

Minutes of the 1112th Meeting of the  
Manchester Pickwick Club held at the Church Hotel on 21st September, 1995

The formal opening of the 1112th Meeting of the Manchester Pickwick Club took place at 8.10 p.m. and was rather rushed: the reason for the haste was that Dodson had not arrived and the opportunity to fine him for late attendance was too good to be missed. Indeed, so quickly was the meeting opened that the Secretary was taken by surprise and there were no agenda papers or song sheets on the table and much of the regalia was still in the bag, so Pickwick opened the meeting once again at 8.15 p.m. once the administrative arrangements were in order.

Winkle, who runs the Spanish end of the Pickwick club, complained that Pickwick was addressing the meeting from a seated position which was giving Winkle's guest the wrong impression and causing Winkle much embarrassment. Pickwick apologised for this lapse and immediately made amends by rising to his feet and inviting members and guests to have a drink at his expense to celebrate his appointment; he also fined several members who had not, apparently, realised that the meeting had been opened – twice.

Grummer and Pott volunteered to act as P. O. C 's, but amidst a crescendo of very macho barking, added the proviso that the dog had to be locked away before they went to the bar.

The barking heralded the arrival of Dodson and Bantam, some 15 minutes late; after Pickwick had agreed to hear Dodson's excuse, members were regaled with the story of how Bantam had asked Dodson for a lift to the meeting and, realising that he had made Dodson late, had agreed to pay Dodson's fine. Bantam supported Dodson's claim and paid both fines whilst Dodson started to collect the subs – like the Insurance companies Dodson has two priorities, always avoid paying out and collect as much as possible as quickly as possible.

Bantam then reminded members that he had come into possession of a genuine old post horn and had suggested that incoming Pickwicks should be required to produce a sound from this instrument before taking office. He presented the instrument (which was carefully wrapped in old copies of the Bolton Evening News) and explained that he had deliberately left it in its grubby state because this would match the unpolished performances we had come to expect from Pickwick.

Pickwick accepted the horn on behalf of the club, pointing out that this was the first time Pickwick had been seen in public with the horn; he then put the instrument to his lips and produced a long note which proved that Pickwick also had the wind. The horn was then passed amongst the members and whilst

it was circulating, Bantam explained that it had been obtained by his brother-in-law who he referred to as his wife's husband!

Grummer was fined for having an unauthorised blow.

After some discussion, it was agreed that Grummer was this year's D. C. and he was invited to present the members to the guests. He performed this task in his usual competent manner and was congratulated by Bantam. Winkle then complained that Grummer had only introduced half the members and this was particularly embarrassing to him because his guest was left confused by the absence of information about the unintroduced members. Bantam said Winkle's complaint had made him realise that he himself had not been introduced and he wished to withdraw his congratulations. Pickwick explained that the club had discussed the problem of introductions taking too long and had agreed that it was only necessary to introduce a selection of members each time; he then fined Winkle for not being present when the rule was revised and therefore being unaware of it, and also fined Bantam for not paying attention and not realising he had not been introduced.

Grummer then decided to introduce those members missed on the first round; Bantam said it was too late to make amends but Winkle claimed that Grummer had acknowledged his error by agreeing to perform a second introduction so he was prepared to withdraw his complaint against Grummer and would expect the fine also to be withdrawn – Pickwick did not agree.

The second round of introductions was performed and Grummer had returned to his seat when Bantam rose to complain that the presentation was still incomplete and Grummer suddenly realised he had failed to introduce himself, an omission quickly rectified.

It was suggested that Winkle could have avoided his mistake in not realising the rule had changed if the new rule books had been produced as promised. Bantam explained that the cause of the delay was the redundancy of his secretary (shortly before his own redundancy) coupled with the absence of an address list promised by Dodson. He had been promised a photocopy of the address list and this reminded him of a police superintendent whose secretary was allocated a new photocopier. The amount of private printing being carried out on this machine forced the superintendent to issue an instruction that police officers should refrain from using his secretary's reproductive equipment for private purposes.

At this moment the landlady arrived to collect the meal plates and, recognising Winkle whom she had not seen for some time, started a conversation. Winkle advised her that he had been in the country since 1st July but had been staying in Blackpool; this reminded her that she had also spent some time in

Blackpool recently and gave members a brief description of the 60th birthday party she had attended on that occasion.

There was more confusion at the raffle; Dodson, who had been selling raffle tickets as early as item 4 on the agenda (the raffle is item 13), advised members that one of the tickets had been withdrawn after that ticket had been drawn. Members thought that the fiddling at the raffle was becoming more blatant but Pickwick admitted that he had tried to fix the raffle so that Dodson couldn't win but had made a mess of it, hence the confusion.

Pickwick had obviously been thinking about use of the post horn instead of paying attention to the meeting and suddenly announced that in future the horn would be used at ordinary meetings whilst the mace would grace the top table at the Christmas and Summer outings. Winkle, supported by Jingle claimed that decision should be made at the A.G.M. but Sawyer claimed that during his year in office, Pickwick could do as he liked.

After Dodson had advised members that the Christmas dinner would be at the Ridgeway Arms on 8th December, Winkle was invited to propose a vote of thanks to Pickwick and the Vice-Chairman. After indicating that he would not refer to the fact that Dodson had left the meeting whilst many members were in need of liquid refreshment, Winkle said he had little to say about Pickwick's first meeting in the chair – in which he had remained seated for most of the evening even when addressing members, rising only to argue with Dodson about the raffle. He could only hope that Pickwick's performance would improve and suggested that he take a leaf out of the book of his predecessor who had made an excellent job of it.

In seconding the vote of thanks Weller admitted he had only been present for half the meeting but had soon realised that the supply of beer at the meeting was obviously affected by Dodson's support for the Water Authority who had recently issued Drought notices. He apologised for not realising that Smangle was the vice-Chairman and said he wished he had brought his rhubarb to the meeting, the content of which would have forced anything to grow.

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

The fines box contained £2.81 and the raffle raised £7.00.