



## **DRAFT 2023 Season Report**

### **Chairman's Report**

The 2023 season was successful on many fronts, one in which the club won several trophies and had more players and teams than for many years. A season also, where our youth section and finances continued to strengthen. It was also one, however where we would have wished for, overall, better results on the field. The 1st XI lost only 3 games, yet the vagaries of the weather and league regulations conspired to give a lower league position that we would have hoped for at the start of the season. A Junior Cup final and a tenacious T20 Bowl win were better reward for captain Jonny Parker and the team's efforts over the year.

From the 2nd to the 4ths the club fielded a growing number of players, many of the youth seeing their first adult cricket. The absence of a consistent selection policy and a nominated 3rds captain hampered consistency and competitiveness in these teams, both are points to improve next year. The 5ths meanwhile offered an invaluable introduction to adult cricket for many of our youth players, and even some dads. It was a great success. Our midweek team was happily resurrected with some success and good fun.

My thanks to each of the team captains for their commitment and hard work over the season. Johnny Parker, Conor Cox, Matthew Pitts, Mohammad Hamza, Rory McMillan and Tommy Speers.

Another bright spot of the season was the inauguration of the Women's team. Competing well in their league matches and laying a great foundation for the future. Thanks to Emma Rayner, James Griffin, Kuda and all who helped.

Growing numbers means more facilities are required. The club is grateful to Bangor Academy for the installation of new indoor practice nets and to Bangor Grammar for the use of their ground. It was a great sight, too to see Ward Park re-commissioned as a functioning cricket ground. Long overdue but very welcome and necessary for the future.

Particular thanks also to the grounds team, including the Thursday morning crew, who give a lot of their time to present our ground so well, and especially to Stephen Burns whose tireless work is greatly appreciated.

Lastly can I think all those volunteers who give their time and whatever capacity to help the club. We have brilliant grounds, improving facilities, a thriving youth section, sound finances with increasing membership and, crucially, some of the best teas in the NCU! None of this happens without the teamwork of many, so thank you to you all.

**Peter McIlwaine**



## **Mens's 1st XI Report**

So often the giving of thanks is left to the conclusion of reviews but this season more than most I feel it important to begin with such remarks. In a season where the 1<sup>st</sup> XI got to two finals and only lost three games over the entirety of the “summer”, I would like to thank each and every player that played for the 1<sup>st</sup> XI of Bangor Cricket Club. Captaining at times has its difficulties and on occasions can be lonely. Never once this season did either of those manifest, not even in our second home final of the year when let's just say we didn't get off to the best start with the ball. I recall this time last year and remarking on the previous season but more importantly looking forward to the season just completed and the potential positives of; seeing performances from younger players, galvanising a squad and ultimately get familiar with winning games of cricket. Reflecting now, I honestly believe that all three of those objectives were achieved.

We had some stand out performances this season and two of our most consistent players were our two youngest members of the squad. Sam McMillan and Michael Skelly both had excellent seasons and it was a pleasure seeing them put in match winning performances and continuing to work hard on their skills to further their development. Furthermore, it was great to see these performances noted and as a result, both go on to represent the NCU talent pathway squads and Ulster Schools'. We had a season of many good individual performances, but I do feel it right to mention those that ultimately went on to take honours at our award's evening. A real highlight of the summer of 23' was the performance of George Prince with the ball and the regular wickets which he picked up. George bowled with real skill and was a real pleasure to stand at mid-off and watch him bowl his quota straight through. Our batting cup was won by a new arrival to the club this year and one that strengthened the 1<sup>st</sup> XI considerably. If you asked him, many of the Prince wickets were due to his presence standing up to the stumps. Andrew Kirkpatrick has been an excellent addition to our squad and was a deserved winner of the batting cup in his debut season. Although the Junior Cup final did not go the way of Bangor, Andrew's innings in the semi-final to get us to the marquee event was exceptional and that's even with Mr Fantasy League, Nathan Belshaw hitting the winning and attempting to take the glory. With the Junior Cup run and occasional rain, this left Kuda Samunderu often without a game at the weekend. To his credit he was able to bookend the games at Upritchard Park with two fine centuries and was once again a vital cog in the dressing room. Kuda gave a lot of his time during the week coaching the youth and the ladies team and I would like to take this opportunity to thank him for all of his hard work and efforts that will undoubtedly come to fruition in seasons to come.

