

**Minutes of the 1,179th Meeting of the
Manchester Pickwick Club held at the Moorside Social Club
on 19th October 2006**

Mr Pickwick, being well prepared, opened the meeting promptly at 8pm. Dodson, Weller, Tupman and Nupkins arrived at 8.01pm and were promptly fined for lateness. Weller expressed his amazement that the meeting had opened on time as Mr Pickwick had never arrived on time during his whole working life. A debate followed as to whether the meeting had been properly opened but the members who had arrived on time confirmed that the gavel had been sounded by Mr Pickwick and the vice-chairman. Although Grummer had arrived just on time he was fined for interrupting the proceedings while the latecomers were being fined.

Tracy Tupman continued his argument against the fines by insisting on giving the meeting a step by step account of the journey from his car to the meeting. He was promptly fined again for boring the members to death.

A new member, Roy Cotterill was introduced by Dodson and was given the Pickwickian name of Jack Hopkins. After Dodson had given a colourful account of Jack Hopkins' dress, Hopkins read the Pickwickean pledge. Joe the Fat Boy asked if the pledge had been written by a doctor as Hopkins had obviously had difficulty deciphering the writing. Jack Hopkins was welcomed to the Club by acclamation.

Sam Weller pleaded to be excused the duties of P.O.C due to a back ailment. There were several suggestions as to how Weller's injury may have been sustained and although showing no sympathy to Weller, Perker and Grummer agreed to deputise on this occasion.

Snodgrass introduced Stephen Jarvis, a guest who had travelled from the South to witness a meeting. Stephen is a member of the Dickens Foundation and is engaged in writing a book on the interaction of Pickwick Papers with the lives of ordinary people. Stephen was welcomed to the meeting but some trepidation was expressed as to whether he would consider his visit to be an enlightening and uplifting experience.

Dodson, having recently returned from a visit to Spain presented Alfred Jingle with a supply of Miaow. Jingle asked Pickwick's permission to leave the meeting early to make best use of his gift. With Sheila's best interests in mind, Mr Pickwick refused the request and at this point, adjourned to the Gents. Joe the Fat Boy asked Mr Pickwick if he had removed his chain of office and thereby adjourned the meeting. Mr Pickwick admitted that he had not removed his chain of office and offered a donation for leaving the meeting whilst it was in progress. Snodgrass suggested that Joe the Fat boy was out of order in challenging Mr Pickwick and Joe was given a double fine for the challenge and for snitching.

At 9.02, Grummer suggested we should have the 9 o'clock toast on time and although agendas had, for once, been distributed to all present, the meeting was in its usual state of chaos and after some discussion as to which was the 9 o'clock toast, Grummer's request was ignored.

Grummer was upset by Dodson's suggestion that it was he who had contributed the Zimbabwe cents to the fines box at the previous meeting. Grummer confirmed that he had never been to Zimbabwe and could not, therefore be the guilty party. Noone leapt to Grummer's defence and the matter remains unresolved.

Dodson claimed that Weller had suggested that he had broken the rules by discussing club business outside the meetings. Weller denied the accusation and utter confusion descended as the matter of what constituted a breach of the rules in this respect was debated. The discussion ended in the usual manner with nothing resolved and Grummer being fined for an irrelevant intervention in the matter. The vice-chairman was fined for failing to respond, for the second time, to Mr. Pickwick's gavel.

The meeting was interrupted by the ringing tone of Weller's mobile and Weller promptly disappeared into the Gents. Grummer suggested that it was Weller's physio calling to fix an immediate appointment. On his return, Weller said that it was his wife who had called and she felt he should not be fined for the interruption. Her plea was not admitted.

As there was only one piece of correspondence, being the Secretary's invitation letter to Stephen Jarvis, the Secretary insisted on reading it in full. The letter congratulated Mr Jarvis on his recent nuptial activity.

A complaint was lodged by Grummer that fines were concentrated on those sitting below the nick. This was refuted by the fines master and a long debate followed as to the location of the infamous 'nick' but, as usual, no conclusion was reached.

Joe the Fat Boy, in rising to read the POR & I referred to his academic prowess in his time at Darwen Grammar School. Ben Allen suggested that this was a girl's school and was promptly fined. Joe then announced the chapter number for the reading as XII, indicating unquestionably that Latin formed no part in the timetable at Darwen as he couldn't translate this to number 12. The inquisition produced substantial contributions to the fines box and must have impressed our guest with total lack of knowledge demonstrated by the members.

The vice-chairman continued to have problems with his gavel and was repeatedly fined. Grummer asked if he should set an alarm clock for 11 pm so that the 9 o'clock toast would not be forgotten. A debate, without decision, followed as to who should be responsible for ensuring that the toast took place on time. The debate frustrated Mr. Pickwick to the extent that he uttered a forbidden word and duly offered a contribution to the fines box.

In the raffle, our guest won a set of tape measures. Jingle suggested that this had been fixed to enable him to measure whether the meeting had come up to his expectations.

Dodson wished Fogg a swift recovery from his recent operation and apologized for not having previously noted Fogg's indisposition. Jingle said that he had noticed Fogg's indisposition and had ordered an extra pint to give him the strength to resuscitate Fogg if necessary. Tupman was relieved that this had not proved necessary as he thought a kiss of life from Jingle could be fatal.

The 9 o'clock toast was drunk at 10.48.

Stephen Jarvis responded to the toast to the visitor by saying that he had never been to a meeting like this. He had hoped to attend the September meeting but had been unable to do so because of his wedding arrangements. His fiancée did not understand that Pickwickian matters took priority over everything. Stephen was particularly interested in our Pickwickian songs and gave a brief rendering of another song he had come across. He had enjoyed his visit and thanked members for their hospitality.

Before beginning the vote of thanks to Mr Pickwick and the vice-chairman, Jingle counted his stock of bitter to ensure that he had enough to sustain him. He thanked Stephen Jarvis for visiting the club but as Jingle had no idea what was going on during the meeting, he wasn't sure what impression it had made on our visitor. Jingle said that Mr Pickwick had shown a big improvement as the first ten minutes of the meeting had yielded more in fines than the whole of the previous meeting. The P.O.Cs were commended for their diligence but that had not saved them from the rattle of the fines box. Jingle welcomed our new member and commented that, looking around, we could use all the medical men we can get.

The vote of thanks was seconded by Grummer who referred to words such as competent, vibrant, dynamic, mature, energetic and youthful, none of which could apply to Mr. Pickwick and the vice-chairman. He felt that drab, mediocre and incompetent would be nearer the mark. Grummer also thanked Stephen Jarvis for attending and hoped that he had found the experience enlightening.

The vice-chairman responded by thanking Jingle and Grummer but commented that his attempts to assist Mr. Pickwick in controlling the meeting would be improved if the elder statesmen of the club gave practical help to the more junior members instead of constantly trying to disrupt the meeting.

The meeting ended with the singing of Good neet owd friends and was followed by the national Anthem and the loyal toast.

The raffle raised £9 and the fines box contained £8.10, €0.10 and 10 Yugoslav dinars.