

Tidy Towns Competition 2006

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Carrickmacross** Ref: **586**
County: **Monaghan** Mark: **279**
Category: **D** Date(s): **12/07/2006**
09/08/2006

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2006
Overall Development Approach	50	47
The Built Environment	50	37
Landscaping	50	39
Wildlife and Natural Amenities	50	26
Litter Control	50	34
Waste Minimisation	20	9
Tidiness	30	15
Residential Areas	40	29
Roads, Streets and Back Areas	50	35
General Impression	10	8
TOTAL MARK	400	279

Overall Development Approach:

The submission impressed, as always. Due to the co-ordination skill of this enterprising committee, the work of a number of official and voluntary bodies combines to further the good husbandry of the town. Carrickmacross seems firmly placed at the top of the county, and in the upper reaches of the national competition. This was the first year in which this adjudicator had visited Carrickmacross since the opening of the by-pass; the main streets certainly did seem to be less clogged with heavy traffic but it was also interesting to see that the substantial car-parks were being used - only four years ago it looked as if the provision of such spaces was a useless exercise! It was definitely much easier and pleasanter to stroll through the streets and appreciate the townscape. Your stated purpose of 'focusing on preserving the heart of the town' is an admirable one and comes just at the right time. Your map was comprehensive and easily read, but please write in the names of the residential estates on it - even some local people were unable to identify their locations! - and show how new roads join up with existing ones. Thank you too for filling in the entry form in pen - this always discloses useful information which some committees overlook by submitting only typed reports.

The Built Environment:

As usual, the principal public buildings and churches were very well presented and need hardly be enumerated again. Of special interest to this adjudicator (because of not having seen the completed work before) were the reinstatement of the wonderfully picturesque Workhouse (!), and the new shopping Mall - ancient and modern, so to speak. The Workhouse was photographed for the Heritage award - the adjudicators nominate projects which are then judged by the Heritage Council; the concept of using this historic and architecturally engaging building as the headquarters of a number of socially orientated organisations is a splendid one. The shopping Mall is well situated and must surely bring additional business to the town; the exterior opposite the superb market square makes a contemporary statement that complements the older

streetscape; there did seem to be over-indulgence in signage, both permanent and temporary: it was not a bit pleasing to see a plastic banner advertising a half-price sale covering the handsome stonework of the antique Toll House. Just a few other comments of lesser importance: the plaques on the Convent walls were most interesting; the quaint spire and handsome graveyard gates by the Kingscour road create a pleasant focus in this neighbourhood; the Jackson Hall could do with painting to emphasise the intricate surface design; the Public Health office was also in need of freshening up with paint; the Catholic Hall was bright with its attractive colour finishes; the 'trompe-l'oeil' painting on the facade of Identity/Smith's is something that is disappearing from our towns and should be encouraged on other premises. Some fine shopfronts were noted; awards can only be given where the entire building, including gables, roofs and stacks, are in good order, where there is absence of mass-produced signage, and (this applies only to older buildings) where timber window frames have not been replaced by PVC.

Landscaping:

It is heartening to read that you propagate your own plants. It was feared that the park-like roadside landscaping at Lisnisk might have fallen a victim to road widening, but it turned out that in fact more people can appreciate it since the opening of the motorway. The new link road to the old Ardee road will be presenting a challenge for which you no doubt have plans. The new link road from the Shercock roundabout past factories is another place where landscaping might be considered, but in fact it only needs mowing and tidying up in the vicinity of the Rye Valley premises. Several very fine landscaping projects were noted - perhaps pride of place should go to the Crann Nua estate, but the Clogh Valley neighbourhood holds its own. The colourful and clean playground here also impressed. As for bedding, tubs, hanging baskets etc, the town is richly endowed but for sheer colour and tasteful design the Market square was surely the most remarkable on the date of the visit.

Wildlife and Natural Amenities:

Trees come under this heading - the planting of over a hundred, as described in your documentation, is a major advance. Interpretative signage was favourably noted, and walks. It is assumed from earlier years that the schools are still involved in nature projects. (In your next submission, please say something about the Kvanagha trail - whether under this heading or another.)

Litter Control:

It is salutary to learn that prosecutions have taken place - there is nothing like well-publicised proceedings to counteract wholesale littering. Your litter control programme is clearly working very well; again, it is good to read that schools are involved. The only neighbourhood where litter was seen to any significant degree was in Emmet road.

Waste Minimisation:

The mark given is slightly above average in the first year of this new category - a category that will assume greater importance as time goes on. Your bring banks were seen to be very well kept. It was good to read of the Green Flag status of the schools and that the idea of the segregation of waste products was being actively promoted.

