

Minutes of the 1213rd meeting of the Manchester Pickwick Club held at the Moorside Social Club on 19th September, 2012

By way of a change the 1213rd meeting of the Manchester Pickwick Club commenced on an unusual note when Jingle fell on the way in to the club; normally he only falls on the way out when there is some justification depending on the amount he has drank! This meant that there was a slight delay in commencing the meeting which was to the advantage of latecomers who were expecting to be fined, so Jingle's fall was to the benefit of all - except Jingle that is.

Due to the absence on holiday of the club Steward and his wife, the refreshments had been made by Mrs Winkle and several members had been asked to ensure they were early to the meeting to assist Winkle to set out the various menu items. As it turned out, Winkle had already sorted things out, and very nice and appetising they looked covered in clingfilm on the side table.

Not only was the Steward absent but Pickwick himself was not present having been a recent in-patient following an operation, so the President, Stiggins, was informed that he would have to take the chair. This didn't go down well because Stiggins had been looking forward to relaxing from 12 months in the post and being able to 'have a go' at his replacement. He protested loud and long about the 'mafia' who run the club and claimed that he would only do the job under duress. If that wasn't enough, the vice-chairman then asked how he had got the job when he hadn't attended the AGM and assumed that he wouldn't be appointed in his absence; how little some people know about the operations of the Manchester Pickwick Club where absence is a guarantee of appointment to some job nobody else wants!

Another notable absentee was the Secretary; Grummer telephoned him and was told he had forgotten the date and was truly apologetic about his non-attendance. There followed a short discussion about sending reminders before the meetings and Smangle proposed that the youngest member of the club should be responsible for this duty and was surprised when this proposal was supported unanimously by the older members - he had mistakenly thought Ben Allen was younger than him and was shocked to find he had talked himself into a job!

In response to a question from members about Pickwick's health, Dodson explained that Pickwick had gone into hospital for a knee operation which had, unfortunately, turned sour and resulted in him being unable to attend the meeting even though only a week previously he had indicated his intention to be present. Grummer then commented on a recent visit to Dodson when he had slipped and fallen on Dodson's path which is very shiny and dangerous in wet weather. As he lay there suffering, Mr and Mrs Dodson appeared and Dodson handed him a glass of whiskey. Grummer was very impressed by this goodwill gesture until he overheard Dodson say to his wife "if he tries to sue, we will claim he was drunk". Snodgrass said this didn't surprise him because Dodson paid little attention to the health and safety of others and quoted the example of Dodson getting a chair for an elderly lady to stand on so she could put up a poster instead of offering to do the job for her.

Mivins expanded this tale of Dodson's absence of sympathy for others explaining that in the past, members were not known for paying their subscriptions until the very last minute and at the funeral of one such member as members stood round the grave, Dodson was heard to mutter that the deceased hadn't paid his subs for that year; whether Dodson subsequently made a claim against the estate of the deceased isn't known. Dodson claimed he wasn't the only one whose morals left much to be desired and claimed that on a recent visit to a garden centre by himself, his wife, Grummer and Mivins, Grummer was seen to pick a steel washer off the ground and Dodson suspected it would have found its way into the club's fines box. However, instead it was used to pay a gambling debt at a card school at the Moorside Social Club. Mivins said he was the recipient of this duff coin which was currently in his pocket at home and might still find its way to the club's fines box - watch this space!

As already indicated the food had been prepared by Mrs Winkle and tasted as good as it looked; members asked that Winkle convey their thanks to his wife for her efforts which were first class. The P.O.R & I was presented by Weller and the only member who answered his question correctly was Tupman who was promptly fined for being too clever. Winkle suggested that the P.O.R & I was unfair to a number of members who had hearing difficulties and it might be fairer if the book was in braille. Tupman commiserated with Winkle but said a braille book wouldn't help because braille was to help blind people not those who couldn't hear.

Jingle talked about the visit to Nantwich which had been a huge success despite himself having to send for his suit which he had forgotten to take and the number of items left behind by various members which included ties, combs and other objects, most of which were collected from the Hotel by Nancy Grummer and returned to the appropriate members by Grummer himself. Jingle went on to say that he had subsequently attended a wedding at Manchester Town Hall and during the evening had enjoyed the company of younger ladies with the result that over-enthusiasm during the dancing had led to him trying one pirouette too many and finishing up in hospital for three weeks. However his problems were alleviated by a visit from two members with a bottle of scotch whilst he was recuperating and having regular attention from a nurse.

The vote of thanks was proposed by Smangle who said he didn't think Pickwick could understand all the insults thrown at him during the evening because of his hearing difficulties whilst the vice-chairman seemed utterly confused by the evening's events and had no idea of the role he was to play. He couldn't understand how Pickwick had been chosen for tonight's job in the first place when he obviously didn't want it and could only assume that the vice-chairman would improve as the year progressed - he certainly couldn't get any worse. Seconding the vote of thanks, Snodgrass felt that some commendation was due to Pickwick who had managed to keep Dodson reasonably quiet during the evening which was quite an achievement. Pickwick had come to the meeting hoping for a quiet evening and had been thrust into the hot seat against his wishes. Similarly, the vice-chairman wasn't aware he had been appointed to the job and had not had any time to prepare for it. So all in all they had done a good job under trying circumstances and deserved credit for that.

To get his own back on those members who had given him a rough time during the evening, Pickwick announced that we would sing the second verse of Good Neet Owd Friends followed by the National Anthem.

The Fines box contained £6.15 whilst the raffle raised £6.50.