

Club History

Without the past, what is the future?

By Martin Whelan, SSAGO Chairperson 2002-2003

I have previously written about the history of the organisation as a whole, and the support structures which have existed to support [Student Scouts and Guides](#), this focuses on the clubs and how you can look at where they have come from.

Researching the history of your club will require some of you to first re-learn the skills associated with social sciences and humanities, namely the importance of supporting evidence and an inquisitive mind. It can be frustrating particularly if your club has had long periods of inactivity, but persist.

Where to start?

Existing members – most clubs can boast a couple of post-graduate, or long in the tooth undergraduates who have may have links with people further back, who have links to people further back and so on. At Loughborough this took us back to circa 1985 without much trouble. Try posting a message on the SSAGO Forum, because some of your former members may be postgraduates elsewhere now.

Union – try speaking to the people that you are affiliated to, which will usually be a Student Union, Association or Guild. Do they hold any historic records, but the chances are if there are any you will already have.

University/college – A number of clubs have in the past deposited information with the library at their institution. This is usually kept in reference or special collections, and likely to be restricted access. You may find that as the technical owners of the material you are allowed to remove materials, but you need to check with the librarians.

Local Scouts/Guides – Try asking the local Districts, Divisions, Counties, Area etc. The chances are that if even your club is not a long standing one, there will be graduates in the local Scout and Guide community who may be able to help. From experience they are likely to be a lot more helpful than HQ, because unless information was specifically deposited with either the Scout or Guide Association they will not have anything on you.

Wider Scouting/Guiding – Try posting a message on the [Uk.rec.Scouting](#) newsgroup, but make sure you check to the group etiquette before you post. [Scoutsreunited](#) is worth trying as I put all the clubs which I thought had ever existed on in late 2002.

Friendsreunited is a possibility but unless they explicitly state they are a Scout or Guide in their post, proceed with caution.

Did we exist back in 19ish?

The simple answer is that it is very difficult to tell beyond the last ten or 15 years, due to the way the organisation worked pre e-mail. Below are a few pointers to help you.

When was your institution started? – if your club is at institution which did not acquire university status until about 1966, AND was not one of the strange exceptions like Loughborough which were effectively counted as a university its slightly more difficult as the university groups got organised a lot sooner than the colleges. The first organised interaction between varsity clubs was around 1919, but the first “organisation” for colleges did not appear until 1956. The SSAGO Chairperson holds the minute books for the varsity organisation from 1947 through to 1966, but there are no details records for any clubs. If your university has recently acquired university status such as the 1992 group, try and find out former names as that will help and tracking information down. Obviously if you are someone like Lincoln University SSAGO, there is no possibility of a club before 1996 in Lincoln because that was when the university opened.

Rovers, Rangers, Cadet, Clubs, etc? – Prior to the late 1960s Student Scouting and Guiding was a hybrid of Rover Scouts/Ranger Guides and clubs, much like today with the Network but on a much larger scale. All records for Rover Scouts will be with your district or county if they still exist, but this will require you to find out whether there have been any local re-organisations of districts/counties. There was never a national re-organisation, but as a general the English ones were changed a lot of local government re-organisations in the 1960s and 1970s, but the extent varies across the country. Try writing to your local free paper, and see if you get any response. Scogui tried this and were lent a photograph of a club event from 1954 for local Senior Scouts. Clubs were responsibility of Imperial HQ until 1967 and SSAGO since then. There is very little available about these.

Periods of inactivity – Just because your club was started in the 1920s does not mean it has unbroken continuity since then, but don’t assume just because you cant find any information that they did not exist. To aid this process the following are the only ones which after a lot of research that I am virtually certain have been active continuously since the mid 1980s, Oxford; Cambridge; Durham; Bristol; Birmingham; Leeds; Nottingham; Loughborough and Bath. Long periods of inactivity are usually easy to spot particularly after about 1970, but if the group was dead for year or two that is often tricky to discover but the chances are that two or three friends from the club will keep meeting informally.

What colour necker did we have? – Simple answer is very difficult to tell unless you have existed since 1996, and also registered your colours. It gets complicated because after SSAGO was created both HQ were conscious that the integrity of the uniform should be maintained, and those not eligible (i.e. non Scout and Guide members therefore some SSAGO people) should not wear and this included neckers. Most clubs had unofficial, and SSAGO had its yellow and green one which briefly became the bane of all SSAGO Treasurers life by becoming the mythical SSAGO indies necker.

It's Tradition – its surprising how many traditions are only one or two years old. Don't fall into the trap of expecting to find something which you think is a club tradition, going back more than a few years.

Finally don't expect to be able to pin the start date of your club down to a specific date or year, the best you may manage is within a decade. This is more the case the further back you go.

Going back can be really rewarding. A number of clubs have run reunions to set dates, for example Loughborough 50 years since first appearing at a rally and Scogui Bears 21st earlier this year, but this is not strictly necessary. Reunions do require a lot of planning, and need to be tailored to the needs and wishes of the older members. Loughborough had a buffet meal and disco, other clubs have run much grander dinners or even weekends. The last thing to say is good luck, the truth is out there.