As mentioned above, this season allowed our 1<sup>st</sup> XI not one but two opportunities to play finals at the home of cricket, Upritchard Park. These were two incredible days and thanks must be given to Stephen Burns and the grounds team on having the ground look as good as it did and to the committee as a whole for all the support, they selflessly give to allow such events to run as well as they did. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank all of those who came and supported the 1<sup>st</sup> XI this season. Some of the turn outs around the boundary and on the balcony were nothing short of incredible and I know on many occasions that number would double if we counted those who were following ball-by-ball on NV play. This continued support really means a lot and does not go unnoticed.

Ultimately, our objective of getting promoted and returning to Senior 1 did not go our way. This was largely out of our control, but these things happen in sport and as such we will make the most of it and use next year to again grow the squad and provide opportunities for our younger cricketers so that our club continues to be sustainable and not chase short term, short lived success.

## **Johnny Parker – 1<sup>st</sup> XI Captain**



## **Ladies' 1st XI Report**

With Bangor fielding a women's hardball team for the very first time this season, it was very difficult to predict how things would turn out. Several indoor, taster sessions, at Bangor Academy, run by James Griffin, Rory McMillan and Dylan Gomez really helped to build the enthusiasm, encourage ladies to get involved and set the foundation for a successful season.

Bangor ladies joined Holywood 2XI, Carrickfergus and Ballymena in Junior League 1. There were training sessions every Wednesday night and occasionally also on Saturday mornings. There were a total of fifteen ladies, who got involved, at various stages throughout the season and we were lucky to have an enthusiastic group, of about half a dozen juniors, who were willing to step up and help field a team for the league matches. Saydee Gomez and Holly Williams also regularly joined the ladies for training.

The season began with a home fixture against Carrickfergus, which was a very exciting and enjoyable experience for all. Bowling first, Bangor restricted Carrick to 105 for 2. Bangor managed 104 for 8, meaning a very narrow defeat in their opening game. The return fixture against Carrick and an away game against Holywood followed but unfortunately Ballymena were unable to field a team, which was disappointing and somewhat frustrating for the ladies, who were keen to get as much game time as possible. To keep the ladies involved and to gain more match experience, a number of interclub matches were played against both girls and boys teams.

The Ladies were also entered into the Gallagher Women's Challenge Plate, where a walkover against Ballymena meant they faced an experienced Muckamore side in the quarter final. Although Bangor suffered another defeat, some excellent bowling by Brooke Stranaghan, turned it into a competitive fixture.

I would like to thank our coaches, Kuda and James Griffin, for their unbelievable enthusiasm, encouragement and endless patience and also the club for providing all the necessary equipment, to get us started. The club has been incredibly supportive of the ladies, in particular Johnny Parker and Peter McIlwaine and we have all felt very welcome. All of those involved this season are very keen to return and it is hoped that a number of indoor nets session will keep the momentum going. A recruitment campaign has already started to boost the numbers for next season.

It has been a real pleasure to captain the ladies side for their first season and I have no doubt that Bangor ladies will go from strength to strength, growing in numbers, to allow for both social and competitive cricket in the future.

**Emma Rayner – Ladies 1<sup>st</sup> XI Captain**



## **Men's 2nd XI Report**

After a successful 2022 season where the Twos retained their status in Junior League 2, the 2023 season didn't quite go to plan and unfortunately ended in relegation back to Junior League 3. Overall, the season mirrored the summer weather experienced across the country, with great weather and great wins in May and June being followed by some pretty poor weather and a struggle for results in July and August.

