

"Caring for our environment"

Centre : **OILEAN THORAI**
County : **DONEGAL**
Category : **A**

Results

Date of Adjudication : 17-06-1999

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded
Overall Developmental Approach	60	46
Homes, Harbour areas and other Facilities	60	40
Litter Control and Tidiness	60	34
Roads, Walls and Hedgerows	60	39
Overall General Impression	60	39
TOTAL MARK	300	198

Adjudicators Comments

OILEAN THORAÍ, CO DUN NA nGALL

OVERALL DEVELOPMENTAL APPROACH

It is very good to read on the entry form of the Coiste's commitment to preserving the traditions of the island and to making improvements which are appropriate to these traditions. It is encouraging too that the committee have obtained the co-operation of Roinn na Gaeltachta and Údarás na Gaeltachta, as well as Donegal County Council, and that young people are working with you under a FÁS scheme. Now that they have entered the Competition, the Committee should consider drawing up a 3 or 5 year development plan, identifying projects which should be tackled, listing priorities, costing each according to available finances, and setting targets for the completion of individual projects year by year (rather than attempting to pursue a number of initiatives all at once). There are several suggestions – some of which you may find appropriate – regarding the improvement of buildings, the maintenance of roads and public places, the plant and tree species which are suited to differing climatic conditions, the encouragement of wildlife, etc etc., in the Tidy Towns Handbook. In the long run, however, it is shared local experience in these matters which counts most; the fact that you already have a Coiste of seven is a good start.

HOMES, HARBOUR AREAS AND FACILITIES

Oilean Thorai has a number of fine buildings which are well cared for. The handsome Church of St. Colm Chille is beautifully kept within and without. The graveyard contains many well-sculpted headstones, the names revealing a wealth of family history. The School is well maintained, as is the superb Lighthouse and surrounding buildings. Remains from earlier times, such as the ruined Church and the Round Tower with stone artefacts collected at its base, are interesting, and perhaps their history deserves more informative signage. An Club Soisialta is smartly presented (with the exception of the uncollected litter on adjudication day). The Hotel is neat and well painted. The Lord Hamilton monument at the unique Dixon Gallery prompts the thought as to whether there are other Tory Islanders and friends of Tory who should be commemorated in this way. The Mary of Tory shrine was being planted with shrubs and annuals on adjudication day – it would be a huge step forward if all householders undertook to look after their front gardens with similar dedication. Some of the oldest homes are the best kept, surrounded by budleias, lilies, veronica and escalonia – more of this would make a huge difference to the two villages. Some front gardens are not kept at all; very little effort is needed. For example,

weed growth of the paths of some of the six newer houses could be removed in half an hour, with only a little additional weeding from time to time. Some houses with attractive colour washes look very well from the harbour, but when seen closer need repair. The Harbour was undergoing extensive repair and will not be assessed until the work is completed. The same applies to the development site between the two villages, after the soil the ground has been restored and replanted.

LITTER CONTROL AND TIDINESS

There was a considerable amount of disposable litter in public places at the time of adjudication in mid June. Visitors and residents should be encouraged to use litter bins and the bottle bank. The worst littered sites were to the north of the East town, where dumping occurs right beside the 'Cosc ar Dumpaí' notice, and in the grounds of An Club Soisialta. However, there was very little litter in the neighbourhood of the shops – this is a matter for congratulation, especially when there are so many daily visitors. In a more general way, a sense of untidiness stems from the number of vacant sites where abandoned domestic objects and machinery tend to collect, and from unmended walls and boundaries.

ROADS, WALLS AND HEDGEROWS

Roads are poor, and the provision of improved surfaces by the County Council would seem to be essential in the matter of good communication as well as tidiness. Walls and boundaries are variable. There are some excellent drystone walls, as well as concrete walls which have been plastered and whitewashed; recent improvements are impressive. The Saunders well project was favourably noted, as well as the plans for picnic tables. The space between the Harbour and the Hotel is not well maintained, and could be tidied up in a few days by half a dozen people working together. The extensive bird life – the call of the corncrake was heard – was a real joy. There is potential in the promotion of the island for visiting ornithologists.

OVERALL GENERAL IMPRESSION

The visitor can only but admire the good humour and friendliness of the people of the island. While it is incumbent upon the official bodies mentioned at the outset to do their best to assist in the development programme, the ideas and the initiatives have to come from the people themselves, and it is clear that this Coiste has begun something very important.