

Minutes of the 1265th meeting of the
Manchester Pickwick Club held at the
Moorside Social Club on 18th January, 2023

As most of the members were present early it was suggested that the meeting could start but Pickwick pointed out that the Vice Chairman hadn't arrived. At 8.00 p.m. Pell still hadn't arrived so the meeting opened at 8.01 p.m. with Tom Roker in the Vice Chairman's seat only to be turfed out when Pell arrived before any items could take place. Pickwick suggested that Pell should pay a fine for late arrival but in true Pickwickian fashion Pell refused on the grounds that it wasn't his fault.

Before any further items could be considered, Dodson indicated that subscriptions were due and collected £5.00 off everybody before enquiring about drink requirements because the first item on the agenda was the opening toast and many members hadn't got a drink and were unable to take part (I personally think this was a fining offence since it is incumbent on all members to ensure they have drinks ready).

Pickwick announced that as there were no guests present the opportunity would be taken for members to renew their knowledge of their own character, Roker having provided crib sheets from a list of characters written many years ago by a member and saved by Dodson as part of the club archives. No meetings had taken place since October and it was possible that members might have forgotten who they were.

At this point Ben Allen announced that on the following Saturday he was going on honeymoon to warmer climes and Pickwick himself remembered that he was also travelling abroad with a lady he had met on the recent cruise he and Pell had been on. Pell said he was also thinking of travelling but had not made any arrangements.

During a Rule 8 intermission, questions were raised about the current health of Mrs Pott, unfortunately without any answers and then Dodson told a story about a past Mr Pott who was also known as Eric Dean, an undertaker about whom there were many tales known to the older members of the club. One such tale widely reported was an occasion when Eric, attired in homburg hat and Crombie overcoat, was taken for a drink by Dodson. The lady behind the bar knew Dodson but not his guest and was informed by Dodson that the person in question was a high court judge who normally led a cloistered life and was anxious to obtain a bit of local colour to help him with his judgements. This very impressed young lady offered free drinks to Dodson and their important guest and this entertainment was continued when the landlord was advised about his visitor. All was going well until a local at the pub walked in and said "Hello Eric, what are you doing here" and advised the landlord as to the true occupation of the 'Judge' which resulted in a ban for both Pott and Dodson!

Members had long suspected that the raffle was one of Dodson's fiddles and this suspicion was not helped when it was discovered that an additional ticket had been issued on this occasion and Dodson's weak explanation didn't help.

After reading the minutes, Mivins announced that after 35 years he was going to have to give the job up at the AGM due to hearing difficulties and arthritis. Tom Roker agreed to take on this task on the understanding that Mivins would act as his deputy, a request which Mivins accepted.

The meeting continued in this start, stop manner with many breaks for Rule 8, so much so that when Rev Stiggins came to propose the vote of thanks to the Chairman and Vice Chairman he said he couldn't describe or remember a worse meeting since he had joined the club and the raffle, although a complete mess was no worse than members had come to expect. On being reminded that he should comment on the performance of the vice chairman he said it hadn't mattered that he was late and a pity he had turned up at all.

Seconding the vote of thanks, Dodson said he felt sorry for the newer members of the club who were supposed to learn their parts from the example of Pickwick and the vice chairman but on this occasion their education would be sadly lacking. The food provided by Pickwick was excellent but apart from that the leaders had even got the various toast wrong. He thought Mivins should have told them earlier that they were wrong but he was probably anxious not to embarrass them so early in the proceedings. Even so, he felt that the evening had been a success.

Once again, the rendering (or should it be rending) of Good Neet Owd Friends was as bad as ever and was followed by an equally unmusical rendition of the National anthem even though we now have a King.

The Raffle raised £3.50 whilst the fines box contained £8.30.