
Mote Park Heritage Walkway



A Gateway to Our Heritage

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the Mote Park Heritage Walkway, ten miles of history and beautiful countryside.

This heritage walkway is approximately ten miles in length and travels through a countryside which varies from forest and hillside to open farmland.

Walkers can vary the length of their excursion on this walkway by choosing a route and distance suitable to their own taste.

One of the beauties of this walk is the serenity and quietness away from heavy traffic and industry where individuals and families can enjoy a stroll or a picnic free from noise and pollution, only minutes from Roscommon Town Centre.

This guide book is based on the starting point at Salter's Gate House at the Roscommon Town entrance to Mote Park. Please use the guidebook in conjunction with the walkway by matching the letter on top of the way marked signs along the route with the relevant section in this guidebook. If you are commencing your walk from any of the other starting points indicated on the map, please amend the directions quoted in the guidebook according to the route you take.

Safe Walking!

MOTE PARK

Mote Park, less than two miles from Roscommon Town is an area which boasts a varied history and an equally varied countryside.

The walk takes one through forest, open farmland and hillside, passing many interesting natural and historical features along the way. The history of the Mote Park area dates through thousands of years as is evident in features such as ringforts,

earthworks and the many architectural remnants of the Crofton Estate. Mote Park was the demesne of the Crofton family from the 16th century up until the 1940's and the estate comprised originally of 17,000 acres. Many of the remnants of the estate are still to be seen along the route of the walk.

Today Mote park is best known for it's forests which represent an important amenity to Roscommon town and surrounding areas. These forests, comprising of 650 acres, provide habitats to many species of wildlife both common and rare. Mote Park's forests add immeasurably to the unique character of the area and provide opportunities for many forms of outdoor pursuit including orienteering, hiking and birdwatching.

We welcome you on this trip through time and nature.

POINT A: SALTER'S GATELODGE TO MARTINSTOWN

This entrance to the walkway is accessed from the Golf Links Road out of Roscommon Town. Salter's Gatelodge, called after the family who last resided there, was built by Lord Edward Crofton around 1850 along with the Roscommon Avenue into Mote Park. Continuing along the avenue past the gatelodge, you pass Roscommon Golf Club. Lord Crofton was one of the founder members of the club and it's first president.

The railway bridge crosses the Dublin to Westport railway line which was established by the Midland and Great Western Railway in the 1860's. The Crofton family were instrumental in bringing the railway to this part of the West and allowed the railway company access through the estate.

Crossing the railway bridge into the townland of Martinstown, to the right is a field containing numerous mature trees comprising ash, oak, beech and lime. This land was once the site of Martinstown House, home to the Davys family once small landlords in the area. The house and lands were sold to the Croftons in the 1860's and the house was subsequently demolished.

POINT B: DERRYDONNELL FOREST

This area of forest is in the townland of Derrydonnell which translates as "Donal's oak wood". The forest here was originally native woodland, hence the townland name. Following the purchase of the Crofton estate by the Land Commission in the 1940's, the trees were felled for timber. The predecessors of Coillte purchased the land and planted this area of forest at Derrydonnell with mixed conifer species such as scot's pine, larch and norway spruce. Evidence of the original native woodland species such as hazel, oak, bird cherry and alder can be found in the forest understorey and throughout this area of forest as mature broadleaf trees.

The forests at Mote Park are home to many species of wildlife including red squirrel and pine marten. The red squirrel population is thriving at Mote Park and survives on the cones of scot's pine and norway spruce among other foods. This beautiful little mammal is native to Ireland and is becoming increasingly rare in many parts of the country. Watch out for chewed pine cones along the forest routes of the walk, this indicates red squirrel activity. The pine marten, another protected species of mammal found at Mote Park, also enjoys the protection afforded by the conifer forests.

Watch out for wild flowers such as primrose, bluebell, wood anemone and wild garlic among others to be found in this area in spring and summer. The bird life at Derrydonnell includes species such as raven, jay, long-eared owl and the more common species. Visiting species include redwing, fieldfare and chiffchaff among others. A number of old trackways dating to pre-famine times are to be found within Derrydonnell Forest.