Tidiness:

It is fair to say that Carrickmacross is a tidy town and therefore the following adverse notes represent only a very small proportion of the total. You will of course be familiar with the sites mentioned and actively working with the Local Authority on their improvement. It was disappointing to see that the prominent row of buildings at the end of a perspective off Main Street - on the way to the shopping mall carpark - was still derelict and all too visible. Some commercial premises in Mulinary needed upgrading, especially where whitewashed walls had become discoloured; this neighbourhood is particularly inconsistent in its presentation, going from first class to something much lower. Some stained gables were seen in the main street and there are still some ugly 'backs', such as opposite Sean Carraig. The ongoing developments on and adjacent to the Ardee road have not been considered under this heading because their inevitable untidiness will certainly be dealt with as the projects are completed: it is those of long standing that are of concern to the adjudicators as much as to the committee.

Residential Areas:

Most of the older town houses that give Carrickmacross its real character are now very well kept. No 4 in an old terrace in the one-way street opposite Metropolitan Finance was regarded as the best in the town. Of the picturesque alms-houses, the one at the north end was specially noted for its imaginative paintwork. This adjudicator came across the Sean Carraig estate with a sense of real excitement, having noted it previously in your photograph: with its traditional roof-lines, stacks and fenestration it is nevertheless a distinctly modern development with clean lines and neat disposition of layout; this was the best new housing development seen in the county this year. It was also good to see use being made of a central site rather than a remote spot with

no real connection to the town. Crann Nua has already been favourably mentioned under Landscaping; the tasteful private gardens were also admired - there is real consistency of design here. Alder Valley has the potential to achieve this standard. It was good to see generous wooden fencing at a number of peripheral estates.

Roads, Streets and Back Areas:

The relief roads will take time to blend with existing. Surfaces on these are very good. (One wonder if there are plans for out-of-town link roads, such as between the KingscourT and Shercock roads, to help with congestion in the town centre?) The new roundabout near the Workhouse is a first rate addition. Lanes were more vibrant, and tidier, than heretofore. The removal of many of the overhead cables have made a vast improvemnt - more of this would be welcome. Not all of the streets and estates seemed to have been given name plaques; the Emmet Road plaque was found about 25 yards into the estate where motorists on the main road could not be expected to see it! Where incised boulders were used the effect was excellent.

General Impression:

The town grows, reflecting prosperity, and as it grows there is more and more territory to supervise. Your committee, with the official and voluntary bodies, are coping with this extremely well. You are seen to be watching for (1) dereliction, (2) untidy 'corners' and entrances which, in spite of their small size do create an adverse impact, and (3) the containment and screening of industrial and commercial premises. At the same time you are adorning the town with a rich spectrum of planting and creating a appreciation of the natural surroundings. Every good wish for the continuation of this fine work.

Second Round Adjudication:

The 2nd round adjudicator was delighted to have an opportune of returning to Carrickmacross not having visited for a few years. It was most disappointing to find so much litter along the main Street and on approach. On the Castleblaney and Shercock approaches to Carrickmacross a lot of litter was noted and some of it was 'aged' litter; that is litter that seems to have been around for some time. In this regard litter control was well below the standard noted at the time of 1st round adjudication. This adjudicator is not in favour of the display of retail goods on the pavement, a practise that was noted in several locations along the Main Street. Such displays look untidy and can cause problems for the disabled. The bye-pass route is of great benefit to the town but the roundabouts on the Dundalk approach road and the Castleblaney / Ardee roads need a lot of attention. Weed growth seems to have taken over on the latter roundabout and weeds were also coming through the cobble-lock paved areas. Some really excellent landscaping was noted in Carrickmacross. The landscaping opposite Inver College was a case in point where the display was truly excellent. The many flower tubs and other landscaped areas bring much colour to Carrickmacross. Along the centre of the Main Street the landscaping there helps to hide some of the traffic and parked cars. On approach roads flower tubs were excellently presented and maintained and provided a really good introduction to Carrickmacross. Very good landscaping helps to complete the presentation of the attractive Library area off the Main Street. Some buildings stand out for different reasons; for example, the stone Garda Barracks with the black railing and the very simple shopfront of McArdle Eng(ineering). The letter 'E' was missing and needs to be replaced. The beautifully lettered and tiled step into the present J.B. Sweetman premises echoes earlier times when this property housed a different retail premises. Good directional signage was noted outside Nallo's that pointed the way to some of the main buildings and areas of interest in Carrickmacross. The 2nd round adjudicator would like to wish you well with your 2007 Tidy Towns Plans.