

Tidy Towns Competition 2013

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Clonegal**

Ref: **37**

County: **Carlow**

Mark: **312**

Category: **B**

Date(s): **25/06/2013**

21/07/2013

| | Maximum Mark | Mark Awarded 2012 | Mark Awarded 2013 |
|---|-------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Overall Development Approach | 50 | 48 | 48 |
| The Built Environment | 50 | 39 | 40 |
| Landscaping | 50 | 42 | 44 |
| Wildlife and Natural Amenities | 50 | 35 | 35 |
| Litter Control | 50 | 40 | 40 |
| Sustainable Waste And Resource Management | 20 | 11 | 11 |
| Tidiness | 30 | 19 | 19 |
| Residential Areas | 40 | 31 | 32 |
| Roads, Streets and Back Areas | 50 | 34 | 34 |
| General Impression | 10 | 9 | 9 |
| TOTAL MARK | 400 | 308 | 312 |

Overall Development Approach:

As expected, a first class entry form supported by simple and clear maps: one wishes that all centres would do the same. The first adjudicator's visit overlapped with preparations for the Entente Florale; an immense amount of work was in progress. It is hoped that you will not try to gild the lily: Clonegal's natural beauty is its most telling asset. It was good to see so many school children and young people physically helping - this underlines what Clonegal has always possessed, a real sense of community involvement. It is noted that you continue to receive assistance from two County Councils, two Tourism organisations, from the County Development Partnership, the Sports Partnership, Solas and Coillte and well as local businesses.

The Built Environment:

Many small but significant premises have undergone renovation since last year. Among these are Hickey's shop, the Pig House, the Parish Hall and a number of houses that will be mentioned under 'Residential' (below). Huntingdon Castle was open on the day of the visit – previously this adjudicator had not viewed it, being private property; although altered several times since the 17th century the whole ensemble has a curious consistency that is both charming and formidable; the lime-bordered avenue is as splendid as the building. The hilltop St Brigid's Roman Catholic church with its attractive granite belfry and castellation owes its dignity and serenity to its plainness. St Fiach's Church of Ireland church with its landmark tower looks from its smooth car park, fine granite boundary walls and judicious planting to a well planted border that is part of the opposite housing estate. Dunne's strong green frontage with white facings makes an attractive traditional statement. The yellow sign detracts somewhat from the handsome General Store. Other business premises are well presented. The School is a model of a kind unnoticeable anywhere else perhaps, but here beautifully painted behind its lush shrubbery and beds of perennials.

Landscaping:

Wall-top perennials on the Carlow road have taken on an indigenous quality; the nasturtiums should be making a show by the time of the Entente Florale. The centre bed was about to burst into bloom. The Park was looking exceptionally well cared for with its first class maps and informational boards backed by foliage. The Community Garden being laid out on Main Street will be a splendid amenity in future years. The shrubberies and beds – whether annual or perennial – at individual terrace houses on Main Street and in some of the housing areas contribute an enormous amount to the charm of the village. Annuals here and there, and especially by the

riverside where the cartload of colour snatches the eye momentarily from everything else, have a distinct function and importance. In the view of this adjudicator the use of planter pots gives a sensation of 'instant gardening', but they too have their place and should not be despised. The vast hillside shrubbery at Watch House had been mercilessly cut back by the date of the visit, presumably because it was past its best and to be replaced by something more attractive. It is good to see – from a photograph – that you plant daffodils for spring showing.

Wildlife and Natural Amenities:

Trees, especially in quantity rather than as an adornment to, say, a housing scheme, are usually considered under this heading. The young oaks on the east side of the river are to be welcomed – not every field owner would be so generous as to allow so much planting. (The same may be said of the owner of the plot on Main Street). It is very interesting to see on your maps how you specify the tree species in all locations. Your observance of National Tree Week is applauded. Do please include the outcome of Dr Hickey's habitat survey with next year's submission. The wildlife gardens at the school and in preparation at the riverside are very favourably noted – do give more information next year. The sense of woodland surrounding Clonegal, on account of the mature timber in all directions and the wonderful limes, oaks, beeches and chestnuts of Huntingdon Castle, is now significantly enhanced by trees planted in the village 15 or 20 years ago: 'well done', we should be saying to the people who masterminded that.

Litter Control:

Due no doubt to the vigilance of your teachers and school children, your voluntary helpers and your FAS workers, there was practically no discernible disposable litter at the time of the visit. Of course litter is a variable, depending upon who drops it and who is available to pick it up. Where does the illegal dumping come from and have you any idea why it should be dumped on your roadway? Have there been any prosecutions or is it simply not practical to watch for culprits?