The season began with some early season rustiness with a defeat at home to Carrick. However, this was followed by three league wins on the trot against strong opponents in Derriaghy, Cliftonville Academy and Cregagh, with highlights including a superb team performance in defending a score of below 100 in the T20 victory over Cliftonville and the individual performances of Johnny Keenan (94), Andrew Kirkpatrick (69) and Chris Pyper (5-23) in the win over Cregagh. A couple of away defeats followed at the hands of CSNI and CIYMS but perhaps the loss that took the wind out of the sails and defined the season was the home defeat to CIYMS at the start of July, which was lost on the last ball while attempting to defend an under par 161 on the road that is the home of cricket. Defeats followed in the remaining fixtures, with some better performances in the last two games of the season against Carrick and league champions North Down. Although these games also ended in defeats, they provided some encouragement going into the 2024 season.

I would like to thank everyone (not sure on the exact number but felt like a lot!) who made an appearance this year for the Twos in what was a tricky season. It may be looked back on in a few years' time as a transitional season, with the make-up of the team being more youthful than in recent times. It was great to see young players such as Nathan Belshaw (in what was his first season in the club), and Max Escott make some valuable contributions with the bat and the ball and to see many other young players make their debut for the Twos. I would also like to thank Andrew Pyper and James Griffin, who captained in my absence, and to the rest of the captains/selection committee for all their help over the year, it was greatly appreciated. It was a pleasure to take on the responsibility of captaincy and although the season didn't quite go our way, I hope it can provide some extra motivation for the team for next season to try and return to Junior League 2.

**Conor Cox – Men's 2<sup>nd</sup> XI Captain**



## Men's 3rd XI Report

Coach K. in his book 'Leading with the Heart' states,

*"If a team played as hard as they possibly could and came up short, did they really lose? I don't think so...if we're constantly looking at a win-loss barometer to determine whether we are doing well, we're not looking at the right barometer."*

And for me, this sums up our season. Whilst we may not have won as many matches as we would have liked, the season still contained many highlights and success stories.

The biggest positive for me is the number of junior members who made their senior debuts in the thirds this season. There are too many to mention but it has been a privilege to watch them gain these experiences and grow in confidence as the season progressed. It is great to see that the club has so many talented and enthusiastic youth members that will ensure we continue to thrive in the future. We also saw many adult members make their debut, either returning to the club or joining as new members and this is another really positive sign for the club's future. There were also many games where fathers and sons (and daughters) played in the same team which felt like really special moments reflecting well on the whole club.

Some of my favourite reflections on the season simply involve being a part of our club, returning from a thirds game and watching the end of the home game at Upritchard. The more we play away fixtures, the more we realise the quality of our club in terms of playing as well as community and this is another factor in our youth development as they see their club as a welcoming and encouraging place to play and watch cricket. There is still nothing better, in my opinion, than playing at home, with teas included, on a sunny day followed by a drink on the balcony. We all really benefitted this year from the use of NV play and the fantasy cricket league (Thanks to George) as this allowed us to keep up to date with all other Bangor teams, adding to the sense of a shared club spirit.

The planning for the season started at the end of last year when Chappers came up with a leadership masterplan involving the man himself as on-field captain and a select group of others, doing all of the other captaincy related hard work. The plan failed well before the first contact so the captaincy was 'awarded' to me at the last minute which meant we had limited pre-season planning time! I want to thank Paul Houstoun and Ian Fletcher for their work in the strategic leadership group as well as Rory McMillan and Paul for their daily work on selection. Paul and Ian also produced excellent performances with bat and gloves respectively throughout the season. The most frustrating part of captaincy is without question, selection, but we just about managed it every week and again, it was the junior players who stepped up, often at short notice. There have been many lessons learnt this season and I am optimistic we will start the year in a good position following the dramatic end to this season.

We moved towards the end of the season, requiring two wins from two games as well as other results going our way if we were to avoid relegation. Both games were scheduled for the same week and as our team selection also involved significant matches for the seconds and fourths, it was essential we ended the season with the right players available. Fortunately, the team seemed to thrive on the pressure, and we won both games convincingly meaning we remain in the same division next year.

