Section C: Preparing Your Draft Article

1. WHAT TO AIM FOR

1. Principles

VCH articles are intended to be definitive works of reference, so it is important always to uphold the core principles which underpin VCH writing:

Accuracy. Always aim for the greatest degree of precision and accuracy possible: the article will only become definitive if these aims are met. This means being constantly vigilant when making notes and drafting your text (it is only too easy to transcribe '1857' as '1875'!). ***Check everything***. Accuracy also means ensuring that your interpretations are correct and checking all assumptions (are you certain that the 'Thomas Smith' mentioned in one source is the same 'Thomas Smith' you have encountered in another? When a source refers to 'Ambridge school', are you sure you are correct in assuming that it is referring to the National School in the village which you know about from other sources?). If you encounter discrepancies between the information in two different sources, do all you can to resolve them and to get to the truth.

Going back to primary sources. The VCH prides itself on going back to original sources and not relying on secondary works. By all means use published local histories as a starting point but don't take anything on trust and look up the sources on which the author relied. You will almost certainly be consulting a wider range of sources than most published local histories do.

Consistency. In order to ensure consistency between articles, it is important that each is built on a comparable level of research. To that end, the VCH has traditionally used a checklist of sources, all of which are consulted. The ***Checklist of Sources*** for the VCH Cumbria project is given below (pp. 62-69): ***you will be asked to confirm that you have checked all the sources listed there for information about the place you are researching.***

Citing your sources. Remember that you should cite the source of *all* factual statements. This should be done using footnotes and following the conventions outlined in 'Citing Your Sources' (below pp. 51-56). It is therefore vital that, when making notes, you take care to record the exact source of the information (including page number if a printed source or full record office reference if a manuscript).

2. Length

The projected length of your article will be discussed with you as you embark on your research and writing. Brevity is the touchstone – for many rural townships in Cumbria, around 5,000 words should be needed to cover all the topics required by the VCH.

3. Content and Style

The arrangement and content of your article should follow the guidelines laid out in the national VCH online Guidance Notes to 'Writing a Parish History' (http://www.victoriacountyhistory.ac.uk/local-history/writing-parish-history), supplemented by the Cumbria-specific advice given (pp. 11-44). Be sure to cover all the required topics under each section of your article.

Style is more subjective, but the touchstones of what is required for a VCH article are precision, succinctness and clarity. Please note the following general points:

- **Write in the past tense**, avoiding terms such as 'now' or 'at the present time'. You are writing a history of the place in question from the earliest record to the time of writing, with the intention that your article will remain a definitive source for many years to come. So, do not write '*the manor house is now a care home for the elderly*'; instead write '*in 2012 the manor house was a care home for the elderly*'.

- **Don't mention sources in the text**. There is no need to say '*Mannix and Whelan's directory of 1847 lists John Smith as owner of the quarry*', since the directory will be cited in your footnote. '*John Smith owned the quarry in 1847*' conveys the necessary information in far fewer words.

- **Avoid value judgements**. A discriminating description of a building or landscape can add life and interest to the article but avoid including personal value judgements. It might be tempting to describe the manor house as having '*a breathtakingly beautiful Georgian facade*' or a council estate as being 'drab', but such phrases should be avoided. Likewise, avoid passing judgement on individuals. A man should only be described as '*a mean, tight-fisted landlord*' if you can substantiate that perception in a source cited in a footnote. It would be better to make it clear that such a judgement was the view of those who know him, rather than your own assessment (you could say that he was '*regarded by some contemporaries as being grasping and avaricious*', for example, as long as you have evidence to substantiate this).

- **Synthesise**. A VCH parish or township history is largely factual but should, ideally, be more than a string of facts. The aim should be to understand (and convey in as few words as possible) the historical processes behind the facts. So, '*Thomas Bloggs founded Ambridge National School in 1846; it was enlarged in 1863*' gives the bare facts but begs several questions. Who was Bloggs? Why did he found the school? Why was it enlarged when it was? How much better it would be to attempt to link the bald facts to other aspects of the parish's history: '*Thomas Bloggs, the curate at St John's church who was concerned by the lack of educational provision for the children of coal-mining families, founded Ambridge National School in 1846; it was*

enlarged in 1863 to accommodate the increase in population after the sinking of the Albert and Edward pits'.

