

## Minutes of the 1192<sup>nd</sup> meeting of the Manchester Pickwick Club held at the Moorside Social Club

Due to the absence of the proper Mr Pickwick who was working in the colonies, the chair was taken by Tracy Tupman with Brother Tadger occupying the vice-chairman's role. The room wasn't ready when the members started to drift in so Pickwick decided that he should pay a contribution for failing to ensure the meeting could commence on time; Jack Hopkins, who was present with Pickwick was forced to pay a fine for the same reason. Dodson and Grummer insisted on leaving much space between the chairs so were fined for 'wastage' and Ben Allen was also fined for agreeing with Dodson and Grummer's layout.

Tupman advised members that numbers were rather sparse because a number of the more adventurous members were overseas at the time; in addition to the above mentioned Mr Pickwick, Smangle was visiting our territories in India whilst Weller and Fogg were involved Hispanically.

Dodson, Grummer and Lowton had recently returned from the Spanish mainland and had brought with them treasure in the form of 3 tins of Miau for Mrs Jingle. Mivins said this worked out at 1 tin each which was pretty mean but Grummer said this was directly attributable to the ongoing credit crisis and represented a major contribution from the members named.

Pickwick then announced that there were no visitors despite the fact that Harry Hamilton was sitting opposite him; he agreed to pay a donation to the Fines Box but claimed that Harry had been a guest so often that he had naturally mistaken him for a regular member! Harry was then formally introduced by his host, Daniel Grummer.

Grummer then told members about a beautiful glazed clay goblet which he had obtained whilst in Spain, the restaurant staff refusing to take any donation for this item but suggesting Grummer shouldn't let the owner see he had got it. He claimed that Dodson envied Grummer's goblet and asked Grummer to slip a second goblet into his pocket but Grummer refused. The following evening Dodson advised the owner about Grummer's acquisition but the owner merely commented that when he had been in Manchester some years ago he had done exactly the same! Grummer felt that Dodson was a little piqued because of his failure to pull a couple of birds in the bar that evening – the fact that one was a 90 year old whilst the other was a mere slip of a girl at 85 made no difference. If truth be told, it was more a case of the two ladies making the running whilst Dodson and Grummer were busy taking avoiding action.

At the start of the meeting, Pickwick had agreed that members didn't need to stand to address the meeting in view of Dodson's bad leg but he realised that Dodson had stood on a number of occasions and suggested that the concession should be withdrawn. Dodson said he was standing in order to exercise his bad leg and that the concession should remain in case he forgot to stand on some future occasion.

Grummer, always ready to embarrass a fellow member, then suggested Pickwick invite Mivins to recount the tale of his recent reconnaissance for a proposed walk and Pickwick agreed.

Mivins explained that he belonged to a group who walked every Monday afternoon, taking it in turn

to lead the group. He had been given a brochure prepared by Wigan Council and decided that one of the walks at Bickershaw might be suitable so set out on a 'recce'. Having parked his car in a pub car park, Mivins set out along the route described in the brochure. The so-called footpath was quite muddy but on the basis that it might get better Mivins carried on until the brochure advised crossing a stile; unfortunately there was no stile to be seen and the route he had been following led to a farmhouse and bore a sign 'Private – no entrance'. Ignoring this sign, Mivins approached the farmhouse and was met by the lady owner who was very helpful and said the stile hadn't existed for many years and that the path ran behind her barn but was very muddy because a pond had been filled in some years before and the water which had fed the pond now made its way down the path to the pub car park about half a mile away.

The muddy path was conquered and for a short time the route seemed reasonable, passing by a fishing pond which had been used by Mivins and Dodson in the past. At the end of the pond the path had been diverted round the back of an estate of new houses and once again mud became the order of the day. Eventually a tarmac road was reached and the going once more became reasonable until the brochure advised a left turn onto a path which would lead to a disused railway embankment and then back to the car park some 2 to 3 miles away. The going became more and more rough until eventually Mivins realised that the field he was trying to cross was now used for moto-cross events and the mud was knee deep because of the tyre ruts, most of which were full of water. To add insult to injury, the track was marked by barbed wire fencing which prevented him from escaping so he had to follow the course until he reached the finishing line. At this point, muddy, weary and wet, Mivins decided this walk wasn't suitable and decided to cut his losses by returning to his car. To do this he had to pass the new housing development referred to earlier and tried, unsuccessfully, to take a short cut through the estate. It was one of those estates which had one main road in and out with all other estate roads circling that main entrance/exit. Mivins approached a workman and asked if there was a short cut and was told if he went down a steep slope to a path at the bottom that would lead him back to the fishing pond but he was warned the slope was very slippery and dangerous. Despite the warning, Mivins set off and was half way down the slope when his feet went from under him and he performed a swallow dive into a pool of liquid mud some 8 feet below! The mud went everywhere and to cap it all, the path he was seeking was fenced off so he had to retrace his steps up the slope where a sympathetic workman took him into the workmen's compound so he could wash the mud off his hands and face. Outer jacket, inner fleece, shirt, trousers and boots were dripping in yellow mud, and the car was still 2 miles away. Eventually, after guidance from several people the car was reached and the problem then was the condition of the clothes which would have ruined the car seats but fortunately in the boot was a pair of waterproof over-trousers used when fishing so Mivins changed into these on the pub car park and drove home in that condition. The proposed walk wasn't suitable and the question arose about how long ago the brochure had been prepared because most of the listed features had ceased to exist!

After the laughter had died down, the Secretary reported notes of a meeting in London on 21st October to which we had sent apologies and communications with Rick Bravo whose photograph was circulated.

Dodson complained that Grummer had damaged a CD case from an Irish folk singer and had refused to replace it with one of his own. Pickwick said it was typical of the C.I.D not to be able to solve a case.

Referring to their trip to Spain, Grummer said that a storm has put the T.V. out of action and a

repairman had to be called. After he had carried out the necessary work, been paid and gone away, Dodson picked up the handset, pressed a button and the T.V. stopped working again and the repairman had to be called back.

Jack Hopkins performed the P.O.R & I with the usual fines for all whether or not the question was answered correctly, the assumption being that if a question is answered correctly, the member must have been cheating. As usual, Jack Hopkins made a donation to the Fines Box.

After the raffle it was discovered that there was a prize left over and it transpired that the guest had decided to bring a prize which he refused to take back. A second draw was made and the winner was the guest!

The guest said he appreciated the way the club had made him welcome and was particularly pleased that he was sitting next to Dr. Slammer, a friend of many years. He was currently preparing some home-made wine with a special Pickwick Club label as requested at an earlier meeting of the club and was prepared to donate a bottle to any member who made a donation to the heart care unit at the local hospital.

The vote of thanks to Pickwick and the vice-chairman was proposed by Ben Allen who said that the meeting could have been better. A plus point was that there were no phone calls from abroad, but the arrangements were poor and the donation to the fines box by Pickwick was most appropriate. The room layout when members arrived was more suited to an arm-wrestling match or speed dating, and the raffle had once again been manipulated by Dodson. Seconding the vote of thanks, Dr Slammer said that he had been in church practising Christmas Carols to entertain the old folk but despite this was fined for being late so his view of the chairman and vice-chairman was somewhat tainted.

Pickwick said the meeting had been tough and had been difficult to control but despite this he and the vice-chairman had succeeded.

For a change Pickwick decided members should sing the second and third verses of 'Good Neet Owd Friends' and followed this with the National Anthem.

The raffle raised £7.50 whilst the fines box contained £4.53, two Greek coins and an Irish 10p piece.