

# SUSSEX RECORD SOCIETY PUBLICATIONS: GUIDELINES FOR EDITORS

## Prepared on behalf of the Society's Council

### 1. THE PUBLICATION PROCESS

#### *The Society:*

The Sussex Record Society (a registered charity) was formed in 1901 in order to publish original manuscript source material for the history of Sussex, usually in either full text or calendar (detailed list) form. By its Centenary in 2001 it had achieved 85 volumes. 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, while early records remain an important quarry for volumes, modern sources have increasingly been published.

Today, the Society tries to publish one volume per year, from a range of sources which is as balanced in terms of subjects as the availability of suitable editors permits. Volumes usually have a print-run of not less than 450 (depending upon the prospects for external sales), which are issued to individual and institutional members, with a surplus 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 currently being made available on the Society's website.

#### *The Council and Officers:*

Management of the Society is in the hands of a Council of twelve annually-elected members (with officers), meeting three times a year. These are answerable to an Annual General Meeting of all members. Any Council member may assist with the preparation of a volume, but the officers who most commonly advise and work with individual editors are the Secretary, and Literary Director(s). It is the Council which decides on the suitability and 'commissioning' of proposed volumes (below), takes major decisions about them, monitors their progress, and decides on the sequence of publication.

#### *The Proposal and Commissioning of Volumes:*

There are two formal stages in the acceptance of a volume for publication, following initial informal discussions, and the submission of a paper outlining the editor's intentions.

The first stage is the volume's minuted acceptance by Council as 'Proposed'. This constitutes an acknowledgement that the Society is interested in its publication, and would hope formally to commission the volume when there is evidence that work is sufficiently well advanced on an acceptable text. Depending on the other commitments of the editor, it can take between one and several years before a volume is commissioned.

The second stage is the formal 'Commissioning', which constitutes an undertaking by the Society to publish a text in its series, subject to the delivery of an acceptable final text, and to other factors such as the availability of sufficient funds. The year of publication cannot be stated at commissioning, since a number of factors may affect intended dates, including editorial delay, but as a rule of thumb (and without a formal undertaking to that effect) a volume will normally be published within five years of a final text being delivered.

#### *Editors:*

Editors are found by a variety of means. Some are approached on behalf of the Society, but often it is the potential editor who approaches the Society with an idea in mind for a suitable volume. The Society welcomes all ideas, and is glad to offer preliminary informal discussion and advice. After this, it will request a paper to put before Council outlining what the editor intends. Council will want 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. 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.

Editors offering texts which may depart from the Society's usual format (below) are invited to explain their reasons and to secure consent for this. Guidance and assistance will be offered as necessary during the process of editing, but while every effort will be made to resolve problems which may arise

at this stage, the Society reserves the right to reject a text which fails to meet the standards or objectives which were anticipated.

*Costs:*

The Society, which is non-profit making, meets all the publication and printing expenses of its volumes, sometimes aided by external grants. Editors are unpaid (though they may earn prestige), but certain costs (e.g. of photocopying) may be reimbursed provided that these are agreed in advance. The Society would not be viable without the public-spirited collaboration of its editors, to whom its gratitude is extended on behalf of the historians who will benefit from their work.

*Copyright:*

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 microform, electronic, or other format.

*Volume Format:*

Since 1983 volumes have been published to a volume size of approximately 245 mm. x 170 mm. (a text 'template' is available for editors on request). Normally they contain title pages, an introduction (with editorial notes) of c. 30-40 pages, the principal text, and an index. The index may be compiled either by the editor or by a professional indexer, though in the latter case the close involvement of the editor is desirable. Illustrations may be included where appropriate, and an illustrated dust jacket is provided. The whole will normally run to some (300) pages, though individual volumes may have up to 50 pages more or less than this. It is suggested that intending editors have a look at recently-published Society volumes in order to get a better idea of what is sought. Potential difficulties with the Society's constraints should be discussed in advance. More specific advice accompanies these preliminary notes.

*Delivery of Text:*

The Literary Director(s) 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. Texts (except illustrations) are normally printed at present from the editor's digital files, as supplied initially to the Secretary and then converted to the master computer used by the Society in order for final work on format, pagination, preliminary pages, etc. Even where the editor has worked to the Society's page size, minor discrepancies occur between computers, and indexing by page should not be undertaken until a definitive printer's text has been approved. Editors wishing to present a text in a different format are asked to discuss the matter at an early stage.

The finished volume is normally 'launched' at the Society's Annual General Meeting in the Spring of the publication year, and in order to meet this deadline, final texts need to be in the hands of the Secretary by the previous Autumn.

Roger Davey

## 2. TEXT EDITING

*Preliminary Considerations*

The proposed volume should consist of a text with an explanatory introduction, not a monograph with illustrative records. The text must be of intrinsic importance and preferably of value to a range of historical interests; if it is presented merely to support an argument it does not qualify as a record society publication. Unlike a secondary work, it should not have chapters and has an editor not an author.

The volume must relate solely or largely to Sussex in order to qualify for publication by the Sussex Record Society. 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.

