

Minutes of the 1186th meeting of the Manchester Pickwick Club held at the Moorside Social Club on 15th November, 2007

The 1186th meeting of the Manchester Pickwick Club was opened at 8.05 p.m. with the chair being occupied by Sam Weller who, members will recall, spent the opening minutes of the last meeting being fined by Mr Pickwick for talking with other members below the nick and complaining about the fine because he said other members had arrived late and had not been fined.

The meeting had barely commenced when Jingle announced that it was the golden wedding of him and Sheila the following day and that he would like to buy a round of drinks for all the members present (of whom there were not many). (It was subsequently decided by Dodson and others that the golden wedding should be celebrated with a bouquet of flowers for Mrs Jingle and the following morning he arrived on the Jingle's doorstep with flowers in hand. Mrs Jingle answered the door and after thanking the club for the flowers asked what they were for. On being told they were to recognise her golden wedding she replied they were a week early – Jingle had got the date wrong!

Noting the sparsity of members, Ben Allen suggested this was because the 3rd Thursday had fallen on the earliest date possible and many members probably thought the meeting would be next week. He suggested Dodson take advantage of the low numbers and announce a free evening, a suggestion applauded by other members but ignored by Dodson who was involved in a discussion with Weller about a problem which had occurred earlier in the week which had resulted in Weller forgetting his wife's birthday. Tupman said this had nothing to do with the meeting and that both Dodson and Weller should be fined. Weller agreed but pointed out that in his temporary position as Pickwick he could do no wrong, so only Dodson would be fined. Tupman said this was unfair because Weller was the one who had commenced the discussion so Weller agreed to pay a contribution but claimed he had no change; this was instantly remedied by Dodson who produced change for a £20 note.

There were no visitors present but Ben Allen thought he should receive some credit for trying to persuade somebody to attend and several other members gave details of the excuses used by those they tried to bring. It was suggested the Secretary keep a list of the more exotic excuses used by potential guests to avoid attending.

There was the usual exchange of views about whether the club had or did not have any Honorary members with the usual lack of progress until Snodgrass came up with the excellent suggestion that because the club now had a website we should allow 'Virtual' members who would be encouraged not to attend meetings but would still pay full subscriptions. Dodson thought this to be an excellent idea but was concerned with the possibility of identity fraud by virtual members of doubtful integrity.

Jingle had been examining the contents of the fines box whilst these exchanges were going on and at a suitable break in the proceedings announced that Dodson had been the only contributor to the fines box. Pickwick said this was inevitable because Dodson hadn't allowed anybody else to get a word in so nobody else had the opportunity to get themselves fined. However, he promised that if the fines box was still light at the end of the meeting, he would impose a communal fine for an offence yet to be determined.

Dodson had been trying to contact Fiskin about a book written by a former Joe the Fat Boy which gave a potted version of the character of every single member. He was worried that this document, which could be regarded as part of the club regalia, might be lost. However, Fiskin had replied that the book had never left the meeting room and it was subsequently found in the club locker as Fiskin had claimed.

The Secretary read the official minutes of the London meeting attended by Pickwick and Grummer and circulated two photographs taken at the meeting. Dodson said that the club's minutes should record members appreciation of their attendance as club representatives, adding that Grummer's recollections of the visit had been written and would be presented at the Christmas Dinner.

The P.O.R & I was read by Ben Allen and taken from Chapter 36 of the book. Snodgrass, Pott and Dodson answered their questions correctly and were promptly fined for being too clever, the remaining members were fined for being too thick and the Reader and Inquisitor was asked to pay a donation for allowing three members to answer correctly, bearing in mind that the fines box relies on members being thickies.

There was a problem when Pickwick's mobile phone rang at 9.00 o'clock ; it was Grummer ringing from the Isle of White to respond to the toast 'absent members'. This caused the toast to be taken on time for the first time in living memory and subsequently caused mayhem when, at 10.25p.m. Pickwick announced the 9.00 o'clock toast to absent members. Although this was the time the 9.00 o'clock toast was normally taken, some members had forgotten it had already taken place whilst others remembered the earlier toast and confusion reigned.

Normally the raffle is a time for confusion and allegations of cheating and this meeting was no different. The first ticket out of the bag was for the vice-chairman, followed in sequence by Pickwick, the Treasurer and then the Secretary; Mivins was getting ready to claim his prize being next in line in the hierarchy but his number didn't come out so there was obviously something wrong with the raffle - yet another example of Dodson's damp ticket process failing to work!

Dodson was fined for some trivial offence and started to bluster in the hope that the fine would be revoked but Pickwick was aware of Dodson's antics and threatened to take Dodson to the local hospital to have his pocket lanced, probably under general anaesthetic. Ben Allen, a paramedic in real life, offered to do the job but Dodson paid up before Ben's offer could be acted on.

The vote of thanks to Pickwick and the vice-chairman was proposed by Dodson who claimed he had tried to help Pickwick to control the meeting properly but without success. Both he and the Secretary, who had also tried to give advice, had been ignored and the resultant chaos had been Pickwick's fault entirely. He had tried to get Pott to take the chair at the start of the meeting but Pott had preferred to act as P.O.C., one of the lowest positions in the club, rather than occupy the chair. Weller had leapt at the chance to wield power and had made a complete mess of it. In seconding the vote of thanks, Mr Pott said he didn't know what Pickwick had done to deserve the scorn Dodson had heaped upon him because the meeting had generally been very good and the fines, apart from in Dodson's case, minimal. The vice-chairman had also performed adequately and was obviously going to be a star when he occupied the chair next year. Admittedly, there had been some confusion by references to things being 'lob-coddled' but he assumed this was a Swahili term used by Snodgrass to describe how well the meeting had gone. Dodson said he thought it meant rubbish!

The vice-chairman thanked Mr Pott for his recognition of the skilled way he and Pickwick had controlled the meeting adding that they could go away this evening safe in the knowledge of a job well done.

‘Good neet owd friends’ was sung by all and followed by the National Anthem.

The Fines Box contained £9.99 whilst the raffle raised £4.50.