

Minutes of the 1078th meeting of the Manchester Pickwick Club held at the Black Horse Hotel on 18th January, 1990

As with most Pickwick meetings, the proceedings commenced with the ceremony of rearranging the chairs which was followed by the ritual of persuading two members to act as P.O.C's for the evening – on this occasion Nupkins and Stareleigh were chosen.

Pickwick, wearing his famous "Rene from the Cafe Artois" expression, announced that the proprietors had once again been caught napping so the menu would consist of the following left-overs: –

10 portions of gammon  
4 steak pies  
6 portions of chilli  
6 portions of chicken curry  
Unlimited amounts of scampi.

The appropriate orders were placed and efforts were made to commence the meeting, only to find that the absence of the Secretary had blighted the proceedings to such an extent that the only agenda available was the one for a summer outing.

By now it was 8.35 p.m. so Pickwick felt that the meeting had to start whether there was an agenda or not, so he gavelled, only to find that not only was there no gavel for the vice-chairman to use, there was no vice-chairman either. Calls went out for Jingle, who was carrying out urgent research in the bar, to attend the meeting, and only then did somebody realise that the duly appointed vice-chairman was in attendance and that the services of "super sub" would not be required on this occasion.

Amidst all this confusion, Dodson suddenly found a members-only meeting agenda which he handed to Pickwick who in turn invited the newly discovered vice-chairman to proceed with item 2. This invitation was met with a blank stare from the vice-chairman who admitted that it had been so long since he attended a meeting that he had forgotten what item 2 covered and was, therefore, unable to make progress. Grummer came to his aid and led the members in the toast to Mr. Pickwick; he might have remained silent had he realised he was about to become the first member to be fined in 1990!

The minutes of the last meeting were read and approved as a correct record, after which Bantam protested that Mivins had improperly used the minutes to "snipe" at him and suggested that the minute writer should be fined for misuse of an official document. Dodson agreed with Bantam and claimed that he had not admitted to drunkenness but had merely agreed that he had taken a drink – the suggestions of drunkenness had come from other members. Lowton said he wasn't aware of Dodson's condition – he couldn't even remember him being on the 'plane, but suggested that the minute writer had merely reported the statements of other members.

Bantam claimed that minute writing was very important and was about to enlarge on this statement when he was interrupted by Tadger who was seen to have his fly undone and promptly fined for being improperly dressed. His lengthy explanation about the difficulties resulting from wearing a new suit were not accepted and a further fine followed, together with a suggestion from Bantam that Tadger be minuted as the first member to be fined for "flashing".

Tadger then incurred further fines by apologising for absence from the last meeting when the minutes clearly showed that not only was he present, but that he also occupied the post of fines officer!

It was reported that the bottle of Scotch for the secretary turned out to be a bottle of gin, and that its delivery was causing such problems that its current address was c/o Solomon Pell.

Whilst these interruptions were taking place, Bantam was patiently waiting to continue his oration on the duties of the minute writer. Eventually he was allowed to proceed and explained that with minute writing must come accountability and accuracy and that having a go at a member is grossly unfair. The offending minute was re-read and accepted as unfair by the minute writer who paid a fine without further ado and explained that he had thought the minute was worth a fine even as he typed it.

Pickwick subsequently ruled that as Bantam had agreed that his reading was "good", this was somewhat below his usually perfect performance so that Mivins interpretation of the reading as "poor" was correct. However, he refused to refund the fine.

At this point, Tadger announced that he hadn't got an agenda and was advised by an unusually lenient Pickwick to keep quiet before he got fined for inattention.

The treasurer's report was presented by Dodson who said that funds were quite healthy and that the evenings refreshments would be free. This announcement was much acclaimed and Grummer asked that any derogatory comments he had made about Dodson be removed from the minutes. Pickwick congratulated Dodson for the report and agreed that the usual discussion about members in arrears should be delayed until the April meeting when the secretary would be present.

The reading, from chapter XXV of Pickwick Papers, was excellent as usual, but there were suggestions from both Pickwick and Dodson that the questions were slightly biased in favour of the minute writer with whom Bantam was trying to ingratiate himself, the fines officer (who seemed to know the answers to all the questions and was fined several times for prompting) and the vice-chairman – this suggestion was, of course, denied.

Decisions were taken about the venues for the summer outing and the Christmas dinner because of problems regarding dates last year, and it was agreed that Dodson should further

investigate the possibility of a Ladies evening at Smithills on one of their regular "Dickensian" evenings.

Whilst this discussion was taking place, the P.O.C's were taking orders for drinks and were quite confused when Jingle said he didn't want any more claustrophobia – further investigation revealed that he was referring to the alcohol-free lager called Clausthaller.

The vote of thanks was proposed by Jingle who said it was an honour to be chosen by Grummer because he was the only one who knew what was going on. Pickwick hadn't conducted the meeting as he should and had been ably assisted in the debacle by his vice-chairman. He congratulated Bantam (who he referred to as Angela), praised the work of the F.O.C 's and then lapsed into the vague muttering with which members have become so familiar.

Nupkins then rose to second the vote of thanks and indicated he was prepared to agree with everything Jingle had said even though he couldn't understand what he was talking about.

Pickwick thanked Jingle and Nupkins for their kind words, then extended his thanks to others whose names had appeared during Jingles meanderings including Dodson, Grummer, a girl from Mount Carmel, Angela and the F.O.C.s. The vice-chairman added his thanks and asked whether Mount Carmel was a school or one of Jingle's sexual experiences – no reply was forthcoming.

Good Neet Owd Friends was led by Jingle and followed by the National Anthem.

The raffle raised £2.40 and the fines box contained £5.68.