

The Rotary Club of Lincoln

April 2026 Newsletter



Notice: Rotary District 1070 Assembly

Held on 16th May 2026 9:00am – 1.30pm at Loughborough University

<https://rotary-ribi.org/districts/page.php?PgID=999440&DistrictNo=1070>

Rotary Club Meeting 13th April 2026

Speaker: Rtn. James “Buster” Miller, Rutland Rotary Club
Rotary Club Meeting – 13 April 2026

Rtn. James “Buster” Miller delivered a compelling and well-researched presentation on the vital role played by women in the Special Operations Executive (SOE) during the Second World War.

Buster explained that his interest in the subject was shaped by his family background. His father, Jock, worked on RAF bases across Lincolnshire, including RAF Waddington, while his mother served in the Women’s Auxiliary Air Force (WAAF). After retiring, Buster completed an Open University degree, focusing his research on the SOE, which was established by Winston Churchill in July 1940.

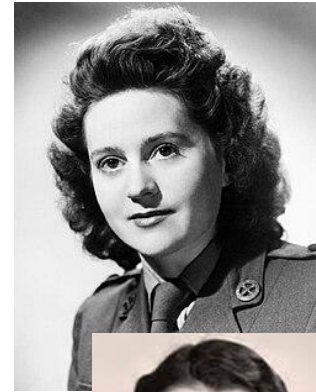
Originally tasked with sabotage and “causing havoc” behind enemy lines, particularly in occupied France, the SOE soon evolved into a highly secretive intelligence organisation. Brutal German reprisals against civilians led to greater emphasis on covert intelligence gathering. Officially, the organisation was known as the Inter-Services Bureau.

SOE agents generally worked in three-person teams: an organiser, a courier and a wireless operator. Of the approximately 470 agents, only 39 were women. Buster highlighted that women proved especially effective as couriers, often able to move through occupied territories with less suspicion.

Initially, many senior military figures opposed the recruitment of women for operational roles, objecting to their undergoing the same intense training as men — including firearms, explosives and hand-to-hand combat — effectively becoming “licensed to kill,” a phrase believed to have been coined by Ian Fleming.

Buster focused on the stories of three remarkable women:

Odette Hallowes (later Odette Sansom) served as a courier in France. Captured and brutally interrogated, she never betrayed her colleagues. She survived imprisonment and became the first woman awarded the George Cross, also receiving the Légion d'Honneur. Her story inspired books and the film *Carve Her Name With Pride*.



Violette Szabo, a wireless operator, undertook highly dangerous missions before being captured, tortured and executed in 1945. Her bravery and sacrifice have made her one of the SOE's most revered figures.



Vera Atkins, though not a field agent, played a crucial role in recruiting, training and managing agents. After the war, she worked tirelessly to uncover the fate of missing operatives. She is widely believed to have inspired the character Miss Money Penny in the James Bond novels.



Buster also paid tribute to the courageous Lysander pilots who flew agents in and out of occupied France without navigators, many receiving gallantry awards.

The talk offered a powerful insight into an often under-recognised chapter of wartime history and was warmly received by members.

John Cawdell gave a vote of thanks on behalf of Lincoln Rotary Club for an interesting and informative talk, acknowledging the bravery of the airmen and SOE ladies.

Rotary District 1070 Disability Games 12th April 2026

The Rotary Club of Lincoln was delighted to support the District 1070 Disability Games. Games participants from Lincoln thoroughly enjoyed the wide ranging events including Swimming, Archery, Boccia, Basketball Hoop Shooting, Curling, Darts, table tennis, rowing machine challenge and weight lifting. The pictures speak for themselves.



Thank you to all members of Lincoln Rotary Club who taxied the participants to and from the bus and to those who attended the event.

Next year's event will be held at Northampton School for Boys **on Sunday April 18th 2027**. Enquiries about next year's event can be made via the District Rotary Website using this link <https://rotary-ribi.org/districts/page.php?PgID=940660&DistrictNo=1070>.

