

Minutes of the 1094th Meeting of the Manchester Pickwick Club
held at the Black Horse Hotel on 17th September, 1992

Despite the fact that Angelo Cyrus Bantam was snoozing, Mr Pickwick opened the 1094th meeting of the Manchester Pickwick Club at 8.12 p.m. and informed members that meeting fees had increased to £3 .00 and the raffle was now 50p. Pickwick then seemed to emulate Bantam and had to be advised by other members of the need to appoint, amongst other officers, a Vice Chairman, P.O.C' s, and a P.O.R & I.

Dodson, who becomes excessively animated when money is to be collected, was in the middle of an altercation with Bantam who had proffered a £20 note for his meeting fee and thought the change was a long time in appearing, and this confrontation seemed to be more attractive to members than the efforts of Pickwick to appoint a vice chairman.

There being no volunteers for the job, Winkle was appointed and promptly tried to suggest that this appointment was an honour only bestowed on the more experienced members. The truth of the matter was that Winkle had been away from the club for so long that he had probably forgotten how bad it was, whereas the regular members who couldn't afford a winter residence managed to avoid the job.

Pickwick then tried to nominate one of the guests to act as P.O.C., but was rescued from this appalling mistake by Smangle and Boldwig who volunteered to carry out these duties and thus saved Pickwick from further embarrassment.

Pickwick created further havoc by deciding that the meeting should not start properly until the drinks arrived, thus legitimising the many conversations which were taking place and which covered such diverse topics as a visit from Jens Jacobson (whose previous attendance at a club meeting caused Grummer to speak with forked tongue), printing of rule books (which was contrasted with the newly printed agendas) and the rules relating to fines for members who fail to bring raffle prizes which were clarified by the Secretary and confirmed by the Minute Writer. Bantam claimed that he was awaiting an up-to-date list of members before arranging the rule book printing but Dodson claimed he used that excuse last year and the year before.

By 8.50 p.m. the meeting was ready to proceed to item 2 and the agenda, but it was then discovered that the P.O.C' s had mixed up the drinks order, so a further delay was necessary. Despite this, the 9 o'clock toast was taken promptly at 9 o'clock, probably for the first time in living memory.

Winkle, who had been remarkably quiet up to that point, complained that he had been unaware that the September meeting was no longer restricted to members only and was most disappointed that he had not brought a guest. Dodson said he had been intending to write to Winkle in Spain about this rule change but had been advised that Winkle had returned to this country.

Tupman was invited to introduce members to guests but instead, chose to report on the very first meeting of the original Pickwick Club. The presentation was excellent and much appreciated by both members and guests.

The minutes were read and approved, and Dodson then asked for a progress report on the effects of the new presentation pack he had brought from Spain for Mrs Jingle. Jingle reported that a 2-hour test had proved the new item to be splendid and requested a bulk supply from Dodson's next visit. The only failure seemed to be the failure to put a kettle on but what the kettle had to do with the test wasn't explained either orally or in the gestures which accompanied the report.

The Secretary was allowed to read a letter from Winkle which was written in Spain and referred to the Balance Sheet. It described Sawyer as the best Secretary the Club had ever had apart from Winkle himself. Dodson explained that Winkle had once been Secretary and Treasurer of the club, and that when Dodson had taken over the post of Secretary, the post of Treasurer had been filled by Mr Pott. The accounting techniques of Winkle and Pott were quite different; whilst Winkle kept the club funds in his own account at the bank (Bantam suggested the Berne branch), Pott considered a shoe box to be the safest form of banking. Dodson had been called upon to use his expertise on a number of occasions to "straighten" the accounts and had eventually taken over the job of Treasurer. The club accounts were now held in a recognised bank and a number of members were counter signatories for cheques issued by the club. Dodson's comments sounded very impressive until Winkle pointed out that two of the four members named on the cheques were deceased!

Winkle went on to thank the Secretary for writing to him to keep him informed of club matters. He was pleased to be able to attend a club meeting once again but was worried to see Dodson smiling because that usually proved to be expensive for somebody. Once again, this theory had been proved correct when the increased fees and raffle ticket cost were announced. He then referred to the problem of rule book printing and reminded members that Bantam was also the club photographer whose work appears not quite as regularly as the rule books. Sawyer said this didn't surprise him because we were still waiting to hear Bantam's published poem.

Pickwick announced item 12 and was advised that item 12 had already been dealt with; he then suggested item 13, only to be informed that item 12 had been taken out of order and that item 11 still required attention – the raffle followed.

The vote of thanks was given by Grummer who said he didn't see any reason for thanks; members were saddled with Pickwick for the next 12 months and if meeting 1094 was anything to go by, there was little to encourage attendance. Members had shown little regard for the status of Pickwick and Pickwick had done little to suggest he was in control of the meeting; what little bit of advice had been offered by the Secretary, the President and the Vice Chairman had been ignored, and even Dodson had been unable to persuade Pickwick to improve the rate of donations to the fines box. One word could be used to describe both the meeting and Pickwicks control of that meeting – abysmal!

In seconding the vote of thanks, Jinks said he couldn't agree with Grummer who had spent most of the evening running his own meeting below the nick. Those members above the nick had witnessed iron control supported by the steel fist in the iron glove of the vice chairman, sadly let down by lesser members. The meetings could only improve and with the current Mr Pickwick in the chair members could look forward to an excellent year.

Mr Pickwick thanked both members for their kind comments, adding that he had decided to be lenient as it was his first meeting in the chair, but warning members to beware if they transgressed in future.

There followed a further demonstration of the technique this year's Mr Pickwick has obviously decided to use in controlling the meeting whereby Pickwick, the President and the Secretary form a huddle (for want of a better description) to discuss the next agenda item. This seemed somewhat unnecessary at this stage of the meeting, but eventually the triumvirate on the top table decided that "Good Neet Owd Friends" would be led by Tupman and Smangle. Their rendering of that classic defies description but was followed by the more recognisable National Anthem.

The fines box contained £10.31, whilst the raffle raised £8.50.