VCH PARISH HISTORY TEMPLATE

Revised 2017

CONTENTS

Preamble

VCH parish histories are a very particular form of Local History. Although interpretative, they are works of reference, encyclopaedic in character in that they aim to treat all places in England systematically. They record what is known, but cannot go into great detail – instead they provide the infrastructure from which local historians may be able to write fuller histories of their parish. The infrastructure we provide means that every parish is researched to a standard which makes comparison possible within counties and between counties across the country. In consequence, VCH parish histories are relatively brief and pithy, their tight structure enabling their length to be kept within bounds. For rural parishes most articles ought not to exceed 16,000 words in length, although large parishes containing multiple settlements may require slightly more.

The VCH works to two guiding principles.

- The text should be based as far as possible on primary evidence, published or unpublished, rather than on existing secondary sources (although these should always be consulted). The VCH has always sought to work from primary sources to try to prevent the recycling of misleading information.
- The evidence on which every statement in the text is based should be supported by a footnote citing the source from which the information has been taken. This is because, as a work of reference, it does not cover every topic in detail, but provides information which will enable future researchers to cover the subject in more depth.

The encyclopaedic aspect of the VCH requires a clear template to ensure consistency of approach. This document provides the current framework within which all authors of VCH parish articles are expected to work, and is based closely on the guidelines in 'Writing a Parish History' on the VCH website, which were prepared c.2010. These have been updated in 2017, taking account of how different counties have interpreted them, in order to provide a template which fits with current practice.

Definition of 'parish' for VCH purposes

A 'parish' for VCH purposes is a place which became a civil parish in 1866, so separate parish histories should normally be prepared for every later 19th-century civil parish. In exceptional circumstances (where an industrial village straddles civil parish boundaries, for example) it may be appropriate to deviate from the norm; such cases should be discussed with Central Office when parish histories for the area are being planned.

In southern and Midland counties the forerunners of the civil parishes of 1866 were usually ancient parishes; in the North Midlands and much of northern England, the forerunners were, in many cases, townships. Where the territory being treated in an article did not coincide with an ancient parish its status and relation to the ancient parish should be made clear in the introductory paragraph. In multi-township parishes where individual townships became civil parishes in 1866, a separate brief introductory account of the ancient parish as a whole should be prepared, and the account of the parish church should be given in the article for the civil parish in which it stands.

Towns

The parish history template outlined in this document is geared primarily towards rural parishes, including quasi-urban settlements (industrial villages or suburban and commuter settlements, for example). The framework of chapter headings will often also be appropriate (perhaps in an adapted form) for the histories of smaller towns, including smaller medieval market towns, though the balance of content will probably differ from that of a rural parish. For larger towns (of both medieval and post-medieval origin) a tailor-made structure should be devised which retains elements of the template as far as is appropriate but which fits the particular circumstances of the settlement in question. The structure of VCH articles for all urban settlements should be discussed in advance with Central Office.

Structure of a parish article.

After a brief introductory paragraph, a VCH parish history will normally consist of six chapters in the following order:

> 1. Landscape, Settlement, and Buildings
>
> 2. Landownership
>
> 3. Economic History
>
> 4. Social History
>
> 5. Religious History
>
> 6. Local Government

The rest of this document consists of detailed guidance on the content of each of these chapters.

Introductory Paragraph(s)

Aims and approach

The purpose of this short introduction (one to two paragraphs) is to place the parish in its geographical setting, give some sense of its general character, and highlight any particularly significant or unusual features. Mention might be made (for instance) of its location on uplands or in a river valley; its size at the time of writing or at a particular date; its proximity (or otherwise) to major settlements or roads; its predominant social character both now and in the past; its religious character if especially important (e.g. as a regional focus of Roman Catholic recusancy); or any particularly significant buildings, industries, individuals, or events. Besides setting the scene, it should aim to draw the reader in and to flag some of the main themes developed in later chapters. If a parish contained more than one settlement (including any significant deserted settlements), then this should be made clear.

In VCH Shorts the introductory paragraph(s) may need to be slightly fuller, in order to place the parish fully in context. For parish histories conceived as part of a Red Book, much of the general context will have already been given in the volume introduction.

The place name may be alluded to here, although depending on its meaning and significance it may be better discussed under boundaries, landscape, or settlement.

1. Landscape, Settlement, and Buildings

Aims and approach

This chapter previously formed the core of the traditional VCH 'Parish Introduction', but to give it more weight it has now been elevated into a chapter in its own right. The primary purpose remains the same: to give a sense of the general character of the parish with particular regard to its topography, its physical characteristics, the layout and nature of its settlements, and the development of the human landscape. Though focusing on topography, it should aim to provide a clear and coherent framework for the article as a whole, tying in where possible (in the case of buildings, for example) with themes explored in subsequent chapters. As in all chapters, particular attention should be given to changes over time.

The account should be structured thematically under the following sub-headings:

- Boundaries and Parish Origins
- Landscape
- Communications
- Population
- Settlement [*usually sub-divided chronologically: see below*]
- The Built Character

The following notes are arranged under those six main topics.

Note that a **map** of the parish or township (preferably incorporating some historic landscape reconstruction based on e.g. tithe or early estate maps) forms an integral part of VCH parish histories. As this chapter focuses on topography and landscape the map will form a crucial element, and where possible should be drafted (or at least planned in outline) alongside the writing of the text. An overly detailed description of boundaries, for example, is made unnecessary by their clear delineation on the map.

1. Boundaries and Parish/Township Origins

The purpose of this section is twofold: (1) to define clearly the area under discussion, and to summarise subsequent boundary changes; (2) where possible, to offer some brief comment on how and when the parish or township first emerged as an independent territorial unit (usually but not always in the late Anglo-Saxon period).

Key information under (1) includes:

- the shape and acreage of the area enclosed - did it form a compact block, was it sharply or ambiguously defined (e.g. running through open fields), were there detached areas and if so why?
- the nature of the boundaries: especially whether they follow identifiable natural or manmade features;
- boundary changes up to the time of writing (giving modern acreages where these differ substantially from the earlier area).

Basic information on boundaries and acreage is available from printed *Census* reports, OS maps (with the accompanying 19th-century 'books of reference'), and the 2001-11 online census. Tithe maps (and sometimes enclosure or estate maps) provide crucial evidence for earlier boundaries. District and parish councils can usually provide information on very recent boundary changes.

In the absence of early maps, perambulations, or Anglo-Saxon charters (searchable online through The Electronic Sawyer: www.esawyer.org.uk), evidence for (2) may be hard to come by. Research for Religious History and Landownership should , however, help to determine whether the parish's medieval extent was broadly similar to that mapped in the 19th century, and whether or not it derives from a single Domesday estate.

2. Landscape

This section (usually one to two paragraphs) should give a concise overview of the parish's physical geography including geology, soils, relief, and drainage, providing a context for everything which follows. It should complement (but not duplicate) the sections on Settlement (below) and The Agricultural Landscape (see Economic History): the latter is the place for more detailed discussion of the changing 'human' landscape (including open fields, enclosures, common waste, woodland, and parks), but key features should be highlighted here and cross-referenced. Other major modern types of land use (e.g. golf courses, airfields, reservoirs, forestry plantations, wind farms) should also be mentioned.

Relief (including the parish's height above sea level) should be briefly described and characterised, with some brief indication of how this has affected settlement and land use. The presence or absence of surface water should be noted, with cross references where appropriate. Underlying geology should be summarised in relation to landform, land use, and settlement, mentioning any exploitation for building material or for raw material for industry. Take note of both the 'solid' (or bedrock) and 'drift' geology (i.e. superficial deposits such as clay, sand, gravel or peat), but avoid being over-technical.

For geology the key source is the Geological Survey maps of Great Britain, available in printed form and on the British Geological Survey website (www.bgs.ac.uk: go to the 'Geology of Britain viewer', which has a search facility). Modern soil categorizations can

be viewed at www.landis.org.uk/soilscapes (hosted by the National Soil Resources Institute (NSRI) at the University of Cranfield), which should be complemented by the historical information on soils and land use assembled for Economic History.

3. Communications

The focus should be on how communications linked the parish or township to its neighbours, to larger settlements, and to local and more distant markets. Cartographic evidence (Ordnance Survey maps and the older county maps) is the starting point, supplemented by documentary and (sometimes) archaeological evidence. The main topics (with subheadings depending on the amount of material) are likely to be:

Roads:

- Give a brief description of the main roads through the parish both now and in the past, including any early diversions.
- Fords, bridges, and ferries belong here, since they generally relate to road- rather than to water communications. Where possible date the building and rebuilding of bridges.
- Give the date of and describe the route of any turnpike roads, noting when they were disturnpiked in the later 19th century.
- Provide details of any 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.
- Lesser access lanes within the parish should be mentioned in summary form, particularly where they linked settlements or led to shared agricultural resources.

Water transport:

- Give details and any early references to wharfs or locks on rivers or estuaries. Direct evidence of goods imported or exported by water may be best discussed under Economic History – but if so should be alluded to here with a cross reference.
- Where relevant, mention the building of canals through the parish, including any wharfs or basins. Unfulfilled schemes should also be mentioned.
- 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).