Lincoln Rotary Meeting – 20 April 2026

Speaker: Steve Holt – “The Lincoln Poacher”, Lincoln City FC Mascott

Talk titled: "Poacher's Mascot Mayhem"

Steve served as Chairman of Peterborough United in the mid-2000s and as Managing Director at Aon Risk Solutions. Alongside his corporate career, he has been deeply involved in the voluntary sector, including roles with Wooden Spoon, Sport Relief, MAGPAS Air Ambulance, and community and educational organisations such as the Cambridge Science Centre.



Steve, better known locally as The Poacher mascot of Lincoln City Football Club, explored the unexpected history, psychology and cultural impact of football mascots, blending local tradition, football folklore and a wealth of entertaining anecdotes. He began by explaining that the true purpose of a mascot is to create an emotional connection with supporters. Even on cold, wet days or when the home team is losing heavily, a mascot can still lift spirits. Mascots exist to encourage, energise and entertain, remaining constantly in motion to engage fans of all ages.

The Poacher at Lincoln City draws strongly on local heritage. The name comes from the traditional Lincolnshire folk song, while the Imp design is inspired by the famous Lincoln Cathedral carving, a symbol of the city. Lincoln first adopted an Imp mascot in 1921, having previously been associated with a black cat. At one time, supporters even placed a wooden imp on the centre circle before matches to entertain younger fans. Today, mascots play an important role in marketing, merchandise and youth engagement.

Steve then traced the broader history of football mascots, noting that mascots as symbols of good fortune date back to French opera. World Cup Willie, mascot of the 1966 World Cup, helped popularise mascots worldwide. Early football mascots were often real animals, such as Manchester United’s assorted menagerie, before costume mascots became widespread with the rise of television entertainment.

The audience particularly enjoyed Steve’s stories of famous and infamous mascot moments, including Cyril the Swan of Swansea City famously fighting Zampa the Lion of Millwall, and the Deepdale Duck of Preston North End becoming the first mascot ever sent off during a match. Other highlights included the Burnley Bee humorously booking the referee’s eyesight by handing over a pair of spectacles, and Hanguus the Monkey of Hartlepool United, who later achieved notoriety by being elected Mayor.



Steve concluded with a behind-the-scenes look at life inside the Poacher suit: extreme heat, poor visibility, frequent falls and relentless banter from away fans. Matchdays involve constant movement around the stadium, fan zones and community areas, and at the highest level mascotting can even be a full-time profession. Packed with sharp one-liners and infectious enthusiasm, the talk was warmly received **A vote of thanks was given by Rotarian Dennis B**

Minutes Rotary club of Lincoln Council Meeting 20th April 2026

Present: Patrick FR, John H, Martin C, Dennis B, , Neil C, Barry D, Bob B

Apologies: Lochan

Conflicts of Interest: nil

Previous Minutes: –

Two Corrections

Existing: *“News trustees needed with the resignation of trustee Terry C: Dennis B and Bob B proposed as the new trustees.”*

Correction agreed: *Dennis B and Bob B are existing trustees and following resignation of Terry C the position was offered John H and Martin C*

Second correction was that the donation to foundation funds was \$100 per member not £100 per member.

Minutes approved subject to amendments

Safe guarding H&S: There have been problem downloading the policies. Patrick to inviting a representative from District Rotary to talk to us

Bench – the hospital want the bench noted in previous meetings

Accounts:

Accounts 2024/20225 unanimously approved

\$100 donation has been sent to the Foundation Fund

Waitrose collection Age uk £775 st Andrews hospice £775 approved

£140 collected from the Peter M whiskey gathering to go to a local children’s Charity

Venue hire to be paid – outstanding

Club assembly – Provisionally arranged for 11th May. District Assembly on 16th May discussed

Next Council Meeting: To be arranged