnance Survey maps and the older county maps) will again be the key starting point here. The main topics are likely to be:

Roads.

- Include a description of the main roads through the parish, taken from Ordnance Survey maps, and include any early documentary evidence and early diversions.
- Give the date of, and describe the route of any turnpike roads , noting when they were dis-turnpiked in the later nineteenth century.
- Provide any details you may be able to find of older, lost roads..
- Mention routes which formed or marked parish boundaries.
- Mention modern roads such as motorways which pass through the parish, even if they do not have direct access.

Water transport:

- Give details and any early references to fords, ferries, bridges and wharfs on rivers or estuaries
- Where possible date the building and rebuilding of bridges
- Where relevant mention the building of canals through the parish and any wharfs or basins on them
- For coastal settlements, mention any early evidence for anchorages, harbours or ports (major harbours will be discussed under Economic History)

Railways:

- Give details of railways built through the parish with their dates of opening and closure. The standard atlas of British railways is A Jowett, *Jowett's Railway Atlas of Great Britain and Ireland from pre-Grouping to the present day* (1989).
- Note the presence of stations, including those now demolished, with their dates of operation. A key source here is C.R. Clinker, *Clinker's Register of Closed Passenger Stations and Goods Depots in England, Scotland and Wales 1830-1970* (1971).

Buses, post and telecommunications

- Brief details should be given of regular bus services and how these have changed across time.
- The presence of post offices, dates of arrival of telephone service and of separate broadband internet services should be mentioned.