

Strokestown Croquet Club - 2014

How special it is to be playing in a Walled Garden of a Big House where croquet was the pastime of the owners more than a century ago. The Strokestown Croquet Club was formed in the spring of 2012 with about 6 members. A local teacher proposed the idea after talking with Irish Croquet Association members. The Association kindly assisted with the free loan of a game kit. Strokestown Park management supported the idea with enthusiasm, feeling that it fitted their vision of supporting community efforts, as they do in many other areas of local endeavor. The Walled Garden was most generously made available for the club to set up a pitch.

As word spread about the new club among local retirees, others came to try it and joined for the season. No one had played the game before, and they found it amazingly enjoyable. The combination of the personal challenge and group encouragement was satisfying.

In the second summer, the Association provided another kit, and this year assisted us in buying a proper greens mower. A second pitch has been set up and membership stands at a 14.

Playing weekly during these first three summers, we have only used the easy rules of Golf Croquet but some are now interested in learning the more competitive association rules.

The club has supported the outreach endeavors of Strokestown Park by participating in two Heritage Weeks, The Gathering and other special exhibits in period dress. In August the club hosted a tournament weekend for more than 20 members of the Irish Croquet Association which was very well received.

The demesne was purchased by local businessman Jim Callery in the 1980's who created the National Irish Famine Museum and opened the house for tours.

Among the many items in the house were close to 20 croquet vintage wooden mallets and a pre 1902 Boxwood ball. One very special item was an antique leather and brass 135-foot tape measure dated 1902 which was specifically for croquet pitches. This is evidence that the homeowners, the Pakenham Mahons, enjoyed croquet in this very same walled garden in the first half of the twentieth century.

Now the location has been made available to those interested in this revived game. The club is open to anyone who wants to join for a nominal annual fee. Games are held on Wednesdays from 10:30 to noon from May thru September, weather permitting.



Croquet Association members and many others enjoyed two days in Strokestown Park



Some of Ireland's best players on the pitch in the Walled Garden at Strokestown Park



Members of the Strokestown Croquet Club ham it up for Heritage Week event



Strokestown Club all playing in hats