

Minutes of the 1079th meeting of the Manchester Pickwick Club held at the Black Horse Hotel on 15th February, 1990.

To the surprise of most members, the meeting commenced only 10 minutes late when Pickwick appointed Jingle as vice chairman and Nupkins and Stareleigh as P.O.C's. He then announced that there were no song sheets or agendas available but that such problems were of little consequence because Pickwick was fully aware of the order of proceedings indeed; was probably the only one who knew what was going on! This latter point was disputed by Grummer who remarked that Pickwick had little idea of what was going on even when supported by an agenda.

Following the presentation to Stiggins of a gold MPC badge, confusion reigned as Stareleigh tried to take the drinks order amidst constant interruptions from Tadger and sanity was only brought to the proceedings when Stareleigh realised that it was his own order that was missing.

After last month's debacle when the real vice chairman was unable to perform item 2 on the agenda without prompting, it was refreshing to see the stand-in, Jingle, perform the toast in a most melodious and competent manner – a tribute to Pickwick's patience in giving him the job month after month ad nauseum.

Grummer introduced his guest as a work colleague who was formerly employed by Eaton Transmissions, and went on to describe the excellence of Eaton products. Mivins interrupted to say that he had heard Grummer suggesting that the only use for Eaton products was on the end of a line as an anchor and Pickwick indicated that such remarks had also been made in his presence by Grummer. Grummer promptly admitted making the remarks but said that he was two-faced and therefore entitled to make them.

Dodson claimed that the only reason he had failed to bring guests was because he had been running round trying to get copies of the agendas and song sheets printed. Dodson rarely fails to bring a guest, but on this occasion he produced neither guest or agendas.

Pickwick announced a change from the normal introduction of members performed by the D.C. and requested each member to introduce his own character, the introduction to be judged by the D.C. and fines levied accordingly. All was going well, with fines being levied against each member for alleged minor infringements, until there arose at the end of the table a figure who announced "Now ve haf som fun Mr Pigvig, my name ees Brother Tadger..." When the laughter had died down, Pell suggested the introductions hadn't been a success and that it would have been easier to simply put 20p into the fines box and pass onto the next item. Nupkins claimed that the reason he didn't know much about his character was that as soon as he became a member he was appointed P.O.C. and had spent all his time learning to be a waiter!

Dodson took the opportunity to convince everybody what an excellent character he was by reading chosen extracts from Pickwick Papers but was fined for failing to continue with his reading when he reached the bad bits about his character. He responded by suggesting that the D.C. should be fined for failing in the past to find the passage in the book which describes Dodson in favourable terms, but Pickwick ignored the suggestion on the grounds that it was probably worth 10p to Dodson to have the opportunity to enhance his character. He also ignored counter-suggestions that Dodson should face a further fine for reading his character from the book instead of presenting it in the form required of other members and instead fined those making the suggestion for defamation of Dodson's personal character,

Pell brought the introductions to a close by describing himself as "a bent solicitor who takes those cases Dodson and Fogg won't touch" and the proceedings of the meeting were then adjourned whilst the meal was served.

The meeting reconvened at 10.00 p.m. when the 9 00 p. m. toast was taken, and proceedings then faltered once again because for some reason, both the Treasurer and P.O.R & I were acting as P.O.C's and the next items on the agenda required their presence.

Once more the meeting was reconvened and Pickwick read a letter from Jack Hopkins tendering his resignation because he had moved to Bury. It was agreed that this matter be put in abeyance until the A. G. M. and that Pell should attempt to persuade Jack Hopkins to reconsider his decision.

The P.O.R & I was taken from chapter 34, wherein Pickwick goes to the Breach of Promise Trial Court. After an excellent reading and inquisition, Jingle complained that it was unfair to have the questions prepared in advance because certain members might have seen them and thus had an unfair advantage. He said that Dodson's integrity was unquestionable – but he still thought Dodson had seen the questions before the inquisition! Grummer had less faith in Dodson's integrity and revealed that Dodson had admitted, during the meal break, that he had deliberately stopped short in his character reading because of the unsatisfactory revelations later in that same paragraph.

Dodson's enquiries into the possibility of a Dickensian evening at Smithills for the ladies had revealed that such evenings were only available if a group booked the room for the whole evening and that little was provided in the way of entertainment other than the meal. Members agreed that further enquiries be made into the possibility of a function at the Wendover, possibly in May.

The raffle produced a most appropriate prize for Pickwick in the form of hair gel – sufficient to last a lifetime in fact.

The vote of thanks to Pickwick and the vice chairman was proposed by Dodson who compared the flow of the meeting with that in the Irwell, and made reference to the great number of interludes which Pickwick had failed to prevent. He admitted that Pickwick looked the part but regretted that he had yet to master the art of controlling members who had spent the evening chatting, jingling money, rattling the fines box, or merely reading. The evening, on the whole, had been rubbish and he reluctantly asked Bob Sawyer to confirm how bad it was.

Bob Sawyer agreed the meeting had been very poor and laid the blame on the fact that Pickwick was drinking orange juice whilst his vice chairman was drinking anything alcoholic; the resulting imbalance had obviously created the complete lack of control.

Pickwick in response said he failed to understand how anybody could criticise a meeting when only Pickwick had an agenda and only Pickwick knew what was going on; he then asked Jingle to reply for both of them.

Jingle said they couldn't be praised highly enough for their control of the meeting and members and guests should raise their hats to both of them. There had been some difficulty during the meeting because Grummer and Dodson, who were normally at each other's throats, seemed to be involved in some collusion (Pell suggested Glasnost) to cause problems and Bob Sawyer was also implicated. He felt sorry for the two new members who had been taken to the cleaners by Dubbley — or perhaps not Dubbley but Grummer.

At the invitation of Pickwick, Jingle joined in a toast to members and guests but as his glass was empty had to borrow a drop of liquid, subsequently found to be lime juice, from his neighbour's glass. He was exhorted by Pickwick and members only to join in the toast if he was sure the non-alcoholic drink would not affect his health!

Good neet owd friends was sung by all and followed by the National Anthem.

The raffle raised £3.00 and the fines box contained £7.92.