

**Croquet at 1st Charlie Chaplin Comedy Film Festival
Waterville, Co Kerry, August 2011
An all round success story.**

Way back last April I got a surprise phone call from Dr Ellie O'Sullivan. For some unknown reason, she had been given my number by the office in Carrickmines. Little did I know then where this would lead - sometime accidents in life turn out to be really lucky, as did this one.

Due to Ellie's huge enthusiasm for the game of Croquet, her desire to bring Croquet to Waterville, and with the loan of Croquet sets from the CAI I set off to run 4 Croquet sessions at the first Charlie Chaplin Comedy Film Festival. Robert Barklie had made a weekend trip to Waterville in July to set the ball rolling and get locals started with the game. It was obvious from all the locals I met that Robert had done a great job.

The success of the event goes to show what one woman's enthusiasm for our game, along with a visit to Kerry, can lead to – four days of Croquet fun, a new Croquet Club in Waterville which will have 2 full-sized Croquet lawns, Mortimer Moriarty of Mannix Point, International Campsite in Cahersiveen planning on having 2 half sized lawns up and running for next summer and meeting Michael who hopes to bring Croquet to life in Athenry, Co Galway.

The first day posed quite some problems – an area of grass had been mown but I was faced with about half an hour to conjure up 2 suitable lawns. With Hugh O'Neill's help somehow we managed to measure out 2 approximately 2/3rds lawns, set them up and were all ready to go by 3pm on quite a cold wet afternoon in the grounds of the Waterville Lake Hotel overlooking Lake Currane - not a moment too soon as would be players started to arrive – including Charlie Chaplin's grandson Arthur – all set for a busy afternoon of Croquet.

Over the 4 afternoons – about 40 players turned up, the majority had never even picked up a mallet before. Most rewarding was the obvious enjoyment by all of the 'Croquet experience' – by all ages and both sexes. Many returning each afternoon, some for fun, some taking the game quite seriously but, without exception, all learning that Croquet can be challenging but also great fun. Added to their enjoyment was the treat of a Pimms and Cucumber "Tea" each day organised by Clare, Maureen and John.

Personally it was a 9-year girl from Cork who made my visit – she sought me out one evening, especially to tell me "I just wanted to thank you so much. I didn't think I'd like croquet but when you helped me and showed me how to hit the ball I loved it and had so much fun - adding - I'll be back for more next summer"

Before returning to Dublin, Haulie O'Shea along with Ellie and Hugh picked out a great site in the grounds of the Waterville Bay Hotel for the Waterville Croquet Club which Haulie promises to have ready for play next summer. How lucky for Waterville Croquet Club to have the benefit of Haulie's generosity and expertise for this.

I left Kerry to return to Dublin full of the positivity I had found there. I look forward to returning to help get the Waterville Club up and running next Spring and later to run Croquet at the Festival in 2012.

Thank you Ellie for asking me and for all your hospitality; thank you Haulie for looking after me and Becky in the Bayview Hotel; thank you to Hugh and to all in Waterville and, of course, to Ellie's gang for your support and who helped make Croquet at the Festival such a success and for making me feel so welcome in Waterville. I never felt like the stranger that I was!

This was the one part of Kerry I had never visited and no better place to fall in love with the Kingdom – the countryside, the people along with a wonderful trip around the Skelligs to experience the magnificent Gannets at close quarters, giving yet another reason to return in the Spring when the Puffins take up residence there – all adding up to make this an unforgettable trip with many new friendships to treasure.

Leo Dungan