Sustainable Waste And Resource Management:

The Green Flag was noted at the school: congratulations to pupils, teachers and parents. It is serendipitous that the composting and water harvesting which you have already introduced will now be put to practical and permanent use in the new community garden. It is encouraging to read that all the businesses in Clonegal have agreed to energy and waste surveys to be undertaken this year: we would be very interested to learn how this goes. The bring bank was clean and accessible.

Tidiness:

One derelict house was noticed discreetly swathed in Virginia creeper! There is an obtrusively ugly gable opposite the R.C. church on which, ironically, the village's win in the Best Kept Towns is advertised! A rusty corrugated iron roof was seen near the cross roads on the Kildavin road. It is so good to be assured that herbicides and pesticides are not used at all and that all weeding is done laboriously by hand. Gates, signposts and seating all looked really bright and clean. Do not give up your representations to have cables undergrounded and the sky left clear of intrusion.

Residential Areas:

Whoever thought of building the dormered and porched terraces below the antique weaver's cottages several years ago did a very sound job because these houses have blended superbly into the local streetscape. The house next to Dunne's now also blends due to painting; the house opposite Moycomb is another worthy recipient of TLC. The 1798 house, recently repainted, is a credit to those who undertook the work. Several very fine individual homes attracted the attention – among them a lovely stone and brick 3-bay 2-storey house by the bridge, a charming house with dormers opposite the Huntingdon gates, covered in rambling roses on the date of the visit, and a smart renovation of what was presumably a Wesleyan chapel. The spacious lawns of Watch House Village impressed. A variety of colour in the houses was a welcome feature of St Brigid's terrace; the strong timber boundary fence gives a sense of cohesion. Neatly kept homes were seen in Radharc na Doirí. Quite a number of houses at Valley View needed their front boundary walls freshened up with paint; the estate is nicely planted with a fresh green communal lawn. In Moyacomb Meadow the smart homes nestle into well maintained lawns and discreet planting approached by an exceptionally well surfaced road.

Roads, Streets and Back Areas:

Road surfaces range from excellent in Moyacomb Meadow to very poor on the east side of the bridge. The cemetery frontage with climbing hydrangea, roses and Virginia creeper looked particularly well. Seating and planting alongside the road to the east of the river also looked well. The rather bleak car park opposite St Brigid's church was not really relieved very much by three flowering containers. The car park at Moyacomb was spic and span. The gravelled space before the Huntingdon gate was exceptionally tidy. The historical information board was greatly appreciated. The use of granite for wall building and rebuilding was favourably noted.

General Impression:

It has been a real pleasure to return to Clonegal after some years and to see the many sensitive steps forward that have been taken by the Tidy Village Association, the residents and the business people of the village. The

central part played by the school, its pupils and teachers, impressed very much. With every good wish for your participation in the Entente Florale.

Second Round Adjudication:

Clonegal looked wonderful again on the day of second adjudication and flower displays together with well maintained green areas, hedgerow and trees make the village a worthy participant in 'Entente Florale'; the following observations are offered in a spirit of constructive criticism and do not detract from the excellent presentation of Clonegal. (1) The grass at the lovely stone bridge on the Carlow road should be maintained neatly trimmed to highlight the bridge as a feature on this entrance to the village. (2) The entrance gates to Huntington Castle grounds in the village centre are worthy of refurbishment; treatment to the window and door apertures of the nearby vacant cottage is applauded. (3) A large farm outbuilding on the Watch House cross roads together with its roadside boundary are in need of improvement to enhance visual amenity. (4) Some roadside areas to boundary walls to dwellings on the road up the hill on the Watch House side of the village look poor. (5)

A few boundary walls to dwellings together with grass verges along High Street are in need of attention however the name plate, water pump and flower display here were admired. (6) The gable wall of a beautifully painted roadside façade of a dwelling close to the bridge in the village centre should be painted also. (7) A small amount of 'Take Away' litter was noted in grass verges on the Tullow road located just before the speed limit sign however the stands of Montebretia in verges were beginning to bloom and looked beautiful. The roadside boundary walls and entrance gates to 'Ben Mulhall Park' enjoy an excellent presentation and the maturing perimeter hedgerow within no doubt provides many wildlife habitats. The boundary walls of the burial grounds on the Tullow Road were admired also in respect of their presentation.