Post, carriers, buses, and telecommunications:

- Give summary information on 18th or 19th-century carriers, including destinations and frequency of service. (These are usually listed in Trades Directories.)
- Gives dates of post offices with a brief summary of the services they offered (e.g. money orders, telegraph).
- Brief details *may* also be given of: regular bus services and how these have changed over time; the date of the earliest telephone service; the date when broadband internet services became available.

4. Population

This section should provide a chronological account of the number of people living in the parish/township, starting as early as possible (usually with Domesday Book), and running to the present day. If the parish was divided into townships, quarters, or discrete settlements for which separate population figures are available (even if only for certain periods), then the distribution of inhabitants amongst the constituent parts should be charted. Population change was, of course, closely related to trends in the local economy, and this section should to some extent act an introduction to themes which will be picked up later on, under 'Settlement' and in the 'Economic History' chapter.

It should be noted that pre-Census sources vary in giving numbers of tenants, of taxpayers, of adult males, or of houses, and that many figures are likely to be under-estimates (e.g. through tax evasion or omission of landless inhabitants and servants). These difficulties and disparities should be deftly flagged in the form of words used, and some attempt made to assess whether population was rising, falling, or stagnating, rather than simply parroting raw data. Parish registers may help to identify periods of exceptionally high mortality.

5. Settlement

This important VCH section should provide a chronological overview of the development of settlement in the parish from prehistory to the present day, and will usually be subdivided along chronological lines. Where a parish contained several villages or hamlets it is usually best to deal with each one separately, although in areas

of dispersed settlement it will clearly not be possible to deal with every farmstead, hamlet, or cluster. The main foci, often located by greens or at road junctions, should nevertheless be mentioned, along with their terminal dates and some indication of their relative size. The influence on settlement of landscape and geology, of changing economic fortunes, and of centralised planning (whether medieval or modern) should be highlighted where appropriate, with cross references to the relevant sections. So, too, should evidence of the parish's social geography (e.g. concentrations of high- or low-status inhabitants in particular areas), which can be picked up in Social History.

The choice of chronological subdivisions will (as in most sections) be dictated partly by the history of the place in question, and by how much there is to say. The Settlement section should, however, include:

- some general opening statements about the overall settlement pattern, and about key changes over time: e.g. whether settlement is dispersed or nucleated; whether there are any deserted or shrunken settlements; whether there has been substantial 19th- or 20th-century growth. This may have already been partially flagged in the introductory paragraph to the parish history.

- **Prehistoric to Anglo-Saxon Settlement** (which may be further subdivided according to the amount of information, e.g. separating Iron-Age or Roman). The section will be chiefly based on the archaeological data contained in county Historic Environment Records (HERs, most easily searched through www.heritagegateway.org.uk), the Portable Antiquities Scheme (https://finds.org.uk), and published archaeological reports – supplemented for the Anglo-Saxon period by place-name evidence, Domesday Book, and (sometimes) by charter evidence (searchable at www.esawyer.org.uk). For some parishes there may be nothing but a few stray finds; where possible, however, the location, date, and character of any early settlement should be summarised and related to later settlement patterns, highlighting any continuities between periods. A distinction should be made throughout between stray finds, landscape features such as barrows, and evidence of actual habitation.

- **Medieval and Early Modern Settlement**. In an area of nucleated settlement, this should include some discussion of the origin of the village and of its early topography, including the location of the church, the manor house, and any surviving medieval or early modern buildings. Questions to bear in mind include:
  o Does the village layout show evidence of medieval planning (e.g. regular house plots or a market area), or of late medieval shrinkage (e.g. modern settlement isolated from the church)?
  o Is it focused on a green or an important early route or road junction?

- o Do 13th-century peasant bynames mention village features (e.g. a cross, churchyard, road bend, or stream), or suggest fringe settlement (e.g. Richard Abovetown)?
  - o Did the pattern change during the later Middle Ages, reflecting demographic change and possibly enclosure?

  Outlying or dispersed settlement may be traceable through field or farm names, personal bynames, early deeds and manorial surveys, or archaeology. Where a parish or township encompassed a variety of landscapes it may have contained both nucleated and dispersed settlement, a contrast which should be described and explained, and whose implications may be picked up in other sections.

- **Settlement from the 18th to 21st Centuries,** chronologically organized and subdivided. This should take account of the wider context: e.g. the impact of enclosure (Parliamentary or otherwise), which may have created new outlying farms; the influence of new roads or turnpikes; general population change; and 19th- and 20th-century decline or (conversely) expansion and gentrification. Please note:
  - o Buildings should be mentioned insofar as they provide evidence of settlement, with some indication of their general character (e.g. new cottage rows, areas of new upmarket housing, or areas of 20th-century council housing, with precise dates where possible). New public buildings (e.g. 19th-century schools or chapels) should be alluded to, although the *architectural* discussion of buildings belongs in the following 'Built Character' section (see below).
  - o Discussion of 20th-century settlement will be the most appropriate place to mention the arrival of gas, electricity, and piped water, even if the politics of this is picked up separately in Social History or Local Government.
  - o Key sources include maps (including 18th-century county maps, tithe maps, and OS); standing buildings; census enumerators' books from 1841; and modern planning reports, which are often available in county record offices or online.

6. The Built Character

This section should provide a broad chronological and thematic overview of the parish's built environment, using individual buildings as illustrative examples. Manor houses, clergy houses, and churches will be more fully described in the relevant chapters (see Landownership and Religious History), but should be alluded to here and cross referenced. In order to set the buildings in context, cross references will probably be needed to Population, Economic History, and Social History.

The section should include:

- a general introductory statement of the parish's built character, including:
  - predominant building materials, and how far these were locally sourced;
  - the approximate date range of surviving buildings;
  - their predominant social types (e.g. small rubble cottages, large 18th-century brick farmhouses, 'polite' or architect-designed houses incorporating classical features, standard-design 1950s council houses).
  - Is the built character typical of the area, or does it display unusual characteristics reflecting particular aspects of the place's history?
- a general discussion of the parish's most characteristic building types, illustrated with specific examples, and related so far as possible to the parish's wider social and economic history. Though this should have a strong chronological dimension and should aim to identify changes over time, within it it may be helpful to group some building types thematically: e.g. labourers' accommodation, substantial 17th- and 18th-century houses built for prosperous yeomen or gentry, and farm- or industrial buildings. Please note that:
  - Besides standing buildings, it may be helpful to draw on evidence of demolished buildings where these are sufficiently well documented or illustrated;
  - The discussion should incorporate documentary sources such as probate inventories and the hearth tax, to form some assessment of the average size, status, and layout of domestic buildings in the past. (This may also be picked up in Social History.)
  - Particularly significant buildings may be described in slightly more detail, although the section should *not* be used as a dumping ground for a series of disparate 'potted building histories'.
  - Reference should be made to farm and industrial buildings as well as housing. These may be subsequently picked up in Economic History (e.g. large 18th-century barns as indicators of large-scale crop growing or general prosperity).
  - Due weight should be given to 20th-century buildings (including modern council housing) and the extent to which these have altered the tone or feel of the place. Where these are of standard design and of little architectural merit, a simple statement to that effect will suffice; some early council housing was designed by well known architects, however, who sometimes adopted a semi-vernacular style in keeping with existing buildings.

    Key sources (other than the buildings themselves) include the online Listed Buildings descriptions (not always reliable for dating or interiors), the Pevsner Buildings of England series, and building reports in the Historic England archive at Swindon and in some HERs. The field books produced by Valuation Offices under the 1910 Finance Act (TNA, IR 58) sometimes contain detailed sketch

plans of individual houses and outbuildings, detailing building materials and room use. *Vernacular Architecture* routinely publishes details of dendro-dated buildings. Photographs and topographical drawings are an essential source not only for lost buildings but for changes to existing ones.

2. Landownership

Aims and Approach

This chapter, formerly described as the 'Descent of the Manor' and latterly entitled 'Manors and Estates', should provide an overview of the development of patterns of landownership and landholding across the parish from the earliest evidence down to the time of writing. The chapter should begin with an overall picture of landownership in the parish/township. Each major unit of landholding should then be traced in turn, dealing first with the manor(s), followed by other sizable estates. It is perhaps the most closely prescribed and focused of all the chapters in a VCH parish history – and one of the most important, as landownership underpins so many other aspects of local history. The extensive and detailed research that is needed in order to provide the authoritative reconstruction of landholding patterns and the descent of individual estates required for the VCH ought not to be under-estimated. The key principle of VCH research is especially relevant here: the account should be based wherever possible on primary sources. Avoid, unless absolutely necessary, antiquarian works or unreferenced secondary works.

Note that the guidance below is intended to apply to a rural, predominately agricultural, parish.

The chapter should be arranged under the following sub-headings:

1. Pattern of Landownership

2. Manors and Principal Estates

3. Other Estates

The following notes, intended to provide guidance about approach and content, are arranged under these headings.

1. Pattern of Landownership

This opening section introduces the chapter and should:

- identify how many manors there were in the parish and whether the pattern remained stable.

- provide an account of the overall structure of landholding in the parish – whether it was dominated by a single manorial lord or a patchwork of smaller manors and estates, for example. Any change to this structure, such as that

caused by the Dissolution of a monastic landowner or more gradual changes should be described here.

