QUICK GUIDE

1. **Contact the Old Boys’ Office** at scotsoldboys@tsc.nsw.edu.au or (02) 9391 7606

2. **Form a Committee** – approximately a year ahead of 4 – 6 people.

3. **Meet regularly** – once every couple of months to start with then every month.

4. **Establish a budget** - include food, drink, room hire, decorations, bus, goods etc.

5. **Establish objectives** - participation, enjoyment, financial goals, database updates.

6. **Database** – ask the Old Boys’ Office for your Alumni database and check the Scotsman publications.

7. **Update the Database** - as you find out new contact information, inform the Old Boys’ office.

8. **“Save the Date”** – around 9-12 months before the event, send out an email to contacts requesting they “Save the Date” and provide details of anyone they know who is not on the contact list.

9. **Theme/Guest Speaker** - consider ideas regarding the venue, theme and guest speaker with the committee.

10. **Guests** – consider inviting special guests, including The Principal and/or former or current staff.

**KEY SUCCESS FACTORS**

- Start early
- Work with the Old Boys’ Office
- Update the database
- Phone, phone, phone
- Multiplicity of activities
- Report against objectives
A Guide to Running a Successful Reunion

Prepared by The Scots College Old Boys' Union
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Introduction

This document aims to provide reunion organisers with some guidelines to help maximise the level of attendance and success of the reunion they are organising. While primarily written for Alumni Reunions, the basic principles may be equally applied to NSW Country Reunions, Interstate Reunions, Overseas Reunions as well as Sporting Reunions.

A reunion provides the opportunity for former classmates to reconnect with one another and the College and to rekindle friendships. If planned properly, it enables attendees to engage with one another, build their network of friends and enjoy each other’s company.

Starting early is a key success factor as well as working with the Old Boys’ Office. The experienced people there are well versed in running a wide variety of reunions and can help you if you ask.

Getting Started

It’s important at the very beginning to establish objectives – what do you want your reunion to achieve. Some examples are outlined later. In the meantime, here is a checklist of items that can help you to get started:

11. Old Boys’ Office – your first step is to contact the OBU Office and advise you are planning to hold a reunion and to discuss potential reunion dates. Ideally do this at least 12 months before your planned reunion date, however earlier is better.
12. Committee – Approximately a year ahead or earlier establish a committee (say 4 – 6 people) from your year to assist the planning stage, to help track down those missing in your year and to ring around. Appoint a Chairman or a Reunion Organiser to set the agenda and run the meetings. Choose people who had different sets of friends and interests when they were at school.
13. Meet regularly – once every couple of months to start with then every month as you approach the date of your reunion.
14. Establish a budget (See appendix)
15. Establish objectives (See below)
16. Database – ask the Old Boys’ Office for a copy of your Alumni database. (For Country, Interstate, and Overseas Reunions etc generate the database based on post codes or overseas countries). Go through The Scotsman for your leaving year’s roll and compare the names against the College’s database. You can go back as far as you like through The Scotsmans to capture those who left early in your alumni year. If your year has held a reunion prior to the one you are working on, try and obtain a copy
of the database for the last reunion as this database can often be in better shape than the one held at the College.

17. Throughout the planning period, continually update your year’s database and advise the Old Boy’s Office of any updates. (See below).

18. “Save the Date” – Around 10-12 months before your planned reunion date, and using the database even before you start to update it, send out an email to those with an email address to:

- Ask them to “Save the Date”, and, provide them with a list of those in your year with whom you do not have a current postal address/mobile or email address.
- Ask them to advise the contact details (Mobile and/or email address) of anyone who is listed in the database as a “Missing Old Boy”.

A sample advance letter is attached (See appendix)

19. Discuss with your committee concepts for the reunion including themes, venues and guest speaker (if any) – is it going to be a one night only affair or are you going to plan it over say 2 days – a boarder’s breakfast, followed by a day at the College watching a rugby match, then an evening reunion dinner and a recovery brunch the next day. Having a multiplicity of activities helps you to appeal to a wider audience and maximise attendance levels. Remember that some of your participants will be travelling from country, interstate and overseas locations. So it is important that the plans you have will appeal to a broad base of former classmates.

