

Guidelines for potential editors of Society publications

The Sussex Record Society welcomes proposals for relevant publications.

The Society publishes original records relating to the history of Sussex, usually in either full text or calendar (detailed list) form. In earlier years there was an emphasis on medieval and early modern sources (both ecclesiastical and civil), with particular attention being paid to material for Sussex held in the Public Record Office (now the National Archives). More recently, modern sources have increasingly been published.

Publications proposed must relate solely or largely to Sussex. A diary written by a Sussex person, for example, would not make a suitable volume unless its contents mostly concern the county or a part of it. Publications should normally relate to the whole of the county or a substantial part of it; to one of its larger towns or estates; or to one of its institutions. However, it can sometimes be useful to publish records of only a small area in order to show how similar records can be used for other areas.

The text may consist of a single record in its entirety or a complete series of records; an unbroken run from a record or class of records; or a selection. If the last, the records should be chosen to reflect the range of content of the whole class or classes.

Our primary publication medium remains the individual printed book. We normally publish one printed volume per year. Volumes usually have a print-run of 250-400 (depending upon the prospects for external sales). Complimentary copies are issued to individual and institutional members, with the surplus being available for sale. Where the subject is likely to interest members of another society, special offers may be made to its members. Early volumes remain in demand, and older volumes are available on the Society's website.

It is important to note that our focus is on publishing *editions of historical records*. Volumes typically contain an extended introduction providing context and explanation for the records concerned. But we do not publish original research, dissertations or monographs where the records are subordinate to a sustained argument. Those who prepare our volumes for publications are editors, not authors. We also try to avoid publishing material which would be more relevant to other organizations or to journals which carry research on Sussex.

Print publication is increasingly being supplemented by publication on the Society's website. This offers us the opportunity to publish material which is supplementary to our main publishing programme: shorter runs of material; and other types of essays relating to the history of Sussex. Examples can be seen on the website. The Society's

commitment to online publication is evolving, and we are always interested in relevant proposals. These might include:

- single documents with a brief editorial
- photographic or visual material
- reference guides to sources and/or specialist printed material
- databases of information

Nevertheless, the same high standards of accuracy and accessibility apply to online as to print publication.

Proposals for new publications are considered initially by the Editorial Board. This currently consists of Dr Danae Tankard (General Editor) and Dr Roger Pearce (Digital Editor). Proposals may be submitted to either of these officers personally, and/or via the Society's website. One member of the Editorial Board will liaise with the prospective editor and advise on the preparation of a formal proposal to the Society's Council.

The Council decides whether or not to commission proposed volumes, takes major decisions about them, monitors their progress, and decides on the sequence of publication. Council needs to be assured that the proposed text will be a coherent one which meets the Society's criteria for publication, and that it will be of value as a tool for those researching the history of Sussex. In the case of print publication, it will also want to establish that the records to be dealt with are amenable to being published in the Society's format, that the proposed text can be contained within a single volume, and that the editor has sufficient experience, expertise and knowledge to undertake a project of this kind. Proposals for online publication need to satisfy comparable criteria of practicality, accessibility and presentation.

The first stage in the commissioning process is the volume's minuted acceptance by Council as 'proposed'. This acknowledges that the Society is interested in its publication, and would hope to commission the volume formally when there is evidence that work is sufficiently well advanced on an acceptable text. Formal commissioning constitutes an undertaking by the Society to publish a volume, subject to the delivery of an acceptable final text, and to other factors such as the availability of sufficient funds. Once a volume is commissioned, further detailed guidance will be made available to the editor.

The Society meets all the publication and printing expenses of its volumes, sometimes aided by external grants. Editors are unpaid, but the Society may reimburse incidental expenses (e.g. travel costs, photocopying, acquisition of image rights etc.). However, a projection of such possible costs must be included in the formal proposal to Council.

Texts published by the Society are the joint copyright of the Society and the editor concerned, unless otherwise agreed in advance. The Society reserves the right to publish the text in print, digital or other format.

The Editorial Board will hope to see specimen pages of text as it progresses, in order to make sure that there are no potential problems on the horizon.

In normal times, the finished volume is usually launched at the Society's Annual General Meeting in the Spring of the publication year.

Detailed guidance

General considerations

The primary aim of the editor should be to produce a text that is as accurate as possible, and to present it consistently. The text may take the form of a full transcript or translation or of a calendar (an abstract containing all persons and places and merely omitting repetition and common form, so that recourse to the originals is unnecessary for most purposes). It is possible for part of the text to consist of a transcript or translation and the rest to be calendared, provided that why that has been done is explained in the introduction.