In terms of individual performances and highlights, there are a few that deserve special mention:



- Stephen Skelly, when not borrowed by the seconds, was once again the standout bowler of the side in terms of consistency and wicket taking. He bowled the most overs for the 3s with an economy rate of 3.96 an over and a strike rate of a wicket every 14 deliveries. Overall figures of 45-6-178-19 from 10 appearances reflect an outstanding season. A particular champagne moment within those impressive figures was the four wickets (all bowled) in one over against Lurgan which included two hatrick chances finishing with figures of 5-2-7-6.
- One for the future is Gareth McCullough who returned to the club with immediate impact. Following a pulled hamstring in his away debut, he marked his return to Upritchard in style scoring 115 off 70 deliveries versus BISC 3rd XI on the 12<sup>th</sup> August.
- One of the stars of the end of season success was Conor Cox who consistently took wickets when appearing for the 3s notably with 9 wickets in those must win games at the end of the season when looking to stave off relegation with figures of 5-1-15-5 vs Cliftonville Academy and 3.4-1-6-4 vs Donacloney Mill.
- The last two games of the season also shone a light on Jamie Tackle's off-spin bowling which is an untapped source of great potential for next season!
- In a last-minute attempt to beat Raspo in the batting averages this year, Matt Pitts found some end of season form with 49 not out of 37 deliveries in the end of season game against Donacloney Mill out of a total of 59 whilst Gareth McCullough watched from the other end with 5 not out.
- As mentioned previously, there were numerous junior/youth players who made valuable contributions as well as many debuts and breakthroughs throughout the season. Max Escott and James Nuttal continued to make great progress and the crop of promising debuts and breakthrough performances included Cruz Gomes, Ben Pitts, Daniel McIlwaine, James Monaghan, Josh Brown, Josh and Felix MacMillan, Max Walker, and 'Super' Saydee Gomes (who also won the first ever women's player of the year award)

As you can see, different measures of success were evident throughout the season and with planning well underway for next year, I am confident the thirds will continue to develop to form a crucial part of the club structure acting as a bridge between junior and senior cricket whilst providing a competitive home for some of our more vintage and pre-worn players!

To end with another Coach K reflecting the thirds' focus on player development and creating the right team culture,

*"A real winning attitude is about standards of excellence-which are variable from year to year, from team to team. Being the best you can be-and doing the best you can-are the constants."*

**Matt Pitts – Men's 3rd XI Captain**



## **4th XI Report**

2023 turned out to be a great season for the fourths in various aspects. The fourths finished 5<sup>th</sup> in the Junior league 8 (b) by winning 4 out of their 13 league games and finished in Quarter Finals of the Junior Cup. They were very competitive throughout and there were plenty of highlights to take encouragement from.

While several senior players continued to demonstrate strong performances, many young players like Josh Brown, Daniel Rayner Felix McMillan and Josh McMillan also got the opportunity to get stuck into senior cricket, show their impressive talents, and all-rounder capabilities.

In the bowling department, Mike Hirst and Ben Pitts continued to show impressive & match winning performances with the spin during the season with both being the top wicket takers for the fourths. The pace bowling unit led by the brilliant Myles McNaught, along with amazing Max and emerging young star of the club Josh Brown, who took a 6-wicket haul against Cooke Collegian IIIs, added further strength to fourth's bowling arsenal.

In batting department, seniors led from the front and showed the experience and valour to put some great batting displays. Along with Muhammad Hamza, who ended up the top run scorer, Daniel Rayner, Mike Hirst, Paul Houstoun kept the batting steadfast for the fourths with one or more half century (50s) scored during the season.

A few of the matches were nail bitters which went on to the final overs of the match. Bangor IVs playing against Cooke Collegians IIIs, ended up winning by 1 run on their home ground (Upritchard Park) while Cooke Collegian IIIs won by 1 wicket to spare on their home ground. Ben Pitts last ball six ensured a victory over Dundrum IIIs playing at BGS, and a wicket maiden by last over by Josh McMillan against Cliftonville ensured progression of Bangor IVs into the Quarter final of the junior cup which Downpatrick IIIs won against Bangor IVs.

The key highlight for the season for Fourth XI were as follows.

