Old Shootershillians 7, Vets 7. 27/1/18.

"There is nothing which has yet been contrived by man, by which so much happiness is produced by a good tavern or inn." So spoke Dr Samuel Johnson circa 240 years ago.

This is something a lot of us gathered at the Flower Pot's Winter Beer Festival on Friday evening may have contemplated. Especially [Martin Maytum](https://www.facebook.com/martin.maytum?fref=gs&dti=347446165466543&hc_location=group) who on hearing of his call up to the Vets insisted on giving a number of us a 'cwtch'\* as well as drinking copious amounts of it. (\* Translated from Welsh, meaning cuddle or hug...and is also a very tasty brew from the Tiny Rebel Brewery in Newport.). Stand in skipper [Karim Neseyif](https://www.facebook.com/karim.neseyif?fref=gs&dti=347446165466543&hc_location=group), meanwhile, also ended up being a very happy and relieved man following the targeted operation carried out by a few of us including the skipper himself and Water Boy [David Tugwell](https://www.facebook.com/david.tugwell?fref=gs&dti=347446165466543&hc_location=group). This successfully ensured that a couple of last season's U17s, Lex Ayling and Sam Cowdry, would be playing alongside their former age group team mate Ben Tugwell, ensuring we had sufficient numbers, having at one stage dropped down to 12. Also riding to the rescue was Chris May and son Liam (though Liam, playing on the wing, may have been regretting this decision halfway through the game having been on the verge of hypothermia!). Having survived and thoroughly enjoyed the evening (El Capitan 'in absentia' [Neil Cole](https://www.facebook.com/neil.cole.397?fref=gs&dti=347446165466543&hc_location=group) is welcome to all those Chang beers and leave the good stuff for the rest of us), all that was needed was to ensure Mayhem made it home from the pub in one piece - which he did despite almost falling through his front door after spending 10 minutes trying to open it.

On to the match itself where from time to time a rugby game threatened to break out. Bitterly cold, rain, wind - credit should first and foremost be given to those spectators (including the wingers...) and support staff such as physio Caroline, continually patching up the wounded, and Tour Supremo Nic Cracknell forever shouting 'lower, lower'. We should have scored at least a couple of tries including from a 30 yard shove from a scrum such was the dominance up front. However we turned around nil all at the break, compounded by an injury to prop Bob Purfit meaning a switch to uncontested scrums and depriving us of our biggest weapon.

Second half. We score - or at least we thought we had. However the ref (who's first game this was for a number of years) rules out second row [Nigel Maddaford](https://www.facebook.com/nigel.maddaford?fref=gs&dti=347446165466543&hc_location=group) 's catch and drive due to a crooked throw...from their lineout. No matter as minutes later No 8 Ben Court crashes through despite suffering an earlier injury (Paul Massey providing the 'if he can play through pain then so can I' inspiration). The extras, from wide out (though not as wide as some of my recent attempts...), into the wind and without a tee were provided by centre Lex Ayling playing with a Pat Cash inspired headband/tape (protecting an ear that had been partially torn off on the day of his old man's 50th birthday in November. Nothing to do with his spectating father I might add; just that he had been playing rugby that day). Not long after his erstwhile age group team mate Sam Cowdry pulled off a try saving tackle. Apparently. Sorry Sam - I missed that... probably due to my brain going into deep freeze - I'll let Tuggy decide whether your head was in the correct position? Unfortunately there was no sign of any try-saving tackle 10 minutes later when the oppo went over for a converted try to even things up. With the clock ticking down and the players increasingly looking forward to a HOT shower there was just time for the hosts to narrowly miss a match winning penalty at the death.

Very difficult to dish out the awards this week. Contenders for MotM were try scorer Ben Court, almost try scorer Nigel Maddaford, Captain Karim Neseyif for efforts he put in on Friday evening to get a team out, Marco for playing and distinguishing himself in the oppo's centres, the support staff on the sidelines and the Old Shootershillians cook who rustled up the best post match scoff of the season - chicken curry & rice with sides of onion bhajis , samosas and steak cut chips (washed down by a couple of pints of Theakston's Hogshead). In the end though it was the 'cwtch' giving, beer drinking, scrum driving, fence fixing, force of nature that is Martin Maytum. As for the TotM, well remember those HOT showers spoken of earlier? Well they didn't exist so the local plumber would certainly be a contender had he been present. Someone also suggested Bob 'Jack Regan' Purfit for getting injured and enforcing the uncontested scrums - this would have been a bit harsh however particularly in a week where he had single handedly thwarted a multi-million pound robbery from Tesco (or was it a multi pack of razors?). Anyway the award - renamed Dick of the Day on this occasion only - goes to [Richard Ewence](https://www.facebook.com/richard.ewence?fref=gs&dti=347446165466543&hc_location=group) for p1ssing in my front garden on the way home when he had the offer of a downstairs toilet just inside my front door!

Finally, I'm away next week in Cardiff so if anyone fancies picking up the pen... ?