

Merrion Cricket Club

Secretary's Report 2022.

On the Field

After two disrupted years due to the pandemic, it was a relief to get back to playing cricket with a full schedule of matches taking place in 2022. Over what at times seemed a very long season, Merrion teams played close to 200 games of cricket [excluding games with no result due to bad weather], divided between adult Open and Womens competitions, youth and social cricket. Additional statistics on the year are set out in Appendix.

Overall it can be counted a reasonably successful season on the field. It was probably the best year ever for the women with the 1st XI winning three competitions and just failing to make it a clean sweep losing narrowly in the Pilkington Final. It was also important in terms of participation with three teams entered in competition. There is work to be done in building up strength in depth, especially in the 2nd XI, but overall a successful season on all counts. A special note of thanks to Isobel Joyce who as coach of the 1st XI was able to balance the desire for success in competitions with the need to blood new younger players and critically see that they were given opportunities to make meaningful contributions in games.

In terms of the Open Competitions, the 1st XI could not repeat there success of the 2021 season when they won the double. Nonetheless, without an overseas professional, the team managed a very creditable runners up position in the Premier League, qualified for the semi-finals of the league-cup and were unbeaten in the T20 Alan Murray before being eliminated on run rate in a very poorly structured competition format.

Outside the 1st XI it could be counted a mixed bag. The 2nd XI won the Tillain T20 Trophy but other than this most of the remaining teams ended up mid-table without any memorable performances in the various T20 competitions. The 6th XI came last in their league and will likely play in Division 14 next year.

Over a number of years the youth section has failed to make a significant impression in terms of players coming through to adult teams, representative honours or trophies won. There were plenty of youth players and a modest level of success on the field, but nothing spectacular and certainly nothing like the contribution that the youth section made to the club in the past.

The Management Committee decided that something needed to be done to raise the bar and really improve the overall standard of youth cricket in the club. The critical first step was the appointment of a full time Youth Development Officer. We were very fortunate in this regard to obtain the services of Michael Hingston, who brought to the position a lot of experience at national, provincial and club level in coaching youth cricket.

This is a long term commitment to creating the environment which will ensure that youth cricket in the club is of the highest standard. It was not expected that everything would be achieved in a single year, but the last season has seen improvements across all the key metrics, overall numbers, youth players coming through to senior cricket, representative honours and performance in competitions. There is still a long way to go but I feel we have turned the corner and can reasonably look forward to a resurgence in youth cricket in the club over the next few years.

I am sometimes accused of not paying any attention to social cricket. I am therefore happy to report that we have three social teams, the Taverners, the Veterans and the Cavaliers, that play out of Merrion. Thanks in particular to Ronan O'Kelly and Alan Parkinson who have kept the Taverners and Veterans going often in difficult conditions. There is clearly an increased demand for social cricket and it will be up to the incoming committee to do what they can to ensure that more match dates are made available at the preferred venue, Anglesea Road.

Pressure on the ground of course does not just impact social cricket. The limited number of weekend dates in a season mean that it is only possible to accommodate certain teams in our main ground. Improvements were made at Bird Avenue last season, especially to the outfield, but more needs to be done. An upgrade to the artificial wicket must be a priority for next season.

In terms of overall participation, 46 players took part in Womens Competitions, 115 in Open Competitions and there were over 250 youth members of all ages, with 52 youth players played for adult teams on at least one occasion.

Financial Matters

The Accounts for 2021 will be submitted for approval later in the meeting and a brief update on our current financial position will be provided. From the Management Committee perspective the year started with a considerable level of uncertainty around the financial position of the club. Covid was

still disrupting activities and for two years the RDS Horseshow, our main source of income, had been cancelled. In the circumstances the Management Committee decided that its main priority would be to ensure that the financial position of the club was protected and that we did not take any undue risks.

This meant that a difficult decision had to be made to prioritise investment in a Youth Development Officer rather than overseas professionals for the Open and Womens 1st XI. It was recognised that there was a risk that this might put pressure on the Open 1st XI and increase the risk of relegation. Despite injuries, missing key players at crucial times and not having an overseas player unlike most of the teams we came up against, the Open 1st XI more than just survived. It was a risk but it paid off. The Womens 1st XI, as I said earlier, had a great year even without an overseas player and indeed when missing some of their key players on international duty during the season.

As it turned out the RDS Horseshow went ahead and we had an excellent show from a financial perspective. On other fronts, the RDS bought out the church across the road which boosted monies from rugby and soccer games. We increased our income from daily car parking, which in light of the rise in numbers working from home was a very good and unexpected outcome. This last source of income remains at risk. These, together with solid returns from subscriptions, the bar and general functions meant that as a club we were able to manage the costs of running the club, carry out some overdue capital works on the ground and pavilion and also pay down a sizeable amount of our bank loan.

Costs will certainly rise again next year. Apart from general inflation, we have to consider the need for overseas professionals and a major repair and maintenance job is needed on the pavilion. But the club is in a sound financial position going into next year.

Governance of the Club

In terms of the governance of the club, at a Special General Meeting held a month ago, the members overwhelmingly approved a new Constitution. They also agreed to apply for Approved Sports Club status from the Revenue Commissioners and to direct the Management Committee to explore the options around turning the club into a limited liability, not for profit, company. These are major exercises that will no doubt take up a considerable portion of the time of the next Management Committee. We will keep the membership informed of developments and of course in the key

decision around the formation of a company, the Management Committee will come back to the members for final approval on whatever course of action is recommended.

Challenges

The past year has presented many challenges for the club both on and off the playing field. I think we are only now beginning to get to grips with a post-pandemic environment which continues to bring changes to the way we manage and play club cricket. There is also increased uncertainty stemming from the demands on players and grounds as representative cricket at all levels expands. Important decisions are likely from Cricket Leinster in coming months around competition structures, umpiring capacity and grounds.