- indicate the place of the manor(s) in the feudal hierarchy, noting any affiliation to an honor or barony and evidence of intermediate lordship and its impact on the parish.

Where the history of an estate is identical or similar to that of others in the vicinity, thought should be given to where the primary discussion of the descent is placed. In a Red Book, the fact should be noted in the volume introduction and the descent given in detail only once, on its first appearance. Any variation, or evidence specific to the manor should be noted in the Landownership chapter of the parish concerned. In a VCH 'Short', however, the relationship between landownership in the parish and that in neighbouring parishes should be noted as it provides valuable context in understanding this parish in relation to its neighbours. A summary of the descent should be given.

2. Manors and Principal Estates

This section should treat both genuine manors (i.e. estates showing the legal characteristics of a manor and administrative features such as courts), **and** significant later accumulations of landed property whether styled a manor or not. After the abolition of manorial tenures in 1925, all landed estates effectively became the latter.

In each case, the account should begin with the earliest reference and with some indication of the manor's or estate's origins, size, importance, and, where possible, location. Where the latter 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. Where possible, the size of the demesne should be indicated (without going into the history of demesne farming; that will come in the Economic History chapter).

The descent of the lordship or ownership of each manor or estate should be traced from the earliest record (often Domesday Book) to the time of writing. Where the lord of a manor sold his/her demesne and ceased to have a landed presence in the parish/township – in other words, where the nominal lordship came to be divorced from the landed estate – the lordship need only be traced where the lord maintained some personal link with the parish in which his nominal lordship lay, such as the advowson of the parish church. If the demesne remained as a substantial estate after such a sale, it is the descent of the estate which should be pursued here, rather than the lordship, bringing it down to the present day (or until it was broken up).

When preparing accounts of the descent of a manor or estate, note that:

- Even where the descent of lordship/ownership happens to identical, each estate should be treated individually.

- Descents should be presented chronologically continuing to the present. Ideally, each lord/owner should be named and the date they acquired and relinquished their interest recorded.

- Mechanisms of transfer, i.e., familial descent, sale and purchase, escheat to the Crown, transfer via trustees of feoffees are an important feature of VCH work and should always be included *where known*.

- Biographical detail of individual lords should be kept to an illustrative minimum. It can be useful to demonstrate the relative importance of the estate under discussion as part of their overall landholdings.

- If, for example, an estate was an outlier to other estates or the business/political or administrative interests and responsibilities of the manorial lord are noteworthy – as for example, seneschal of Aquitaine or a member of parliament – then it is important to give this detail.

Gaps in knowledge should be clearly identified.

Manor houses.

Each descent should be rounded off by noting the existence and location of any manor house together with an architectural account of its historic development (where known) and present state (if applicable). Indicate its location and note features associated with the manor house complex, such as court houses, agricultural buildings, dovecotes, and fishponds. What is the earliest reference to the manor house? If the lord was not resident, was the manor house let out? The architectural account should aim to identify the age of the structure (if it survives) and trace its major building phases.

3. **Other Estates**

This section should gather the history of lesser accumulations of property, often distinct from the main story of landownership within the parish. The basic principles of the manorial descents outlined above should be applied though less detail may be justified.

Estates which qualify for inclusion in this section could include both those identified from an early date and recent accumulations of landed property. Previous guidelines suggested that 'Other Estates' should be those of 100 acres or more, or which survived for at least three generations. Local circumstances should determine which landholdings to include: in some areas (particularly where enclosure of waste added large acreages to existing farms) estates over 100 acres would include almost every individual 19th-century farm in a parish. A higher acreage would be a better guide in such circumstances. It may also be appropriate to include in this section an account of the rectorial estate and tithes if they had sufficient value and were no longer applied to

the upkeep of the incumbent (e.g. where the estate had been granted to a religious house or lay owner).

The size and location of each estate should be given, explaining how it was accumulated, tracing its ownership, and noting the wealth and status of its owners, and whether those owners were resident or at least maintained substantial houses on their holdings. Wherever possible, the account should be brought down to the present day with brief comments on any sale or disposal of major estates in the past hundred years. Each estate should be dealt with under the name of the main house. As with manors or larger estates, the entry should conclude with an account of the principal dwelling with an architectural account of the historic development (where known) and present state (if applicable).

The VCH has traditionally included holdings of corporate bodies such as monasteries or public schools under 'Other Estates', mentioning even small holdings (of more than about three acres) if they were the property of a monastic or collegiate church; a bishopric; a chantry in another parish; the universities of Oxford and Cambridge, or one of their colleges; long established endowed schools, hospitals or other charitable foundations. Monastic property held before the Dissolution should be mentioned even if it was less than three acres. For these institutional estates, give the approximate acreage of the holding, any large variations in its size and the dates at or by which it was acquired and disposed of.

FURTHER GUIDANCE

An annotated example manorial descent from Oxfordshire, written by Mark Page, is available to serve as an illustration of how individual sources can be incorporated into the text.

3. Economic History

Aims and approach

This chapter is concerned with how the people of the parish made their living from medieval times onwards. Every village and town had its own economy and this economy is related to local resources, surrounding markets, and communications networks.

You should open the chapter with an overview that portrays the balance over the centuries between primary production (farming, but also fisheries and forestry), industrial activity (including crafts, mining and quarrying, and manufacturing), and services, indicating how this balance has changed over time.

Your account should then be structured thematically, and should cover the following topics:

1. Farming (and Fishing and Forestry, if relevant)
2. Industry
3. Services

In many small rural parishes it will be appropriate to combine (2) and (3), examining industry, crafts, trades, and retail (probably all very limited) within a broadly chronological framework.

There will be something to say about agriculture for all rural parishes; how much material, if any, you include under the remaining headings will obviously depend on the particular history of the place in question. In all cases you should aim to trace economic activity in the parish from the earliest record (often Domesday Book) to the time of writing, as far as the evidence allows.

Remember to examine the economic transformation which has affected most 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, home and workplace have come to be separated as increasing numbers of professional people live in the countryside while working elsewhere. The nature of their employment is as much part of the local economy as was the work of farmers and farm labourers at an earlier period. Different communities have experienced very different trajectories of change across recent decades, which should be drawn out if possible in your account. For example, many communities close to old market towns have enjoyed growing prosperity, as high-tech manufacturing companies and the service sector prefer to locate close to attractive countryside near towns with good communications, services, and schools. By contrast, the economy of former mining and industrial communities has been transformed since the 1960s, often with persistent high levels of

structural unemployment, but also with growing employment of women as the principal breadwinner in a family. Some aspects of these changes are also highly relevant to Social History, and how the two chapters relate may require some thought.

The following notes provide guidance on approach and content under each of the three headings listed above.

1. Farming (and Fishing and Forestry, if relevant)

The account of farming will form the bulk of the Economic History chapter of many parish histories. It should provide a broadly chronological survey from the earliest record (often Domesday Book) to the time of writing, prefaced by a succinct description of the farming landscape of the parish, as follows.

The Agricultural Landscape. By this, we mean the physical framework of land use within the parish and how the balance between the different elements – arable land; grassland (both hay meadows and enclosed permanent pasture), woodland and common waste – has changed over time. This section should aim to describe the location and extent of each land use category and identify key periods of change (as a result of enclosure, for example), the aim being to provide a spatial and temporal framework for the chronological account of farming which follows. The section should include, if possible,

- an assessment of the relative proportion of arable, waste and woodland in the Middle Ages and later, incorporating Domesday evidence if available.
- the extent of open fields, their boundaries, names of fields and evidence of amalgamation or subdivision. The VCH uses the term 'open fields' to mean fields which were farmed in common and subject to some form of common rights or management. It is recognised that few open fields as such existed in some parts of the country, at least after the medieval period.
- the extent of early enclosed fields, sometimes originating in medieval assarting (reclamation) from the waste, or effected by lords and other major landholders (e,g. for late medieval sheep farming).
- the location and extent of any medieval seigniorial park and the date of disparking, if relevant. (This too may have subsequently become enclosed farmland.)
- areas of common waste: their extent and character (e.g. heathland, moorland or wetland – marsh, fen, or peat moss) and use. The common rights exercised over them should be noted: pasture rights (what types of livestock grazed there?); rights of turbary (the right to dig peat and turf) and estovers (the right to take timber and wood or to gather vegetation such as bracken, heather and rushes). Were they open to all inhabitants or only some?

- the date of enclosure, both piecemeal enclosure by 'agreement' and Parliamentary enclosure post-1750. Remember that it is important to distinguish between enclosure of open fields and meadows and enclosure of common wastes (they did not necessarily take place at the same time).
- the extent of reclamation of former waste and its conversion to agricultural use.
- (if relevant) any major 're-writing' of the farming landscape by an improving landlord.

Chronological account of farming. Except in exceptionally small or poorly documented parishes, this section will probably be divided into subsections, the precise chronological divisions being dictated by locally significant changes. The Dissolution would be an obvious break-point in the history of a monastic estate; enclosure in the later 18th or 19th century, or the break-up of a large estate in the early 20th, would provide other natural divisions. However it is divided, the account should aim to cover the history of farming in the parish from the medieval period to the time of writing.

