

Minutes of the 1092nd Meeting of the Manchester Pickwick Club
held at the Black Horse Hotel on 20th February, 1992

The 1092nd meeting of Manchester Pickwick Club opened at 8.15 p.m. with the usual request for volunteers to carry out the duties of P.O.C for the evening. Pott and Magnus obliged and began the awesome task of identifying the liquid preferences of members.

This vital task having been completed, Mr Pickwick welcomed Tupman and Roker who had been absent from club meetings through illness. This immediately brought complaints from other members who claimed to have been suffering but who had been omitted from Mr Pickwick's welcome. Prominent amongst the walking wounded who had been ignored by Pickwick was Sam Weller whose dignity was further offended when Pickwick suggested that the sort of injury he had sustained and the manner in which it had been achieved bore all the attributes of a self-inflicted wound.

To try and prevent further deterioration of Pickwick's standing in the eyes of the members, Tupman apologised profusely and said that if he had realised the trouble it would cause, he would have refused to have his tonsils out.

Pickwick then aggravated the situation by claiming that his welcome to the convalescents was merely to pass the time whilst waiting for the P.O.C's to bring the drinks so that the more important parts of the meeting could start. This was not appreciated by the members, particularly those whose delicate physique was put to the test by their violent objections to this disclosure by Pickwick.

The toast to Mr Pickwick, which followed the discussion on sickness absences was notable in that eight of the members sang the toast with their hands in their pockets.

Pickwick then further endeared himself to the members by asking them to explain why they hadn't brought any guest. Weller said his guest was in hospital; Tupman said he didn't know he could bring a guest and was promptly fined; Magnus claimed his only friend had been to a meeting before and that was enough for anybody; Nupkins claimed all his friends were already at the meeting; Roker that he was still on the sick and shouldn't be present anyway; Pott that his friend was otherwise engaged and Tadger that he had no friends – he was a one-armed bandit!

Grummer, having explained that his guest had been forced to cry off, took the opportunity to renew his claim of unfair punishment at a previous meeting when he had been fined because his guest was smoking before Pickwick had given permission, and claimed that his guest was going to prove that he didn't smoke and therefore could not have been guilty of the crime for which his host was punished.

Pell supported Grummer, claiming that one of the Executive Committee had placed his cigarette in the ash tray before Grummer's guest so Grummer should not have been fined. Sam Weller immediately suggested that Pell should be fined for failing to draw Pickwick's attention to this gross miscarriage of justice at the time.

Unfortunately, this attempt to divert Pickwick from the issue of absence of guests failed and the excuses continued. Jingle claimed he had many friends but none who were prepared to attend a Pickwick meeting; Jinks claimed that there was little purpose in inviting friends from Leicester because they can't understand the Salford patois and Sawyer simply said his guest had cried off. Mivins said he was at night school and it was unfair to invite a guest and not be present for the whole meeting; Pickwick rejected this argument completely, but then stood and informed members that the reason he had not brought a guest was that because he was on the top table it would be unfair if his guest couldn't sit with him – members felt this was a slight on their ability to make guests feel at home.

The spirit of novelty continued when Grummer decided that each member should describe the character of another member – unfortunately he started with Jingle who introduced Jinks as Justice Stareleigh, then rambled round until he effectively proved to his own satisfaction that Stareleigh and Jinks worked "in cahoots" and that Dodson, "a bent lawyer", was also involved. Jinks had nothing to do with Jem Wardle's daughter but Magnus did have something to do with Wardle's father, but he wasn't sure what. As though this wasn't sufficiently confusing, Pell introduced Dodson (who wasn't present) as a person who visited a Conservative Club in Higher Broughton to see a friend who wasn't there, so rather than going into the club and having to pay, he went elsewhere and came back later. The friend was in, so Dodson went in where he put money into a slot machine and won £100 on the third pull. He then put money into a second machine and promptly won another £85, then followed this by taking £2 off his friend at billiards. He insisted that this be entered in the minutes to show what Dodson's character was like, so Sawyer suggested that the minutes also record that Pell's fly was open whilst he was telling this tale!

The minutes were read and approved, being seconded by Weller who hadn't attended the meeting. Tadger reported that the name of the parrot referred to in the minutes was Joey and that he had tried to get it to talk without success, so in the end he swore at it. There was still no reaction from the bird until the room was occupied by ladies when the parrot suddenly decided to repeat what could be described as various Teutonic catch phrases and had to be removed. There is no truth in the rumour that it claimed to be "Mr Pigvig".

There was a lengthy discussion about the length of time taken to introduce members at the Summer and Christmas outings and a number of solutions were put forward for

consideration. Eventually it was agreed that previous procedures should be replaced by a short, 10 second, introduction of every member.

In a shortened vote of thanks, Mivins claimed that the meeting had once again been a failure thanks to Pickwick's inefficiency which was compounded by the failure of his vice chairman to be aware of proceedings. The meeting had lurched from item to item with little thought being given to make the subjects interesting, and hopefully the National Anthem would soon draw a closure on the proceedings. Seconding the vote of thanks, Weller likened Pickwick and his vice chairman to road lamps from which the batteries had been stolen – they were alright for leaning on but didn't throw much light when it was needed.

Pickwick thanked Mivins and Weller for their kind thoughts and invited them to lead the meeting in "Good Neet Owd Friends" which was, naturally, performed brilliantly and followed by the National Anthem.

The Fines Box contained £3.94 and the raffle raised £2.80.