

## YE OLDE VILLAGE OF PINNER WHEELBARROW RACE

How it all began, by Keith Regan

It was instigated in 1963 by five local lads, David Brown (nicknamed Bush), Terry Brooks (now both deceased) Ian Weatherly, Pod (*whose Surname Keith cannot recall*) and Keith himself.

It was based on a Pig Race held many moons ago in Pinner, and it was decided that a Wheelbarrow Race would be a suitable alternative.

Keith's initial role was just to help out, although later he was involved in the Stewarding. Originally the race started at the Bell pub, Pinner Green which was next to the Pinner Green traffic lights and now demolished for apartments. The first stop was at the Oddfellows Arms, opposite the Police Station in Waxwell Lane, then crossing the road to race down Bridge Street to the George pub which was underneath the railway bridge in Marsh Road (now sadly demolished) then back to the pedestrian crossing into the High Street, where they stopped outside the Victory pub at the bottom, then up to the top of the High Street, round the War Memorial, and back down to the Queen's Head car park. One person sat in the wheelbarrow whilst one pushed, but both had to drink a pint of hand pumped real ale at each stop, the ale being supplied by each of the pubs. Very little lager was drunk in English pubs in those days.

Each team was timed, and at the end of the race the Stewards gathered to determine whether any of the teams had transgressed any of the strict rules of the race.

5 seconds was added if a team had spilt any of the beer, 5 or 10 seconds for not using the pedestrian crossings correctly and 10 seconds if there had been any sickness.

Keith then became more of an Organiser when the Police requested that they manned the crossings, stopping the traffic and also "recommended", as being safer, that the race start at Little Common, just higher along Elm Park Road from the Police Station. The teams had to start the race by drinking a pint of real ale, not the wimpy half pint nowadays, so that each participant drank 5 pints in total! In order to maintain the original distance of the race it was decided that teams had to run round Little Common twice, before exiting into Elm Park Road.

Subsequently it was decided that consumption should be reduced to a ½ pint, but increased to six times, stopping at the Hand in Hand in the High Street on the way to the War Memorial, and that rule still applies today. The race now finishes at the top of the High Street, on the green opposite the Parish Church.

The organisation was then taken over by the Publicans at the Oddfellows' Arms, Alan and Sharon Vincent, but when Alan had a serious accident the mantle passed to the PRATS (The Pinner Real Ale Tasting Society) masterminded by John Brown who is remembered as the man who brought the Punch and Judy shows to our celebrations of St. George in Pinner in April each year, now sponsored by Sean White at the Queen's Head pub.

At that time the race was normally run annually in the Autumn. However, with all the Health and Safety issues, it was decided to run the race on the same day as the celebrations for England's Patron Saint, George. When John sadly died Paul Thompson took charge of Ye Olde Village Wheelbarrow race, but in 2013 the Rotary Club of Pinner became involved, and the whole of the St. George celebrations is now successfully masterminded by them, with Steve Morrisby in overall charge, and Jez Foster (in his dual role as both Rotarian and a PRAT) taking the lead with regard to the Wheelbarrow race, which is still aided by other members of PRATS.

Whilst it is unlikely that St. George ever saw a Wheelbarrow in his life this annual race is now a very firm favourite with the crowds enjoying the afternoon, and the next opportunity of seeing it will take place on Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> April 2018, the race starting at 3 o'clock. Alternatively there are

photographs in the Oddfellows Arms and at The Queen's Head pubs, depicting this quintessentially English pastime, which is probably unique in our Country. Long may the tradition continue.

Gordon G. V. Williams, January 2018