- **Top Wicket Taker: Josh Brown** (10 Wickets)
- **Top Runs Scorer: Muhammad Hamza** (194 Runs)
- **Best Individual Match Performance: Mike Hirst** (2-21 in bowling and 54\* runs with bat against BISC V)
- **Emerging Young Players of the Year: Josh Brown, Daniel Rayner, Josh McMillan**

All in all, a very positive season with notable contributions throughout the team! Thanks must go to Peter McIlwaine, Paul Houstoun, and Stephen Burns for their continuous support for the fourth XI and fulfilling our fixtures.

## **Muhammad Hamza – Men's 4th XI Captain**





## **5th XI Report**

The 5th XI made a welcome return after many years away and although did not gain the desired promotion had a very successful and enjoyable year.

The team was named the Dad, Lads and Lasses XI and the concept was to allow the opportunity for many of the youth section to play their 1st senior games of cricket with their Dads. In total throughout the season, a staggering 15 different Dad and Lads or Lasses combinations had that opportunity and memorably in the case of Dyllan Gomes, he played with both his son Cruz and daughter Saydee on a couple of occasions.

The season started with a home game against Cliftonville Academy 4s at BGS and could not have gone better. The Dads lead with the bat with Peter McIlwaine and especially setting the standards, but it was the youngsters who excelled with the ball, Harry McMillan, Max Johnstone, Oli Armstrong, Jacob Campbell and Daniel McIlwaine all bowled beautifully and secured a famous first win.

We travelled to play the same opposition a couple of weeks later, and although we fell just short, it was another encouraging display with impressive performances from debutants the Mullins, Carsons, Merrimans and Gomes.

A strong Victoria side came to visit us in the Cup, and we had the pleasure of hosting them at a glorious Ward Park. The team was much more Lads than Dads with 7 under 14s representing the team against a very experienced Victoria side. A chanceless 50 partnership from Stu and Fergus Johnstone and some late order hitting from debutant Dan West allowed the team to set a challenging 110 target on a Ward Park pitch that was doing a bit.

The young bowling attack made it more challenging, with a fiery Max Walker and Josh McMillan almost unplayable at times. Harry McMillan bowled with skill and guile from the other end, but unfortunately Victoria got over the line with a couple of wickets to spare.

The team got back to winning ways with a couple of great away wins, firstly an unlikely victory against a stacked Carrick team, where a great knock from everyone's favourite Fantasy Cricket Player able assisted by Stu Johnstone, chased down 140 at a rainy Middle Road.

This was followed a week later by another hugely enjoyable win against local rivals North Down on the top pitch at Comber. Again, it was the youngsters who led the way, with Josh McMillan anchoring the side with a well-made 36 and then firstly the spin of Ben Pitts and then young Saydee Gomes stole the show with the ball. Saydee ripped through the North Down middle order with a series of in swinging yorkers and flew the flag brilliantly for our ever-growing Girls/Ladies section.

North Down made the short journey to Bangor a week later and as always with a well-known youth coach who captains their team, the match was tinged with huge controversy and North Down came away with a fortunate win. However, it was not all disappointing, Josh McMillan again showed his huge talent with his first senior 50 on a tricky BGS wicket.

An unfortunate defeat at a thunderous Moylena on a Monday night followed, leaving just a double header against title chasing Templepatrick to finish the season.





The games were very home dominated with a strong Bangor team demolishing Templepatrick at a sun kissed Upritchard. Massive thanks to Barney for prepping a great wicket and giving both teams the opportunities for both teams in Junior 9a, the opportunity to play on such a wicket on a Saturday afternoon. The victory again was largely due to the 13-year-old with a quite superb 75 and performance of the season from Josh McMillan and some very impressive bowling from Max Walker, Harry McMillan and Cruz Gomes.

Sunday was a different game with Templepatrick much strengthened and the promising Bangor team not performing as they could.

This game concluded the season and, in many ways, could not have gone better. Many of our talented youth section played their first senior games and proved time and time again, that they have the ability to play senior cricket, and at a much higher standard. Perhaps even as importantly, we saw the return of a few older cricketers, many not having played since school but lured by the prospect of playing with their sons/daughters and already talking about next year.