Within each subsection you should aim to cover both *institutional* and *farming* aspects:
- ***Institutional aspects*** include how the land was held (forms of tenure; rents and services, etc) and how farms were run (By a farm manager or by an owner? As family farms or employing labourers?). The extent of demesnes; the size of tenant farms; and the proportion of owner-occupied farms are all relevant here. It is not normally necessary to record the history of individual farms, although particularly important or long-lived ones should be identified where possible, especially if they were derived from former demesne land or still exist. What is required for each period, however, is an overview for the parish as a whole.
- ***Farming aspects*** include the crops grown and livestock raised. The aim here is to chart the types of husbandry carried out in the parish: was the focus on crop production, dairying or sheep farming, for example? Innovations should be noted, including evidence for regionally specific features (the floating of water meadows; the adoption of long ley rotations and outfield cultivation, for example), as should specialisations (such as market gardening, fruit growing or poultry keeping).

Medieval period

The length and structure of this section will largely be determined by the survival of archive sources. Where they survive, estate records (accounts, extents, manor court records) will yield much more evidence of demesne farming than of farming on tenant land, so most accounts of medieval farming will be skewed towards the working of the demesnes. The main elements of this section are likely to be as follows:
- For most parishes, Domesday Book will form the starting point, bearing in mind that it is a valuation of estate income, focusing on demesnes. Does the Domesday account suggest changes in the extent of land under cultivation between 1066 and 1086? How does the Domesday evidence mesh with later sources?

- The tenurial structure of the manor or manors in the Middle Ages should be traced, in particular the balance between the demesne and tenant holdings, and between free and unfree tenures. Generalized valuations of tenants' rents in successive inquisitions post mortem (IPMs) or manorial extents should be used – with caution – as evidence of changing estate income.
- The working of the demesnes, including the nature of crop and livestock production, should be described, as should the evidence for labour services and other 'boon works', where recorded.
- The date by which direct demesne farming ended; the leasing of demesne land; and the commutation of labour services into money payments are all important markers of the shift in the power and approach of landlords in the 14th and 15th centuries. The nature of local agriculture in the centuries 1350-1550 (notably putting land down to pasture; the rise of sheep and wool production) should be traced where possible.

Post-medieval period

The structure and detail of this subsection will be determined partly by the structure of landownership in the parish, in particular the balance between land retained in hand by an estate owner, tenanted land, and owner-occupied farms. In most cases it will be subdivided chronologically into (e.g. 1550-1800; Since 1800).

Where a landed estate was wholly or largely confined to a single parish and is sufficiently well documented, 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. Most accounts of estate farming will end with the break-up of the estate, most commonly in the early 20th century, but remember that the account of farming should be brought forward to the time of writing.

In parishes where most farms were owner-occupied or belonged to estates whose muniments have not survived, it may not be possible to examine farming and land management in detail. However, it should be possible to discuss broad themes, including whether the farms were mainly arable or mainly pastoral; what crops were grown; the impact of the major fluctuations in the agrarian economy since the Middle Ages; and (related to this) the periods in which most renewal of buildings took place (cross referenced with 'The Built Character' in Landscape, Settlement, and Buildings).

The account of post-medieval farming (whether treated as one period or divided into more than one chronological section) should aim to address the following topics, as far the evidence allows:

- the evolution of tenures, including the survival of copyhold tenures into the 19th and 20th centuries. Where applicable, the types of lease found in the parish at different periods should be noted.

- the related development of the local farm pattern: e.g. the emergence or otherwise of substantial yeoman farmers in the 16th and 17th centuries (and sometimes earlier); creation of larger commercial farms (sometimes related to enclosure); survival or otherwise of smallholdings.
- numbers employed in agriculture at different periods, although they will generally be available only for the 19th century. The decline in agricultural employment since 1945 and the consolidation of farms into larger units should be traced, where possible.
- wage rates and terms of employment for farm servants and agricultural labourers, where known, also any evidence of agricultural disputes (Captain Swing in the 1830s, agricultural unions in the 1870s, for example) and efforts to improve the condition of the poor (allotments, for example).
- husbandry and land use, particularly the types of crops grown, animals kept, and agricultural specialisation. For the late 16th and 17th centuries this information is often most readily available in wills and probate inventories. For later periods it is often helpful to summarise material found in the 1801 crop returns, the tithe files, and in the MAF agricultural returns from 1866 (in TNA), highlighting changes over time. How far did e.g. enclosure or the agricultural depression of the 1870s onwards result in significant changes in land use?
- land use change since 1945, including farm diversification, the impact of agri-environmental schemes ('set aside' etc) and the rapid increase in the use of land for energy generation (solar farms and wind farms) since the 1990s.

Fishing and Forestry

The exploitation of resources from woodland and waters is traditionally classed as 'primary production', along with farming. If fishing and woodland/forestry were a significant part of the economy of a parish, they should be dealt with as separate sections following Farming; although if the amount of woodland (and the amount of information available) are both minimal, this may be worked into the preceding account.

Fishing. In coastal communities look for evidence of the exploitation of sea food from the medieval period: shellfish, 'fishgarths' (inter-tidal fish traps), ownership of fishing boats. By the 18th century, some coastal communities were engaged in larger scale sea fisheries (such as the herring fishery) and fish-curing. In inland parishes river and lake fisheries could be important, not only the larger salmon and eel fisheries on major rivers and estuaries but other small-scale fisheries as well.

Woodland and Forestry. The extent of woodland and how it has changed across time will have been described earlier, under 'Landscape, Settlement and Buildings' and/or under 'The Agricultural Landscape'. In this section the aim should be to chart its history

as part of the economic land use of the parish. You should draw a distinction between '*ancient' (i.e. semi-natural, deciduous) woodland*, used for charcoal manufacture and craft industries, and *forestry plantations*, usually coniferous, which have been deliberately planted for timber production in more recent times. You should seek to establish the ownership of woodland, who exploited it and how (by lease or by custom, for example), what woodland products were obtained and sold, and through what markets. In the case of 'ancient' woodland, try to chart the changing patterns of use from the medieval period to the present. For forestry plantations, try to establish ownership, date of planting, the species planted and the intended market, and the numbers employed in forestry.

2. Mills, Crafts and Industry (as appropriate)

This section should deal with the extractive industries (mining; quarrying; gravel pits etc) and the making of saleable things, which embraces a wide range of economic activity, from shoemaking or processing of foodstuffs (milling, brewing, meat packaging, for example) through the traditional heavy industries (iron and steel, textiles) to modern 'light' industry (printing, for example). For most parishes there may be little more to be said than can be found in probate evidence for early modern cottage industry (spinning, handloom weaving, basket making, for example) or short-lived activities recorded in 19th-century trade directories. The order in which different industrial activities are discussed will vary from place to place. The approach should be broadly chronological, but in general *extractive industries* and the manufacture of *producer goods* (iron and steel, engineering, tanning etc.) should come before 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 in describing the structure of industry (and other sectors of the economy) in a systematic way: see
http://www.statistics.gov.uk/methods_quality/SIC/

Mills. The history of milling will often be the only type of manufacturing to be discussed in rural parishes. All references to both water- and windmills should be collected, as should any mention of horse-mills in the medieval period. In some areas many rural communities also had fulling mills in the medieval period. Remember that water-mill sites could change use across the centuries, switching between corn milling and fulling, for example, or being converted into saw mills. The history of each mill site should be traced chronologically.

Crafts. All but the smallest rural parishes had a fairly standard range of village craftsmen, certainly in the post-medieval period. Though their existence should be noted, there is normally no need to refer to *individual* blacksmiths, wheelwrights, carpenters, shoemakers and the like, unless one of the businesses was of special interest

(for example where a smithy evolved into a foundry or engineering works), or where the same family pursued the trade through successive generations. Where a parish lay in a district containing a distinctive craft that was ubiquitous within that area (such as textiles or hosiery, for example), with little variation in chronology or scale between adjoining villages, this should be mentioned but only discussed in detail where the parish was notable as a centre of the craft in question. The growth of rural 'craft' industries since the later 20th century should also be noted - not only handicrafts (potteries, wood turners, toy makers etc), but also other small-scale manufacturing businesses.

Mining and Quarrying. The extractive industries form part of the economic history of many parishes, even in areas not normally considered to have been 'industrial'. This section should attempt to establish what minerals were extracted (from stone, sand and gravel to coal, metal ores and more localized resources such as gypsum) and when. It should be arranged by the type of mineral being exploited and should, at the very least, provide the broad chronology of each (earliest reference to a mine/quarry in the parish; final demise of the extractive industry in question). Ideally, the history of each major mine or quarry should be traced, particularly those operating on a large scale during the 19th and/or 20th centuries. Large-scale mining and quarrying businesses should be treated in the same way as larger industrial operations (see below). It will probably be sensible to deal with the processing of extracted materials which took place at or close to the mine/quarry (such as stone crushing or lime burning) before moving on to the use of the mineral as a raw material (e.g. iron making; monumental masonry).

Larger-scale industrial activity. In parishes with distinctive industrial activity, 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. If possible, please include quantitative material, try to establish some key data. These should include:

- the origins of those involved and their sources and quantity of capital
- the organisation of the business (sole proprietorship, partnership or limited company)
- the number of employees
- its products, markets and the value of sales
- the wealth of the principals at death.

Please also discuss, where appropriate, 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.

