

# Tidy Towns Competition 2003

## Adjudication Report

Centre: **Abbeyleix**

Ref: **289**

County: **Laois**

Mark: **237**

Category: **C**

Date: **04/08/2003**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2003	Mark Awarded 2002
Overall Developmental Approach	50	41	42
The Built Environment	40	34	33
Landscaping	40	36	34
Wildlife and Natural Amenities	30	17	17
Litter Control	40	30	30
Tidiness	20	15	15
Residential Areas	30	22	22
Roads, Streets and Back Areas	40	35	34
General Impression	10	7	8
<b>TOTAL MARK</b>	<b>300</b>	<b>237</b>	<b>235</b>

### Overall Developmental Approach:

Thank you for your entry to Tidy Towns 2003. Abbeyleix is a most pleasant town to visit and its Heritage town category is well earned. The now completed roadworks has given the town a visual perspective complemented by the absence of overhead wirescape. High density traffic is an ongoing difficulty which continues to hinder movement throughout the town.

### The Built Environment:

Abbeyleix has a number of very well presented buildings along its main street and at various points on roads leading into the town. Those to catch the eye along the main street included the Bank of Ireland, Morrisseys, Bramleys, the old Hibernian Hotel and Prestons. The heritage centre with its adjacent lawns and car park, the RC church with its well kept gardens, and the Church of Ireland church in its wooded setting and avenue of trees were all most impressive. Special note was taken of the citizens advice bureau, the garda station and the "Further Education" centre. Market House and the fire station looked fine. Some of the window woodwork on the Market House requires attention. The Ballinakill Road corner of the square has a derelict house which is still a problem, although a creeper has been planted to screen it. Several houses on the main street had very attractive frontages and, in some cases, colourful gardens.

### Landscaping:

The main street looked very well with its new lamp standards and excellent road surface. The roadside trees are maturing and parking bays give an ordered look to the town. From the apex corner in front of the heritage centre at the northern end of the town to the fountain feature at its southern end, Abbeyleix has a colourful and entertaining landscape. Centerpiece is the square, with its hanging baskets, De Vesce Memorial and Market House. The citizens advice bureau is excellent with displays of colourful hanging baskets and the garda station with its shrubs and trees. The street signposting to the points of interest are very well done. The Abbeyleix parish hall could do with landscaping and the roadway by the tennis courts towards the football park needs resurfacing. New walls at the junction to Heywood Estate is complete and looks well

### **Wildlife and Natural Amenities:**

The Lords Walk and Sextons House and its vegetable curtilage are very special features. Mature hedging on the Ballyroan Road is an excellent wildlife habitat and the co-operation of the golf club in setting up a wildlife feature was noted. The little park beside Knochamoe House with its ornamentation looks well. Dove House and its Sensory Gardens is a delight.

### **Litter Control:**

The anti-litter programme is working well, although there was some litter in grass on the left hand side of the Mountrath Road approach.

### **Tidiness:**

The 30 mph signs could be painted. Frontage on Dunnes Hardware is not particularly nice.

### **Residential Areas:**

Balladine housing estate has nicely trimmed green areas. There is a mixture of well maintained gardens. The green area which fronts onto the main road with mature trees and seats looks well. Housing generally in this area is well presented. Abbey Crescent has a nice green area to front. A number of new trees have been planted and there are a number of flower beds. A profusion of flowers outside one house in particular impressed and the verges in the vicinity are excellent. The housing estate adjacent to the citizens advice bureau is nicely presented with green areas and plants. Walls could be repainted along the run of houses on the right. Vesey Close is exceptional with its many excellent gardens and very well maintained frontages. Thornberry estate looked well with its new wall and planted green. Heywood estate has a grotto with a green area. The interior green area could be trimmed. The green area near frontage with floral display looks well. The triangular green at the junction to the main road is well presented as it is nicely trimmed with stone surround and signposting.

### **Roads, Streets and Back Areas:**

Approach roads to Abbeyleix are generally well presented. From Shanahoe Road at the 40mph sign, there is a cut verge on both sides. This gives way to a rough cut presentation, with attractive walls where the "Heritage Town" sign is erected. The approach into Abbeyleix along the Cork Road from the 30 mph sign is quite nice with both sides neat and tidy. The left hand side has a cycling lane and there are some tree plantations. On the right hand side is the new hotel in front of which a new beech hedge is growing well. The approach from the Rathdowney side is really very pleasant with fine old trees and well maintained houses and gardens. Road surfaces are very good. The Dublin Road access is fine with cut verges. Pratts Sales Yard should be screened.

### **General Impression:**

Abbeyleix is a delightful town which is managing to accommodate considerable change. The main

street redevelopment has maintained its old world ambience, although its traffic problems still persist.

### **Second Round Adjudication:**

Abbeyleix is a small town with a population of 2,000, developed around the junction of many roads but especially the N8. Like Durrow, it is dominated by heavy through-traffic. However, the committee of seventeen members has responded magnificently to this drawback and they are to be highly commended. The adjudicator remembers the recent long drawn out upheaval to the main street as it was being rehabilitated. It is now just wonderful; its parking areas paved differently from footpaths and roadway; its tree planting and its outstanding street lighting. The adjudicator would now consider the street a most outstanding street and would compare it to the best in the country. Both Laois County Council and the committee are to be congratulated. The newly rehabilitated heritage centre and its excellently landscaped grounds terminate the street brilliantly. The view down it from the centre is now exceptional. The former courthouse is excellently landscaped and adds to the success of the street. The housing estates of Abbey Crescent and Vesey Close were beautifully planted and maintained. The Abbeyleix District Hospital grounds would need many more trees. At present, there is a scattering of diverse tree types, what is now needed is a consistent theme of trees. The garda station and its grounds looked well. An outstanding change to the main street was the removal of the overhead cables. The adjudicator has memories of the former wirescape and there is truly a remarkable visual change with the cables placed underground.