To the rear of this area of woodland is Martinstown bog, an area of raised bog from which turf was extracted by hand in the past.

POINT C: DERRYDONNELL BRIDGE

Leaving Derrydonnell forest the road opens out into an area of open farmland and approaches the site of Mote Park House.

The stone archway over the River Hind is known as Derrydonnell Bridge and was built in 1714 by Sir Edward Crofton the 2nd Baronet. Note the inscription on the bridge:

*"Sir Edward Crofton Brt
has this bridge built
at his own expense for
his own use in 1714.
Rebuilt in 1849".*

The River Hind rises at Clooneyourish near Athleague and enters the Shannon waterway system at Lough Ree about three miles from Mote Park. Upstream to your right is the old bridge across the river which formed part of the old farm road to Roscommon, which travelled through the forest at Derrydonnell.

Continuing along to your right are the remains of the sawmill of the estate. This mill was fed by a stream from St. Catherine's Well about two miles from the sawmill. Carried via a stone lined canal this millrace turned the overshot mill wheel which is still in situ.

From the 16th century to the 1940's the Crofton estate and demesne was a hive of activity. Records show upwards of one hundred people employed on the estate in the 18th and 19th centuries in positions such as stone masons, herders, grooms, woodworkers etc. The agent and accountant for the estate, Mr. E. Holmes was responsible for introducing the scottish champion potato into the country in 1860 to alleviate the effects of the famine.

Continuing along the road to your right are a number of mature horse chestnut trees which are the remains of a walk known as "The Chestnut Walk".

Further along to the left an ancient stone archway marks the remains of a pathway from Mote Park House to the farm-yard and gardens.

POINT D: SITE OF MOTE PARK HOUSE - MOTE DEMESNE

You are now at a junction. Straight ahead lies the Hill of Kilmaine, site of Kilmaine Church and the Crofton burial vault which are surrounded by the prominent stand of sycamore trees which can be seen from here. At this point take a left turn. Immediately on your left are the ruins of the stables and coach-yard built in 1840.

Further along the road, past the stables and on the left was the site of Mote Park House originally built by the Crofton family around 1730. The house was preceded by the Castle of Mote erected by the family in 1620. Mote Park House was a mansion of massive proportions and was remodelled by the Crofton family on many occasions over its two hundred year existence. The mansion was demolished by the Land Commission in the 1950's.

Isacc Weld in his survey of 1832 stated:

"Mote Park the seat of Lord Crofton is a magnificent demesne and the hanging woods on the hill in front of the house afford the broadest expanse of woodland scenery I can call to recollection within the county. Stacks of oak bark for use of the tanners were seen here and there".