In the case of limited companies, it would be appropriate to comment on the circumstances in which the company was founded; the ownership of shares (were they held by members of one or two families or marketed more widely?); and when such companies ceased to be locally owned and became part of larger groups with headquarters elsewhere.

3. Services

The service sector is now overwhelmingly the most important branch of the economy in all but a few parts of the United Kingdom. In some parishes there may be little to say other than can be found in 19th- and 20th-century trade directories, as the service sector in the past was mainly concerned with the distribution and sale of agricultural and manufactured goods. However, many rural parishes contain more recent businesses, many of which are part of the 'visitor economy'; these should be included here. Look out for continuities in areas of work, e.g. blacksmiths turning to bicycle and then motor vehicle repair.

Retailing. 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. Please mention the post office, pubs and any service activity of special interest specific to the parish. (NB that as the post office will have already been discussed in Communications, and pubs will be discussed more fully in Social History, only a brief allusion should normally be given here, with a cross reference.) Much of the information will come from trade directories.

In parishes where there was only minimal craft activity and retail, the two may be discussed consecutively with no need for a separate subheading.

Markets and fairs. If there was a market or fair in the parish (they were found in rural communities as well as in towns), the vitality of the market/fair at different periods should be assessed (rather than merely narrating the chronology of grants). What goods were traded? What distance did buyers and sellers travel to attend the market/fair? When closure or removal of a fair or market was proposed, who supported and who opposed the change (note any social class divisions)?

Transport services. Road carrying services (always far more important than passenger traffic on roads until quite recent times) 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 (such as providing accommodation for horses). Their modern equivalents, filling stations and motels, should also be

mentioned. Canal companies employed a few people in each parish in which there was a public wharf.

Railways were major employers in many parts of the country, rural as well as urban, between the mid-19th and the mid-20th centuries. Even small country stations had a staff large enough to make an impact on a rural community, and in industrial areas served by several competing lines, with extensive goods yards as well as passenger stations, the railways were generally among the most important sources of employment.

'Visitor economy'. This part of the service sector includes hotels and guest houses, Bed & Breakfast establishments, camping and caravan sites, visitor attractions (open farms; visitor centres, heritage sites, etc), and specialist outlets (cycling and outdoor pursuits, for example). Dates and circumstances of establishment and numbers employed should be sought for major businesses. Individual guest houses and B&B establishments do not need to be mentioned; the aim should be to provide an overview of the origins, growth and importance of that sector of the local economy. Where tourism has affected the social character of a place some aspects of this will be highly relevant to Social History, and the relationship between the two chapters will need to be carefully considered.

4. Social History

Aims and approach

The 'Social History' chapter of a parish history aims both to provide an overview of the social character of the community and how it has changed across time, and to trace the origins and development of institutions which brought members of the local community together (schools, charities, the village hall, the local WI, for example). While much of the evidence and many of the institutions are likely to date from the 19th and 20th centuries, it is important not to forget that you should also be seeking to say what you can about earlier periods. The account should be structured thematically, and the 'Social History' chapter should contain the following sub-headings:

- Social Character
- Communal Life
- Education
- Social Welfare

In some circumstances it may be appropriate to integrate the first two headings into a single section named 'Social Character and the Life of the Community', as the two strands are often so closely interwoven.

The following notes are arranged under those four topics. As well as the guidance below, you should read the background papers which are to be found in the national VCH Guidance Notes (at http://www.victoriacountyhistory.ac.uk/local-history/writing-parish-history/social-history), covering the following topics:

- Community organisations since 1945
- Education 1870-1944 Act
- Education post-1944
- Charities and Poor Relief: early history
- Charities and Poor Relief: 19th and 20th century developments.

1. Social Character

The aim here is to encapsulate the socio-economic character of the parish and how this has changed across the centuries. Even for the smallest parish, it should be possible to say something about the character of the community as well as its social structure. In larger parishes, the section should be divided into chronological periods: most commonly medieval, 16th to 18th centuries, and 19th century onwards. This is a chance to draw together significant strands from all the other chapters and to try to distil the social character of a place, including social relations, local politics, social/geographical identity, and how and why these things may have changed over time.

Topics which are worth discussing for rural communities for all periods include:

- The character of the parish as a community – was there a single village or more than one settlement? If the latter, how did they link together? If the settlement pattern was one of dispersed farms and hamlets, was there a focal point for community activities? Can you discern anything about how residents perceived their community – what was their 'mental map' of the parish and how did it change?
- The social geography of the parish: is there any evidence of segregation by class, religion or ethnicity?
- 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.
- The impact of the pattern of landholding on the character of the community: was there a large 'home farm' run by a landed estate, or was the community one of small family farms? What was the social character of those who provided labour on the farms: were they landless labourers or live-in farm servants?
- The proportion of the population deemed to be 'poor', or at least excused from paying tax.
- Whether there was a sharp social divide between different socio-economic groups (for example in the status of owner-occupiers compared with tenant farmers, or between farmers and labourers), or whether the classes merged into one another. Is there evidence of class conflict, reflected e.g. through anti-enclosure agitation or agricultural trade unionism?
- Whether tradesmen and craftsmen not employed on the land formed a distinct class.

For each of these topics you should seek to assess change over time. The social structure and character of many communities changed markedly in the 19th century (with the coming of the railways and growth of rural industry, for example) and again in the 20th, with the break-up of landed estates and the influx of the urban middle class into great swathes of rural England from the 1950s onwards.

2. Communal Life

The main focus here is on local organisations and institutions and the role they played in the life of the community. Most of the material is likely to relate to the 19th and (particularly) 20th centuries, but you should also include evidence for communal activities in earlier times (such as local customs, games and folklore, wakes, seasonal rituals). To set social activities into the wider historical context of the parish, you should ask when and why community activities were established, who took the lead in promoting them, and when and why they declined or ceased.

The staple fare of this section should include brief accounts of the following:

- **Friendly societies.** These were often among the earliest modern community organisations, established in the second half of the 18th century. They were joined in the 19th century by a wider range of voluntary organisations, some charitable, some educational and some purely social.
- **Social activities of religious organisations.** Both the Church of England and nonconformist congregations expanded their work in the later 19th century into social (or quasi-social) activities, such as temperance gatherings or setting up clothing charities. They provided social meeting places, especially for young people, often through uniformed organisations (scouts, guides etc.), as well as sporting activities. In many rural communities, the church and/or chapel provided virtually all the settings for spare-time activities.
- **Village institutes and reading rooms and the Women's Institute.** Reading rooms or institutes were founded in many villages in the later 19th or earlier 20th centuries, to provide 'improving' reading and leisure facilities (a billiard room, for example), especially for young working men. The WI came into existence during the First World War, and after 1918 was often central to the life of a village.
- **Village halls and community centres.** Although some parishes had institutes before the First World War, pressure for village halls arose mainly after 1918, some being conceived of as war memorials. Halls could not be provided by parish councils at that time and were usually established and managed by a separate voluntary committee, many of which later obtained charitable status.
- **Inns and alehouses.** Inns capable of providing accommodation (where this can be established) should be included, but it is not necessary to mention every alehouse or beer shop. In market towns the names and dates of only the principal inns should be mentioned. Where an inn was the venue for meetings of a friendly society or of later societies and clubs, sporting or otherwise, this should be mentioned. Inns often also hosted concerts, regular auctions, and sometimes political meetings.
- **Amateur sport.** Amateur sport became organised in its modern form in the later 19th century and was seen as a socially integrative activity. By the mid-20th century many communities had football, tennis and cricket clubs. In towns and larger villages, some were linked to a particular church or employer, others were open to all. In rural villages, the squire and parson might take the lead, especially in cricket, which was played by a wider range of classes than association or rugby football.
- **Recreational space.** This should extend from allotments and potato patches to golf courses, playing fields, public parks and large recreation grounds. (Note that a public park or golf course which had private origins may also be mentioned under 'Landownership', and a disused churchyard that has been turned into a

recreational open space under 'Religious History'.) Open air 'country sports' such as horse races, fox-hunting, hare-coursing and shooting should be mentioned.

In larger settlements and towns the range of community activities will be much wider, including theatres, concert halls, music halls, cinemas, museums and local newspapers.

3. Education

Your account should be a history of education in your parish, rather than simply an account of the school(s): the histories of individual schools should be given in a relatively summary form. Places with no school of their own nonetheless educated their children: how was this achieved? If the local school closed, where did children go for schooling? In modern times most children from rural communities have attended secondary schools outside their own parish. Note that the VCH originally intended that the history of ancient endowed grammar and independent schools would be covered in a separate county-wide article; these should now be included under the parish in which they were located.

When it comes to public educational provision ('state' schools and their predecessors), the text will usually divide naturally into sections defined by the major legislation of 1870, 1902 and 1944. However, you ought also to include private schools and to try to capture the less formal end of educational provision, such as 'dame schools'. Remember also to include evidence for adult education, particularly where there was a long established lifelong learning or continuing education institution (though these topics may already have been covered when discussing reading rooms and village halls in the previous section).

Your account should attempt to dig beneath the surface of finance and school buildings, to allude to the 'political' questions surrounding education, such as who controlled access and the syllabus and which sections of society attended which schools and for how long. Questions of politics, religion, status and privilege will rarely be absent from an account of local educational history.

