

MANCHESTER PICKWICK CLUB

Minutes of the 534th Meeting held at
Headquarters on 20th January, 1944.

A fair sprinkling of Pickwickians had assembled in the meeting room when the Secretary arrived to find Dr. Slammer deeply engrossed in conversation with the chairman, the subject of such conversation was never discovered, but presently Mr. Pickwick awoke to the fact that he had come to preside over a Pickwickian meeting and he asked members to be seated.

In the absence of Mr. Fogg, who was suffering inwardly from gastric trouble and mainly from his inability to attend the meeting and take his usual quantum of beer, Mr. Pickwick nominated Tony Weller to the vice-chair and declared the 534th meeting open.

A complaint was immediately voiced that the members were undecided as to the year in which the meeting was to be held, this by reason of the fact that the attendance cards had shown the meeting to be held on Thursday, 21st January, whereas the 20th was the due date. The Secretary humbly apologised and put a penny in the Poor Box.

The vice-chair now called for the toast to Mr. Pickwick and in the absence of Mr. Lowton this was honoured without the usual musical accompaniment.

The minutes of the 532nd meeting were read and received on the motion of Sgt. Snubbin, supported by Mr. Wardle.

Mr. Pickwick now enquired if anything was arising from the minutes, if not, we would get on with the correspondence, but Sgt. Snubbin, who this evening was evidently the disciple of the late Tracy Tupman, said he had a lot to raise; the first item being something to do with the Christmas Dinner. Mr. Pickwick said this had nothing to do with the minutes and was there anything else. Sgt. Snubbin said "Yes. Where were the Syllabus?" Mr. Pickwick again pointed out that this had nothing to do with the minutes and Pott got on his feet and said he would like to speak on the alternative accommodation. Mr. Pickwick ruled him to order as this was a separate item on the agenda.

It was evident that the Chairman was in a hurry to get on to some business and he hurriedly called for correspondence and apologies were read from Sgt. Bufus, Mr. Fogg and Mr. Dumkins. The Secretary inadvertently called Sgt. Bufus Sgt. Snubbin and was fined for his error.

Mr. Pickwick now stated that three possible members were waiting at the bar downstairs for nomination to the Club, this probably accounted for the Chairman's hurry to dispense of the earlier part of the proceedings.

Sgt. Snubbin enquired as to the number of members and the Secretary said that they would admit of the election of three new members. This, however, did not satisfy Sgt. Snubbin who said he would like a straight answer to a straight question. The Secretary stated that the present members numbered twenty-six not including the "live" member and the honorary member and a short discussion ensued as to whether "live" members and honorary members should be counted in the total of thirty which is the maximum number allowed.

The Chairman got a bit rattled with Sgt. Snubbin's interruptions and said that whatever anybody said he, as Mr. Pickwick, was going to propose them for new members. Eventually Mr. Warton was proposed by Mr. Wardle, seconded by Alfred Jingle; Mr. Graham proposed by Mr. Pickwick, seconded by Mr. Wardle and Mr. Nelson proposed by Alfred Jingle, seconded by Mr. Pickwick.

George Nupkins enquired if the proposed members had attended meetings in accordance with the usual custom of the Club and on being assured of this they were duly elected members of the Manchester Pickwick Club.

A discussion as to the names arose and it was finally decided that Mr. Graham should take the Pickwickian name of Job Trotter, Mr. Nelson should take the name of the Hon. Samuel Slumkey, M.P. and Mr. Walton Rev. Stiggins.

Mr. Wardle then went to bring in the proposed members and said that they were about to take one of the most important steps in the crossroads of life, if they would look on the intelligent faces clustered around the table they would see that they were a very worthy company. He read the Pickwick Pledge which was afterwards read separately by the three members. Mr. Wardle then informed them of their Pickwickian name, saying Job Trotter was a man of tears; the Hon. Samuel Slumkey was a man of education and dignity; while the Rev. Stiggins was a man of fire and water which was dedicated to the consumption of pineapple rum and more from the fact that the less he had to pay for the more he had to drink. He then introduced to all the members present with a further instalment of his character sketches.

Mr. Pickwick then welcomed them as members to the Club.

Mr. Pott now arose (he had been endeavouring to get a word in most of the evening) and said that he wished to place on record his appreciation of the efforts made by the M.C. he thought it was the finest effort which had ever heard. This seemed to be the general consensus of opinion and the D.C. bowed his thanks. (I was going to say humbly, but such I think is not in the character of the D.C.)

Mr. Pickwick now asked Sgt. Snubbin if he would proceed with the matter he wished to raise on the minutes. Sgt. Snubbin said he had a complaint regarding the last Christmas Dinner. According to the preliminary notice the price should have been 40/- but Pott had nudged him and held out his hand and asked him for 43/6d. when asked for some explanation as to the additional cost he had merely shrugged his shoulders. Mr. Pickwick asked Mr. Podder for some explanation but all the explanation Sgt. Snubbin got from that gentleman was that a politician was allowed to give evasive answers why not Podder. Sgt. Snubbin said he had another matter to raise. Some months ago the matter of Syllabus for 1933-34 session had been mentioned and the Secretary had promised to have them prepared, where were the said Syllabus and why had they not been distributed? The Secretary pointed out that Mr. Lowton had kindly undertaken to have the Syllabus printed but they had not yet been completed, however if Mr. Lowton had brought them tonight they would now be distributed to the members present.

Mr. Pickwick expressed the thanks of the meeting to Mr. Lowton for his efforts in this matter and enquired as to the cost. Mr. Lowton in vulgar parlance said "They are on me" and he was again thanked by Mr. Pickwick.

Mr. Lowton was now called for an item which he gave in his usual great style at the piano and was much appreciated. Then Alf. Jingle responded with the item "John Wellington Wells" a new one to many of the members, but greatly enjoyed.