20. Guests – do you want to invite The Principal (or his representative) to update everyone about the status of the College? Are there any former teachers that had a big impact on your year that you would like to reconnect with?

**Updating a Database**

There is a great deal of satisfaction and sense of achievement when you find classmates in your year who are listed as “Missing Old Boys”. Some may have been missing for a number of years and have been missing out on the regular communication others have been receiving to attend other events at the school. They also appreciate the fact that you have been able to track them down after perhaps many years as being listed as “missing”. Updating the database enables you to invite a larger number of former classmates than would otherwise be the case and assist maximising attendance at your reunion. Large numbers of attendees add to the success of your reunion.
Here is a simple approach to update your database:

1. Ask the OBU Office for a list of those in your alumni year. Note for privacy reasons, this list can only be used for the strict purposes of organising your reunion. It will be clear that a number are “Address Unknown” or “Missing Old Boy”. Make sure that those who repeated into your year from the year ahead of you and those who repeated into the year after you are included in your Alumni database.
2. Ring or email those whose address is listed as “Returned Mail” or “Missing” where the database still shows a phone number or email address. Mobile numbers are best as generally people do not change these even if they change jobs or home addresses.
3. Try the various social media channels – facebook, twitter, linked in
4. Send out your “Save the Date” email with a list of those who you have been unable to track down via emails or mobiles. You will be surprised by the number of guys in your year group are still in contact with some of those listed as “Missing”.
5. Still have a number you have not found? Go to the Mitchell Library of NSW (State Library in Macquarie Street) and go through the microfiche for the electoral rolls. Start with NSW, then Qld, ACT, Vic., SA, WA, TAS, and finally NT. It is best if you have the person’s middle names as well as their first and surname. Take the address home with you and search on White Pages online http://www.whitepages.com.au/ - using the name and suburb/town and ring them. “Are you the Bill Blogs who left The Scots College in 1987?”
6. Maintain an excel spreadsheet and provide periodic updates back to the OBU Office. Too many times Reunion Organisers update their database but fail to notify the College.

**Reunion Objectives**

There are some basic objectives you and your committee should set and report against after the event. Too many times functions are held without any measurements of their success or otherwise. Here is a hypothetical list:

- To have at least 75% of our Alumni Year (including those who left early) attend
- To ensure everyone has a “great time” (Minimum score of 8 out of 10 in post reunion survey)
- Financially, to make a surplus or at least achieve a break even position
- To update the database to achieve a 90% legitimate addresses and communicate these changes to the OBU Office.
Maximising Attendance

With adequate warning and a variety of elements your reunion should achieve a maximum number of participants. This is how to maximise your attendance:

1. Find those “missing” in your database – they will not attend if they do not know about it
2. Give ample warning – “Save the Date” 12 months out plus a reminder 6 months out. It’s amazing the number of people who have not been given warning that say “sorry, would have loved to come but I have another commitment”.
3. Appeal to a wide variety of potential participants – have a number of elements, not just a dinner or a lunch – get them back to the College for one of the “Back to Scots” functions to visit a new building or to watch one of the sporting events, consider holding a Boarder's Breakfast, a tour of the College or it’s new buildings before the rugby, etc.
4. Guest Speaker or Special Guests – an appropriate draw card such as The Principal or a valued teacher can provide encouragement to attend
5. Phone, phone, phone – divide the database up among your committee and ring everyone. It’s a good start to email everyone but there is no substitute for a personal phone call inviting one of your former classmates to come along. They will appreciate this personal approach plus it gives you an opportunity to get an update on what they have been doing since the last time you both spoke.
6. Promote the function:

   • By email
   • In the OBU Magazine and website (The OBU Office will assist you here)
   • Social media
   • Sydney Morning Herald (xx) and Daily Telegraph )xx)
   • Take a camera for your reunion photos
   • Provide the copy for an article in Lang Syne after the function
   • And for the College’s archives, provide photos and copies of reunion collateral materials such as Table Programs, Invitations, copies of speeches, any gifts given on the night such as souvenir reunion pen, A special Yearbook that you produced for the function, etc.
The Invitation

