

Minutes of the 1200th meeting of the Manchester Pickwick Club held at the Moorside Social Club on 16th February, 2010

The 1200th meeting of the Club was opened promptly at 8.00 p.m. with Mr Pickwick suggesting that the sparsity in numbers was probably because members had heard that he was back from his travels; members disagreed with this comment.

Dodson was carrying out his usual activity, namely collecting money, when Nat Winkle arrived; he promptly asked whether he could revert to being a guest because it was cheaper. Smangle also arrived at this point blaming his late arrival on his daughter who had forgotten to remind him that it was the date of the meeting.

The toast to Mr Pickwick was performed in such a manner that Pickwick claimed it was lacking in both quality and quantity, but more important matters were affecting the meeting; Dodson was attempting to take the drinks order when his pen ceased to operate. It seemed that this pen was a free gift from Barclays Bank and Dodson was disgusted that an organisation which had made 11 billion pounds profit was issuing pens of such poor quality. Dodson claimed he usually takes 6 pens at a time and he hoped the others were of better quality than the one he was using.

Grummer decided to relate a story about a recent visit he and Pickwick made to the Air and Space Museum but was interrupted by Smangle who wanted to know where the 'mantle' was. Grummer didn't really know but suggested it was between the Ionosphere and Stratosphere, at which point Smangle decided to give a talk about Astrophysics and Tupman said Smangle was mental, not mantle. Jingle then entered the fray by talking about a face covering in the Roman Catholic Church but Magnus brought this fiasco to an end by explaining where the mantle was, which certainly impressed Pickwick.

Grummer said he had heard on the radio that there was only one statue of Charles Dickens in the world, that being in Philadelphia and he wondered if Magnus could contact Rick Bravo to see whether he could send us a photograph for our archives.

Smangle produced an early copy of Pickwick Papers which he had obtained from eBay; this was passed round the members who were each afforded a cursory glance whilst Dodson spent ages trying to find something nice about himself or Mr Fogg in the book.

At this point Mivins arrived having been visiting Mrs Mivins in hospital and his arrival was heralded by the subsequent arrival of the hot-pot meal; Grummer claimed that Mivins waited downstairs until he smelt the food and then put in an appearance so as not to lose out on the feed.

Before the meal Dodson had been suggesting that Tupman's description of his character was flawed and that he wasn't as bad as was regularly claimed. This complaint of deliberate 'besmirching' continued after the meal until Grummer advised members that when he was joining the club, Dodson told him prior to the introduction meeting that his Pickwickian character was to be Tom

Roker so Grummer carefully studied the relevant parts of the book only to find that at the meeting he was given the character Daniel Grummer instead of Tom Roker; he considered this to be a typical example of how bent Dodson was. Dodson countered this suggestion by claiming that he was forced to change the name because otherwise he could have been accused of talking about Pickwickian business outside the club with non-members. To settle the argument, Magnus read from the former Joe the Fat Boy's book which described Dodson as "the dominant partner of an unholy alliance".

Dodson claimed that there were really only two options for celebrating Charles Dickens' birthday in 2012, these being Nantwich or Smithills. The merits of both were discussed and Pickwick suggested that the local media be contacted to try and get publicity for the club. Magnus felt that the two London clubs would want as many people as possible from other clubs to attend their celebrations but whilst agreeing with this, Dodson said that this club should have its own celebrations. Nat Winkle said he thought it was too soon to start organising a celebration for two years hence but Dodson explained that some members wanted to make monthly subscriptions rather than having to find all the costs at once. Tupman suggested the subscriptions should commence in September 2010.

The Secretary reported a communication from Rick Bravo inviting people to attend a port tasting at the home of 'Slasher' and Mrs Slasher. The cost of this event was to be \$20 for the tasting or an extra \$25 if food was required. Enquiries about the 'Manchester' connection had revealed that Dickens had visited ragged schools in the Clerkenwell area of London after which he travelled to Manchester where he spoke at the Athenaeum club and congratulated them on their support for education. He then returned to London where he started to write 'Christmas Carol'. Pickwick agreed to visit the Athenaeum club to seek further information.

The P.O.R & I was taken from Chapter 3 and, as usual, everybody was fined. The 9 o'clock toast was taken at 10.42 p.m.

The Vote of Thanks was presented by Jingle who asked "Who is running this show?". He reminded members that this month Pickwick is in the chair; last month it was the President. Jingle always pledged his allegiance to the leader but he no longer knew who the leader was. Pickwick had come a long way but so had Jingle, even though he had been fined for being late last time. He wondered whether the vice-chairman had a gavel because he hadn't heard it this evening. He felt that Pickwick should have returned with an intent to fill the fines box rather than a meek and mild attitude. The President last month had been very ineffective and this month had been no better - the leader hadn't led.

Seconding the vote of thanks, Winkle said he concurred with everything Jingle had said. The meeting had started on a bad footing and had then deteriorated. Pickwick was trying to do a decent job but couldn't because members were ignoring protocol so control wasn't coming across. He felt that Pickwick should go away and come back next month in complete control.

'Good Neet Owd Friends' was sung by all and followed by the National Anthem. The Fines Box contained £7.10 whilst the raffle raised £5.50.