The volume 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, not the interests of the editor or what he may consider to be important.

An edition of records should always have, in order of importance, the text, an index and an introduction; and usually acknowledgements or a preface, and a list of abbreviations. It may also have an appendix or appendices, normally following the text and consisting of material relating to the text such as subsidiary or cognate documents or lists; a glossary of technical terms; and illustrations and maps. A bibliography should rarely be needed: all books directly relevant to the text will be cited, and many discussed, in the introduction, and some will be included in the list of abbreviations. If there is a bibliography it should be short: it should not contain anything of a general historical nature as background reading or books and articles that are likely to prove ephemeral. Preceding everything else there will be a table of contents.

### *The Text*

The primary aim of the editor should be to produce a text that is as accurate as is humanly possible, in order to ensure that the records need never be published again, and to present it consistently. Errors and inconsistencies, however minor, undermine the user's confidence in the rest of the work.

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). A calendar is sufficient for most records. Full transcripts can be justified for a few, but documents in Latin or other languages should be translated or calendared in English. 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.

If the text consists wholly or in part of a transcript, it must be decided at an early stage (and perhaps in consultation with the Literary Director) 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. A calendar is not a work of literature: 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 the numbers used in the index. Those who consult the volume will find what they are interested in, and its context, much more readily if index references are to entries rather than to pages.

### *The Index*

The index is an essential part of the book: a work of reference is of limited use without a good index. Indexing is an integral part of the editorial process and should not be regarded as an inferior activity, fit only for lesser hands. There are good reasons why the editor should undertake the task:

- the editor has an unrivalled knowledge of the text which an external indexer can never approach;

- most of the difficult work of identifying persons and places will have been done during the production of the text;

- if persons and places are entered on cards or a spreadsheet as they are identified, the work of identification does not have to be repeated every time they recur in the text and it will also be immediately clear what cross-references are needed;

- it is helpful to have subjects indexed before the introduction is written.

Indexing is not technically difficult and the Literary Directors are happy to give any advice and assistance required; but an editor who is unable to undertake the index should at least keep in close touch with the indexer.

A volume 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. All persons and places must be indexed whenever they occur. The subject index, or subject element of a general index, cannot be exhaustive; its contents will vary from volume to volume.

### *The Introduction*

Just as the text should be as perfect as possible in order to stand the test of time, so the introduction should remain relevant throughout the life of the volume. It should therefore be timeless in content, vocabulary and style. The contents should be limited to a description of the records edited; an account of the purpose for which they were compiled and of the institutions or persons who produced them; a history of the records and their preservation from their compilation to the present day; a summary of their importance and value; and an explanation of the editorial conventions adopted in the text and index. Issues arising from the records which may be engaging historians at the time of the preparation of the volume should be avoided. Fuller guidance on the writing of the introduction is provided in a separate section of these guidelines.

### *The Book*

Most editors will have no difficulty in presenting their work in digital form and as hard copy. The Secretary can provide files with specifications for the size and lay-out of the printed page and it is helpful if books can be presented in the exact form in which they will be printed. That is obviously helpful for the Society and its printers, but it is equally useful for the editor. It means that the pagination of the introduction can be finalised and the introduction indexed before the work leaves the editor's hands. Similarly, if the text is indexed to the page, that can also be done earlier. Another consideration is that the editor can be confident that the volume will be printed exactly as intended. The files should therefore be in rich text format to ensure that no formatting will be lost. Nothing is more frustrating than for late errors to creep in for which the editor was not responsible, something which reviewers may not appreciate.

If the text is indexed by entry numbers the pages of the introduction should not have Arabic numerals. The pagination from the first page of the preliminary matter to the end of the introduction should be in small roman numerals and the first page of the text should be Arabic page one, the Arabics continuing to the end of the volume. A note to the index (or first index) should explain that Arabic numbers refer to entries and small Romans to pages. Although it is not strictly necessary for the introduction to have Roman page numbers if the text has no numbered entries, it would give the Society's publications more uniformity were the practice always to be adopted.

The text should be set out to save as much space as possible. One way to save space is by the use of headers or headlines (short descriptions which are centred at the top of the page). They should not repeat the book's title but should relate to the relevant section of the text and be so worded, where feasible, that repetition in the text itself or running heads in the body of the page are rendered unnecessary.

Footnotes should be short, most consisting only of references or cross-references. In the introduction they should be at the foot of the appropriate page. In the text they should be either at the foot of the page or, when there are numbered entries, at the end of the entry.

### *Editorial Conventions*

It is impossible to deal here with every conceivable issue which might arise under this head. Every edition is different and presents its own problems, with the result that some editorial conventions may vary from volume to volume. Nevertheless, there are many that can be adopted whatever the nature of the edition and a few of those are briefly noted below. Editors can always consult the Literary Directors on matters not covered here or can refer to the works listed at the end

There should be a double space between sentences, as in this paper. It makes long passages appear less daunting.

Quotations should be in single inverted commas, with double inverted commas reserved for quotes within quotes. Long quotations should begin on a new line and be slightly indented, without inverted commas. Italic type should not be used for quotations either with or in lieu of inverted commas.

