

OXFORD CENTRE FOR METHODISM AND CHURCH HISTORY

*'Floreat Westminsteriensis' and 'Be Prepared':
Scouting at Westminster College*

Archives & Research, No. 2

Predating the national student Scouting movement by forty years, the 41st Westminster (Westminster College) Rover Crew was one of many Scout groups founded within universities and colleges for their students.

The origins of the Crew can be traced to an evening presentation given by J. S. Ross (tutor, and future principal of Westminster College), in which he argued that the values of Scouting were beneficial to teacher training when combined with a traditional elementary education.

Scoutmasters who become teachers and who carry the Scout spirit with them into the schools will do much. They will rightly lay stress on the Play spirit and on the value of outdoor education, and they will do well to supplement their efforts in the classroom by forming patrols of Boy Scouts outside it. But they will seek to modify the elementary school, not rashly to destroy it.

***The Westminsterian*, Easter 1926**

The 41st Westminster Rover Crew was constituted in February 1926, and thrived in the decades that followed. Their first report in the summer edition of *The Westminsterian* for that year related that the Crew had joined the Westminster Boy Scouts Association, and quickly developed a reputation 'as the largest troop in the district'. Activities at this time included signalling, camping, hiking, and a robust lecture series. The latter was particularly directed to those wishing 'to discover a little more about the value of Scouting', and naysayers who might have 'criticisms of the organisation'.



Photograph, 41st Westminster (Westminster College) Rover Scout Crew, 1936-1937. Frank Wright, circled.

The records of the Crew demonstrate that they encountered many of the same issues as student Scouting societies today (meeting location, storage space, funding, etc.). Their uniform also shows striking similarities to those worn by modern Scouts; a beige shirt, a neckerchief, and fabric and pin badges. Whilst the positioning and colour of the badges may have changed (i.e., the location badges being worn on a long sleeve), the meaning conveyed by the badges has not.

Like the rest of college life, Scouting activities were interrupted by the turmoil of enemy action in London. The Second World War saw the division of the student body when the College was evacuated, and many Scouts were involved in wartime activities. The Scouting spirit persisted, however, and the re-unification of the students in 1945 saw the Rover Crew reformed and the resumption of their programme of activities – even undertaking a weekend trip to Guernsey and Normandy in the 1950s.

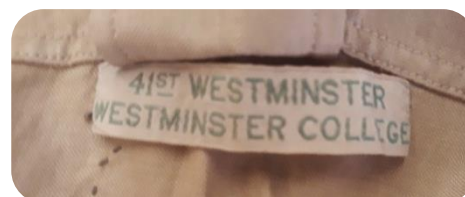
At Westminster College's relocation to Oxford in 1959 the troop was reconstituted as the 51st Oxford Rover Crew, and were soon camping at their new local site at Youlbury. When the College became co-educational again in 1960, a Girlguiding Ranger troop was founded and both groups carried on activities together. Today, students at Oxford Brookes can still be involved in scouting, with the modern form of a College or University Rover crew (SSAGO) group covering both Brookes and the University of Oxford.

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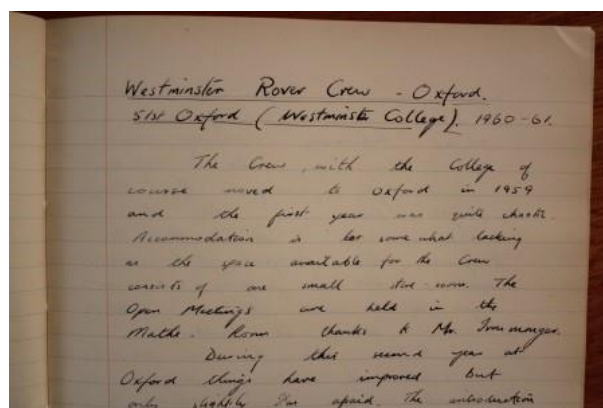
The history of Scouting at Westminster College can be traced using the **log book of the 41st Westminster Rover Crew, 1934-1961**. Incomplete, the volume was lost for almost a decade during the 1950s. The finances of the Crew can also be found in the **Westminster College Union Society Club and Society Accounts**

Further reports on the activities of the Crew were published annually in *The Westminsterian* magazine.

A material link to Westminster College's Scouting heritage is the **shirt of Frank Wright (1934-1937)**. It features the embroidered badges of the Scouting district of Westminster, and City of London. Wright is identifiable as the owner by three small holes in the shirt. A surviving **photograph of the Westminster Rover Scout Crew, 1936-1937** shows Wright as the only person wearing three pin badges above his breast pocket. More images of the Westminster Scouts can be found in a **scrapbook of news-cutting and photographs, 1950s**.



Rover Scout shirt of Frank Wright (1934-1937), 1930s (with details)



Log book of the 41st Westminster Rover Crew, 1934-1961

All materials cited from the collections of the OCMCH, with thanks to the Scouting Heritage Centre

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