• In keeping with a desire to maintain continuity, the College has strict requirements regarding the use of the College or Old Boy logos and typefaces – for this reason it is best to have the Old Boys’ Office prepare your invitation for you.
• Ideally should be sent out 6-8 weeks before the event – too early and people forget and later than this is not enough warning
• Venue, time, cost, RSVP date and a person to contact for enquiries
• Dietary requirements?
• College can send out on your behalf
• Sample – See appendix for a sample of the Invitation and the Reply Form

RSVPs

• By post or online through the College or via www.trybooking.com
• The Old Boys’ Office can maintain an excel spreadsheet as well as update their records when the RSVP is received
• You can periodically email everyone in your year the names of those who are attending
• This spreadsheet may also be used to make name tags and seating plans

Reunion Themes/Ideas

Your committee may decide to put a theme to the function or to provide a few activities for those attending. Some ideas:

• Prepare a power point presentation with photos from The Scotsman and other sources
• Ask everyone to bring along photos – pass them around
• Prepare place mats using black & white photos from your year’s Scotsman (See appendix)
• Consider serving Haggis as the entree
• Have one of the pipers play during the function – welcome guests, pipe in the Haggis
• Hold a trivia quiz with token prizes such as an OBU cap or a Scots polo shirt—e.g. “Heads & Tails” quiz about your past teachers, the rugby scores, which Gilbert & Sullivan play was being performed, where did we come in the GPS Athletics, etc.

• Consider providing everyone with a memento gift such as a souvenir pen or a set of Scots cufflinks or Scots glassware (all available from the Scots Goods Store)

• Prepare a Reunion Year Book - have everyone update themselves on what they have been doing since they left the College

• Print a Table Program – list all who are attending and those that have passed on.

• Toast the College

• Remember the dead – Piper’s lament e.g. “Sleep Deary Sleep” or “Flowers of the Forest”

Wives, Girlfriends & Partners

A number of people have different views on whether to invite wives or partners to their reunion function. Generally the following applies:

• Wives etc. do not want to attend your Class Reunion because they do not know the other wives. Also they do not want to meet your drunken classmates

• However there can be opportunities in multi facet reunions to have them attend one of the elements e.g. the rugby match or the recovery brunch

• Reunions held in the country areas of NSW or overseas generally provide more relevant opportunities for female partners to attend as they tend to know the other females. This is also relevant for overseas functions as well.

Communication with the Venue

Good communication on your needs, your budget and the venue’s costs are an essential ingredient to running a successful reunion. You should pick the venue which meets your needs and represents good value for money. Here are some tips:

• Research as many as you can to compare costs and to find out which one best suits your needs and what some of the venue’s limitations are e.g. minimum price, inflexibility re allowing you to bring wine to cut costs, large venue hire costs, etc.

• Discuss the Run Sheet (See appendix) – it is important that the venue is aware of the various activities you have planned during a dinner or a lunch and essential that you
stay on time throughout the function to avoid issues such as cold or over cooked food, additional staff costs, etc. The venue is in the best position to indicate the time they need to serve food and collect plates between courses so discuss your run sheet with their representative.

- Be absolutely clear on when you have to advise your final numbers. Is there any flexibility here if you get a last minute acceptance or withdrawal? What are you up for?
- Does your package include alcoholic beverages or are you supplying these? If the latter, have you agreed on a corkage cost?
- Are there any special dietary requirements? Did you include that question on the invitation and how are you communicating those responses to the venue?

**Post Event**

It's a good idea to send out a survey within 2 days after the reunion to obtain feedback and measure your level of success. A survey could ask questions (using a rating scale out of 10), such as:

- Level of enjoyment
- Rating of guest speaker
- Rating of venue
- Rating of food
- Rating of value for money
- Rating of various elements (e.g. Boarder’s breakfast, rugby match, recovery brunch, etc.)
- How could it have been improved?

Lang Syne – photos & copy

Email thanking everyone with photos

**Conclusion**

Start early, follow the points in this document and enjoy your Class Reunions. You only hold these every 5 or 10 years so it’s important to maximise their success for the enjoyment of everyone in your year group and to help you build attendance for the next time. Remember, as the Reunion Organiser or one of the committee members, you will get more out of organising the event than if you just turned up as one of the participants.

Good luck.

Scots to the fore!