Key topics to include are:

Pre-1870

- the dates, location and establishment of schools, including any pre-1870 references to school teachers and schools, even if these schools cannot be located on the ground.
- the funding or endowment of the school, including names of donors of the sites.
- the character of the school buildings and any changes in accommodation.
- an indication of the size and type of school including average attendance, if known.

- brief information about teachers and curriculum before 1870.
- the existence of Sunday Schools, but only prior to 1870 when they were likely to have played a more general role in education than subsequently.
- the transfer of authority from voluntary societies to Local Education Authority School Boards etc.

1870 to present day

- the building of new schools by School Boards and county education authorities, particularly the provision of senior/secondary schools and of new schools on housing estates.
- the rebuilding and/or reorganisation of existing school provision since the later 19th century, including the date and circumstances of discontinuance and any reduction in the status of schools (to infant status, for example).
- the transition to comprehensive secondary schooling from the 1960s.
- for schools that are still open, the article should include a sentence giving the numbers of pupils and staff at the time of writing. The simplest ways to get this information is to consult the most recent inspection report via the OFSTED website or to contact the school secretary.

4. Social Welfare

The focus here is on all aspects of welfare, including poor relief, charities, medical services, and institutions such as orphanages, hospitals and nursing homes. Charities for the relief of the poor should be discussed here; other charities should be mentioned in their appropriate place (e.g. under 'Education' or 'Communal Life'). As in other sections, a broadly chronological approach should be taken, charting the developments from late-medieval and early modern charitable provision, through poor relief provided by the parish and Poor Law Unions, to modern social welfare provided by central government and the National Health Service. As with Education, local private provision should also be noted.

Topics to be treated in this section include:

- ***Charities for the poor***. The description of charities should focus on endowed charities providing alms, doles, apprenticeships etc. for the poor. Details of charities associated with the church or education or village halls, playing fields etc. should be discussed in full under those headings. From as early as the 16th century, charities for the poor merely supplemented statutory provisions and, by the 18th century if not before, expenditure funded by the poor rate greatly overshadowed charitable giving. The account of individual charities should be brought up to the time of writing where possible, charting any remodelling by the Charity Commission since the 19th century. After the establishment of the

National Health Service some of the objects for which charities were originally established were rendered largely or wholly redundant. How did charities adapt to this further change in state provision? What role did they retain after c.1950?

- *Almshouses*. The date and circumstances of foundation, the number of houses and the scale of endowment should be noted, as should any evidence for the management of the almshouses since endowment. The character of the building(s) should be described briefly. Again, the account should be brought forward to the time of writing or the date of closure.
- *Poor relief*, under both the Old and New Poor Laws, including outdoor relief, the provision of cottages and the building of poor houses and workhouses. The balance between what to include here and what to reserve for the 'Local Government' chapter will require some thought. As a broad rule, you should focus here on the experience of the poor, in terms of the sort of relief they received, and reserve discussion of the administration of the Poor Laws for the 'Local Government' chapter. Fluctuations in the amounts spent on poor relief (as summarised in Parliamentary Reports and in local overseers' accounts) may also require discussion in Economic History or Social Character, insofar as they relate to economic prosperity, employment, and levels of poverty.
- *Medical services*. Early evidence for resident physicians and surgeons or parish nursing associations should be noted; from the mid-20th century only local provision (a GP surgery or health centre) need be mentioned. If the parish contained a hospital or nursing home, the date and circumstances of its establishment, its size and function, and an outline of its later history (including any change in function) should be given.

5. Religious History

Aims and approach

The intention is to offer an interpretative and broadly chronological account of religious activity within the parish, paying particular attention to crucial periods of change or transition. In most places the parish church (or a subservient chapel) will provide the main narrative thread from the Middle Ages to the present day, although from the Reformation religious Nonconformity (whether Catholic or Protestant) may be equally important, and will sometimes require its own subheadings. The chapter is nevertheless intended as an integrated account, and consideration should be given to the interaction of religious groupings within the parish. The chapter concludes with an architectural account of the church building; however, physical changes which reflected aspects of religious life (e.g. the creation of a chantry chapel, significant new church fittings, donations by parishioners, or re-orderings of the interior) should be mentioned in the preceding chronological subsections where appropriate.

If the parish contained a religious house, then its impact on local religious life and its relationship with the parish church (if a separate one existed) will require special treatment. Even so, providing that it was of only moderate size and importance this should fit reasonably well within the following structure, possibly with some additional bespoke subheadings. Other aspects of its local impact (site and buildings, landownership, economic and social impact) will already have been dealt with in preceding chapters.

The Religious History chapter should be divided into the following sections, each (except for the opening introductory paragraph) with their own subheading:

1. [Brief introductory paragraph]

2. Church Origins and Parochial Organization

   2a. Advowson and Church Endowment

   2b. Clergy Houses

3. Religious Life [*subdivided chronologically*]

4. Church Architecture

The following notes provide guidance on each of those sections.

1. Brief introductory paragraph. This should highlight the main features of the parish's religious history, e.g.:

- Was the church independent from the Middle Ages, and if so was it a rectory or vicarage? Were there any outlying chapels within the parish?

- Was the church well or poorly endowed, and what sort of incumbents did it consequently attract? Were they generally resident or not at different periods?

- What has been the relative importance of Catholic or Protestant Nonconformity at various dates? Were any chapels or meeting houses established, and do they still exist?

- What is the current status of the parish church? - is it still independent or is it now part of a larger group minister or united benefice? Has it been entirely rebuilt at any stage? (If not, the existence of a medieval church restored in the 19th century can usually be assumed.)

- Any other key features - e.g. the presence a medieval hermitage or hospital, or of a particularly important chantry chapel.

2. Church Origins and Parochial Organization

This thematic section deals with the parish church's origins, ecclesiastical status, patronage, and endowment (including clergy houses), providing a context for the chronological discussion of Religious Life which follows.

The opening paragraphs should deal with church's origins and status, including:

- The earliest evidence for its existence (which may be documentary, e.g. Domesday Book, or architectural, e.g. a surviving 11th- or 12th-century window). If there is evidence of a pre-Conquest minster then that will require more detailed treatment, including discussion of its pre-Conquest *parochia* and its subsequent fragmentation, and discussion of when the minster ceased to be collegiate.

- Any indications of the likely founder - e.g. a lord of the manor whose successors held the advowson (bearing in mind that some churches may have been community rather than lordly foundations, at least in part)

- Its parochial status when first recorded, and any changes thereafter - was it fully independent (with its own rector, endowment, and advowson), or was it a subservient chapel? How early did it have baptismal and burial rights (the date of the font may be the earliest evidence for the former), and did it have authority to dispense all the sacraments?

- If a rectory, has it remained so, or was it appropriated to a religious house or other institution? If so give dates and details, including the date of any vicarage

ordination. (Details of the ordination itself will be given below under Endowment.) Alternatively, was it served informally by members of a religious house or by stipendiary chaplains (who may be very poorly documented)?

- What is the earliest known dedication, and has this changed?

- What changes have been made to its status in recent times - e.g. has it been merged with other parishes or benefices during the 19th, 20th, or 21st centuries? Give its formal status at the time of writing (e.g. 'since 2007 part of a team ministry with the churches of ....., served by a vicar living at ...'.).

Where a church began as a chapel, achieving full independence possibly as late as the 19th century, its changing status should be described, including information on its range of parochial functions, how it was served, and whether it had any independent endowment or advowson. In a Red Book, the chapel's mother church will probably be dealt with in full under the relevant parish, to which cross-reference should be made. In a freestanding VCH Short, it may be necessary to include rather more information on the mother church and its relation to the chapel.

Medieval chapels of ease which did not survive the Reformation should be noted briefly, and may also be picked up in Religious Life. Private manorial chapels should be reserved for Religious Life, and will usually also be mentioned in the description of the manor house under 'Landownership'.

2a. Advowson and Church Endowment [or, where a vicarage was endowed, 'Advowson, Endowment, and Vicarage']

This subsection of 'Church Origins and Parochial Organization' deals with (a) the ownership and exercise of the advowson, and (b) the church's endowment and income, including glebe and tithes.

Advowson. If the advowson passed with the manor, this can be dealt with summarily with a cross reference to Landownership. Where the advowson descended separately, its ownership to the present day should be traced here. If the story is especially complex, 'Advowson' may require its own separate subheading. In either case, mention should be made of:

- instances of Crown presentation or collation by the bishop (stating whether this was through 'lapse' or for some other reason)

- grants of 'turns' for one or two presentations only

- leases of the advowson

- ownership by recusant Catholics, who were theoretically not allowed to present

Church Endowment [and Vicarage]. This section should summarise the church's total income from the Middle Ages to the early 20th century (with some indication of whether this was above or below the average for the area), together with a brief chronological account of its glebe, tithes, and any other income. Diversion of tithes to other bodies should be briefly noted, along with any known changes to the glebe. Changes as a result of enclosure or tithe commutation should be mentioned.

Where the rectory estate was appropriated and a vicarage ordained, details should also be given of the vicar's income from the ordination to the 20th century, including which tithes or offerings he received, and whether he had any glebe.

If the appropriated rectory estate (including the tithes) remained separate thereafter, passing to a lay impropriator from the Reformation, then its subsequent history will be better treated as an 'Estate' under Landownership, since it no longer benefited the church or its incumbent. Cross references will be needed to allow readers to follow the story through.

