

Minutes of the 1217th meeting of the Manchester Pickwick Club held at the Moorside Social Club on 20th February, 2013

The return of the proper Mr Pickwick saw the meeting commence at 8.06 p.m. with an announcement by Dodson that this would be a free evening; members realised that Snodgrass was not present and we always have a free evening when Snodgrass is unable to take advantage of the situation. The evening was further improved by Pickwick announcing that he had recently celebrated his 75th birthday and would be buying drinks all round for the members in celebration.

Dodson announced that he had brought a present for Mrs Jingle - a tin of calamari which seemed to have replaced the Miau he normally bought. Jingle was so excited that he thought of ringing Mrs Jingle right away but then revised his decision, explaining that by this time Mrs Jingle would be on her second bottle of port and probably unable to respond.

Grummer reported that Smangle had moved to Cornwall at very short notice but intended to retain his membership and would attend whenever possible.

Dodson, who had volunteered to act as P.O.C suggested that there should be an introduction of members even when there were no visitors present but Stiggins claimed this was simply a smokescreen so Pickwick would forget Dodson owed a fine from the last meeting for attending a football match instead of a club meeting. Dodson, of course, denied this. Pickwick thought Dodson's idea was a good one and ruled that when the D.C. wasn't present, members would introduce their own characters; to everybody's surprise every member present was able to describe their characters perfectly.

Stiggins again claimed that Dodson was getting away with avoiding payment of a fine but Dodson said the fine had been withdrawn and made the scurrilous suggestion that the minutes had been 'made up' by the minute writer within the last week. Mivins claimed that although the minutes had only been typed up recently, they represented a true and correct record of the meeting and, in due course, would be confirmed as such.

Dodson then decided to tell members about how Grummer's kleptomania first manifested itself; it seemed that a vehicle similar to Grummer's had been severely damaged in an accident and was taken to the garage where Grummer was employed and subsequently written off. Knowing that the vehicle would be transferred to a scrapyard, Grummer asked the workshop manager whether he could transfer the wheels from the damaged vehicle to his own vehicle because they were much better. Permission was given and the wheels were transferred and repainted to match Grummer's vehicle. Unfortunately, within a short time the manager was told that the insurers had decided to inspect the damaged vehicle tyres to make sure they weren't responsible for the accident so the wheels had to be transferred back to the damaged vehicle and again repainted. The inspection completed, the wheels were once again transferred and repainted, fortunately for good this time.

Grummer then told the members about a recent visit to Blackpool with Stiggins when the wind was very strong and making walking difficult. He advised members never to get on a boat with Stiggins because many years ago Stiggins had gone on holiday on the Broads in a boat. And had collided with a bridge when the engine failed. The boat was forced against the bridge by the current and the mast made the front of the boat sit lower and lower in the water until it looked as though it was going to sink. Fortunately, the mast then snapped and the boat levelled off, only to drift backwards until it collided with a sandbank, the jolt causing Stiggins to fall overboard and lose his glasses. They were subsequently rescued and the mast replaced by the boatyard.

Stiggins then decided to volunteer to act as P.O.R & I and collected a copy of the book only to discover that the copy he had collected was in French! Having exchanged the French version for an English copy he presented a reading from Chapter 22 and followed this with an inquisition which was notable for the fact that a couple of members were able to answer their questions correctly - not that it availed them anything because they were promptly fined for being too clever.

There followed a short discussion about the membership of the club, Grummer pointing out that none of the members were getting any younger and that some new blood would be advantageous. However, Ben Allen, supported by Slammer and Stiggins, said that many organisations were experiencing reductions in membership because younger people didn't seem to want to join organisations like ours, preferring to sit in front of a television or computer. Masonic Lodges, Rotary Clubs and other similar organisations were also suffering reductions in numbers and many had been forced to amalgamate or close. Probably the only organisations able to attract younger people were sports clubs and even they found that members left once they could no longer take part in the activity.

The vote of thanks to Pickwick and the vice-chairman was proposed by Ben Allen who said Pickwick's brain was obviously still in Australia because the whole meeting had been upside down. This was the first meeting since his return so hopefully by the next meeting he would have sorted himself out. Seconding the vote of thanks, Dodson said Stiggins was obviously on the ball because he kept advising Pickwick on what to do, and he was particularly pleased to see the fines box in operation to keep everybody on their toes. It was obvious that the vice-chairman must have learned much from Pickwick's performance which could only bode well for next year.

Before members could sing 'Good Neet Owd Friends', Grummer spoke about the old Mr Pott who had chest problems and frequently had to spend time in hospital, and at one meeting the surgeon who had been treating him had been invited as a guest. When Pott was asked to lead the singing the surgeon (who had had plenty to drink) produced a stethoscope and sounded Pott's chest before announcing "I think we should limit it to the first and last verse only". Incidentally, in those days the meetings regularly lasted until the early hours of the morning and the surgeon announced at the end of the meeting that he was operating at 7.00a.m. the following day - pity the poor patient!

Good Neet Owd Friends was sung by all and followed by the National Anthem. The fines box contained £4.17 whilst the raffle raised £4.50.