

Tidy Towns Competition 2014

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Clonegal** Ref: **37**
County: **Carlow** Mark: **319**
Category: **B** Date(s): **21/06/2014**
31/07/2014

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2014
Community Involvement & Planning	60	48
Built Environment and Streetscape	50	40
Landscaping and Open Spaces	50	45
Wildlife, Habitats and Natural Amenities	50	36
Sustainable Waste and Resource Management	50	20
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	64
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	50	32
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	50	34
TOTAL MARK	450	319

Community Involvement & Planning / Rannpháirtíocht an Phobail & Pleanáil:

Congratulations to Clonegal TidyTowns Committee for entering the 2014 SuperValu TidyTowns Competition. Our wish for you is that your participation in the competition assists you in your aspirations for Clonegal and helps you to further your plans for the future. Thank you for the material you submitted and a special word of appreciation for the person who compiled the material. Yours is an ambitious group, well accustomed to the demands of this TidyTowns competition. You mention the usual mix of agencies that groups engage with except that in your case you also mention Tullow Men's Shed. Well done to the enterprising men of Clonegal and well done for mentioning that group in a TidyTowns context. Your engagement with the young children is impressive. The school building reflects the beauty of the village. It is wonderful when the adults of a village give credit to the young ones for so much of the work done and use the phrase 'give ownership', thus handing over responsibility. The adjudicator agrees about 'gilding the lily'. This is a heritage village but not a museum piece to be admired firstly and lived in secondly. From a social mental health viewpoint one loves to read of your networking with other TidyTowns groups throughout the country. The adjudicator loves the conversational tone of the presentation of your submission. Stark cold facts are relayed as if this is a chat between friends around the fire. In this way the Clonegal personality is unveiled to the reader. But lets have a look at the quantity of material submitted. The 2 maps were a great help in leading the adjudicator about the village and in pointing up the projects that might be of interest to the adjudicator. But two are sufficient. When compiling the submission for next year ask yourself is the adjudicator likely to read this, is this material relevant to the work of the adjudicator, does he need two copies of the entry form? If there is any doubt then leave it out. There is the real danger that the adjudicator may overlook important material in wading through matter of no immediate relevance to the adjudication. It is also likely that you will lose a mark as a result of not editing material submitted. The quantity of material is the reason you have not improved your mark in this section.

Built Environment and Streetscape / An Timpeallacht Thógtha agus Sráid-dreacha:

One arrives into Clonegal and cannot be sure what buildings are occupied and what are unoccupied. There is a terrace of buildings at one end of the street that are live enterprises and looking very well. The Gaeilge chimes with the heritage village theme. The buildings on the way to the Castle are like the representation of a heritage town. But across the way business is busy so this is real and wonderful. The town houses bring a touch of modernity to the street. People are busy, many with their home frontages. But the Weavers cottages raise a doubt again about occupied or unoccupied, is this present or past? Their presentation has an inhabited appearance. One feels like visiting Ó Duinn's for fortification. Then the centre piece at the junction and the beautiful school and all is well again, this is real. What a journey through the past and into the present. The uninhabited buildings and their meaningful presentation, could be juxtaposed between present and past. Wonderful. And all outdoing one another for attention. There is no camouflaging of a door or window to say 'Nobody Home'. The paint and the window boxes and the net curtains invite one to knock on the door and say 'Hello'. Constant challenges face the proprietors of the

restaurant and Ó Duínns to keep their high gables in ship shape. That challenge is met resplendently. The adjudicator loved the two churches and the treatment of their environs. Likewise the castle and its grounds and gardens. Church and Landlordism have bequeathed wonderful buildings on this village. Your work has added another layer of interest in honouring your past associations with political crises and the importance of farming in village life. One felt that your submission was muted on the contribution of the Castle to the life of the village and the Castle barely made it onto the map. It could have been missed by the adjudicator.

Landscaping and Open Spaces / Tírdhreachú agus Spásanna Oscailte:

