

Minutes of the 540th Meeting held at Headquarters
on the 13th April, 1944

The atmosphere at the Mitre Inn was at a much better temperature than that at the previous meeting; a nice fire glowed in the meeting room, pots were on the table, furniture set out, nothing lacking except members who came in little by little and one by one until finally a move was made upstairs and the Secretary stating that Mr. Pickwick was absent asked Mr. Fogg to take the chair. This Mr. Fogg did and nominated Mr. Wardle to the Vice-Chair. He duly ~~at~~ declared the 540th meeting to be opened, passed a word of welcome to the visitors and asked Mr. Podder to get the mugs filled up. When these preliminaries had been completed the Vice-Chair rose to his feet and proposed the health of Mr. Pickwick which was given with great gusto to the accompaniment of Lowton.

The chairman then called for the minutes of the 539th meeting and the Secretary prefaced the reading with the remark that he hardly thought that the minutes did justice to the occasion. When he had finished then the chairman referred to the Secretary's opening remarks and said that he was aware that the minutes had been compiled some considerable time after the meeting in spite of entreaties from the Secretary's secretary and that if he had written them immediately after the meeting when the events were fresh in his mind he would perhaps not have to apologise. The Secretary refuted these remarks saying that he was not apologise in the manner suggested by the chairman, who had, in the Secretary's opinion, taken advantage of being officially associated with the Secretary, to make remarks regarding matters of which he would otherwise be unaware. His remarks were intended to convey that the meeting was so full of incidents that it was impossible to do justice to them on paper.

Mr. Lowton while proposing the minutes said that he would like it to be placed on record that this was the first time in the history of the Club that remarks had been made to the Secretary on the subject of the minutes.

Apologies for absence were now taken and the chairman apologised on behalf of Mr. Pickwick saying that he had an important engagement with an old friend. Apologies were also received from Haratio Fiskin, Ben Allen, Mr. Trundle and Bob Sawyer; it was reported that Tracy Tupman was ill and going into hospital and that Mr. Pott was unable to attend, being engaged on fire-watching duties.

The chairman now stated he would entertain the Company although nobody had asked him to and led off with "Fishermen of England" and "Gentle Maiden". At the conclusion the vice-chair said he wished to call ^{the} attention of the chairman to the conduct of certain members who, in his opinion, should be heavily fined that -

- (1) The Secretary had gone out without permission and had called on his way;
- (2) Conversation with George Nupkins;
- (3) Mr. Podder had been engaged in conversation with Dr. Slammer;
- (4) George Nupkins for conversation with the Secretary.

After much argument and debate the ~~minutes~~ fines were duly paid and the chairman called on Samuel Slurkey who gave us his standby "An Old-fashioned Story". Alf. Jingle and Mr. Stiggins now arrived and were duly fined 1d, and the chairman called on Mr. Lowton for an item. Mr. Lowton said the piano was in a very poor condition and he would not attempt a pianoforte solo, but he obliged with the song "Longshoreman Billy".

George Nupkins and Alf. Jingle were then fined for the manner in which they expressed their enthusiasm when the chairman was speaking and a discussion arose on

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the subject of the First Lord of the Admiralty - W.H. Smith, and the basis for the Gilbert & Sullivan's Opera "Trial by Jury". At the end of the discussion Mr. Lowton said he was going to give an encore whether the Company wanted it or not and obliged with "Let It Go." Alf. Jingle then gave entertainment, the items being "Toast to the Visitor and that much admired favourite, "The Night I appeared as Macbeth.

The vice-chair then rose to his feet to propose the toast to the visitors; he said it was a pleasure and a privilege to draw the attention of the Pickwickians presence to two very fine guests; we were delighted to see them, the Pickwick Club specialised in visitors, we preferred them almost to members, he hoped they would have an enjoyable evening.

Mr. Whitehead replied on behalf of the visitors - himself and Mr. Batty, saying they were doing very very well and thoroughly enjoying their evening and drank the health of the Pickwick Club.

The Secretary now presented the Chairman with one complete lemon, as a perfect answer to his remarks on the minutes, and thereafter George Nupkins enquired who was the Pickwickian who was saw fitting to fill the punch bowl and stated that it was the privilege of Mr. Pickwick. The chairman asked who gave Mr. Nupkins the privilege to inquiring at this stage and George replied it was his privilege to inquisite as and when he wished. A debate on the price of whisky followed, chiefly centred around a remarkable brand of Messrs Lewis's at the handsome price of 1/- per bottle.

The chairman thinking he was about due again, got up and gave us "A Lady Sweet and Kind" and by special request the "Floral Dance."

The toast was called to the memory of Charles Dickens followed by that to absent members and the chairman thereafter called on P.O.R. & I. for a reading.

George Nupkins responded with an account of the visit of Mr. Winkle to Bristol and his meeting with Bob Sawyer at Bristol. As inquisitor, he went deeply into the matter of the finding of the remarkable stone by Mr. Pickwick and after this had been settled said he would suggest at the next meeting, or some future meeting, P.O.R. & I. be put in the pillary and members be allowed to take up the role of inquisitor. It was thought this might produce a certain amount of fun and members willingly accepted the suggestion.

The chairman now called on Alf. Jingle who gave "Songs of Hiawatha" after Longfellow followed by "Three Blind Mice a parody of Rudyard Kipling.

George Nupkins now addressed the chairman as Mr. Fogg who took him up very sharply on the point and that he should either be addressed as Mr. Chairman or Mr. Pickwick. George, as is his want, argued the point saying that Mr. Fogg was only occupying the chair by virtue of Mr. Pickwick's absence and that he was quite entitled to address him as Mr. Fogg. The chairman, however, stood by his guns and said he, on this occasion, was the judge and George Nupkins would be fined one penny.

Time was getting on, the kitty was exhausted and finally the chairman called for the King.

So ended the 541st meeting.

Present: Mr. Fogg
Lowton
Podder
Hon. Sanl. Slumkey M.P.
George Nupkins
Dr. Slammer
Dodson
Alf Jingle
Mr. Wardle
Mr. Stiggins

Visitors: Mr. Whitehead & Mr. Batty.