2b. Clergy Houses.

These formed an integral part of the church's endowment and should be included here, usually with their own subheading (Rectory House or Vicarage House as appropriate). Information should include the first mention of a clergy house; indications of its size and status (e.g. from glebe terriers, visitations, hearth tax, wills); and a brief architectural account of the surviving building. Try to relate what is said to the parish's wider religious history, e.g. periods of residence or non-residence, the relative wealth and social status of particular incumbents (or their curates), and the relative wealth or poverty of the benefice as a whole. In most cases the house will have been sold during the 20th century, in which case the date should be given and something said about any replacement (usually a nondescript modern house).

3. Religious Life

This section is primarily concerned with local clergy and their pastoral relations with their parishioners; manifestations of popular or community religion; and the impact, scale, and organization of religious Nonconformity, both Catholic and Protestant. It will usually be divided into at least two chronological subsections (pre- and post-Reformation), and often more; alternatively, if there is relatively little to say it may remain a single section. Where appropriate the evidence of the church building (including significant additions, church fittings, or internal layout) should be worked in to illustrate aspects of religious life or lay involvement.

Broad topics include:

- parish clergy (longevity, pluralism, fame, notoriety, qualifications or lack of them); also the role of chaplains or curates if incumbents were non-resident

- clerical-lay relations in all periods

- patron saints; chantries; side chapels

- the impact of the Reformation (e.g. removal of church furnishings, dissolution of chantry chapels, ejection of married clergy under Mary, the response of 'ordinary' parishioners as sometimes reflected in wills)

- impact of religious and political turmoil in the mid 17th century

- changes in worship and liturgy (sometimes to be 'read' from the church fabric)

- the rise of Nonconformity

- building of new churches/chapels.

More detailed themes to consider include:

Middle Ages to Reformation:

- Incumbents' status, education, social contacts, and residence. If absent, is there any evidence of local chaplains?

- Evidence of lay involvement? - e.g. through additions to the church building (nave remodelling, side aisles or chapels, wall paintings, towers and bells); bequests to lights, bells, or church fabric; early evidence of churchwardens (*procuratores*); private chapels

- Evidence of religious cults? – as revealed by shrines, altar dedications, and (in the later Middle Ages) images and lights?

- Evidence of Lollardy or proto-Protestantism?

Reformation to Interregnum:

- Turnover of incumbents - were any deprived, and are any known as Catholic or Protestant sympathisers?

- Suppression of chantries, removal of church fittings or vestments

- Religious attitudes as revealed in the preambles to wills (which may, however, reflect the views of the scribe or incumbent as much as the testator). Did bequests to the church continue, and if so in what form?

- Any evidence for doctrinal or liturgical change?

- Evidence for recusancy (e.g. recusant fines, Catholic invocations in wills)?

- Evidence for incipient Puritanism - e.g. establishment of Lectureships?

- The church: any physical evidence of iconoclasm or Laudianism?

The Interregnum:

- Changes in personnel - whether the local clergy conformed or were ejected

- Evidence of Dissenting groups (e.g. Quakers)?

- Church building: any evidence that fonts or surviving images or glass were removed?

- Were any local ceremonies, feasts, and customs suppressed?

1660–1840s:

- The change (if any) from the arrangements of the Interregnum to those under the re-established Church. Did the clergy conform or were they ejected; and if ejected, did they remain active in the area and establish Nonconformist congregations? What was the background of the new incumbents installed after 1660, and had they conformed or suffered during the Interregnum? Was the former incumbent restored in 1660?

- Any changes to the fabric reflecting the teaching and worship of the new regime?

- The standard of service provided by the Established Church into the 18th century (usually recorded in detail through 18th-century visitation returns): resident or non-resident, provision of curates and whether adequately paid, numbers of services, celebration of sacrament etc. Evidence for relations between clergy and parishioners.

- *Nonconformity*. NB: Depending on how much there is to say, this may be extracted as a separate subsection. If so, the varying strength of Nonconformity at different dates should still be briefly alluded to in the account of Anglican religious life, with cross references. However it is arranged, the account should discuss evidence for:

  o the strength of the various denominations from the 1660s on, including whether any meeting houses were established;

  o social background of adherents if known;

  o the rise of 'New Dissent' (e.g. Wesleyan Methodists) from the 18th century;

  o the attitude and response (if any) of the Anglican clergy.

- *Roman Catholicism*: may similarly be given a separate section where its influence on the parish as a whole was sufficiently pervasive, and particularly if there was a Roman Catholic chapel. In most cases, however, information on local Catholics will be better woven into the general narrative.

1840s to time of writing:

Very often the mid 19th century saw the arrival of dynamic Anglican incumbents who took religious affairs in hand after long periods of neglect, transforming the religious (and sometimes the social) life of the parish. If so, this may provide a convenient date for a new chronological subsection in a given parish. More general themes to bear in mind include:

- Regularity and type of service: e.g. was worship primarily Eucharistic? Were incumbents influenced by the Evangelical Revival or the Oxford Movement, and were there any related alterations to the church building or its furnishings? Mission churches and 'tin tabernacles' should be woven into the general narrative.

- Fluctuations in the size of congregations (usually recorded in visitation returns), and particular problems identified by incumbents.

- The decline of organized religion during the 20th century, concluding with how the church is currently served, how well attended, and the 'tone' of current worship.

- *Nonconformity*:

    o trace the emergence of any new denominations during the 19th century (including any new meeting houses, even if only temporary licenses for worship in private houses), and their subsequent fortunes to the time of writing. As well as tracing particular groups, give some idea of the overall strength of Nonconformity at different dates (e.g. as recorded in the 1851 ecclesiastical census), and of the Anglican Church's response, which is usually evident from 19th-century visitation returns.

    o Where possible, something should be said of the social background of Nonconformists and their relations with the Established Church, a theme which may also be relevant in Social History. Names of ministers and details of Sunday schools should be mentioned only briefly, unless a particular minister was resident and had a particularly strong impact.

    o For most rural parishes, information on *meeting houses* and *chapels* (dates of opening and closure, building costs, donations of sites, and brief architectural descriptions) can be woven into the general account.

- o As for the earlier period, Nonconformity can form a separate subsection if it would overburden the general narrative. If the story is particularly complex, separate paragraphs or subsections may be needed on the different denominations, although in most cases that will not be necessary.

- o Remember that religious affiliation often influenced the socio-economic and political outlook of church members (and vice versa). The 'church', whether Anglican or nonconformist, was the people who made up the congregation, and an attempt should be made to assess how their faith was expressed in community life. The fruits of such expressions of faith should be mentioned here, but will probably have been discussed more fully in the Social History chapter.

- In places where *non-Christian religions* have become a significant presence during the 20th century, these should be dealt with here as part of the general discussion of 20th-century religious life, particularly if there is a separate place of worship. In most rural parishes it will not be necessary to have a separate section, although something should be said about such groups' relations with the parish's Christian churches and with the wider community.

4. Church Architecture

This section comprises a broadly chronological account of the parish church's architectural development from the earliest surviving fabric through to the present day. It should begin with a brief overview of the church as it now exists, saying something about its size and status, the dates of its main phases, the main building materials, and its component parts; for example:

> *Chalgrove's spacious church dates chiefly from the 12th to 15th centuries, and was sympathetically restored in 1881–4. Built of coursed limestone rubble with ashlar dressings, it comprises a two-bay chancel, a four-bay double-aisled nave with south porch, and a three stage west tower, the top part of which was reconstructed following a partial collapse in 1726. The nave's and chancel's steep tiled roofs probably retain their original pitch. High-quality early 14th-century work in the chancel, including a celebrated cycle of wall paintings, probably reflects patronage by well-connected local lords, particularly the Barentins.*

Other published or unpublished descriptions of the church should be cited in a footnote.

The subsequent account should begin with the earliest dateable fabric (which may not be in situ), followed by a chronological description of the building's evolution. This will include (e.g.) addition of aisles, transepts, side-chapels, towers, or clerestoreys; rebuilding or extension of the chancel; refenestrations; and the survival of such features

as piscinae or aumbries (indicating the position of altars). Documentary evidence (e.g. wills or re-dedications) should be brought in as appropriate, and any evidence of patronage (e.g. of side or chantry chapels) should be mentioned, with cross references to Religious Life. Some indication should be made of the quality of the work, and whether it reflects similar work in neighbouring churches: sometimes the same masons worked on groups of churches (as may be indicated by masons' marks), or features of a particularly significant local church may have been copied across the area. Features such as wall paintings or medieval stained glass may require mention in Religious Life, but should be included here from an architectural and artistic perspective

Major structural alterations between the 15th and 19th centuries may have been few, but known changes (either documented or shown by illustrations) should be mentioned, along with any evidence of neglect. Fittings such as 17th-century pulpits should be mentioned even if already alluded to under Religious Life. Victorian restorations are usually well documented, and the main features should be summarised, giving the names of architects and builders where known. Details of associated fundraising will normally fit better in Religious Life (with cross references), as will internal re-orderings which reflect changing religious preferences. New fittings such as pews, choir stalls, carved reredoses, and stained glass should nevertheless be mentioned here, where possible with the names of the craftsmen or workshops. Major 20th- and 21st-century changes should be summarised, including major renovations. Extension of churchyards and erection of lychgates (sometimes as war memorials) should be mentioned briefly.