In this section the residents have been blessed with a rich inheritance. The panorama into which the village nestles provides a rich spectacle of fields and forests sloping down to the 'cluain' that gives the village its name. In the village itself the legacy of trees that accompany the castle helps create the personality that is Clonegal. Add to this the river that sweeps through the village, the resultant bridge and the forest of trees and you wonder is there any way in which these people can improve on nature. And they sure can. You refer to last year's report and urgings to calm the window boxes and hanging baskets. While this adjudicator feels that very often these adornments can interfere with the appearance of the building which they are meant to improve, that this is not the case with Clonegal. Some of the buildings on the street would be like granny without the make up were it not for the floral displays. The summer colour enlivens those buildings and their surroundings. So does your work compliment what nature has bestowed on you? The answer is that your landscaping enhances all of the recreational amenities, all of the roads and corners created by man, the buildings built by man and does not detract in any way from the majestic trees that shade the village from the forces of nature. Imagine the town houses on the street without the softening touch that nature through your hands brings to their appearance. What is magical here is the diversity of plant and of texture, like an orchestra playing its various instruments to create the melody. The adjudicator loved the limes at the Castle, an unusual avenue. The work of man in that generation. The adjudicator loved the landscaped areas, the work of this generation. These landscaped plots may not be limes but for the most part they are herbaceous, they are sustainable, they provide colour and forage, they celebrate the past, they soften a corner, they unite a community in their creation. But be careful not to overdo the formality. The informality of the street structure is best adorned with the informal box hedge in front of one building, wild roses climbing up another, stones laid haphazardly to form kerbing for a landscaped bed. The granite kerbing along flagstones in one area represents that informality for the adjudicator. The adjudicator feels that you have now reached the limit with the formal gardens. But tree planting should not stop, nor does it. Oak will be the new lime for coming generations. You say you removed brackets that would not be holding a hanging baskets this year. You left no trace behind. Lastly, well done on your proud achievement last year in the Entente Floral. The adjudicator is not surprised that you struck gold. A visit to Clonegal is a 'Sos Cois Abhann'.

Wildlife, Habitats and Natural Amenities / Fiadhúlra, Gnáthóga agus Taitneamhachtaí Nádúrtha:

The trust and drive of your activities in the Wildlife section and in the Sustainability section are intertwined. Wildlife activities impact on sustainability issues and vice versa. There is a living, working link between the present activities and activities for the future in both. The contribution of the children of Clonegal are common to both sections emphasising the importance of the future. So the Community Garden is a wildlife resource and a sustainability resource. The adjudicator loved the siting of the garden, slap bang in the village centre so there is no escaping its presence. The adjudicator also loved the comment about the garden looking 'somewhat neglected', a landscaping mentality breaking through where all must have an order. But the egg shells must be broken in order to make the omelette. The oak whips seem to provide a balance between planting for today with bedding plants and planting for the future. The adjudicator would love to have been presented with 5 salient pointers from your biodiversity plan that would point him towards observable habitat havens either along the river, around the bridge, in the landscaping or to the rear of the Weavers Cottages. Highlights of that plan would have been far more effective than including the total plan. The adjudicator would also wish to have been pointed in the direction of the Indian Balsam. Bear in mind, though that most TidyTowns adjudicator leave the wellies at home. Somehow your golden mile was missed despite looking forward to experiencing a wildlife walk. Sorry. But it emphasises what was said earlier about the volume of material.

Sustainable Waste and Resource Management / Bainistiú Acmhainní agus Dramhaíola Inbhuanaithe:

Yet again one is in awe of your energy while at the same time realising that your programmes should be the manual for every community in the country. You have moved, it seems seamlessly, from waste minimisation to waste elimination. And that is the common goal. Your survey and discussion on a 'binless village' is proof. But your submission acknowledges that waste does develop and you provide opportunities for the residents to manage the disposal of this waste in a safe manner. Opportunity is also provided for the manageable reuse of unwanted goods through the car boot sale. A knock on effect of the car boot sale is that the occasion creates a community gathering also. Your list of activities is realisable and definable. But the last project mentioned is the coup de grace for the adjudicator, the Green Dog Walkers initiative. Good luck with that. As the adjudicator is certain that you would have registered with greenhome.ie or with stopfoodwaste.ie he would love to read of your experience with these websites.

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

Your litter awareness policies and the moulding of a few generations of children have resulted in a mind set that wishes to reduce the number of litter bins in the village. Some achievement. The Bring Centre is like a sacristy with the rails around it but not hiding the banks. Not a fragment of glass anywhere. This section, with its increased weighting, may be a challenge to your village. It is difficult in a rural village where the buildings of the farming community are part of the built environment to present their environs in a way that is pleasing to the non farmer.

Added to this is that these buildings deteriorate at a faster rate than residential areas. You have some examples. For the most part your committee is blessed by the cooperation you are receiving from the farming community in the village. The sight or sound of a tractor is integral to the needs of the farmer but can be a headache to the Tidy Towns people. The condition of farmyard gates illustrates the cooperation from the farming community. A special mention for the proprietors of the Take Away. Well done. The area around Take Aways are a special challenge to tidiness. While the dazzling brightness of buildings with their perpetual fresh paint is the usual visual impact the adjudicator felt on coming over the bridge that there are one or maybe two buildings that will need freshening by next year. There is a shop sign that is out of tune with the rest of the orchestra. Debris can develop along roadways under our noses and it was felt up around the Church of Ireland area that mown grass debris gave an untidy image to the area.

