

Minutes of the 1111th meeting of the Manchester Pickwick Club held at the Church Hotel on 16th March, 1995

The formal opening of the 1111th meeting of the Manchester Pickwick Club took place at 8.15 p.m. when the Vice-Chairman proposed the toast to Mr Pickwick from a sitting position! When a number of complaints were voiced about this apparent insult to our leader, Tupman claimed that he had a bad back which was causing him some difficulty in getting to his feet; Weller suggested that it was the weight of his wallet which was causing the problem.

There being no official P. O. C's present, Dodson volunteered for the job with Grummer as his assistant, but before any move could be made to provide refreshments, a separate meeting commenced with Dodson and Pell trying to score points off each other. Pickwick watched the interplay for some considerable time, so much so that members began to think he had fallen asleep.

It was suggested that the February meeting had been so poorly attended as to be inquorate: it followed that the meeting had, therefore, not taken place so members who attended had obviously discussed Pickwick Club business outside the club and should be fined in accordance with club rules. However, this argument was too complicated for Pickwick to understand so to avoid making a decision, he adjourned the meeting to allow Grummer to tell Members about his recent holiday in Kenya where he had stayed with a friend who had been a guest of the Pickwick club on a number of occasions.

Grummer's travels were followed by a short interlude from Dodson who had recently visited Benidorm where he had met Winkle in a bar. Despite the relative cheapness of Spanish beer, Winkle was reluctant to buy any drinks but when forced to stand his round displayed the meanness for which he has become renowned in the club. Dodson, having ordered a half pint, was presented with a full pint, Winkle claiming that this would prove his generosity to members; however, Winkle then emptied half the pint into his own glass on the grounds that Dodson had only wanted a half pint in the first case!

The meeting having reconvened, the minutes of the 1110th meeting had described the sartorial elegance of Tupman who had been fined at previous meetings for being improperly dressed. The minutes described Tupman's blazer with regimental badge, clean shirt, tie and Pickwick club badge on the lapel. Weller pointed out that the description of the garments did not include trousers and that there was a possibility of Tupman once again being improperly dressed but it was agreed that Tupman was probably wearing some covering over the legs although nobody could remember sufficiently well to describe exactly what form the covering took.

There were suggestions from Dodson that club funds had been seriously depleted whilst he was away in Spain, the implication being that his assistant treasurer, Pell, was too generous. Tupman claimed that this was merely evidence that Pell was not yet as astute as his master at manipulation of club funds but expressed concern that Dodson should use this format to belittle his assistant. After consideration, Pickwick decided that Tupman was completely wrong and that Dodson was actually complimenting Pell for the manner in which he had pandered to members thereby avoiding the usual questions about the source of Dodson's holiday funds.

Tupman claimed it was inconsiderate of the Queen to invite Mivins to the Palace on a date which clashed with a club meeting and suggested that a fine would be appropriate without indicating whether the Queen or Mivins should pay that fine. Pell suggested that the Queen had felt sorry for Mivins who had been left at home whilst Grummer was riding a zebra in the Commonwealth and Dodson was visiting King Juan Carlos. He added that Royalty had also given him a holiday in Kenya, although the travelling arrangements and accommodation were not up to the standard that Grummer experienced and he was required to wear a uniform whilst there. Mivins refused to comment on a suggestion from Dodson that the Queen has asked whether Tupman was still a miserable old 'B', pointing out that conversations between the Queen and her subjects are confidential.

Whilst Dodson was out of the room collecting drinks the opportunity was taken to slip a Kenyan 10-shilling note into the float which he always carries and counts and recounts continually throughout meetings. It did not take Dodson long to realise there was a 'foreigner' present and the effect on his health could have been serious had he not been instantly aware of the only possible culprit.

The vote of thanks was proposed by Mivins who claimed that Pickwick and his Vice-Chairman were both inconsequential and incompetent. The meeting had been a failure from the start and the guidance members sought from their leaders had been absent, indeed, it seemed that the Vice-Chairman's main role had been to try and increase the contents of the fines box by 'peaching' on other members. In seconding the vote of thanks, Weller said he was having difficulty deciding which meeting he had been attending because several had been taking place simultaneously without any attempt by Pickwick to gain control – on several occasions he thought Pickwick had died: at this point there was an interruption and Pickwick dropped his gavel – Weller said that was the first reaction from Pickwick all night. Before he could continue, the Vice-Chairman dropped his gavel so Weller said he could now see why the meeting had been so terrible – neither the Chairman or his Vice could get a grip!

After the Chairman and his Vice had ignored the opportunity to respond to the vote of thanks, Pell drew members attention to the poor attendance at meetings; he accepted that there was some justification for poor attendance at our last venue but

felt that the new meeting place was first class and that the meals were excellent. Recent deaths and resignations made the need for new members paramount, but guest invitations were an essential part of the club and he asked members to do their part in reviving the fortunes of the club.

There being no other business, members joined in singing Good Neet Owd Friends followed by the National Anthem.

The fines box contained £5.00 and the raffle raised £2.30.