As a consequence of 'The Beast from the East' in early March, trains were disrupted - Chris Failing (sic), Secretary of state for Transport was delighted that he could blame his incompetence on the weather - roads were treacherous and schools closed, but still 15 intrepid players, and five others, battled through the hazards to take part in the annual Alf Parish Memorial darts match at Selhurst Park

Alf would have been proud; he was always a man to combat adversity, and come out on the right side. As for the darts contest, a compromise was agreed with the Labour Party playing Old Wilsonians in a pairs competition with Old Wilsonians' Cricket Club beating Old Wilsonians' Football Club 3-1 in the final

But we all knew that, because of the weather, this was just the preliminary as so many people could not make it, and it was agreed to re-stage the evening later in the year to enable those who had become house-bound this time to participate

"Not until after the Local Elections", insisted the Labour Party teams, which were due to take place on May 3rd, "as we will be busy until then", a reasonable request and one that nobody found fault with

A glorious summer followed and, after consulting with Crystal Palace Football Club and Doreen Parish, September 21st was the agreed date for the 'replay' and work began on getting teams together

"I promise it won't snow" I ambitiously informed those concerned!

All six of the original sides from March agreed to take part and we welcomed two new teams, Lewisham West and Penge Constituency Labour Party and the modestly entitled 'No skill, Just lucky' to help Ellie Russell fund her trip to Peru next year , where she will be living alongside rural communities, helping them with wildlife, environmental and infrastructure projects and to generally improve their standard of living. Well done Ellie; and good luck next year

Catherine Miaris and Lyndora Goodger were assigned by Crystal Palace Football Club to handle the event – where do they get all these talented people from - and there were 24 players confirmed for September 21st

The morning of the day went smoothly enough and just when I thought there would be no last minute hiccups the emails and 'phone calls started and, to cut a long story short, we ended up with 19 players and my mathematical skills were tested to the limit as I pondered how to reduce the competitors to 16, which would enable a straight knock-out competition, and also ensure that everyone played at least one game

Eventually I cracked the mathematical conundrum, and without the help of Rachel Riley, too, as 13 were given byes, the other six played to bring an end result of three, which were then added to the 13 byes to make 16 - simple really – and the straight knock-out formula was achieved

Both boards were then in operation for almost four hours and the final finished just before 11-00 p.m; perfect timing

I was privileged to score for a number of these games, and many thanks to the others who also volunteered to do so, and the first match I officiated saw John Getgood (Lewisham West and Penge CLP) defeat Alex Forbes (Old Wilsonians' Football Club)

Ellie Russell, who defied her team title – see earlier - had a long struggle with Chris Taylor (Orpington CLP) to such an extent that they had to have a meal break midway through, with Chris eventually becoming victorious , whilst Andrew Steel (Old Wilsonians' Cricket Club) beat Eva Stamirowski (Lewisham West and Penge CLP). Andrew has an economical and precise darts action – you should try adopting this when bowling, 'Drew – whilst Eva just seemed pleased to be there and felt her defeat was more than compensated for by the fact that she won first prize in the raffle

Seem to recall I was called away on other duties mid-way through the encounter between Joe Dromey (Lewisham and Deptfotd CLP)) and Doug Forbes (OWFC), which the latter ultimately won

As the evening wore on spectators began to arrive – including members of the Unite Retired Members' Association committee –Alf was their secretary after he retired - Doreen and Steve Parish and the latter's daughter, Jessie, and Eileen Taylor, a 'Countdown' octochamp although, and to be totally honest, she was there from the start and originally contemplated playing

"I won a darts Cup 60 years ago" she confided earlier in the week "and was very good at doubles" (The Old Wilsonian contingent, too, are very good at doubles, but this invariably involves a bar!)

And so the competition progressed as the 16 became 8, the 8 became 4, and then the final. The original draw had ensured that team mates were not pitted against each other but the final was between two members of the OWFC , Ian 'Chunk' Wellman and Doug 'I have taken more wickets for the OWCC than anyone so why I am I playing for the football club rather than the cricket club', which Ian won, thus retaining the Cup for his team

By this time Lyndora and Catherine had left as they had to be at Selhurst Park early next morning to prepare for the Newcastle game, but my sincere thanks to them – they were both a joy to work with – as was Steve, who had taken time out from his busy schedule to attend

We were also indebted to Julien Maisonneuve, for providing an excellent buffet, and to Caroline, who skillfully dealt with all of the request behind the bar

There was just time to draw the raffle - and thanks to CPFC for donating the signed ball and two tickets for a game of your choice, and Doreen, Chris Taylor and my local MP, Ellie Reeves, for the bottles of wine, before Doreen presented the 'Alf Parish Memorial Trophy' to the winning team and the individual winner 's Cup to Ian Wellman

All agreed it had been an entertaining and enjoyable evening and all of the players are to be congratulated. – you were ***ALL*** winners in my eyes. Thanks also to the London Print Branch for their generous financial donation – there was £155 left over from the March evening, whilst the raffle made £200 – and thanks to Alex Forbes for selling the tickets in a way that only he can

With the £245 collected from participants and supporters this meant the grand total for the evening was a very neat £600 and, as there were six teams, they all received £100 each – the Labour Party has egalitarian values, and even my mathematical skills made it easy to work that one out! And a reminder here that the Bromley and Chislehurst Labour Party, of which Alf was a member, instigated this event seven years ago

To go back to the beginning, and I'm being somewhat presumptuous here to assume anyone is still reading my turgid prose, the occasion replaced that originally scheduled for March, so we will be holding the next celebration of Alf's life in March 2019, and I sincerely hope that all teams will participate again and, hopefully a few more - the Labour Party conference prevented some from doing so this time – and the weather behaves itself !

Doreen called me just before 10-00 p.m. on Saturday and we both agreed that it had been a successful evening and we are both looking forward to the next one; and I trust you are, too.