Residential Streets & Housing Areas / Sráideanna Cónaithe & Ceantair Tithíochta:

Can you imagine the appearance of the village without the intervention of so many people since 1998? Imagine the state of so many of the buildings that now enhance the streetscape rather than detract from that appearance. These houses are no longer lived in but could be defined as residential. When you feel down just ask 'What if we did not...?' What would the new houses on the street look like were it not for your promptings? Would these new residents feel that they are important, significant members of the Clonegal family whose house front adds to the montage of street colour? The adjudicator loved the lay out of Moyacomb Meadow. It is as if the architect ensured that no house would block the view from any other one, that no house would be overshadowed by another. The road weaves and winds unfolding a new picture as it progresses. Valleyview estate is more the traditional linear estate but has the advantage of a beautiful open space to its front with a lush line of trees and the roadside landscaping creeping in their direction. St Brigid's Terrace may be the senior citizen among the estates but it is not outdone in its delightful presentation. The adjudicator loves the idea of 'Adopt a House' thus ensuring damage limitation and also including the residents of Radharc na Doirí in a meaningful way. The individual houses all along the approach roads bring colour and character to their surroundings.

Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes / Bóithre Isteach, Sráideanna & Lánaí:

The approach roads arouse one's expectation levels immediately. The sign, and this was away out, 'Moilligh Daoine ag Siúl' endeared the village to the adjudicator. The caution was so pertinent as there are bound to be walkers enjoying the panorama the surrounds them. That caution could be repeated on all sides. Then the landscaped roadsides unfold. Do nasturtiums grow out of the granite. It is a lovely sight. On all roads into the village the driver is also preoccupied with the beautiful scenery, so preoccupied that the village is suddenly upon one. Only on the GAA pitch road is there a long stretch of road and one climbs into Watch House Village in order to witness what those people can enjoy on a daily basis. Suddenly the bridge is upon one or the centre piece at the school is reached. We have arrived. Accompanied by neatness and wilderness all the while. On at least one occasion the adjudicator felt the side of the street needed remedial work, a semi pothole. One day there will be a pedestrian bridge over the river to facilitate the walkers. The only back area that could be accessed is in the vicinity of the entrance to the Castle. This area is a gem of antiquity and kept like a front garden

Second Round Adjudication:

This is the first visit to Clonegal for your second round adjudicator and what an amazing experience it was. Congratulations on your success of Gold Medal in the Entente Florale Competition. This without doubt is reflected in the high standard that the village has presented itself.

The village which is set in a valley also has the distinction of the meeting place for three counties Carlow, Wicklow and Wexford. On entering the village the adjudicator passed St Brigid's church and stopped at the 'centre flowerbed' which allowed the village centre to be surveyed.

The landscaped bed here with the weaved goat as its centre piece was superb. Passing the weavers cottages fabulous landscaping reflecting the owner's unique taste was admired. However the adjudicator felt that the satellite dishes that had to be placed at front of the cottages distracted somewhat. The pleasant park on the left with superb year round planting was admired. The community garden opposite creates a focal point in the village. The garden which is suitably located for the community is very well maintained and was very much admired. The novel notice on the gate didn't stop the adjudicator exploring. The contrast of the village changes as you reach the bustling businesses and Derry River. What an experience this was. The old weigh bridge is a splendid feature here with red and blue cart, complete with flowers. Children were busy playing around in this exquisite location.

The superb estate past the Watch House had spectacular landscaping at the entrance. On return Huntington Castle was visited. The drive and entrance is superb where the house boasts a coffee shop and play area through the trees, which was a delight. The school was admired as was St Fiacs church. The landscaping throughout reflected the rural setting of the village and was superb. Tubs of flowers dotted throughout the village gave that extra splash of colour, in particular the tubs opposite the church were noted. Good to see the many village pumps are still being maintained. The yellow sign on top of the shop opposite the entrance to Huntington Castle needs attention. The adjudicator felt it distracted somewhat from a beautiful building. The many housing areas again are well presented and the village residents are to be complemented.

This is a quaint rural village in a beautiful setting that did not destroy its natural beauty by over doing its presentation. The absence of litter and bins from the streetscape was noticed which presented a tidy appearance apart from some weed growth at the area around St Brigid's Church.