Church monuments and brasses may be better mentioned under Religious Life or Social History, although something might be said here of their over-all number, date, and quality. Those of particular size or merit can be briefly described in their chronological context (e.g. an elaborate tomb chest or brass may form an integral part of the architecture of a chantry chapel). *Church plate* should only be mentioned (if at all) under Religious Life or Social History.

If the church has been completely rebuilt, the description of the existing building should be preceded by a reference to its predecessor(s). Drawings and documentary references will sometimes allow these to be reconstructed in some detail; if not, it should be made clear that nothing is known. Where a parish contains a second church (either a chapel or a district church), then the architectural description should follow that of the main parish church.

Other Religious Buildings. In most rural parishes, Nonconformist chapels can be briefly described in the Nonconformist paragraphs of Religious Life. In the few cases where a chapel or non-Christian place of worship is of exceptional size or quality, it may be appended to this section after the parish church. In that case the section would be renamed 'Religious Buildings', with subheadings for 'The Parish Church' and for the chapel in question.

6. Local Government

Aims and approach

The purpose of this chapter is to show how the parish was run, by looking at the institutions and officers responsible for governing its affairs. This means that it should cover all aspects of civil governance, from the manor courts of the medieval and early modern centuries, through the parish 'vestry' meetings which dealt with poor relief, highways etc from the 17th century, to the modern civil parish council. The section does not require a detailed account of how the institutions of parish government developed over time. However, attention should be drawn to any unusual practices within the parish and comment should also be made on any periods of intensive governance and, likewise, periods of exceptional lawlessness and laxity.

The colour and liveliness of the account will depend on the extent to which the work of a succession of office-holders is documented over the centuries – in some cases the records simply won't have survived. Therefore, it is worth providing a statement about survival of local administrative records.

The Local Government chapter is one place to consider political tensions in the local community - unless these have already been discussed under Social History, in which case a cross reference should be included here. Political tensions will normally be most usefully discussed in the context of the institution in whose records they occur – for instance, tensions between medieval lords and tenants should be dealt with under medieval manorial government; tensions between a Tory landlord/chairman of the parish council and a lone Liberal councillor should be dealt with in the section on the parish council, and so forth. Note that discussion of local politics should focus on the operation of local and national politics within the parish and not the actions of individuals from the parish in national politics. Local party politics will not often be discernible until the creation of parish councils but there may nevertheless be interesting evidence of political activity before the 20th century (for example , in the activities of clubmen and chartists and involvement in the Swing riots).

The guidelines that follow assume that you are researching a rural parish. The chapter is likely to be considerably longer for an urban parish and may include a wider range of institutions. Urban records may also allow for a greater depth of analysis, particularly in relation to recapturing local politics. Even small urban communities are likely to have evidence of much more sophisticated political activity within them, and local politics will need more extensive treatment. When dealing with an urban community that is also a parliamentary borough, a history of the constituency and its politics should be included.

Structure and scope

The account should be structured thematically, which will mean that it is broadly chronological, running from manorial government in the medieval and early modern period, through parish government in 16th-19th centuries, to modern local government. It will normally divide into three sections:

1. Manorial government
2. Parish government
3. Post-1894 arrangements in relation to Rural and Urban Districts

In determining the scope of the chapter, two issues may arise:

- **Supra-parochial units of local government.** Where a Red Book is in prospect, it is likely that some aspects of local government will be discussed in the Introduction to the volume, in order to avoid duplication in the treatment of overlapping jurisdictions such as poor law unions and post-1894 local government units. Where this is the case, the Introduction should explain the administrative pattern in the district covered by the volume, highlighting in particular whether more than one poor law union and local government unit was involved. In these circumstances, the Local Government chapter of a parish article should concentrate on the impact of such wider local government units on the parish in question, rather than the history of the district as a whole. In a VCH Short, more may need to be said about local government at the district level, particularly if the district unit had its seat in the parish under study.
- **Regional variations in parochial administration.** The core subject matter of the 'Parish Government' section concerns the exercise of the civil administrative responsibilities placed on the parish, but regional differences and deviation from the southern English parochial norm mean that other local administrative units (the township in northern England; the tithing in central southern England) may loom large. While a cluster of administrative responsibilities – highway maintenance; relief of the poor; tax collection and peace-keeping (i.e. the constable's role) – fell to the parish in southern counties, these were often divided between parish and township in the North. It is therefore important to distinguish between different administrative roles:
  - *Constables* were, strictly-speaking, in origin township, not parish, officers.
  - *Poor law administration*. The 1662 Act of Settlement and Removal allowed townships in northern counties to maintain their poor independently, so separate overseers and systems of poor relief are sometimes found for each of the townships within an ancient parish in these areas.

    o   *Highways maintenance.* In northern counties this was generally undertaken at township level (and sometimes even at sub-township level), while in southern counties, the tithing was often responsible.

The following guidance is arranged under each of the three section headings in turn.

1. Manorial Government

The manorial structure of the parish will have been established in the 'Landownership' chapter. The focus of this section will be on the manor courts and the role they played in managing the community's affairs. You will need to give a brief description of the powers of the manor court, mentioning perhaps the dates of the earliest extant court rolls and other records. Court rolls (where they survive) are the most likely source to provide you with the information required for this section. In their absence, it may be impossible to do much more than to indicate a court's existence, and the approximate date of its demise.

Where possible, you should comment on the following aspects of the manor court:

- Its powers. The court's jurisdiction should be defined: was it solely that of a court baron (dealing with manorial business only, including tenures) or was it also a court leet (dealing with other matters such as policing, maintenance of roads etc.)?
- The location and frequency/regularity of sittings. You may find that manorial government can be outlined only in terms of when particular kinds of court were held and who owed suit to them.
- The nature of the business transacted: admissions and surrenders of copyhold land; making bylaws; presentments; minor civil pleas.
- Officers appointed.

These topics should also be covered for courts held for a 'reputed' manor. If the parish was not a manor in its own right, how far did the tenants have to travel to pay their dues and suit of court?

2. Parish Government

This section should cover all aspects of civil administration at parish/township level. Much of the account will concern the responsibilities laid on parishes in the Tudor local government reforms: the Highways Act of 1552 and the Old Poor Law. These responsibilities were gradually taken over by other bodies during the 19th century (administration of the poor law passing to the Poor Law Unions, for example), and the

remaining civil powers of parishes were transferred in 1894 to elected parish councils and parish meetings.

Where records survive (from the 16th and 17th centuries in some cases), the account should be structured around the work of the following parish officers:

- constables
- overseers of the poor
- surveyors of highways
- churchwardens

Note that the churchwardens' primary role in the running the parish church should be discussed in the Religious History chapter; here the concern is with their role in civil administration, including the Poor Law, in which they acted along with the overseers of the poor.

Sources of income (including parish property and local taxation) should be mentioned along with levels of expenditure, picking out periods of notably high (or low) expenditure, and how local officials responded to changing conditions and circumstances.

Parish officers acting in their civil capacity (relief of poverty, highways, justice etc.) were answerable to Quarter Sessions, the quarterly meetings of the justices of the peace - for example to have their accounts signed off each year. Matters relating to the supervision and control of parish local government prior to the 19th-century reforms should be covered where possible. Appeals against the actions of parish officials were considered by the justices, and surviving documentation (such as petitions to Quarter Sessions) often sheds light on the efficiency (or otherwise) of local government at parish level.

Poor Law Administration

An important subject will be the administration of the poor law from the late 16th century onwards. There may be some overlap in the information for this section and the Social History chapter. The experience of the poor, in terms of the sort of relief they received, and the existence of any charities should be treated in the Social History chapter, while Local Government should cover the administration of the Poor Laws. Matters such as how overseers were appointed (By election? By 'house row'?) and if, when and why a paid assistant overseer was appointed should be discussed here.

The poor law was reformed in 1834 and parishes were grouped into Unions. Thereafter records were kept by the union, and you may be able to find information only for the post-1834 period. In many places the records generated earlier were lost after the New Poor Law was introduced in 1834. The account should record into which Union the

parish was placed; when; and any particular part played by the parish's representative on the Board of Guardians.

3. Post-1894 arrangements in relation to Rural and Urban Districts

This section should consider two main topics:

The local government district into which the parish was placed after 1894. This subsection should include:

- details of the local government groupings the parish was in during the 19th century
- an explanation of changes in rural district boundaries
- the provision of public services, including police and fire services (unless these have been covered with other public utilities in the 'Settlement' section of the Landscape, Settlement and Buildings chapter)

The civil parish council (not to be confused with the Parochial Church Council (PCC), which is only responsible for the upkeep and running of the church). Something should be said here about when the PC was established; where it met; and its membership across the decades. An account of local government in the 20th century will often be able to draw on correspondence between parish council and county council officers, and perhaps local newspaper reports, to enable a summary of the main concerns of the parish council over the century (traffic, litter, playing fields etc) to be provided. Some aspects of the activities of the parish council, such as the building of a village hall, will sit more easily in the Social History chapter. However, any aspects relating to 'political life' (allotments, elections, planning objections etc.) are relevant here.