

Minutes of the 1076th meeting of the Manchester Pickwick Club
held at the Black Horse Hotel on 19th October, 1989

It would be remiss of the minute writer not to attempt to describe the glittering spectacle which met the eyes of the members of the Manchester Pickwick Club as they fought their way through the throngs of customers enjoying the irrepressible atmosphere of the lounge at the Black Horse Hotel towards the luxurious meeting room awaiting their pleasure.

No effort had been spared to ensure that the members and their guests did not succumb to heatstroke and that their eyes were not deleteriously affected by glare from electric lights, but an attempt to improve the health of members and guests by reducing their calorie intake was only marginally successful because the members discovered that no meals had been ordered in sufficient time for alternative arrangements to be made.

It could not be said that the 1076th meeting of the club was a huge success; the absence of the secretary meant that the start of the meeting was delayed far longer than usual and the attempts by Pickwick and Jingle to sort out the agenda and music sheets for the meeting led to a chaotic situation which was not improved when Grummer decided to help.

Some semblance of order was achieved by 8.30 p.m. when Pickwick opened the meeting by welcoming Joe the Fat Boy with the remark that "One pound of Joe is worth a ton of some other members". The chaos which reigned prior to 8.30 p.m. suggests that one ton might be a little on the light side.

Jingle was invited to take the position of vice chairman and Hopkins and Nupkins were appointed POC's. Winkle, supported by the other members present, suggested that Jingle's appointment was a poor choice and during the ensuing argument it was noticeable that the guests had already lost interest in the proceedings and that Hopkins was using the official regalia in the form of the vice chairman's nameplate to draw lines on a piece of card so the drinks order could be taken. The benefit of this strategy was clearly seen when he nearly got the order correct first time – although some prompting was necessary.

After the usual introduction of guests, one of whom was index-linked, and some moments pondering on why all Pell's guests seem to be pensioners, Winkle asked whether the meeting had been formally declared open and then compounded this felony by suggesting that Pickwick was displaying "5 o'clock shadow". Pickwick agreed, but said that he had been unable to shave because of the lack of electric light in his room. The discussion about the sparcity of illumination had lasted about 20 minutes when members realised that the P.O.C's had failed to materialise with drinks and doubts about their veracity were voiced.

Whilst the D.C. was introducing members to the guests, Pickwick displayed his versatility by producing home-made raffle tickets. He then went on to warn members that at some future meeting he

intended to invite members to introduce their own character. This proposal rendered most of the members speechless, one notable exception being Jingle who is only speechless when legless, and who claimed that the highlight of any meeting was Grummers introductions which were "inimible", whatever that might mean.

At this point, a novelty item was introduced into the proceedings; the P.O.C's, having gone to the bar to replenish drinks, reappeared with the request that the glasses currently in use be returned as there were no clean glasses available. Perhaps members and guests should be invited to provide their own glasses in future to ease the landlord's burden.

Pell advised the meeting that several members had only returned from Spain during the afternoon and had been unable to attend because of "jet-lag". He said that Winkle had never used that excuse for non-attendance but was overruled by Pickwick who claimed that Winkle used to get "jet-lagged" when he drove his lorry.

Pickwick, who was obviously missing the prompting of his secretary, announced the toast to the visitors and was immediately reprimanded by Jingle who claimed that the vice chairman proposed the toast to visitors. Mivins leapt to the defence of Pickwick and criticised Jingle for embarrassing Pickwick by pointing out his deficiencies, and was promptly fined by an ungrateful Pickwick who said he had no deficiencies!

At this point, Joe the Fat Boy asked permission to address the meeting. Permission having been granted, Joe paid tribute to Winkle and friends who had worked at Joe's house to make it more habitable. He linked this work with the club motto "Honour, Harmony, Friendship", and his words were much appreciated by other club members.

Sam Weller arrived at 10.10 p.m. and, but for the intervention of Grummer who pointed out that Weller was one of the "jet lagged" members, would have been fined for lateness. Instead, he was complimented for his efforts to attend. Weller expressed his thanks by suggesting that those members who had failed to make the effort should be fined. Winkle supported Weller in this proposal but was himself fined for failing to stand when addressing Pickwick, and became the subject of some abuse when he suggested that, as fines officer, he need not pay a fine.

The minutes of the last meeting had been prepared by Dodson and were read by Mivins, Grummer thanked Jinks for reading the minutes and was promptly fined for failing to pay attention, after which the minutes were proposed and seconded as a correct record of the proceedings by two members who hadn't attended the meeting.

Dubbley carried out the Reading and Inquisition from Chapter 16 "Too full of adventure to be briefly described". All members failed to answer their questions correctly, including the P.O.C's who were out of the room when the reading took place. A suggestion from Winkle that Dubbley be fined for asking hard

questions gained unanimous support from members but was ignored by Pickwick.

In proposing the vote of thanks to Pickwick and his vice chairman, Winkle said that this was only the second meeting he had been able to attend this year and that it was impossible to identify any improvement in Pickwick's performance — perhaps the presence of guests had unnerved him. The choice of Jingle as vice chairman had been a big mistake — Jingle's performance had been pathetic and had added nothing to the meeting.

Joe the Fat Boy said that the meeting had been a revelation to him and the club was obviously in good hands. Funds were bound to increase if the P.O.R and I was left in Dubbley's hands, Grummer was excellent as D.C., and the standard of debate was high. On that note, Joe sat down; Winkle immediately apologised for Joe's failure to second the vote of thanks but Grummer voiced the thoughts of other members that the omission was both deliberate and justified.

Pickwick thanked Joe for the comments, with which both he and Jingle agreed, and Grummer was fined for suggesting that the acting vice chairman was still acting.

"Good neet owd friends" and the National Anthem were led by Jingle, the raffle raised £2.80 and the fines box contained £6.90.