

Minutes of the 1086th meeting of the Manchester Pickwick Club held at the Black Horse Hotel on 21st February, 1991

As members prepared to get the 1086th meeting of the Manchester Pickwick Club started, it was obvious that, once again, a chairman was required because of the absence of the current holder of that position. Bantam was prepared to accept the temporary honour, but was thwarted when Pickwick himself appeared in the doorway, only 15 minutes late and therefore in plenty of time for the meeting which didn't commence until 8.20 p.m.

Sam and Tony Weller were appointed as P.O.C's and were also fined for failing to wear club ties. Sam Weller promptly pulled down the neck of his crew neck pullover to reveal a club tie and was equally promptly fined for deliberate concealment of the tie in order to deceive Pickwick.

The introduction of guests caused some problems because one of the guests had been invited by Sam Weller who had left the room to collect drinks as part of his P.O.C. duties. Because the guest was known to be a member of the constabulary, Grummer suggested that the introduction be made by Dodson. Dodson refused to perform this task, presumably to avoid being charged as host, but fortunately the problem was solved by the return of Sam Weller with the drinks order.

Further confusion followed when the P.O.C's tried to take the order for meals whilst serving drinks and several attempts were necessary before the list was finalised.

Following the usual excellent introduction of members to guests, Dodson suggested that a modern, brief, character definition might be more appropriate than the traditional introduction, citing as examples "Puff" in respect of Bantam, "Thief" in respect of Mivins; Mivins suggested this was a deliberate attempt by Dodson to divert attention from his own "off white" character, whilst Bantam suggested "Big-gobbed Troublemaker" as an obvious definition for Dodson, Pickwick decided the new definitions had gone far enough and that the traditional definitions would remain.

It was then decided to break with tradition by taking the 9.00 p.m. toast at 9.00 p.m., but fortunately several of the members had empty glasses so the toast couldn't be taken on time after all! Even so, it was taken at 9.02 p.m., the closest to the official time for many years.

Whilst waiting for the meal to be served Bantam, who had made several pre-meeting references to a recent visit to Bath was asked to entertain members by recounting his adventures in that fair city. He said that he had visited the city on business and spent the afternoon in a small hostelry in the city centre near the Pump Room. He then adjourned to his hotel for the night, leaving for home at 0800 hrs. the following morning. He had thought this might be interesting to club members but in view of

the complete languor which resulted, had been regretting it ever since. To compensate, he promised to bring his camera and published poems to the next meeting.

Pell took the advantage of Bantam being on his feet to suggest that Bantam's time spent writing poems would have been more usefully employed in revising the members booklet. Bantam said he had discussed the revision only that morning with Dodson, when it had been agreed that a copy be circulated so that members could correct any entries which they knew were wrong. He then produced a copy of the book which he handed to Dodson who promptly began to cross out the names of deceased members, a process which seemed to take so long that Sam Weller made an urgent request that the reprinting be undertaken quickly before any more members died.

At this point the meeting was becoming very noisy and confused, so Bantam asked whether there had been a double-booking of the room because so many meetings were taking place.

Before he could be answered, Dodson produced yet another present from Spain for Jingle, pointing out that this one was in a "hot" sauce. Accepting the gift on behalf of Sheila, Jingle explained that there was no doubt that the contents enhanced his performance (particularly when walking uphill suggested Bantam) and Sheila hadn't stopped smiling since the last meeting. He added that he had told Sheila that her secret was safe with the Pickwick Club members, but was told that rumours were circulating within the club that Sheila found pea soup to be equally effective, a fact which Jingle refused to accept.

Whilst this discussion was taking place, the present was being passed round and was being closely examined by Bantam. Jingle noticed this and asked Bantam not to remove the wrapping because Sheila preferred her presents to be "Virgo intacta". Bantam said he had no intention of disrobing the present but asked whether Jingle was aware of the note on the side which advised the need to retain the key – Jingle felt this was a reference to the key to Sheila's chastity belt but other members were more inclined to the suggestion from Sam Weller that the key in question locked Jingles cod-piece.

Pell and Tadger were fined for talking whilst the meeting was in progress; Pell claimed that they were discussing amendments to the members book which had been circulated by Bantam and that he thought it was in order to discuss Pickwickian business during the meeting. He added that his reason for talking was that Tadger had forgotten his glasses and couldn't read the entries in the book, but this claim was immediately ruined by Tadger who produced a pair of glasses from his pocket, only to be fined for adopting a disguise without permission during the meeting.

The Secretary reported that he had not received a reply to his letter asking Mr Luffey about his membership intentions and members agreed that Mr Luffey's membership be terminated.

Sam Weller referred to the minutes of the last meeting and asked Tadger whether any progress had been made about provision of

badges. Tadger said he knew nothing about this matter and Dodson, who had promised to make enquiries of Tadger accused Sam Weller of being a "snitch". Tadger agreed to make the necessary enquiries.

The P.O.R & I was performed by Bantam who chose page 759 for his reading, explaining that he had read this page some 2 years ago and that members would, therefore, be familiar with it. For that reason he read the extract at breakneck speed and proceeded to collect fines with equal rapidity.

The reading was followed at 11.15 p.m. by a proposed toast from Pickwick to absent members; Sam Weller pointed out that this toast had already been performed at 9.02 p.m. (as recorded earlier in these minutes) and that a toast to Pickwick's absentmindedness might be more appropriate.

In proposing the vote of thanks to Pickwick and the vice chairman, Dodson said he had been chosen because Grummer obviously thought he had enjoyed the meeting when the opposite was the case. He had been castigated all evening by the President and Pickwick, and the contribution made by Dubbley had been nil. Only the presence of the Secretary had kept the meeting progressing; Dubbley had sat in the corner like Jack Horner saying and doing nothing but whine about his lost badge. The only thing which could be said in Pickwick's favour was that he turned up and it was just a pity that Dubbley turned up as well.

Tony Weller disagreed with Dodson claiming that it had been a most enjoyable evening, that Pickwick had done his best and that Dubbley had also done well. He felt that Dodson was out of order to complain.

Jingle interrupted to say that Dodson had been speaking on behalf of the whole assembly and had perfectly expressed the feelings of both members and guests.

Pickwick declined to respond to the vote of thanks claiming it was rubbish; he had listened intently but was not enthralled by anything he heard. Dubbley suggested that there must be something wrong with Dodson's ears if he couldn't hear the gavel and that this hearing problem probably accounted for his repeated interruptions of the meeting.

"Good neet owd friends" was led by Jingle and Pell and was followed by the National Anthem.

The fines box contained £3.70 and the raffle raised £3.80.