- ***Make every word count***. Write as concisely as possible, as you will need to squeeze a lot of factual information into a tight word limit. 'VCH style' can seem frustratingly spare and clinical and doesn't give the author much freedom to express themselves! But this is necessary in a work of reference – remember that you are writing something akin to an encyclopaedia entry.

4. Footnotes

Your footnotes are there to enable your readers to go straight to the sources on which you have drawn. Fine footnotes are an art form! The aim is to provide full and precise information as succinctly as possible and the VCH has developed very effective ways of achieving this. Follow the conventions given in the 'Citing Your Sources' section (below, pp. 51-56) to the letter. Remember that, if you have used archive material in private hands, you should give a full and accurate attribution (providing the same degree of specificity as you would for an archive in a record office, for example) and include an acknowledgement of thanks.

2. SUBMITTING YOUR ARTICLE

The following guidelines should be followed when preparing your draft article for submission to the Project Director and/or Volunteer Co-ordinator.

Presentation

- Draft articles should be word processed as Word files, double-spaced using Times New Roman or Arial font in size 12 font.

- Please use the automatic footnoting facility and present your notes as footnotes rather than endnotes. While drafts are being prepared footnotes should be numbered consecutively from 1 for each section of the township history. Use footnotes to cite references only, with brief explanations as necessary. They should not carry extended comment or a subordinate argument separate from the text.

- Please follow to the letter the prescribed conventions for laying out footnotes and abbreviations as given pp. 51-61.

- Margins should be set to 'normal' (Word 2007), or 2.54cm top, bottom, left and right.

- The title and section headings should be written in block capitals.

Submitting Your Draft

- Please submit one section of the township history at a time, so that it can be read and commented on by the Project Director and/or Volunteer Co-ordinator.
- At the top of each draft section should be the name of the township/parish, your name (the author) and the date the draft was submitted, as well as the section heading (e.g. Landownership).
- Make sure that the draft is double-spaced before submitting as this makes it easier to read it. Keep to single-spacing for footnotes.
- Drafts should be submitted as an email attachment so that the Project Director and/or Volunteer Co-ordinator can provide feedback using the Word comments facility.
- Please submit maps and illustrations as separate files; do not embed them in the text.

Feedback

We aim to provide you with feedback on your draft within a comparatively short time – but please be aware that it may take us several weeks to undertake the detailed reading and consideration required.

- Comments will be made on your draft using the Comment facility on Word. So, please be prepared for your draft to be returned covered with lots of electronic 'red ink'!
- We'll be looking at how well your draft fulfils the requirements laid out in the VCH national Guidance Notes and in this Handbook, so you can expect to receive comments on
    - the quality and quantity of the research you have undertaken
    - how well you have interpreted the evidence you have found
    - points requiring further research and/or clarification
    - citation of evidence in footnotes
- We aim to discuss our comments on your draft with you in person, as well as through email/telephone contact.

Revision of drafts

In the nature of the project, the completion of a first draft is merely the start of a long journey towards publication. Draft articles will be submitted to the Director or Volunteer Coordinator, who will edit them and, in many cases, return them to the author(s) for further revision: volunteers should thus expect that changes, sometimes involving additional research, will be required before their article is accepted. The Director and Volunteer Coordinator reserve the right to make changes to drafts submitted to them as part of the project. Once completed to the required standard, articles will be posted online on the VCH Cumbria project website (http://www.cumbriacountyhistory.org.uk/) and may subsequently also be placed on the Cumbria pages of the national VCH website. It is likely to be several years before completed articles are edited by VCH headquarters and published in either printed or electronic form: further revision will almost certainly be required at that stage. This may be undertaken by someone other than the original author(s) of the article.

