

Minutes of the 1091st Meeting of the Manchester Pickwick Club
held at the Black Horse Hotel on 16th January, 1992

In an obvious effort to turn over a new leaf, and probably as part of a new year resolution, Mr Pickwick opened the January 1992 meeting of the Manchester Pickwick Club as early as 8.12 p.m. He also wished all members a healthy and prosperous new year.

The opening was followed by the toast to Mr Pickwick which was less tuneful than usual, but Pickwick is happy to accept any kind words these days and seemed not to notice the poor singing.

A call for volunteers was met by deaf ears, but eventually Pott was pressganged into acting not only as P.O.C. but also as Fines Officer, although the excessive nature of his duties was reduced by the promise that Tadger would act as deputy fines officer if the two duties clashed.

The minutes of the last meeting were read by Grummer in the absence of Mivins, and were questioned by Dodson who pointed out that the medical term for his infirmity was "Alacranon Burser" and not "Widows Bottom" which Grummer had claimed. He went on to explain that this particular affliction was rather exclusive, being normally restricted to the hierarchy – princes and such. Presumably the particular bug which got him was looking for a "bit of rough" as a change from its usual diet of blue blood. Before Dodson had chance to further describe the symptoms, Pell demanded that Pickwick slap an injunction on him to prevent any further "action replays".

After being anxious to talk about his medical condition, Dodson suddenly became reticent when asked about club finances and tried to resurrect previous matters until Pickwick pointed out that we had had the medical report and would now like the treasurer's report. Members were more interested in whether the meeting was a free evening than in what the treasurer had to say. Dodson, looking strangely like the Chancellor of the Exchequer, outlined a variety of reasons for failing to grant a free evening, covering such matters as the recession, the need for the books to balance etc.

At this point, completely out of context and to Dodson's great relief because it diverted attention away from him, Tadger announced that his dog had been at it again. He expanded this statement by claiming that he had been in the bedroom when the dog had clearly said "I told you so", and had also approached Mrs Tadger saying "Mum, Mum". The problem of talking animals was having a serious effect on Tadger's social life; he had been banned from the "Lord

Rodney" pub in Warrington because the Pub's pet parrot had learned to swear by listening to Tadger. Tadger denied he had anything to do with the parrot's language, but one only had to listen to the parrot's accent to identify the culprit.

By this time everybody had forgotten the treasurer's report so once again Dodson was able to avoid his responsibilities, and to further confuse the issue, he told Pickwick that Mivins had crept in unnoticed. To avoid problems, Mivins immediately paid a 10p fine for arriving late, even though he had given advance warning that he would be late, a fact confirmed by Pickwick.

At this, Dodson changed course and asked Pickwick whether it was right that Grummer should appear at the meeting in casual dress. Pickwick said that Grummer was on pills which made him feel cold so he was entitled to wear a pullover on medical grounds. Jingle immediately complained about this further reference to medical matters, so Dodson again changed course and began talking about a hamster he had once looked after which had escaped from its cage and then been clever enough to get back in again.

At this point, Grummer suddenly realised that the treasurer's report had faded into oblivion and asked what state the club finances were in. He was advised by Jingle that we weren't on skid row yet but had access to a number of extremely clever and voluble animals, although what that had to do with the treasurer's report he didn't know.

The P.O.R. & I. was to be read by Dodson and there was some discussion about whether the reading should take place in the absence of the P.O.C. Some members were of the opinion that it was the P.O.C's problem if he didn't hear the reading, but eventually the militants were overruled and the reading was delayed. It was then noticed that in addition to his duties as P.O.C and Fines Officer, on the table in front of Mr Pott was a plaque bearing the motif "P.O.R & I"; is there no end to this man's versatility.

Pell reported that the landlord was moving away from the Black Horse but that the new landlord was prepared to allow the club to use his premises as their meeting place. He went on to say that several members had indicated a desire to change the venue for the Christmas and summer outings, but as several members were not in attendance it was agreed to defer consideration of this matter until the next meeting.

Dodson tried to introduce apologies for absence and was told by Pickwick that he should have done this during any other business. A confused Dodson pointed out that the meeting was currently dealing with other business so he was allowed to continue.

Grummer, supported by Jingle complained that Pickwick failed to stand when addressing the meeting and Dodson found a drawing which showed Pickwick addressing a club meeting

whilst standing on a chair. Pickwick pointed out that he had recently had problems with chairs disappearing through floors so that was one idea which was killed at birth.

The toast to Charles Dickens was being sung in good voice by all members when Grummer suddenly realised we were singing the wrong toast and immediately began the count for the proper toast. This was followed by the raffle when Pickwick surprised all by saying that he hadn't realised that there was a raffle at members only meetings – Mivins was so shocked he spilt his drink all over the minute book and had great difficulty recording his notes thereafter because his pen kept tearing the damp paper and the ink was smudging.

Because of the fog, Pickwick announced he would like to make better progress so the vote of thanks by Jingle was shorter than usual, but nonetheless scathing for that. Jingle said that he had been told during the meeting that dogs talk and cats talk, even parrots talk, but Pickwick didn't seem to talk. Pickwick had done absolutely nothing all evening apart from turning up in the fog, and if he had done his best, then his best simply wasn't good enough. On a points system, only the secretary scored less than Pickwick, and the meeting would have closed earlier had it not been for Dodson's interruptions, for which he gave 8 points. Nupkins agreed with Jingle.

Pickwick thanked both members for their kind comments and allowed them to lead members in "Good Neet Owd Friends", half way through the rendering of which Jingle changed glasses which not only allowed him to see better but also seemed to make him sing louder. Pickwick claimed the harmonisation was excellent, the voices were less so.

The National Anthem followed.

The Fines Box contained £10.78 whilst the raffle raised £2.00.