

Minutes of the 1085th meeting of the Manchester Pickwick Club held at the Black Horse Hotel on 17th January, 1991

The 1085th meeting of the Manchester Pickwick Club was preceded by a discussion between Jinks (who was once again standing in for Pickwick) and the Secretary about which agenda to use for the members only meeting. It was quite obvious that the Secretary had failed to bring the correct agendas and was trying to palm Pickwick off with an agenda for Dingley Dell; Pickwick, being a stickler for procedural etiquette, was refusing to accept the wrong agenda but was meeting resistance because it was simply impossible to produce the correct agenda. Eventually a compromise was reached whereby the meeting used the agenda normally associated with ordinary meetings.

Honour having been satisfied, Pickwick proceeded to break a chair and having replaced it, sat down to commence the meeting only to disappear through a hole in the floor – the smile on the secretary's face showed how the power of prayer is sometimes answered in mysterious ways!

Having recovered his dignity and his chair from the hole in the floor, Pickwick then had to ask his vice chairman to sit down so that the meeting could commence.

Following the toast to Pickwick, that esteemed member commented that he had noticed over the years that members tended to wait for Grummer to lead the singing of the toast – a task which he felt should lie with the vice chairman. The vice chairman leapt to his own defence by claiming delegation of the function to whoever was prepared to do it.

After commenting favourably about the Christmas dinner, Pickwick told members about his journey back to Leicester. He had taken his guests home after the dinner and returned to the Grants Arms where the drinking had continued until 5.30 am. Rising at 7.00 am. for breakfast, he had set off on his return journey, reaching Birmingham by 10.00 am, where he ran into heavy snow which forced him to stop. He had sat in his car with no food, drink, cigarettes or heat for 27 hours, eventually reaching Leicester at 3.00 pm. on the following afternoon. He said the incident had caused him to think about winter journeys and he would be carrying a small pack containing provisions etc, in future. Grummer suggested an inflatable doll might provide the necessary warmth and wouldn't take up too much space.

The improvements noted at the last meeting were, unfortunately, not in evidence on this occasion, the P.O.C's reporting that there was no Scotch, no Brown Ale, no alcohol-free beer and no ice available, and that the only food was "hot-pot".

Jingle, who had won an aphrodisiac in the raffle at the last meeting, was presented with another by Dodson. Pickwick suggested that a commendation from Jingle's Shiela might be appropriate. Pell claimed that Shiela found pea soup to be far more effective

than the item produced by Dodson, but was not prepared to say how he knew this.

The minutes of the last meeting were read and approved, after which members were updated on the incident of the 3d bit which had been claimed by Dubbley but subsequently rejected by him following examination. Apparently Dubbley had purchased the second 3d bit which had appeared in the fines box and was now the possessor of two 3d bits - both of which he can recognise!

This piece of news so impressed Stareleigh that he uttered a swear word and was fined for so doing - Stiggins was fined for failing to realise the enormity of the offence and asking the reason for the fine.

The P.O.R & I was to be carried out by Jingle but was actually performed by Dodson because Jingle had left his reading glasses at home. Grummer offered to pay 10p if Dodson could find a favourable reference to himself in the book; Dodson is never found wanting when money is at stake and after much searching was able to identify two such references, thus lightening Grummers pocket by 20p.

Jingle claimed that his guests were disappointed that there were no Christmas dinner menus this year and asked why? The Entertainments Officers conferred and the explanation was eventually given by Dodson. He explained that some years ago the executive had made a decision not to continue with menus, but that Stiggins had continued to have them printed at his own expense as a warm gesture to the club which was much appreciated. As Stiggins was unable to attend the Christmas dinner it was thought unfair to expect him to produce the menus. After some discussion, Stiggins suggested that the menus be replaced by a formal invitation for the Christmas dinner and Summer outing and agreed to make the necessary enquiries about printing costs.

Pickwick suggested that the meeting should consider the dates and venues for next year's Christmas and summer outings to allow the Entertainments Officers time to make the necessary arrangements. After some discussion it was agreed that the venue for both events should be the Grants Arms, the suggested dates being 7th June and 6th or 13th December. It was further agreed that a Ladies Evening be held at the Park Hotel, Prestwich, if possible on 1st November.

Dubbley reported that he had lost his badge and asked whether any were available. Following comments about the appearance of the last badges, Dodson agreed to ask Tadger to make enquiries about replacements.

Grummer proposed a toast to British troops serving in the Gulf; this was supported unanimously.

Dodson, whilst selecting a reading for the POR & I, had found a passage where Sam Weller refers to Dodson and Fogg as virtuous gentlemen, and cited this as further proof of his qualities. Mivins pointed out that the same Sam Weller also reported Dodson

for failing to attend a meeting on his return from Spain but Dodson claimed that particular offence took place 90 years after the book was written and that 90 years before, they were virtuous.

The 9.00 pm. toast was taken at 10.50 pm, after which the raffle was held. Jingle won a bottle of window cleaner which so amused Pickwick that he promptly rocked back on his chair and once again disappeared through the hole in the floor. On being restored to the meeting he examined the agenda and announced that he thought he had gone through everything — and wondered why everybody laughed.

The vote of thanks was proposed by Jingle who said Pickwick and the vice chairman had conducted the biggest shambles he had ever seen — the only good thing had been the raffle prizes. He had mistaken his prize for a truncheon and was having difficulty in getting it back in the wrapper, but his Shiela was so pleased with the other present that he had been invited to hurry home and was unable, therefore, to assist Pell in getting rid of the bottle of Scotch won by him. As an afterthought he expressed some sympathy for Pickwick who had received no support from his vice chairman who might be of some use in about 10 year's time.

Seconding the vote of thanks, Pell said it was the worst meeting he had ever attended and that both Pickwick and the vice chairman had made a mess of everything they had attempted. Despite this, he was pleased to second the vote of thanks, if only to end the meeting that much quicker.

Pickwick responded by referring to the old show business saying "never try to follow children or dumb animals" and refusing to say any more.

"Good neet owd friends" was led by Stiggins and Nupkins and followed by the National Anthem.

The fines Box contained £5.10, whilst the raffle raised £2.40.