

Minutes of the 1254th Meeting of the Manchester Pickwick Club held at the Moorside Social Club on 18th September, 2019

Due the unavoidable absence of the Minute Writer, Mivins, who was up to his neck in muck and bullets on the Somme battlefield it had been arranged that the minutes of the last meeting would be read by Tom Roker, one of the few Pickwickians known to be able to read; to everybody's surprise Roker advised that he could also do joined up writing and so was asked to make notes of this meeting. That'll teach him to be clever!

Roker's notes record that the meeting commenced promptly at 8.00 p.m. after the usual financial complaints from Dodson about non-payment of subs, the miscreants being named as Roker and Slammer. The dispute ended when Grummer owned up but Roker and Slammer still announced their intention to sue.

Pickwick opened the meeting with his usual bonhomie but then complained about a second meeting taking place below the nick which appeared to revolve around the problems of Mr Pott who was occupying the position of vice-chairman, problems which necessitated the rearranging of furniture.

Dodson then advised members that Tracy Tupman had been on a trip to the Lake District but was still taking the tablets. He was followed by Grummer who had written an amusing poem about the recent cruise on the Bridgewater Canal, where members experienced tropical heat followed by intense storms, one of the latter necessitating taking shelter under a bridge. At this point Pickwick announced that in an earlier existence he had driven a Fire Engine over the bridge in question with his heart in his mouth.

Tracy Tupman's idea of choosing a particular chapter to talk about at each meeting was considered a good idea and Jingle impressed the members with his concise account of Chapter 7 and the assistance he received did nothing to reduce the applause his rendition merited. It was agreed that the Bardell trial, Chapter 34, should be studied for the next meeting.

The minutes were accepted as correct but slanderous, obviously the way they were read, and despite Dodson claiming something should be done about the slander of Nat Winkle, there were no matters arising from the minutes.

It was noticed that the bonhomie with which Pickwick opened the meeting had not continued and the Fines Box was getting heavier as the level of fines rose.

Probably a first for the club was the presentation by Dodson to Solomon Pell of 25 Dirhams which had found their way into the Fines Box in recent meetings; obviously he had been unable to find a lucrative outlet for these coins.

The P.O.R & I was read by Dr Slammer as usual; it was taken from Chapter 9 and was claimed to be a very difficult reading covering Jingle's elopement from Manor Farm. The number of fines increased even for those who managed to answer correctly and there were suggestions that Pickwick was becoming drunk with power.

The meal followed and once again great appreciation for Mrs Pott's dumplings was expressed. It was then announced that Mrs Pott had been very ill recently and members expressed their hope for a speedy recovery. Similar sentiments were expressed towards Mrs Slammer whose problems had necessitated the fitting of a pacemaker.

Pickwick announced that he had been researching the archives and had produced a copy of the minutes of a meeting on 9th March, 1915 (meeting 147). These 104-year-old minutes showed that the meetings in those days were just as lively as the present-day meetings. Members were very impressed with Pickwick's initiative and it was agreed that a similar reading from the archives would be included at all future meetings.

At the commencement of the raffle, Dodson complained that Mivins had kept the new book of raffle tickets which Dodson had provided but was unable to discern what nefarious activities he intended with them. Dodson had been forced to purchase another new set of raffle tickets. Bearing in mind that Mivins has been shadowing Dodson for some years as his deputy, it is hardly surprising that many of Dodson's own nefarious activities should come back to haunt him!

The vote of thanks to Pickwick and the vice-chairman was presented by Solomon Pell who entered the proposal with gusto but then proceeded to criticize all members of the top table and gradually extended this criticism to the rest of the members with the exception of Dr Slammer. Several members were fined during this presentation. Seconding the vote of thanks, Tom Roker, who seemed to be the master of any situation or activity said it had been a splendid meeting and that Pickwick's research and presentation of the 104th meeting had been exceptional, as had Tupman's idea of covering a particular chapter of the book at each meeting.

Pickwick thanked the proposer and seconder of the vote of thanks for their kind words and said the health of the club was improving steadily; Jingle agreed and claimed that Pickwick had raised the game at Manchester Pickwick Club.

Once again 'Good neet owd friends' and the National Anthem were sung with gusto but little musical ability.

The Raffle raised £5.00 whilst the fines box contained £8.35.