It is important that the club and its members provide input to the decisions taken at provincial and national level around the future of the sport, while at the same time being in a position to respond to the changing environment within which club cricket is played in Ireland.

Support

I would just like to end up by thanking all the volunteers in the club, those on committees, captains, youth managers, selectors, and those that take on particular responsibilities, for all their effort and support. It is perhaps unfair to single out any individuals but I feel that a report on the season's activities should not pass without acknowledging the enormous contributions made by Paddy Byrne, Conor Austin and Harry Bhoja. As Andrew is stepping down as President, I would also like to thank him for all his work over his period as President, surely one of the most difficult in the club's history.

We need more people to help out with a wide range of activities, from working on car parks to helping out around the ground. We need more scorers and umpires. And we also need more sponsors and club patrons. The last is particularly important if we are to pay off our bank debt over the next couple of years. So if you can help in any way please let me or a member of the Management Committee know.

Appendix: Merrion CC - Statistics for 2022

Membership

While a small number of late payments remain to be collected [membership remains open until the end of the year at which point anyone who has not paid is deemed a lapsed member], the total number of members of the club for the current season was 564¹.

This is broken down between Senior, Social and Youth Members as follows.

Senior Members	Life Member	43
	Annual Playing	71
	Pavilion Members	83
Social Members	Parents of Youth Members	100
	Other Social Members	27
Youth Members	Under 9 [U9]	48
	Over 9 [Teams]	192

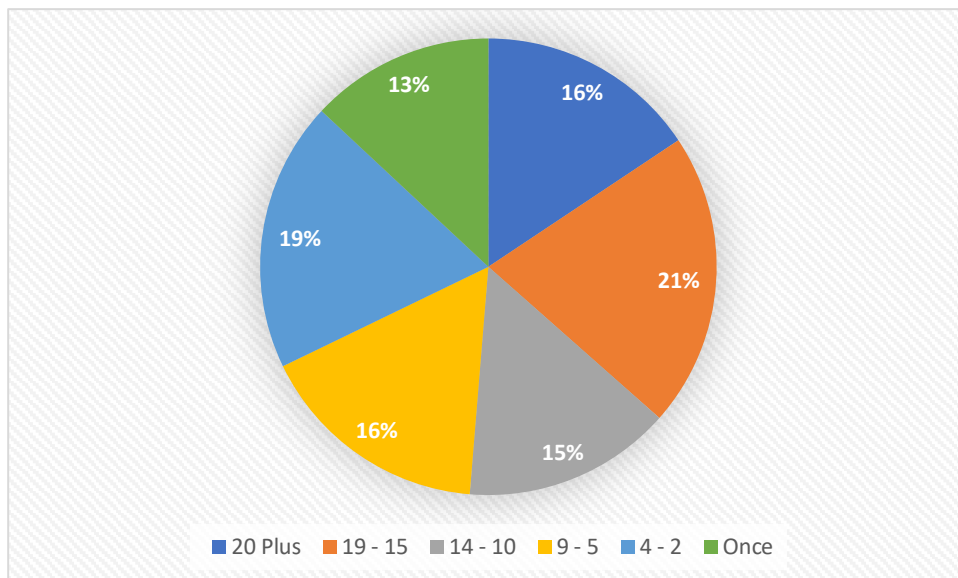
The gender breakdown among the playing membership is as follows.

Youth Members	Girls	72
	Boys	168
Playing	Male [including Life Playing]	62
	Female	12

¹ The figures do not include Temporary Members [usually employees of the club] of which there were seven. Some of the Life Members are under the age of 18 and therefore do not as yet have a vote in General Meetings. There was one Corporate Member.

Participation

According to Cricket Leinster records a total of 115 players took part in Open Competition matches. The average number of matches played per person was 10.8. This is further broken down.



46 players took part in Cricket Leinster Womens competitions. Seventeen took part in 10 or more games, fourteen in more than 3 but less than 10 and the remainder played either one or two games in the season.

There are no reliable statistics on the number of competitive youth games played in the season.

23 girls took part in Womens Competitions and 29 boys in Open Competitions.

Leinster Competitions.

In Open Competitions, Merrion teams took part in 123 games, of which 14 resulted in a No Result. Overall the teams recorded 52 wins and 57 losses in all competitions. There was only 100 runs in the difference in the balance of runs scored v runs against [17871 v 17945]. The same for the wickets take [826] v wickets against [830].

Forty six games took place at Anglesea Road, where Merrion had a clear home advantage 24 wins v 14 losses, with 8 no results. A further 20 games were played at Bird Avenue, where the balance wins to losses was nearly even [8 to 9]. The Women played 27 games.

The full breakdown by teams [including league standings] are set out in the enclosed table.

Team	P	W	L	NR	League	
					Division	Position
1st XI	24	14	8	2	Premier	2nd
2nd XI	19	11	5	3	D3	4th
3rd Xi	16	7	9	0	D4	3rd
4th XI	20	7	13	0	D7	6th
5th XI	16	8	8	0	D11	4th
6th XI	18	3	14	1	D13	8th
Women 's Competitions						
1st XI	21	17	4	0	Premier	1st
2nd XI	11	1	10	0	D2	7th
3rd XI	5	1	4	0	D4	6th

The only Open Competition trophy won in 2022 was the Tillain Cup [T20] by the 2nd XI.

The Women's 1st XI won the Senior League, Senior Cup and the Irish T20 and were losing finalist in the Pilkington [40 Over] competition.

Individual Awards

Amish Sidhu won the O'Grady Cup for bowling in the Premiership.

In 21 matches he took 43 wickets for 671 runs at an average of 15.6 [best 6/15]