An edition of records should always include the text, an index and an introduction; and usually acknowledgements, a preface, and a list of abbreviations. It may also have an appendix or appendices consisting of material such as subsidiary or cognate documents or lists; a glossary of technical terms; and illustrations and maps. If there is a bibliography it should be short and avoid general background material not referenced in the introduction. Preceding everything else there will be a table of contents.

If the text consists wholly or in part of a transcript, it must be decided at an early stage whether the original or modernised spelling should be used. There will be related decisions as to whether or not the punctuation, use of capital letters and abbreviations of the original records should be retained. If they are, the practice must be justified in the introduction. In a calendar it is important to preserve the essential words of the original. Synonyms should not be introduced when the same word occurs many times in the records, but that word should be repeated. If it is not, the implication is that different shades of meaning were intended.

If the text consists of, or can be easily broken down into, relatively short sections or 'entries', on average two or three to the page, it is helpful for the entries to be numbered consecutively throughout the text and these numbers used in the index.

The introduction

The purpose of the introduction is to provide useful information to enable readers to get all possible benefit from the source material. It should include some analysis of what the records add to our understanding of a particular subject (eg. operation of the poor laws in the C18, poverty and poor relief in the C19 etc) rather than merely an explication of the records themselves. Readers will want to be assured that we have provided material in a sound, reliable and acceptable fashion, which can be trusted and cited without recourse to original manuscripts. They will also value advice relating to contextual

matters, problems entailed in the material, and technical points such as definitions of terms, use of language, etc. It is valuable to provide some comment on standard ways in which historians have made use of the material, but it is important not to get drawn into contentious debates.

In preparing the introduction, it is important to consider the following issues:

- What are we doing? – what documents are we reproducing? How did they originate and where are they now to be found?
- Why are we doing this? – why is the Society bothering with these particular documents? what makes them so worthwhile, so interesting? what makes our presentation of the material helpful and justifiable?
- How are we doing the job? – how best can we explain our chosen structure and plan of attack? what approaches have we considered and rejected? what makes our structure and chosen way of dealing with the sources appropriate?
- What are our sources? – what exactly do we need to tell readers to ensure that they fully understand the nature of the material we are giving them – its strengths and its weaknesses?
- What problems does the material pose for historians? – readers will want to know technical difficulties, but may also want advice on potential uses, some of which may carry more problems than others.
- What key hypotheses have generally been drawn from past use of this material? – this line is sometimes ignored by those who edit records for fear of being drawn into historiographical minefields. On the other hand, the critical editor who has tried to draw problems and pitfalls in the evidence to the attention of readers may also be considered 'honour-bound' to provide some thoughts on past and potential use of the type of material in question.

It is important to provide full details of editorial practice in order to give the reader confidence in the transcription, translation and selection of material, including comments on aspects of the editorial work relating to tables, illustrations and diagrams provided. It may be helpful to provide a glossary of technical and obscure terms.

A good introduction endeavours to make use of material in the text in order to bring that material to life. General points made in the introduction should always be clinched by reference to the specific material being published. This applies when talking about source problems as well as when discussing more obvious matters of content.

The appropriate length of an introduction will depend on a multitude of factors, in particular the nature and context of the records in question. A rough indication could be between 5-10,000 words: prospective editors should look at the introductions to recent Society volumes for guidance. In the end, however, this should be a matter for discussion with the Editorial Board.

The index

A good index is essential: indexing is an integral part of the editorial process. Depending on the nature of the text, a publication may have a general index; an index of persons and places and a separate subject index; or three separate indexes. The nature of the text will determine which is most suitable.

The Editorial Board will be happy to give any advice and assistance required with indexing.

Style guide

The Society does not mandate adherence to a particular style guide; what is important is accuracy and consistency. However, the Style Guide of the Modern Humanities Research Association is authoritative and widely respected. It may usefully be followed. It can be downloaded in full – and free of charge – here:

<http://www.mhra.org.uk/style>

Format

Volumes (whether for print or digital publication) are normally published to a page size of approximately 245 mm. x 170 mm. Illustrations may be included where appropriate. The whole will normally run to some 300-400 pages. Footnotes should be short, most consisting only of references or cross-references. Editors should refer to some recent volumes to get an idea of the usual format.

Typically, the text will be laid out by one of the Editorial Board for consistency with Society style, in consultation with the editor, and a digital file will be prepared for printing. Editors are advised to avoid elaborate formatting of the text file (headings, sub-headings, paragraph styles, indents, bold, underlining etc), since this usually needs to be removed later. A simple text file, in Microsoft Word or a similar format, with minimal formatting, is ideal.

Contents, indexes and cross-references will be finalised by a member of the Editorial Board, in consultation with the editor, once layout and pagination have been determined.