The use of italic and bold type should be kept to a minimum to preserve its effect. Italic should never be used for emphasis. Bold should be reserved for headings and entry numbers. Underlining should never be used.

Capital letters should be used sparingly to allow names of persons and places to stand out and be readily seen by users following up index references.

Hyphens link words: e.g. nineteenth-century diaries.

En rules link either numbers or words to indicate 'to': e.g. 1914—1918; Newhaven—Dieppe (although Newhaven to Dieppe is better). If an en rule is similarly used between a number and a word

there must be a space before and after the rule: e.g. May 1914 — July 1918 (but May 1914 to July 1918 is better).

Em rules should be reserved for parenthesis: e.g. He was — or so it is generally believed — a first-class navigator. They should be used sparingly. Round brackets are often preferable. Better still, the sentence can usually be improved by being reordered or reworded, as can the example above.

Footnote numbers in the text and introduction should follow any adjacent punctuation: e.g. coroners;<sup>1</sup> (not coroners<sup>1</sup>);

Records should be cited in the text and footnotes in the abbreviated forms used in the repositories in which they are housed and frequently cited printed works should also be abbreviated, with the full titles of both appearing only in the list of abbreviations where abbreviations should be listed in alphabetical order.

Words which are abbreviated by suspension should have a final point (e.g. cont.) but those abbreviated by contraction should not (e.g. contd). Upper case abbreviations have no punctuation (e.g. MP, JPs, NATO). Abbreviated words which are part of references also need no punctuation (e.g. p and pp, no, f and if). Forename initials need no punctuation but should be spaced (e.g. J M Bloggs). When part of a record is illegible or torn away, missing words can be supplied from other sources in roman type in square brackets. Such sources should be identified in footnotes, although if a single source is frequently used that should be explained in the introduction instead. If missing words cannot be provided from elsewhere they should be replaced in the text by three dots however many letters or words have been lost. Editorial comment within the body of the text should be in italic within square brackets (but not italic square brackets), although it is less disruptive to have such comment in a footnote.

Any editor wishing to have further details about any of the points mentioned above or related matters could consult the following works:

J Butcher, *Copy-editing: the Cambridge Handbook* (Cambridge, 1975)

P D A Harvey, *Editing Historical Records* (British Library, 2001)

R F Hunnisett, *Indexing for Editors* (British Records Association, Archives and the User, No 2, 1972)

R F Hunnisett, *Editing Records for Publication* (British Records Association, Archives and the User, No 4, 1977)

R.F. Hunnisett

### 3. PREPARING THE INTRODUCTION

The purpose of an introduction to a record society volume is plainly to provide useful information to enable readers to get all possible benefit from the sources we have taken the trouble to publish. 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 would be 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 highly contentious debates. The editor is providing a technical service in making material available for others to use; in order to do that job properly it is vital that full attention is paid to the problems entailed in the sources, rather than getting drawn into problems entailed in their use by historians.

Editors should consider carefully what they are providing for readers, while also noting what they are not doing. It is important to provide clear answers to the following questions which might occur to readers:

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 record society bothering with these particular documents? What makes them so worthwhile, so interesting? What makes our presentation of the material helpful / 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 / chosen way of dealing with the sources appropriate?

What are our sources? - what exactly do we need to tell the reader 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? - this connects with the point above, for 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. Such thoughts will buttress ideas already presented concerning why the material is worthy of publication.

Consider the merits of adopting an 'active voice' in answering the questions above when writing the introduction. This may help to avoid falling into the trap of simply providing 'background' information in an implicit, vague attempt to address the concerns of readers. As you construct sections of the introduction, always keep in mind the nagging question: 'how will this help the reader?'. What do people need to know to help them to make best use of the sources you have provided? Look back over paragraphs and consider carefully how they really assist the reader. Are you sure that you are keeping a tight focus and that the relevance of what you are writing will be immediately apparent to the reader? Think carefully - much as a teacher has to do - about the best order in which to give material to your readers.

It is imperative to provide full details of editorial practice in order to give the reader confidence in your transcription, translation, and selection of material in full or part. This is most obvious when you have adopted an approach which provides full transcriptions of material in some sections, while constructing varying forms of digest in other sections. Remember to comment on all aspects of your editorial work from tables, illustrations and diagrams which you may provide, to footnoting conventions, common abbreviations, etc. It may be helpful to provide a glossary of technical, obscure terms; likewise a critical bibliography.

An introduction is not a free-standing, separate essay on topics related to the printed material; it should serve as a tool to enable readers to make good use of the text. It follows from this point that a good introduction endeavours to make use of material in the text in order to bring that material to life. General points being 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.

Finally, you might find it useful to consider carefully what you are not doing with the text and introduction, partly because this will sharpen your focus on what you are doing, but also because it may provide you with thoughts for obvious points which you might otherwise neglect to comment upon. It may make you think about common assumptions which readers may bring to reading the text, assumptions which you may wish partly to dispel. Always take the precaution of getting a variety of people to read your drafts, for nothing is ever as obvious as it seems!

Andrew Foster