On Friday March 10th, a little after 11-00 p.m, Old Wisonians' Football Club collected their first silverware of the season when Matt Rand defeated George Johnstone in the final of the Alf Parish memorial darts competition at Selhurst Park

OW President Doug Forbes, who had earlier lost to Matt in a previous round, collected the team trophy, kindly donated by Bromley and Chishlehurst Labour Party, from Doreen Parish, Alf's widow, before she presented the individual trophy, donated by Crystal Palace Football Club, to Matt.

Less than 24 hours later the OWFC's 4th Xl defeated Old Owens 3-1 in the Old Boys Cup final whilst Matt scored the only goal in the 8th Xl's game at South Bank Cuaco to claim all three points, so we now have three trophies to proudly display at the 'George Croucher Memorial Dinner on April 22nd.



There were 19 darts players at this event and George Johnstone expertly explained that 13 needed byes in order to reduce the numbers to a manageable 16, which would then become eight, then four and then the two finalist

The six who did not achieve a bye took the decision stoically and the battle commenced, including our very own Stuart Paton, who is in charge of the Football Club's fund-raising this season and saw this event as an integral part of this project

As well as the aforementioned Matt Rand and Doug Forbes the OW team was competed by Mark Mace, an erstwhile treasurer of both the football club and the Association - Mark still keeps an eye on his OWA successor, Clive Peckover, and should almost certainly do so on Alex Forbes, the football club's version - and Chris Billing, who once took me to task for excluding him from the list of leading goal-scorers published in the weekly newsletter when he was having a particularly prolific season and which has not been repeated since!

But before I recall other events of the evening, and those leading up to it, it is apposite that I explain a few background details, and, most importantly, how the Alf Parish memorial darts competition came about.

Alf Parish was the general secretary of the National Graphical Association, one of the print unions, lived in Bromley and was very active in the local Labour party, and when he died in May 2011, Pete Williams, another Labour activists in Bromley, thought it would be a good idea to stage an event in Alf's honour, an idea which met with general approval, and it became a regular event in the H.G Wells centre on an annual basis and was attended by both Labour party members and trade unionists alike

Sadly Peter died himself in October 2015 and it was proving difficult to find someone to take over organising the event, and finding a venue, so I approached Alf's son, Steve, the Crystal Palace chairman, and asked if we could stage the evening at Selhurst Park, and he readily agreed and put me in touch with his events department



I had initial meetings with Sharon and Anna, and subsequently Kristina, contacted Bromley and Chishlehurst, Orpington, Greenwich and Woolwich and Dartford Labour parties and as I knew that the football club were due to have their own darts tournament on March 18th , asked them to put a team together

In the run up to the event I had a number of very pleasant and informative conversation with Betsey and George Johnstone (Bromley and Chislehurst) Chris Taylor (Orpington), Roger Hough (Woolwich and Greenwich) and Tom Maddison (Dartford), although the latter did tell me that most of his party members were Charlton supporters so would be reluctant to come to SE25, besides which they were organising a Quiz night near to March 10th and were concentrating their fund-raising activities towards that evening

Meanwhile, back at the oche, I scored two of Matt's games - getting into practice for the cricket season, 'Mitch' – including his game against Doug, which was a challenge to my mental arithmetic, whilst Roger Hough, who is also an Old Wilsonian, scored the final between Matt and George – thanks Roger, and for your help in so many other ways

Terry Edwards, a member of Roger's team, is yet another Old Wilsonian and he reminded me of the cricket reports I used to write for the local paper - alas they do not cover local cricket anymore. Terry was a fine actor during his school days – probably still is – and I remember him playing the lead role in 'Billy Budd', despite having broken his leg about a week before the first night – what do actors say about breaking a leg(?)

This was an excellent evening and my thanks and congratulations to everyone who took part and to those who came along to support this fitting tribute to Alf, best summed up by Tom Murphy, the secretary of the London Print Branch who, when sending a donation of £250 towards the evening - thanks Tom –wrote:

"Alf was a great officer and it is our Branch's privilege to help sponsor the event in his name"

Doreen presented the trophies to much applause and it was her night as much as Alf's

Everyone at Palace was a joy to work with and could not have done more to ensure the evening was a complete success. They provided the buffet, three substantial raffle prizes - and the raffle tickets - purchased a new trophy and new dart-boards, which they then let us borrow for our own darts extravaganza the following week.

Kristina was on hand all evening and could not have been more helpful, whilst Caroline tended the bar, a position which is always extremely busy when Old Wilsonians are around, to perfection and, true to tradition, the OW contingent were the last to leave and did so respectively and at the allotted time

Sharon called me the next day to ask how the event went, as did Doreen to express her satisfaction

The Palace Chairman arrived soon after 10-00 p.m. and has already agreed that we can stage the competition at Selhurst again next year, when I am confident the event will be even bigger and better ,and that will take some doing

All of the participating teams - three local Labour parties and the OWFC – gained some much needed funds for their respective organiations and, as far as the Old Wilsonians are concerned and, after all, this is a column that appears on their website, they are £265 better off thanks to the efforts of the Trade Union and Labour movement and Crystal Palace Football Club; my attempts to gain converts may have been a long and arduous process, but perhaps I am at last getting there!