

Minutes of the 1182nd Meeting of the Manchester Pickwick Club held at the Moorside Social Club on 15th February, 2007

The 1182nd meeting of the Manchester Pickwick Club commenced with Tracy Tupman in the chair, the real Mr Pickwick being absent for unknown reasons. As meetings go it was fairly unremarkable, but shortly after the meeting Dodson experienced an incident which could have laid him low for the whole of the 2007 season. It is a well-known fact that Dodson spends most of his spare time counting money and on this occasion he was counting the income from the 1182nd meeting (for about the third time) when he suddenly realised that one of the 50p coins from the Fines Box was duff. Having already discovered one duff 50p coin immediately after the meeting the discovery of a second could have proved fatal to lesser men but Dodson is made of sterner stuff and vented his anger and frustration on Mivins so that these minutes would truly record the offence. The thought that there are criminal elements within the club who are using the club for money laundering was too much to bear.

The meeting itself had not started well for Dodson because Tupman, in the guise of Pickwick, had decided to fine everybody for failing to assist him to distribute the agendas. Snodgrass said that he thought because it was the earliest possible date for the third Thursday in the month there would have been many members who would have mistakenly thought the meeting was next week and Dodson would have taken advantage of the reduced numbers to announce a free evening; for this reason, he hadn't brought any money with him and would have some difficulty in finding the money for the fine. He added that the Moorside Club had announced a 10p reduction on a pint of beer so Dodson was obviously profiteering by continuing to charge full subs from each member whilst getting the beer at reduced prices.

Pickwick refused to accept Snodgrass' argument because he was on a diet and was restricted to water – Weller said he would refuse on principle to ask for a glass of water at the bar!

Jingle complained that he had mislaid his hearing aid and couldn't hear Weller introducing his guest who happened to be Ron McCluskey. He told members that Ron had only recently left hospital after open heart surgery and in future was to be known as 'the Bolton Bypass'.

Weller was approached by Jingle and the Fines Box and claimed he had already paid; he asked whether he was being asked to pay a fine on behalf of his guest and, if so, when the rules that guests couldn't be fined had been changed. Dodson immediately announced that Weller had been fined twice and Weller responded by asking what right Dodson had to get involved in a personal matter between him and Pickwick. Pickwick said both Dodson and Weller were getting perilously close to incurring further fines, and Jingle stepped in at this point to ask whether another fine had been levied because he couldn't hear because he hadn't got his hearing aid in. It was suggested that it might be cheaper for the club to buy Jingle a new hearing aid rather than lose revenue because he hadn't heard the fine being issued.

After the introduction of members to the guest, Dodson said he was always wrongly being presented as an unsavoury character when, in fact, he was an upstanding citizen and proved this by producing a

framed drawing of 'Dodson, a true Pickwickian' which had been presented to him on his retirement. Grummer said there were 70 members and guests present when he joined the club; Dodson had led him to believe his character would be Tom Roker so he had swotted up on that character ready for his initiation only to be horrified when it was announced that his character would be Daniel Grummer about whom he knew nothing; he felt that this incident described Dodson's character far better than any drawing.

Grummer went on to say that because Snodgrass spent so much time out of the country on business he was never able to take advantage of the free evenings so he personally would pay Snodgrass' subs for the evening so Snodgrass could, at last, enjoy a free evening. He added that Dodson could have done this had he been a compassionate treasurer but Dodson said he had intended so to do but Grummer had beaten him to it.

Pickwick introduced the toast to the visitors and after the toast the vice-chairman claimed that introduction of this toast was his responsibility. Pickwick said he realised that but thought the vice-chairman was asleep and didn't want to wake him. The vice-chairman said the idea that Pickwick thought he was asleep was very offensive and that to compensate he ought to be excused all fines for the rest of the evening. Weller said that the vice-chairman might not have been asleep when the toast was called but he was certainly dreaming if he thought Pickwick would excuse his fines!

There was a long discussion as to why Tupman was invited to take the chair instead of the vice-chairman, Dodson claiming that most members with previous experience in the chair had other duties to perform and the vice-chairman was, in effect, still learning the job. It was eventually agreed that on future occasions where Pickwick is not present, the vice-chairman should be consulted about who should be invited to take the chair.

The evening meal was interesting because with one exception both members and guests had to dine from the same trough; the one exception was Ben Allen whose meal arrived on his own personal plate with his name on top. Ben Allen claimed it was because he didn't have either butter or margarine on his sandwiches but most members agreed it was more likely that because he was a long standing member of the Moorside club and thus a cut above the rest of us, special circumstances applied.

The Secretary reported a communication from the Philadelphia Pickwickian Society which indicated that their Mr Pickwick had been seriously ill in intensive care after a series of operations. He had sent a 'get well' card on behalf of this club and read a reply he had sent to the Philadelphia club, an action well received by members of this club.

Referring to the summer outing Smangle, supported by Fiskin, suggested the club have another meeting like the centenary dinner in addition to the existing summer outing and Christmas dinner, possible venues being Nantwich, Grassington or York. This year's events already having been booked for 25th May and 7th December, it was suggested that the proposed additional event could be considered for next year and members be invited to look into this idea for discussion at the next meeting.

Fiskin reported he had set up a web site for the club which would include the monthly minutes.

Because of the lateness of the hour it was suggested that the P.O.R & I should simply be a reading

with no questions; a counter suggestion that there be questions without a reading was vetoed because the Fines box would prosper anyway as Pickwick would invite everybody to make a donation in lieu of a question.

The vote of thanks was proposed by Dodson who said he thought members had heard enough of him this evening and suspected the only reason he was asked to propose the vote of thanks was because he likened Fiskin to a teletubby. He realised his decision to appoint Tupman to the chair had been a big mistake because Tupman had been a tyrant but he accepted that the Fines Box had profited from his tyranny. The vice-chairman was learning his trade but God help him if he tried to learn anything from Tupman; he would be far better using the Treasurer, Dodson, or the Secretary, Magnus, as a role model.

Seconding the vote of thanks, Snodgrass said he felt totally besmirched by this task; he had attended in the confident hope that this would be a free evening and Pickwick had failed to order Dodson to issue a refund of subs to everybody. The vice-chairman had done a good job despite Pickwick's attempts to do the job for him, and it was unfair that Pickwick was drinking water whilst other members were enjoying themselves. Finally, he wished it to be minuted that he was 40p in credit in the Fines Box and would like this to be carried over to the next meeting he is able to attend.

The vice-chairman, on behalf of himself and Pickwick thanked the members for their kind words and reminded Dodson that in 2 meetings time, the vice-chairman would be in the chair.

'Good Neet Owd Friends' and the National Anthem were sung by all.

The raffle raised £7.00 whilst the Fines Box contained £10.53, 50 French cents, 25 Dutch cents and a duff 50p piece (a second duff 50p piece was subsequently discovered, thus reducing the Fines box to £10.03).