

Minutes of the 1211th meeting of the Manchester Pickwick Club held at the Moorside Social Club on 18th January, 2012

Although the 1211th meeting of the Manchester Pickwick Club commenced promptly at 8.00 p.m., it couldn't really be classed as a good start because Smangle claimed that the meeting was a shambles before it had even got under way. He was promptly fined for his claim but Jingle, who had forgotten his hearing aid and wasn't able to follow the proceedings with any clarity asked him to repeat his comment. Smangle did so and was again fined; he felt this was unfair as he was simply trying to help a fellow member but Pickwick was adamant that the fine should stand.

It soon became apparent that Jingle's infirmity was causing problems for Pickwick although the rest of the members were quite happy because Jingle couldn't hear when fines were being levied and thus a number of these fines were not being collected; Pickwick solved the problem by appointing Winkle as fines officer for the evening. His first duty after being appointed was to fine Dodson who had addressed the meeting without standing, but this fine was withdrawn when it was revealed that Dodson had a leg problem and was awaiting surgery. An unknown member suggested that at the same time he should have surgery on his wallet which hadn't seen the light of day for many years.

As in Jingle's case, Dodson's infirmity was causing problems for the club because nobody was acting as P.O.C and members were suffering the pangs of dehydration. Yet another volunteer was called for this most important task and Smangle agreed to stand in, borrowed a piece of paper on which to record the drinks order and got the order correct first time, one of the advantages of being raised in a drinking environment!

After some 15 minutes Weller claimed that there had been absolutely no progress since the official opening although many separate meetings were clearly in session and he felt that it was about time Pickwick got a grip on matters. Pickwick said he knew exactly what was going on but obviously took Weller's advice to heart by immediately asking Winkle to visit Weller and invite him to add a little weight to the fines box.

To bring a little order to the proceedings, Pickwick asked Grummer to perform the introduction of members; this went well until he said Mivins was dancing a 'turnpike' in the fleet prison. Members immediately wanted to know if this dance was a variation of the 'hosepipe' or possibly the 'hornpipe' but Grummer said dancing wasn't one of Mivins' strongpoints and it could have been any of the three! Apart from that slight mistake, the introduction was up to its usual high quality and at Magnus' request Dodson was fined for interrupting Grummer's presentation. It was noted that Magnus' proposal was seconded by Smangle - who wasn't actually present when the offence occurred but nobody was bothered by this technical point.

Jingle still seemed to be having problems following the proceedings and Weller asked why he hadn't brought his hearing aid with him. Jingle explained that he hadn't seen his hearing aid since the previous Sunday when, he admitted, he had spent much of the day drinking! There was a suggestion

that Pickwick, who also wore a hearing aid, should lend it to Jingle because there were so many private meetings going on that it didn't seem to be much use in Pickwick's ear and would probably be better used by Jingle but Pickwick didn't seem to hear this suggestion.

Mivins reported that Dodson had claimed the minutes to be fiction; Dodson was fined for this observation but in turn claimed that Mivins' comments were based not on any comment Dodson had made about the minutes but because of jealousy, because Dodson had been given a new carp rod by Jack Hopkins for his birthday. Grummer told members that Mivins and Dodson did not see eye to eye about fishing rods since an incident some years ago when Mivins had been given a 'greenheart' rod and Dodson tried to show how flexible such rods were but only succeeded in snapping the top section. Dodson claimed this was evidence that the rod was old and brittle because it shouldn't have snapped had it been in good condition. Weller appeared from the gents toilet bearing a length of wooden batten to which was attached a piece of cloth and claimed this was a new rod for Mivins to replace the one Dodson had snapped!

The Secretary reported a number of items of correspondence including a reminder that tickets for the dinner at the Mansion House were still available at £120 each and a letter from the Pickwick Bicycle Club Chairman (Justice Stareleigh) listing events due to take place to celebrate Charles Dickens' bicentenary. One member of the Bicycle Club (P.Legge) was intending to attend this Club's celebration at the Crown Hotel in Nantwich and had been sent details of the arrangements, but nothing had been heard since about his intentions.

On the subject of the bicentenary celebrations, Grummer said the price would be £90 each and produced a list of who would be sharing with whom and what travel arrangements could be made. He suggested that we should aim to be at the hotel by 11.30 a.m. to register and members could then spend the afternoon in Nantwich before the official celebrations which would commence at 7.00 p.m. Members felt there would be no point in holding a formal meeting on the Wednesday following the bicentenary but agreed to pay £1 at the March meeting to alleviate any loss of income by cancelling the February meeting.

Due to the lateness of the hour the P.O.R & I was cancelled and members made a donation in lieu of their question - which they would have got wrong anyway.

The usual fiddle on the raffle took place with, surprise surprise, Dodson claiming first prize. The vote of thanks to Pickwick and the vice-chairman was presented by Weller who said it wasn't difficult to criticise Pickwick and his vice-chairman because the meeting had been a complete disaster with no control being exercised from start to finish. Instead of following the agenda, Pickwick had allowed members to talk about such matters as blue films, carp fishing and any other matters which took their fancy. Instead of reminding Pickwick of his duties, the vice-chairman had joined the many discussion groups which had proliferated throughout the evening and it could only be hoped that things would improve in the future although that seemed to be a vain hope if this evening's performance was anything to go by. At one point during the vote of thanks, Pickwick was seen to be negotiating some cash transaction with Dodson, probably in connection with the bicentenary arrangements. Winkle felt that Pickwick was more sinned against than sinning and said he was happy to second the vote of thanks to a man who had done his best to control a group of

members intent on disrupting all his efforts. He was ashamed to think that all Pickwick's attempts to control the meeting had met with abuse and Pickwick's restraint was commendable.

Good neet owd friends was sung by all and was followed by the National Anthem The raffle raised £6.50 whilst the Fines Box contained £6.65.