Authorship

Full acknowledgement of authorship will be given when an article is published, whether online or in print. In cases where an author has drawn together materials researched and/or analysed by other volunteers, acknowledgement of the role of other members of the research team will also be given.

Copyright

Once a draft has been accepted for posting on the VCH Cumbria project website, the author(s) will be asked to sign a statement transferring copyright to the Cumbria County History Trust. When a draft article is subsequently posted on the VCH national website, copyright will be transferred to the University of London, which owns the Victoria County History. Note that assigning copyright applies only to the article itself – it in no way prevents a volunteer from using the research on which the article is based in any way they like.

3. CITING YOUR SOURCES

The footnotes are an integral and vitally important part of a VCH article, enabling the reader to pursue the history of the place by delving further into the sources you have consulted. Crafting your footnotes successfully is thus a key part of writing for the VCH – and you should expect it to take time to master the skill! The following notes provide guidance for writing footnotes when submitting drafts for the project. ***Please read these notes carefully and follow the instructions to the letter. Correct citation of sources is an important part of the discipline of writing for the VCH.***

The VCH uses the footnoting system common in Humanities subjects, in which a footnote number in the text refers to a note giving details of the reference. Standard abbreviations are used for many of the sources which are frequently cited in VCH articles: these are given pp.57-61. **You should use the standard abbreviation where appropriate: the following guidance should be followed for sources not covered by the list of abbreviations.**

1. MANUSCRIPT SOURCES

- The broad rule is: repository name (or abbreviation, e.g. 'TNA', 'CAS', 'BL') followed by reference number (Examples a and c, below) or description, if the repository's form of reference is insufficient to lead the reader to the exact piece of paper or parchment you are citing (Example b).
- If the manuscript is a volume, you should give the page or folio number on which the information you cite is to be found (Example a). If unpaginated, an alternative identification should be given (e.g. date of entry) (Example d).
- For archives held in private hands, give a description of the document, followed by the name of the person or institution in whose hands it is and the year in which you consulted it (Example e).
- Material in sound, image or film archives should be cited using the same conventions as for manuscript material.
- Neither quotation marks nor underlined titles are used.

Here are some examples:

a   CAS (Carlisle), D/Lons/W8/12/1, p. 235.

b   CAS (Whitehaven), D/Lec, box 300, Brown's survey 1758, Wasdale Head.

c   TNA, ADM74/2/16.

d   Keswick Museum 4692, 12 Oct. 1688.

> e   Eskdale Commoners' Association Minute Book 1967-1980, 8 May 1968 (courtesy of Eskdale Commoners' Association, 2008).

2. PRINTED PRIMARY SOURCES

Abbreviations are used for many of the frequently cited printed sources (trade directories, Thomas Denton's *Perambulation of Cumberland*, the *Calendar of Inquisitions Post Mortem* etc) – see the list of standard abbreviations pp. 57-61. Where an abbreviation is not given in that list, full details should be given, as follows:

- Title of volume
- Editor
- Series and volume number (if appropriate)
- Place and date of publication
- Page number (or, if documents are numbered, as in *Calendar of Inquisitions*, document number).

> Examples of sources on the list of standard abbreviations:
>
> *Denton's History*, 101.
>
> *Cal. Inq. p.m.* VII, no. 279.
>
> Citing sources not on the list:
>
> *Antiquary on Horseback*, ed. J.M. Ewbank (CWAAS Extra Series XIX, Kendal, 1963), 99.
>
> *An American Quaker in the British Isles: the travel journals of Jabez Maude Fisher, 1775-1779*, ed. K. Morgan (Oxford: British Academy, 1992), 293.

3. NEWSPAPERS AND PERIODICALS

- Title (in italics)
- Date; page number
- Only the main title of the paper need be given. Omit `A' or `The' except for *The Times*.
- If an article is authored, give author, title and pages.

