

Minutes of the 1198th meeting of the Manchester Pickwick Club held at the Moorside Social Club on 18th November, 2009

The 1198th meeting of the Manchester Pickwick Club was opened at 8.04 p.m. despite numerous complaints from members due to the absence of the Secretary and other senior members of the club. Despite these complaints, Pickwick went ahead with the meeting and the toast to Mr Pickwick was taken with a background of argument between Tupman and Smangle regarding Smangle's tie which Tupman claimed was not an official Pickwick tie and should result in a fine. Eventually Pickwick acknowledged that there were a number of absences, not least being no P.O.C's; this was quickly remedied by the appointment of Dodson and Tadger to perform that most important role.

At 8.15 p.m. Weller arrived, claiming that his late arrival was due to floods which had necessitated part of his journey being by boat. Pickwick refused to accept this excuse and the appropriate fine was levied. Weller was unhappy about this fine and was heard to comment under his breath something about a punt - presumably a reference to his mode of travel.

Once again, the question of Pickwick refusing to stand to address the meeting was raised with Grummer saying he would also refuse to stand even though out of the corner of his eye he could see the fines officer, Jingle, making his way towards him with the box in hand.

An apology was received from Bob Sawyer who was on the Isle of Bute; Smangle asked where that was and Tupman proceeded to give a geography lesson to all members whether they wanted to know or not!

The introduction of members was next on the agenda but Dodson wanted to take a drinks order and things got a little out of hand with Jingle wanting to know what was bitter and what was smooth - the answer was never really clarified, but Pickwick asked who was running the meeting and Weller replied that if Pickwick didn't know, what chance did the rest of the members have? To avoid further confusion, Smangle decided he would introduce members and proceeded to present one of the most interesting if uninformative introductions heard for a long time.

Commencing with Mr Pickwick, who was described as living in a flat and travelling about a bit, Smangle proceeded to 'Jack Hopkins' who starred in 'The Cruel Sea' and was a 'bit of a sawbones', Jingle who was something to do with greensleeves, Rev. Stiggins who Smangle didn't like because 'he had a go at me', Dodson who had a mate called Fogg who lived in Cornhill, Sam Weller who was Pickwick's manservant and a bit of a brown licker, Winkle a sportsman, Snodgrass a poet, Ben Allen a mate of his over there (pointing at Jack Hopkins), Grummer a copper, Brother Tadger a short man from Brick Lane who was a drunkard, Dr. Slammer a soldier who fought a duel and Tracy Tupman who fancies women. The only comparable introduction was when Grummer was performing the introduction in the presence of a Danish visitor and described Pickwick as 'he big chief and Dodson as 'very nasty man' without realising the members were in convulsions at his descriptions.

During Smangle's introduction, the new oak gavel pads provided by Fogg came in for a severe testing

as Pickwick tried, without success to maintain some sort of order; eventually, he asked once again who was in charge which suggested he had completely lost the plot. Grummer suggested it would be better if he retired because without the advice and experience of the Secretary and Dodson he was lost.

At this point Tupman announced he had contacted the Secretary who had informed him that he had completely overlooked the meeting because of worries about his mother who was ill in hospital; members expressed their concern and asked that their best wishes be sent to Magnus' family.

The minutes were read and Grummer (who was acting as minute writer in the absence of Mivins) expressed confusion about the references to Ben Allen and Bob Sawyer being 'herb doctors' but as the minutes had been proposed and seconded, he accepted they must be right.

At this point Pickwick decided that the meal should be taken and, on cue, Mivins arrived to take over the minute writer's job with many thanks to Grummer for standing in.

After the meal, Smangle told the story about a friend who wore a wig which was blown off whilst carrying out electrical work on Winter Hill. Mivins said his funniest experience in that area was during the celebrations for the Queens Silver Jubilee celebrations; it had been decided on high that the celebrations would feature a chain of bonfires throughout the country with the Queen herself lighting the first bonfire in London with the remainder being lit one after another until the whole country was lit up. The North-West bonfire was to be on the summit of Winter Hill and was to be lit as soon as the flames from the fire on Snaefell in the Isle of Man were seen with the proviso that if visibility was impaired, the fire would be lit at a particular time. On this occasion the fire on Snaefell was clearly seen and the fire lit followed by the next in the chain in southern Scotland. The festivities were being enjoyed by all when Mivins, the organiser, was approached by a rather flustered gentleman who explained that he was the head of a local Borstal who had decided to take the inmates by coach to see the celebrations - unfortunately in the surrounding darkness they had all absconded and he needed to contact the local police to have them rounded up so wanted to know where the nearest phone box was!

Grummer then reported on the trip to the meeting in London in October and a copy of his report is attached to these minutes.

Members were told that Holts Brewery were prepared to pay £2 for every £1 contributed by members towards Christie Hospital so a collection was made.

The Christmas Dinner was discussed and members were advised that Jingle had arranged the usual coach for members from the Salford area. Members then discussed possible arrangements for 2012 and agreed that a small sub-committee be set up to examine various possibilities.

By this time the meeting was running very late so it was suggested that the P.O.R. & I. be abandoned with everybody paying a fine in lieu of a question; to those who complained it was pointed out that they would be paying a fine whatever the outcome!

The vote of thanks to Pickwick and the vice-chairman was proposed by Rev. Stiggins who said he would like to thank Pickwick for running such a well-constructed and faultless meeting; unfortunately he couldn't because although he wasn't allowed to say so, Pickwick had performed like a 'pillcock' and the efforts of the vice-chairman, whoever he was, were not worth any comment at all. Seconding the vote of thanks, Tadger said he felt that Stiggins comments were most appropriate because this meeting had been the worst of the lot. Pickwick had asked on a number of occasions who was running the meeting and most of the members were still wondering. All in all, a complete fiasco.

Pickwick thanked them for their kind words which were far from the truth of the matter bearing in mind the difficulties under which he and the vice-chairman had laboured due to the absence of so many senior members.

'Good neet owd friends' was sung by all, followed by the National Anthem.

The Fines Box contained £12 whilst the raffle raised £7.