Tony Weller in his capacity as Vice-Chairman proposed a toast to the new members, he said he hoped that they would have many happy years with us and they may, in time, wear the chain of office of Mr. Pickwick. The toast was drunk with musical honours and thereafter the members expressed their appreciation of the honour of being elected members of the Club, although the Rev. Stiggins lodged an objection to his Pickwickian name and the Hon. Samuel Slumkey M.P. said he would be glad if in future members would address him by his full title and not so much of the Slumkeyabout it.

The question of accommodation was next discussed and the Secretary said that Mr. a small deputation consisting of Mr. Wardle, Mr. Trundle and himself had visited the host at the Mitre Hotel and had viewed certain accommodation which was available for Pickwickian Meetings. He suggested that the next meeting be held at that Hotel and then the members could judge for themselves whether or not the accommodation was suitable. If they decided that in the infirmative, then the question of fresh Headquarters could be discussed.

Mr. Pott who had been endeavouring to speak on this subject all night, now got up and after making some obtruse reference to the fire and the frying pan, said the Club had been in the present place for ten years, that without doubt the present landlord would die within a very short time, if he did not, he ought to, and in his opinion we should hesitate before moving. It was pointed out to Mr. Pott that the visit to the Mitre was only a matter of inspecting rooms and the question of ultimately moving Headquarters would be discussed.

Mr. Pickwick pointed out that the attitude of the present landlord was embarrassing both to the Secretary and Mr. Poddex and in any case look at the amount of beer we lost. Strangely enough the next jug that came up was about three quarts short. It was decided that subject to accommodation being available, the next meeting would be held at the Mitre Hotel.

Rumour had reached Mr. Pickwick's ears that the Hon. Samuel Slumkey, M.P. was good for an item of entertainment and he accordingly called on him to oblige. The Hon. Samuel Slumkey gave an old fashioned story "Sir Applethwaite" which was much appreciated. It is pleasing that we can still recruit additional talent from the new members of the Pickwick Club.

The Secretary announced on behalf of Mr. Pickwick that Mr. Pickwick proposed to hold a Pickwickian Party at Dingley Dell on Thursday, 24th February. Mr. Lowton however, had an important engagement on this date and as it is not proper for such a party to be held without the services of Mr. Lowton, it was eventually decided that, if convenient to Mr. Pickwick, the Dingley Dell meeting should be held on Thursday, 17th February at 6.0 p.m.

Mr. Pickwick said this would be convenient to him and his good lady.

The minutes of the Christmas Dinner and of the 53rd meeting were read and both were well received with the exception of Mr. Wardle who with his usual eagle eye had noticed one or two omissions and commissions, these were rectified and it is hoped when they next come up for reading they will satisfy even so stern a critic as Mr. Wardle.

After the reading of the minutes, the Vice-Chair got to his feet and said he thought the action was proper to propose a very hearty vote of thanks to the Secretary and Mr. Wardle for all their efforts for the Christmas Dinner. He knew they had worked long and hard all that day and it was very much due to their efforts that the Dinner had been such a success.

Both the parties mentioned gracefully responded.

The chairman now called on Ben Allen for an item and he gave "Simon the Cellarer" a very good effort, it is a pity we do not hear a little more from Ben Allen.

Alf Jingle next gave us two items "The Lass of Killiecrankie" and "Ray Donal" which were greatly appreciated, especially by Captain Trow, the visitor and he followed by Mr. Lowton in "Moscowaty's Serenade" which was much enjoyed by all present.

The toast to absent members, to Charles Dickens and to our visitor followed in rapid succession and Capt. Trow, being the only visitor, replied on his own behalf to the effect that although his stay in Manchester had not been very long he had found the Manchester people very friendly and hospitable and although he hoped the next year would see the end of the present war, yet he would feel compelled to come back to Manchester at some future date to renew the very good friendships he had made. He had thoroughly enjoyed himself this evening and wished to thank Mr. Pickwick and all the members.

Mr. Pickwick now called on George Nupkins for a reading but P.O.R. & I. said that tonight he did not propose to read from Dickens Papers but from Gordon's Tunis Dairy and he read an extract from this book which was truly an epic of heroism and valour.

Mr. Pickwick thanked George for the reading which had greatly interested all members present and then called on Alf Jingle for that immortal ballad "The Night I Played as Macbeth". This was great. Alfred seems to get better every time he attempts it and the applause when he had finished was simply deafening. The Hon. Samuel Slumkey, M.P. was next called upon and he replied with "Albert and the Lion" in the good old Lancashire dialect. Again there was great applause.

Alf Jingle next gave us the "Dangerous Age" followed by the old Pickwickian favourite "One Fish Ball". These were a great success and Mr. Lowton was asked to provide something a little more sentimental and he responded with "I Know a Lady Sweet & Kind" and "The Musician's Dream". Wonderful chap Lowton; he accompanies everybody, plays himself, sings himself and how the Club managed to struggle on in those days when he was with the Army is more than amazing.

Alf Jingle now gave us the final item "Somebody's Old Cassidy's Old Shabeen" or Marnin's Marnin."

A reminder from my host of the Naga Head that it was more than time roused Mr. Pickwick to the fact that it was gone ten o'clock and reluctantly he called for the King.

So ended the 534th meeting.

Present:

Mr. Pickwick	Mr. Wardle
Mr. Pott	Tony Weller
George Nupkins	Ben Allen
Dr. Slammer	Mr. Trundle
Polder	Sgt. Smubbin
Dodson	Alfred Jingle
Job Trotter	Mr. Lowton
Hon. Samuel Slumkey	Rev. Stiggins

Visitor: Captain Trow