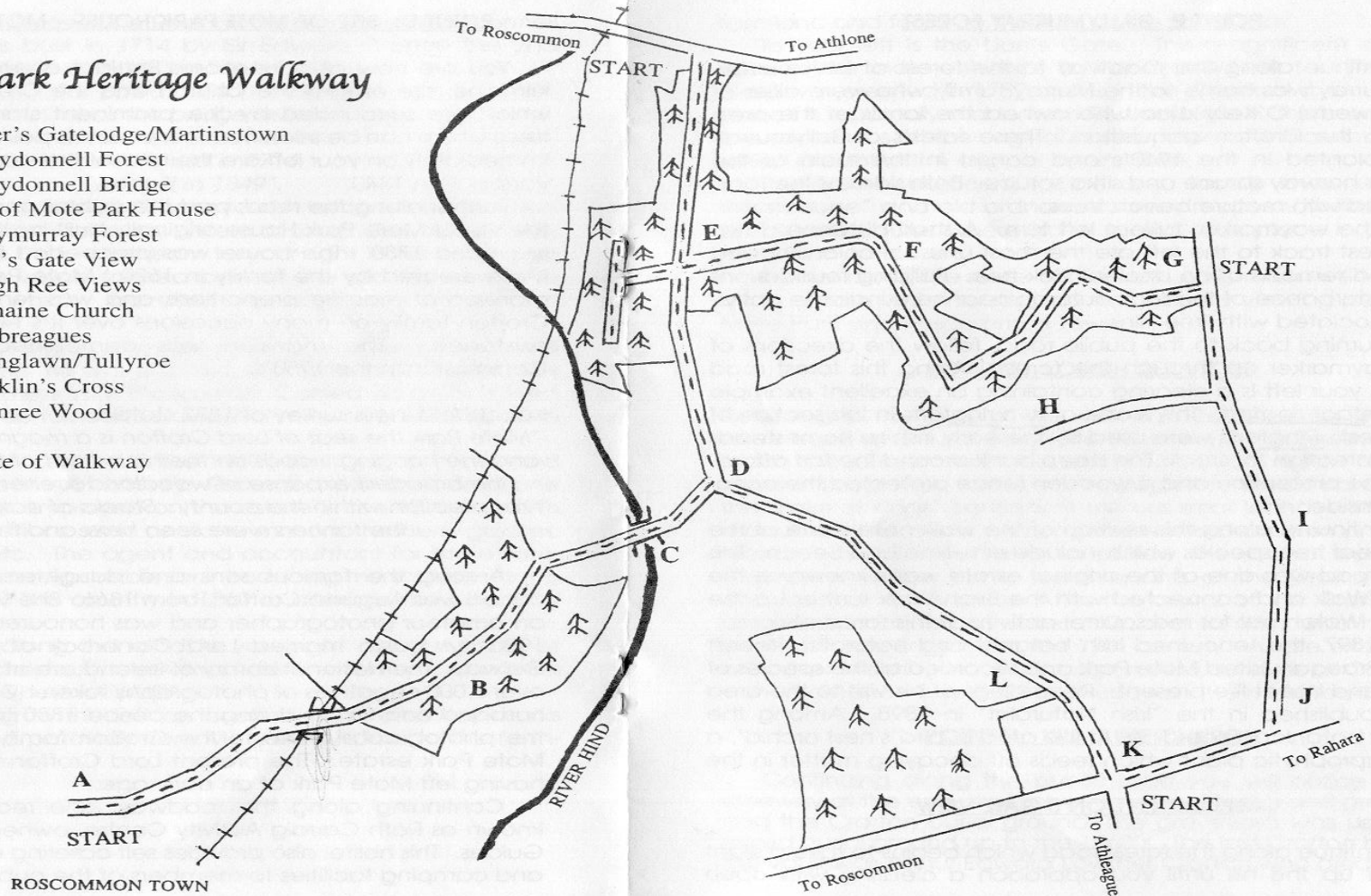
Among the famous sons and daughters the family produced was Augusta Crofton, born 1866. She was renowned as an amateur photographer and was honoured with an OBE in 1920. Augusta married Lord Clonbrock of Ahascragh, Co. Galway. The National Library of Ireland are at present restoring over 3,000 negatives of photographs taken by Augusta and her husband and family during the period 1880 to 1920. Many of the photographs relate to the Crofton family and life on the Mote Park estate. The present Lord Crofton resides in the UK having left Mote Park at an early age.

Continuing along the roadway, one reaches the hostel known as Rath Carraig Activity Centre, owned by the Irish Girl Guides. This hostel also provides self catering accommodation and camping facilities to members of the public.

Mote Park Heritage Walkway

- A Salter's Gate Lodge/Martinstown
- B Derrydonnell Forest
- C Derrydonnell Bridge
- D Site of Mote Park House
- E Ballymurray Forest
- F Lion's Gate View
- G Lough Ree Views
- H Kilmaine Church
- I Fearbreagues
- J Springlawn/Tullyroe
- K Macklin's Cross
- L Bolinree Wood

--- Route of Walkway



POINT E: BALLYMURRAY FOREST

Continue along the roadway to the forest at Ballymurray. Ballymurray was home to the Murray family who were allies of the powerful O'Kelly clan who owned the lands of the area prior to the Crofton acquisition. These forests at Ballymurray were planted in the 1940's and consist in the main of the species norway spruce and sitka spruce. Both sides of the road are lined with mature beech trees.

At the waymarker, take a left turn. A short distance down the forest track to the left are the most unusual onion shaped fossilised remains of an ancient oak tree. Building foundations and disturbance of the rock outcrop near here indicate activities associated with lime kilns.

