

Minutes of the 1087th meeting of the Manchester Pickwick Club
held at the Black Horse Hotel on 21st March, 1991.

The 1087th meeting of the Manchester Pickwick commenced with the usual promptness at 8.30 p.m. In the absence of Mr Pickwick, the chair was taken by Jinks who commenced the proceedings by fining Tadger for smoking without permission. Tadger explained that he had already paid a fine so was fined once again for anticipation.

The meeting continued with a number of fines being levied for a variety of offences both factual and imagined, and this was probably the reason for utter confusion when the drinks order was taken by Grummer and Roker who had volunteered to act as P.O.C's for the evening. A quick count had shown 11 members to be present, but only 10 drinks had been ordered. Much time was taken in trying to identify the missing member and the drinks order was checked a number of times but still the order totalled 10. Then somebody had the bright idea of counting heads once again – and discovered that only 10 members were present and that the missing member had never existed!

The delays caused by this error were obviously the fault of Pickwick for failing to adequately control the proceedings so to reimpose his authority, Pickwick promptly fined all smoking members who had assumed, wrongly of course, that after fining Tadger, Pickwick had authorised members to smoke.

Because the D.C. was also acting as P.O.C., it was agreed that all members would introduce their own character. All went well until Jingle referred to the Golden Cross public house (he later explained that he meant the Bull) during his introduction and was fined for the error. After paying the fine, Jingle suggested that certain members were receiving favourable treatment from Pickwick whilst others were being fined for trivial offences. It seemed likely that a further fine would be levied but the meal arrived at that moment – half an hour early, and the proceedings were adjourned to allow the meal to be eaten. When the meeting recommenced, Pickwick had obviously forgotten Jingle's accusation and the offence went unpunished.

The 9.00 p.m. toast was taken early at 9.45 p.m., after which Tadger was asked about the provision of Pickwick Club badges. He reported that he had costed the manufacture of the badges but not the engraving, and borrowed a badge off Grummer (with the threat of dire consequences if it was not returned in the condition it left Grummer) so the engraver could work out a price in time for the next meeting.

Nupkins read the P.O.R & I from Chapter XX, page 251, and was immediately accused by Pell of favouritism, a charge supported by Jingle and Grummer. Despite this (or possibly because of it), Pickwick expressed full support for Nupkins and described the reading as "excellent".

The meeting might have expired of boredom at this point had it not been for Tadger who announced, without any preamble, "my alsatian is 45". He knew it was the dog which spoke because on the night it happened, he had searched the house without finding anybody else there. Many doubts were cast about this statement but it was significant that most members accepted the fact of the dog speaking and were concerned more about the accuracy of its calculation. Grummer insisted that a year in a dogs life is equivalent to seven human years, so the dogs age must be a multiple of seven, which made its age 42 not 45!

Pickwick agreed, pointing out that because a dog could speak didn't mean it was good at multiplication. Jingle said he daren't repeat what his dog Ben had said when he tripped over him at the bottom of the stairs, he couldn't afford the fine which Pickwick was sure to levy. The only person who doubted Tadger's statement was Nupkins who said that veterinary science had proved that dogs could not talk - he thought it more likely that Tadger's cat was a ventriloquist and was trying to embarrass the dog in front of Tadger. The discussion was interrupted at this point by a telephone call for Pell who, on returning to the room, explained that it was Tadger's dog asking whether Tadger had been telling tales about him.

The vote of thanks to Pickwick and the vice chairman was proposed by Nupkins who said that the meeting had been excellent and could only have been improved if Tadger's dog had been in the Chair with the cat acting as vice chairman. Seconding the vote of thanks, Roker agreed the meeting had been excellent and claimed that the vice chairman's response to Pickwick's gavel had been so fast it sounded like rifle shots. Members felt that this was more evidence of Roker "creeping" to the person destined to be the next Pickwick and much scorn was heaped on Roker.

"Good Neet Owd Friends" was sung in unison (accompanied by Tadger's dog) and was followed by the National Anthem.

The raffle raised £2.00 and the fines box contained £6.51.