As posted on FB.

6/1/18. Cranbrook Vets 12 Maidstone Vets (inc. a smattering of Barbarians) 47.

As our most loyal supporter & beer jug provider Nic Cracknell has already alluded to on these pages, where to start ladies & gents? The Cranbrook hospitality (including one of their players volunteering to ref); two yellow cards for the same player - Ben 'Sicknote' Weston; Vets skipper for the day Karim Neseyif running the show superbly ensuring everyone getting fair game time; Dan 'Bert Trautmann' Wiles for playing (& scoring) with broken bones (take note those with the sniffles); Phil White, Marco Trismegisto Bauchiero, Karl Floyd & in particular Ian Davis for volunteering to don the Cranbrook shirt at various stages of the game to even up player numbers or even the Captain 'in absentia' Neil Cole for telling erstwhile first team stalwart Ben Court that by playing for the Vets he had now found his 'natural level'.  And I haven't even mentioned the at times 'stunning' rugby on the pitch that featured 7 different try scorers, including both wingers and an 86% kicking conversion rate!

No. We shall start with the disturbing news that transpired towards the beginning of the week. Namely that one of our young has obviously not been listening to his father. If there is one piece of advice that Ben Tugwell should take from his old man it should surely be to never let the lady in your life dictate your Saturday afternoon during the rugby season (a heinous crime that may well be passed on to his Dad come this season's tour). Luckily we still had the young but not quite as youthful Dan Ellesmere to call on at scrum half thanks to those never-ending university holidays.

Anyway on to the actual action. Our first try saw winger Phil White strolling in under the posts after some good forwards and backs interplay interspersed with 'almost butchering' a two man overlap. The second try followed when Richard Cutbill working in almost perfect harmony with centre partner Tom Holmes scythed through the oppo's defence. Cranbrook responded with a try in the corner of their own during a period of the game when we were forced to make two enforced changes. Flanker Adrian Clarke succumbing to his aging hamstring and prop Steve Pooley having to catch a train (or pilot his helicopter) back to the West Country. No matter. Adrian's replacement Ben Weston restored the two try advantage after a strong run shortly before half time.

The half time break saw Mr Cracknell deliver some inspired words - though I think he was more in a state of shock that we were stringing a few passes together and scoring some tries. More importantly he also brought on the half time port courtesy of our hosts (what happened to the oranges?).

Maybe it was because of the port but I can't quite remember the exact order of scoring in the second half. I do know however that No 8 Ben 'found his natural level' Court, alongside the ever supporting Colin Frost, had a large part to play in punching holes in the defence. His intelligent off-loading also led to try-scoring opportunities including supplying the pass to scrum half Dan Ellesmere to score his try. Broken bones did not stop winger Dan Wiles scoring a well worked try following some good passing from this ever so modest author and the outstanding Richard Cutbill who's sidestepping and jinking runs kept the Cranbrook defence guessing all afternoon. Our other two tries came from the powerful running of full back Craig Caunt and flanker Karl Floyd, both on loan from the Barbarians. At some stage earlier in the half Cranbrook had narrowed the gap to two scores and when we had two 10 minute periods of 14 men (take a bow Ben Weston) they might have had a chance. Instead we kept the pressure on them to seal the result. No prizes for guessing this weeks' TotM even if there a few other contenders; not least hooker Anthony Round for kicking the ball.

Post-match Cranbrook continued their fine hospitality with some decent grub and beer. All that was needed to cap a fine afternoon then was a celebratory pint or 3 back in Maidstone waxing lyrical to our club colleagues about Karim's unbeaten run as captain in 2018. Oh well, you can't have it all...

Scorers: Phil White, Richard Cutbill, Ben Weston, Dan Ellesmere (+3 cons); Karl Floyd, Dan Wiles, Craig Caunt (+3 cons).

TotM: Ben Weston.

MotM: Difficult decision as everyone played a part. However our match skipper nominated the following and asked me to pick one: Ben Court, Dan Ellesmere, Richard Cutbill and Tom Holmes (& Cranbrook RFC for living up to the true spirit of rugby). To save myself from accusations of nepotism I'm going for Richard.