Returning back to the public road, follow the directions of the waymarker up through the forest. Along this forest road and to your left is a clearing containing an excellent example of an intact ringfort. This is one of two ringforts in this section of the forest. Ringforts were used by the early Irish as homesteads and protection for stock. The steep bank around the fort afforded some protection and a wooden fence protected the occupants inside.

Continuing along this section of the walk note some of the broadleaf tree species which include elm, lime and beech. This forest road was one of the original estate walks known as the Broad Walk and connected with the Birch Walk further up the forest. Watch out for red squirrel activity at this forest also.

In 1897, the renowned Irish botanist and naturalist, Robert Lloyd Praeger visited Mote Park and recorded all the species of plant and insect life present. Recordings of his visit to the area were published in the "Irish Naturalist" in 1898. Among the recent botanical recordings in the area is 'bird's nest orchid', a rare saprophytic plant which feeds off decaying matter in the soil.

POINT F: LION'S GATE VIEW

Continue along the forest road which begins to take a slight ascent up the hill until you approach a clearing with open

farmland and forest to the rear of the farmland.

To your left is the Lion's Gate. This magnificent structure marked the main entrance to the Crofton estate. The Lion's Gate was erected in 1787 and is in the Classical style. The lion himself is reputedly made from Portland Stone. This entrance to the estate was off the original Roscommon to Athlone roadway which predates the original main route.

This area is adjacent to the area locally known as "The Racecourse" and old ordnance survey maps show the outline of the racecourse where horse racing took place in previous centuries.

Further along the route of the walk, a right turn will take you on to a path which leads to a magnificent viewing point over Mote Park and Roscommon Town.

POINT G: LOUGH REE VIEWS

Returning to the route of the walkway, continue up along the forest track which travels up the hill through the forest. As you reach the junction with the public road, turn right. Note the views of Lough Ree to the east. Lough Ree which translates as the "Lake of Kings" contains numerous small islands with ruins of monastic settlements. Among these is Inchcleraun or Quaker Island. The Quaker who inhabited the island was a Mr. Fairbrother whose family were tenants of the Crofton estate and resided in this area. After the arrival of the Croftons the area was inhabited by several Quaker families who had fled persecution in England in the 17th century. A rare example of a Quaker Meeting House, though ruined, survives at Corgarve, a short distance beyond Ballymurray on the main road.

POINT H: KILMAINE CHURCH

Continuing along the public road you will notice a small laneway at the end of which is Kilmaine Church and graveyard and the Crofton burial ground. The graveyard was used as a mixed burial ground up to the 1960's. The last Crofton buried in the vault was Arthur Edward Lowther Crofton who died in 1942.

In and around the ruins of the church are headstones marking the graves of servants of the Crofton family. The vault is closed off for safety reasons.

The meaning of Kilmaine is reputed to be "Church of Ui Maine". The O'Kelly territory was known as "Hymany" which translates in Irish as "Ui Maine".

Close to the church in a nearby field is a 17th century O'Kelly wayside cross which marked their territory. A similar cross is situated at Moydow townland close to Farbreagues.

POINT I: FARBREAGUES

Continuing along the public road on the route of the walkway brings you to the townland of Farbreagues. It is generally believed that the meaning of Farbreagues which translates as "false men" may have signified some form of stone circle or standing stones in the area. This section of the walkway provides magnificent views. On a clear day the hills of Sligo and Leitrim, the Slieve Blooms in Offaly and the mountain ranges to the west can be seen.

A print of Kilmaine church exists in "Grose's Antiquities", the artist of the print stated that on a clear day, eleven counties could be seen from it's point.

The nearby hilltop with the telecommunications mast at it's peak is the celebrated Mountkelly, ancient headquarters of the "Ui Maine" territory with it's ancient ruined observatory and a rich archeological heritage and history of it's own. Mountkelly contains the site of an O'Kelly castle and pre-famine field systems.

POINT J: SPRINGLAWN/TULLYROE

Continue along the route of the walkway which begins to move downhill. Watch out for summer wild flowers such as wild rose, bird's foot trefoil and many species of vetch along the hedgerows on this section of the walkway.

