

**Minutes of the 1183rd meeting of the
Manchester Pickwick Club held at the Moorside Social Club
on 15th March, 2007.**

The 1183rd meeting of the Manchester Pickwick Club commenced at 8.12 p.m. with Sam Weller occupying the chair in the absence of the proper Mr Pickwick. Tupman asked who had appointed Weller and on being advised that Dodson was the culprit asked what right did Dodson have to decide who should occupy the chair; Dodson said that as a past President, he had the right to decide who should act in place of the absent Mr Pickwick.

To annoy Dodson even further Tupman supported a suggestion from Snodgrass that all meetings held on the 15th of the month should be free evenings and on being advised that subs had already been collected for the evening and that the next meeting was to be a free evening because it was the A.G.M. said that if we had a free evening on the 15th the subs already collected could be held against the next meeting to pay for that free evening! Dodson ignored this tortured thinking and brought up what to his mind was a far more serious matter, the placing in the fines box of not only one but two 'duff' 50p pieces. Grummer sympathised with Dodson and suggested that the Fines Officer should face a considerable fine for accepting duff coins, adding that coining was a serious offence formerly meriting execution although in this case he felt a fine or loss of a hand might be more appropriate. Jingle claimed it was not his fault; his hearing aid had been lost and he was thus unable to hear the sound of the coins falling into the fines box to check their quality. At this point Tupman announced that he had been given a 1 cent piece in his change instead of a proper British coin and Jingle's sins were overlooked.

The toast to Mr Pickwick was called and found several members without drinks. Mivins claimed that in the past members without drinks at such an important time were automatically fined but Pickwick decided that on this occasion the 'stand-in' P.O.C. should pay a fine instead. The reason for this decision was not hard to find – Fiskin who was acting in that role had provided his own piece of paper on which to record the drinks order instead of cadging a piece of paper from elsewhere as Mr Pickwick in his alternative role normally does.

The vice-chairman said the minutes had reminded him that at the last meeting it had been decided that if Pickwick wasn't present the vice-chairman should be consulted about who should stand in for him and he couldn't recall being consulted on this occasion! Dodson said that club rules could only be changed at the A.G.M. so the decision reached at the last meeting was illegal; he added that nobody had made any attempt to solve this problem and that if he hadn't grasped the initiative the meeting would never have started. He went on to say that the first member he had approached to take this job had declined the honour and he appointed Weller in a state of desperation. He was very disappointed at the reluctance of members to take the chair when Pickwick wasn't able to attend – even Tupman with all his experience had been reluctant to take the chair at the last meeting but had eventually performed admirably. Mivins pointed out that when passing the vote of thanks at the end of that meeting Dodson had referred to Tupman as a tyrant and claimed his appointment to the chair was a big mistake and he wondered which statement to believe.

The Secretary reported that he had received a number of E-mails following his communications with the Philadelphia Pickwick Club. An E-mail from Philadelphia which had been circulated to almost everybody in the USA enclosed writings from their Mr Pickwick. A further E-mail from Peter Barnes announced they were holding a meal on 20th March, 2007 for 4 Pickwick Clubs in the London area. Finally, an E-mail from the Dickens Pickwick Club founded by Cedric Dickens which meets at the George and Vulture every December and has recently produced a book about the history of the club together with pen-portraits of the members past and present. The Secretary was congratulated for all his work in bringing together information about the various Pickwick clubs which had been hidden until now.

Reverting to the earlier discussion about free evenings, Dodson said the clubs money was the clubs money and to quote a famous supermarket expression, "Once its gone, its gone". Ben Allen suggested an even better expression was "Buy one, get one free". Grummer then tried to improve Dodson's feelings by offering to buy the two duff 50p pieces but failed to indicate how much he was prepared to offer for them.

Tupman suggested that if the club was interested in having a meeting away from this area involving an overnight stay there were various ways in which this could be achieved and invited suggestions. Dodson thought it should not replace one of the regular meetings but should be a separate event similar to the Centenary dinner but as a social evening rather than a meeting. Smangle thought it might be possible to organise the event in July or August and suggested Nantwich as a suitable venue; Magnus felt that it could replace the usual summer outing. Eventually it was agreed that it would be discussed at the A.G.M. and that if such an event was to be agreed, to set up a small committee to organise it. Jingle reminded members that the owners of the Nantwich venue had closed the bar at 4.00a.m. despite the club's request for an extension!

Magnus said that the website set up by Fiskin was excellent and that Fiskin should be congratulated for his efforts.

Smangle complained that Ben Allen had got salad with his sandwiches whilst the rest of the members got nothing, a further example of the preferential treatment given to this member because of his longstanding membership of the Moorside Club. Pickwick agreed with these comments and asked why Ben Allen should get the 'de luxe' buffet whilst the rest got 'compo' rations.

After Ben Allen's reading of the P.O.R & I had resulted in fines all round the meeting was in abeyance whilst Pickwick tried to work out who was doing what and why. It was pointed out to him that the item he was searching for was in the hands of the P.C. and was the nomination of members to propose and second a vote of thanks to Pickwick and the vice-chairman.

Tupman having drawn the short straw commenced by pointing out that despite having two pairs of glasses on which to call, Pickwick was still unable to follow the agenda set before him. He had spent most of the meeting talking to Dodson and then had to impose swingeing fines for the P.O.R & I simply to put a bit of weight into the fines box. The Fines Officer had virtually nothing to do all evening and the only officer to come out of the meeting with any credit was the vice-chairman. Pickwick had been rubbish.

Seconding the vote of thanks, Grummer said he thought both Pickwick and the vice-chairman had done a good job this evening but he had noticed that Ben Allen, who had started his pickwickian career just below the top table, had slowly moved down and was now clearly below the nick.

Good neet owd friends was sung by Grummer and Jingle and was followed by the National Anthem which was sung by all.

The raffle raised £6.00 whilst the Fines Box contained £9.29.