

Minutes of the 1084th meeting of the Manchester Pickwick Club held at the Black Horse Hotel on 15th November, 1990

Once again it was necessary for a member to deputise for Mr Pickwick who was delayed; on this occasion Jinks took the Chair and formally opened the 1084th meeting of the club at 8.27 pm. Dubbley maintained his 100% record by failing to gavel in response to Pickwick, and to compound the offence, had to be reminded of that duty,

The toast to Mr Pickwick having been taken, it was noted that no guests were present; despite this, Pickwick decided that the DC should perform the introduction of members as usual. Having introduced Mr Pickwick, Grummer then broke with tradition by inviting members to introduce their own characters with fines for those whose introductions were not considered good enough. Jingle made an excellent presentation but got a little confused when describing his first meeting with Pickwick which he claimed took place at "Jem Farmer's Wardle". He went on to indicate that he subsequently took Jem Wardle's daughter into the wilderness" but was corrected by Bantam who pointed out that it was Jem Wardle's sister who was taken into the wilderness" and suggested that it would have been better if Jingle had stayed there. Despite this formidable presentation, Jingle was fined for referring to Dodson as "Buckley" whilst Stiggins, who couldn't remember the name of the society to which he belonged but thought it might be the British Legion, was similarly fined.

The Fines Officer, Tadger, was very disappointed when he found that Weller, who appeared tieless, was wearing a Pickwick tie under his crew neck sweater, and retired back to his seat uttering vague comments which were unintelligible but which left no doubt about their target.

Many were the comments about the improvements at the venue and Pickwick went so far as to allow members to remove their jackets because the room was so warm. Jingle and Stiggins were moved to volunteer for the job of P.O.C's and the orders for drinks and meals were taken. Dodson appeared at this moment, closely followed by Pickwick, almost as though they had heard the rustle of the menu. They argued that they should not be fined for late arrival as they had indicated that they would be late. This argument was accepted and they were fined, instead, for interrupting the meeting, a course of action supported by the remainder of the members.

There was considerable discussion about the manner in which the D.C. was forced to make his introductions at the Christmas dinner to a background of noise; Dodson suggested the introduction be replaced by a short reading from the book with a similar reduction in the number of toasts; Bantam felt that each member should present his own character; Joe the Fat Boy thought that the existing format was correct. Eventually, the members agreed with a proposal from Tony Weller that the D.C. should briefly introduce a member and then invite that member to introduce his guests.

The arrival of the meal reminded Pickwick that the 9.00 toast had not been taken so this omission was immediately rectified and the meeting was then adjourned.

The minutes of the previous meeting were read and approved as a correct record, after which Dodson complained that the Secretary had incorrectly blamed Pickwick for the absence of the regalia at the last meeting when a simple examination of the regalia by the Secretary prior to the meeting would have led to the discovery of the Chain of Office. He added that the lack of raffle tickets could also be laid at the door of the Secretary who should be fined for failing to do his job properly.

Bantam refused to condemn the Secretary, claiming that Dodson was quick to lay blame elsewhere when the real reason was that Dodson likes to collect money and the raffle tickets were simply a device to justify his collections; their absence had caused Dodson great pain, hence the reason for his unprovoked attack on the Secretary.

Pickwick pointed out that this item was in the hands of the Chairman of the meeting and as Grummer was the "stand in" Chairman at the time, the blame obviously lay with him. Grummer accepted this and in mitigation said that he had manufactured some raffle tickets in order to get round the problem.

Because the rancour at the meeting seemed to be flagging, Sam Weller reminded members that this was the anniversary of the famous Spanish trip which had resulted in various members failing to attend a club meeting for a variety of excuses. He suggested that further problems arising from more recent Spanish trips made it essential that future visits to Spain be arranged so as to avoid club meetings.

Bantam informed members that he was now a published poet, having had two items published in the Bolton Evening News – he promised to read one of his poems at a future meeting of the club.

The raffle was notable in that Jingle won a prize which had been imported from Spain and was reputed to have interesting side effects; he was given permission by Pickwick to make an immediate phone call to Sheila to advise her of the good news.

The vote of thanks was proposed by Tony Weller who admitted he was a new member but pointed out that he had been a guest on many occasions. The meeting had been worse than he had ever seen before; the room was ready, the members were present, but where was Pickwick? When he eventually arrived, he allowed Jinks to remain in the Chair and was content to allow the shambles to continue when he should have brought order to the chaos which reigned. The raffle had taken place whilst the meeting was in progress, the toast to absent members had been taken twice, and the agenda, if such a thing existed, had been totally ignored.

Jingle seconded the vote of thanks by suggesting that Dubbley had performed exactly as expected – it was impossible to tell whether he was grovelling or gavelling, but that members should thank

Pickwick and his Vice Chairman because things could only get better. (Bantam claimed that if he had been a guest he wouldn't have come).

In responding to the vote of thanks, Pickwick said that the ramblings of Jingle suggested that in future the agenda should record a vote of thanks to Pickwick, his Vice Chairman, those who attended, those who didn't, their relatives and anybody else Jingle could think of. Dubbley added that it was a compliment that Grummer had been forced to remind the members that this was an opportunity to slate Pickwick and himself.

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

The fines box contained £7.61 plus 4 half p's and a threepenny bit, whilst the raffle raised £3.00.

The threepenny bit was subsequently claimed by Dubbley, but after examining it he returned it to the treasurer saying it wasn't his. Members were most impressed by this because there cannot be many people in this world who can recognise their own coins!