> *Westmorland Gazette*, 7 Sept. 1984, p. 4.
>
> *Gentleman's Magazine*, Feb. 1751, opp. p. 51.

4. WEB SITES

- If you have obtained information from a website, you must cite the site and web page precisely in your footnote. Only cite a website when the information is not available elsewhere; in particular do not cite a website for digitised images of a printed source (e.g. trade directories; newspapers). In these circumstances, cite the source which has been digitised.
- Be precise; vague references to 'the web' will not suffice. The full citation is necessary, followed by the date on which you accessed the site.

> http://www.pastpresented.ukart.com/beach/index.htm (Accessed 25 July 2012)

5. BOOKS

The first citation of a book should include the following information:

- Author (with initials preceding surname)
- Full Title (in *italics*, use a colon to separate main title and any subtitle)
- Name of the series in which the book appears (if any) and volume number in that series
- Place of publication and year of publication in parentheses
- Page number(s) on which the material cited can be found. Note that the VCH does not preface the page number(s) with 'p.' or 'pp.'

- Where there is more than one edition of a book, you should cite the reference from the edition you have used, irrespective of the original publication date.

> S. Denyer, *Traditional Buildings and Life in the Lake District* (London, 1991), 6.
>
> R. Sharpe, *Norman Rule in Cumbria 1092-1136*, CWAAS Tract Series XXI (Kendal, 2006), 21.

6. CHAPTERS IN EDITED COLLECTIONS

- The first citation should include:
- Author's name (as above)
- Title of chapter in single quotation marks
- The word 'in' followed by the names of the editor(s), title and publication details of the book (as above)
- First and last page numbers of the chapter cited or page number(s) of a specific reference.

> R.W. Brunskill, 'Vernacular Building Traditions in the Lake District' in J.R. Baldwin and I.D. Whyte, *The Scandinavians in Cumbria* (Edinburgh, 1985), 135-160.

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7. ARTICLES IN JOURNALS

- Author's name (as above)
- Title of article, in single quotation marks
- Title of journal (in *italics*) omitting 'A' or 'The'
- Volume number, in lower case roman or arabic numerals
- Year of publication
- First and last page numbers of the article or page number(s) of a specific reference
- **NB Do not italicise the title of the article - only the journal.**

> N. Gregson, 'Tawney revisited: custom and the emergence of capitalist class relations in north-east Cumbria, 1600-1830', *Economic History Review*, 2nd series, 42 (1989), 18-42.
>
> R. G. David, 'The slate quarrying industry in Westmorland: Troutbeck, Kentmere and Longsleddale', *CW2,* lxxxvii (1987), 215-235.

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8. DISSERTATIONS AND THESES

- Author
- Title of thesis/dissertation in single quotation marks
- Title of degree, university and date

- Page references (if necessary)

> G.L. Murfin, 'Popular Leisure in Cumbria, 1870-1939', unpublished PhD thesis, University of Lancaster, 1987.

9. PERSONAL OR LOCAL KNOWLEDGE

Some information on the recent history of a place will come from your own personal knowledge or from talking to neighbours. If it is possible to corroborate such information from a written source, this should be done and the source cited. If this is not possible (e.g. 'Lady Agnes was remembered as a domineering figure who rode through the village in the 1930s on a fine black mare'), you should use the form 'Local inf.' followed by the date. If your informant is happy to be named (be sure to check; do not assume this), you could use the form 'Inf. from Mrs S. Jackson, Penrith, 2011'.

10. SECOND AND SUBSEQUENT CITATIONS

The simplest way of referring to a published work already cited in a previous footnote is to use the abbreviated author/title method. You give the reference in full (as detailed above) the first time. Then give the author's surname, a brief title, and the relevant page number(s) in subsequent references within your chapter. **Do not use the form *op. cit'***

> First reference:
>
> 4.   A. J. L. Winchester, *Landscape and society in medieval Cumbria* (Edinburgh, 1987), 83.
>
> Second and subsequent references:
>
> 14.   Winchester, *Landscape*, 41-3.