Thanks to all the help this year, to Peter McIlwaine for preparing Ward Park and for him, Matt Pitts and Jonno for standing in as skippers.

Performance of the season- Batting - **Josh McMillan** 75 against Templepatrick

Performance of the season Bowling - **Saydee Gomes**- 3 for 7 against North Down

Player of the Season- **Finn Merriman** with more than useful contribution with the bat but consistently high-quality performances behind the stumps and an attitude unmatched throughout NCU cricket.

**Rory McMillan – Men's 5th XI Captain**



## Midweek XI Report

The Midweek XI returned to action since last playing their invincible season in 2019, looking to have a chance of reclaiming the trophy won in such formidable fashion during that last pre-covid season. The format differing slightly this time out, with two groups of 9 teams split as South and North compared to the one league format before.

Bangor were in the Midweek South group and shot off to a perfect start away to Cooke Collegians. A return to Ward Park as home venue in the next match to Lisburn would prove a low scoring affair, with Bangor disappointed not to capitalise on dismissing Lisburn for 54 with Paddy English picking up a hat-trick amongst a 5-wicket haul. The fading sun behind the tennis courts perhaps putting some of the lower-order Bangor men off from reaching the target. None-the less it was a welcome return to Ward Park after many a year without the club availing of the place where BCC originally called home upon its inception many years ago.

The Midweek team would play another home fixture at Ward Park, beating Drumaness comfortably before completing their remaining home fixtures at Upritchard and Bangor Grammar respectively, the later abandoned against Drumaness Superkings but winning the former in a devastating 7 wicket defeat of Cregagh where a 5-wicket haul for opening bowler Andrew Beech shined through the gloom of a showery late June eve.

However, it was the away fixtures where the greatest drama took place and perhaps what will live longest in the memory of those participating with the Midweek this season. A late Wednesday evening away to (eventual winners of the 2023 Midweek League) Downpatrick proved as tricky as it sounded in rustling up an XI and Bangor arrived with ten men and a particularly youthful line-up, most of whom making their debuts. That the game went right down to the wire in the duskiness of Strangford Road showed the depth that the Midweek could call upon. Nathan Belshaw excelled with the bat and ball that night and would prove a valuable Midweek presence in their remaining fixtures amongst his great exploits in the Club's senior teams throughout the season. Another tight game ending in defeat away to Instonians at sun-baked Shaws Bridge was the only other loss recorded in the Midweek's group campaign.

It was the last of these away exploits in the group games at Civil Service for which stands out as *the* fixture for the Midweek season. A feisty affair composing of questionable antics from the opposition Captain, controversial walk-offs and words between opposition, saw another tightrope game being decided in the final moments. From being in a position of relative comfort in chasing Bangor's target of 119, CSNI went from 89 for 3 at the halfway stage to needing just 2 runs from the last over with their last pair of batsmen. A nerveless over from Max Escott saw him pick up the final wicket from his fourth ball and jubilation ensued. Such games don't come often and was one to savour in the circumstances as it would prove to be the victory to push Bangor into the top 4 of the Southern Group, thus setting up a quarter final away to Northern Group leaders Cliftonville Academy.

Not imagining that the theatre of the CSNI game could ever be matched or topped, the QF at the Castle Grounds did just that and may even have surpassed it! A damp pitch saw the visiting team struggle and muster 85 runs. Expecting the worst Bangor skipper Thomas Speers then bowled the spell of his season, picking up 4-14. Others contributed, chipping wickets here and there, with that man again Nathan Belshaw swinging the momentum in Bangor's favour with two wickets in one over to demoralise the home team as their last batsmen - their captain - came to the crease with 15 runs needed to win. Bangor had them in their sights, but it wasn't to be. The final overs ticked by without that elusive last wicket falling. Another agonising final over followed where the equation was 1 wicket needed for Bangor and 3 runs for Cliftonville Academy. The prodigious



Myles McNaught stepped up, but the cricketing coin of fate did not land Bangor's way on this occasion and the home skipper pulled his team from the depths to muster the winning runs to send Bangor crashing out of the competition.