Before the junction and to your right is an old two storey farmhouse known as "Springlawn". The name signifies numerous water springs and wells in this area.

At the junction turn right. You are now in the townland of Tullyroe, which translates as the "redhill". Continue along the road to the crossroads.

POINT K: MACKLIN'S CROSS

At the crossroads turn right. This area is known as Macklin's Cross. The house at this crossroads was originally a gatelodge to the Crofton estate. Continuing along this section of the walkway brings you back into the townland of Mote Demesne.

On the right a sunk fence ran parallel to the avenue. This was used as a deterrent to stock and served as a canal from the stream which crosses the road at Macklin's Cross. The manipulation of watersystems helped to flood land in front of Mote Park House, facilitating boating and other water activities in summertime.

POINT L: BOLINREE WOOD

At this stop you will note an area of clearfelled forest to your left. This forest is in the townland of Bolinree (Baile an Ri) and the area was originally called the Laundry Bog. Coillte have recently harvested the trees from this area and have replanted with the next crop which will mature in around thirty years time.

Along the road on the left is a field containing St. Catherine's Well, which was an early Christian Holy Well. It was renamed in honour of Catherine Lowther Crofton and a stone plaque was erected at the well in 1700 by her husband Edward Lowther Crofton.

Continuing along this part of the walk you will notice intact hedgerows which are very important to bird life for shelter, food and nesting.

Further along the route is an interesting old house to the left a small distance off the road. This house is known as the Laundry House and was used for laundry activities on the estate. A stream ran under the house from St. Catherine's Well and provided the water supply for washing clothes.

Continuing along the route brings you back into Derrydonnell forest and back to the start of the walk.

We hope you enjoyed it!

FLORA & FAUNA OF MOTE PARK

Wild Flowers:

Marsh marigold, wood anemone, celandine, cuckoo flower, milkwort, common dog violet, tutsan, square stalked St. John's wort, ragged robin, soapwort, dove's foot cranesbill, herb robert, wood sorrel, restharrow, vetches, meadowsweet, wild raspberry, wild strawberry, wood avens, wild rose, round leaved sundew, white bryony, purple loosestrife, enchanter's nightshade, rose bay willowherb, sanicle, bog myrtle, cranberry, primrose, cowslip, common centaury, bittersweet, henbane, fig wort, foxglove, brooklime, lousewort, eyebright, wild mint, wild thyme, selfheal, bugle, bluebell, sneezewort, carline thistle, bog asphodel, wild garlic, common twayblade, bird's nest orchid, fragrant orchid, bee orchid, early purple orchid, pyramidal orchid, green - winged orchid, columbine.

Birdlife: (resident & migrant)

Grey heron, mute swan, mallard, sparrowhawk, kestrel, peregrine falcon, pheasant, moorhen, lapwing, curlew, snipe, woodpigeon, collared dove, cuckoo, barn owl, long eared owl, skylark, swallow, meadow pipit, grey wagtail, pied wagtail, wren, dunnoek, robin, blackbird, thrush, chiffchaff, willow warbler, goldcrest, coal tit, blue tit, great tit, magpie, jay, rook, raven, starling, sparrow, chaffinch, greenfinch, goldfinch, siskin, bullfinch, tree sparrow.

Trees & Shrubs: (native & introduced)

Silver birch, downy birch, aspen, common lime, large leaved lime, blackthorn, holly, alder buckthorn, common alder, goat willow, hazel, hornbeam, common beech, wych elm, crab apple, whitebeam, snowberry, rhododendron, bird cherry, holm oak, sweet chestnut, spindle, willow, laurel, sycamore, field maple, guelder rose, hawthorn, pedunculate oak, sessile oak, horse chestnut, ash, rowan, elder, gorse, larch, yew, norway spruce, sitka spruce, scot's pine, lawson's cypress..

Mammals:

Hare, red squirrel, badger, fox, pine marten, stoat, hedgehog, bats.

Mote Park Conservation and Amenity Association accept no responsibility whatsoever for any loss, damage, injury sustained or caused as a result of using the walking route.

No access is allowed to any of the buildings or private lands along the route of the walkway or mentioned in the guide book.

This project has been funded in part by Mid South Roscommon Rural Development Company Limited.