The low of the QF loss did not linger as any reflection can only summon tremendous pride. Club members who played any part in a Midweek fixture this season will know how close the match was, always in great spirit and enthusiasm. There was no crushing loss experienced and any victory was hard fought. A memorable season. The Midweek are back and next year look to do one better.

### **Thomas Speers – Midweek XI Captain**

#### **Youth section**

The 2023 season was another successful year for the club's youth section. Numbers have expanded further to 255 young people, necessitating training to take place over 2 evenings. We continued to pursue a twin focus of competitiveness and enjoyment, and I think were successful on both fronts with all year groups competing well at the Premier League level. Particular successes were that for the first time in a few years we had a genuinely competitive U15 side, who recorded a terrific victory over a fancied CSNI team in a Graham Cup match- many people's highlight of the year. The U13's came runners-up in their Premier League and the U11's were unbeaten in competitions, lifting both the league and Quoile Cup trophies. The U11s also enjoyed a successful and enjoyable trip to The Hills in Leinster. Youth players from Bangor represented the NCU in good numbers across all age groups and with commendable success, a great cause for optimism for the future.

Each of the "B" and "C" teams, the U9 soft-ball teams and the girls' team also enjoyed matches against other clubs, invariably acquitting themselves well and certainly enjoying their cricket.

Thanks must go to the cohort of some 37 coaches and helpers who take the training sessions and matches each week, none of the above success and enjoyment would be possible without their commitment.

#### **NCU Age Group Players in 2023:**

Daniel Rayner  
Felix McMillan  
Finn Merriman  
Jacob Campbell  
Josh McMillan  
Jude Hirst  
Michael Skelly  
Myles McNaught  
Oliver Campbell  
Sam McMillan  
Saydee Gomes  
Teddy McIlwaine



## **Bangor Cricket Club – Grounds Report 2023**

### **Investment**

The following new equipment has been purchased:

1. New tarpaulins for the dome covers.
2. 3 pitch flatsheet.
3. 7m batting cage.
4. Line marking frame.
5. Hayter Rotary Mower (2<sup>nd</sup> hand).
6. Storage Container for youth and practice equipment.
7. Sisis Truspred (2<sup>nd</sup> hand)

### **Playing Season**

The season got off to an early start with the first competitive match before the end of April in what were less than favourable conditions and whilst the game got finished the pitch saw no further use during the season and is still slow to recover compared to other pitches.

We then experienced a prolonged period of drought which brought its own challenges with the square requiring regular watering.

Once again, our 10 day programme for pitch preparation made for excellent pitches throughout the summer with consistent bounce and carry which has been recognised in a very positive NCU Grounds report.

Upritchard Park continues to be recognised as one of the top grounds in the NCU and we were proud to host 2 days of the Ireland v Scotland U15 Celtic Cup together with both the Junior Cup Final and T20 Trophy Final. Despite difficult weather conditions with considerable amounts of rain in the lead up to these games, the ground and pitch were both presented in a fashion in keeping with these high profile games.

### **Ward Park**

For the first time in a number of years, cricket returned to the former home of Bangor Cricket with 4 pitches on the old square, prepared for play throughout the season by youth and midweek teams. This was a particular challenge with limited available equipment, however the efforts of our Chairman, Peter McIlwaine, ably assisted by Jeremy Stewart made it all possible and augers well for playing cricket at Ward Park for many seasons to come.

### **End of Season Renovations**

These were completed mid-September in what seemed to be ideal conditions however the heavy rain that soon arrived impacted the work done with much of the seed and loam washed off the bare ends. Overseeding was undertaken in October however seed strike has been patchy and further work will be required come Springtime.

As always, this is only possible due to the dedication of our grounds team of volunteers who have supported grounds preparation throughout the season, in particular, thanks go to Kuda, Wilson McCloskey, David Montgomery, Ian “Lively” Rayner and the rest of the regular Thursday Grounds Team.

### **Stephen Burns – Grounds Convenor**