

Tidy Towns Competition 2006

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Clones** Ref: **710**
County: **Monaghan** Mark: **208**
Category: **C** Date(s): **29/06/2006**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2006
Overall Development Approach	50	39
The Built Environment	50	30
Landscaping	50	27
Wildlife and Natural Amenities	50	14
Litter Control	50	26
Waste Minimisation	20	9
Tidiness	30	11
Residential Areas	40	20
Roads, Streets and Back Areas	50	25
General Impression	10	7
TOTAL MARK	400	208

Overall Development Approach:

The word 'dignified' is used occasionally in the following - not a term one might have applied to the Clones of forty years ago, when this year's adjudicator was familiar with the town - or in the more recent fictional descriptions! It was useful to have your documents and pictures in plenty of time before the date of the visit: congratulations on these. The town centre is certainly dignified, as are the chief public buildings, but unfortunately the word 'inconsistency' will also be used, because some areas and buildings fall way below the high standard set elsewhere. Please name all roads and estates on your map for purposes of identification, particularly newer estates, some of which are not even named at their location.

The Built Environment:

The 'Boardroom' project, recently completed, makes superb use of this quaint Gothic building; it was not open at the time of the visit so it was not possible to enjoy the interior - congratulations to this particular enterprise. A Hall on Cara Street appeared to be undergoing restoration. The new building at the Business and Technological Park, though still inaccessible, looked extremely promising: this cool type of architecture fits into such an area without detracting from more traditional neighbours. The new Credit Union fits reasonably well into the lower section of the Diamond. The Roman Catholic Church has probably never looked so resplendent since the time it was built. An interesting planning notice at the Church of Ireland church which suggests that the walls and graveyard will be restored; perhaps then there may be public access to this magnificent historic and scenic site. The environs of the famous Round Tower do not match the importance of the ancient monument. The diminutive Abbey hides away; one wonders if it would be a heresy to suggest a lowering of the gloomy boundary wall so that the interesting remains could be appreciated and a public garden created; this has been done with great success at town archaeological sites elsewhere. ('Welcome to historic Clones' - yes, but let us be given an opportunity to appreciate the sites.) The handsome Court House badly needs rehabilitation. Of the scholastic buildings, Scoil Croi Ri Naofa and Largy College impressed by their smart

presentation in attractive grounds. The Ulster Canal Stores is an attractively modest old structure; a pity there is some dereliction close by. The general housing stock in the town centre - which will be mentioned under Residential below - has great dignity; there is still some dereliction, but the Diamond and Fermanagh street look remarkably well, in spite of an over-abundance of untidy signage in the latter and the unfortunate break in the roofline that allows access to parking: not an appropriate intervention.

Landscaping:

It is very encouraging to learn that you grow your own plants. New flower beds were favourably noted; tubs and hanging baskets in the main streets showed careful nurturing and created the essential spots of colour. Roses at the Round Tower bar looked particularly well. The children's playground near the Canal Stores was well kept, additionally attractive because of its surrounding trees; the playground at O'Neill Park was also popular. The hard and soft landscaping opposite the Market Square has probably been favourably commented upon many times. The fact is, there is no major soft landscaping project in Clones, unless the gardens of the RC church be accounted as such - they are certainly the most delightful area of planting. 98 Avenue and the Monaghan approach would seem to be waiting for improvement under this heading.

Wildlife and Natural Amenities:

The sunflower project sounds splendid! From your notes, it would seem that major projects to create an appreciation of the wild life resource and to introduce a better understanding of the natural world to the public are as yet at the planning stage, hence the comparatively low mark. As this is a notoriously difficult section to judge - partly because evidence can not always be seen - please provide details of progress in your next set of notes. A thought strikes the visitor: what wonderful project it would be to reopen and irrigate the section of the canal from the picturesque bridge near Clonboy to, say, near the back of the Health Centre with pedestrian access from there; a tow-path walk, aquatic birds, plant life such as reeds, lilies and irises, could be encouraged; boating too - such a close amenity to the town centre.

Litter Control:

The work of the voluntary helpers and council workers is applauded, and also the participation of citizens who took part in the annual clean-up day. There was a distinct improvement upon last year, though some litter was seen at O'Neill Park, on Cara Street and on the Scothouse road. Congratulations.

Waste Minimisation:

This is a slightly above-average mark in this new category - a category which will assume greater importance as time goes on. Congratulations to Scoil Chroí Rí Naofa for its second green flag. The recycling activities already started make a good beginning.

Tidiness:

There was less dereliction seen than heretofore, thanks to the action of the Town Council, yet a conspicuous derelict site was seen coming from Newtownbutler, near the Fermanagh street junction. A number of buildings are still ill-kept, with gables and boundary walls unpainted, mainly in McCurtain Street and Back Alley. The exterior of the GGA stadium is quite forbidding: the need for security is appreciated. Fermanagh Street would be tidier if there were fewer obtrusive mass-produced signs. These are all relatively minor matters: the two areas that require considerable thought, and which give a very poor impression of Clones before reaching the fine town centre, are (1) almost the whole length of 98 Avenue and the cross roads for Monaghan (in spite of some judicious planting at the latter) and on almost to the Newbliss road; open sites, broken fences, an apparently abandoned commercial building, unappetising views of the 'backs' of Fermanagh street, etc. and (2) the neighbourhood where McCurtain Street becomes the Scotshouse road and the site of the former canal bridge; this neighbourhood can only be described as 'scruffy' and is not helped by one of the large factories where an appropriately tidy forecourt appears to be a low priority.

Residential Areas:

The older residential areas have been mentioned above under 'Buildings' - such as the Diamond and adjoining streets - it is these that give Clones its distinctive character. Mention has also been made that a few older houses need attention. A new (un-named) estate on the Roslea road pleased because of its relationship to old timber, and its brick entrance. An interesting precinct of new (un-named) houses was seen off the Newtownbutler road, where there is a wonderful opportunity for planting in the open central space. More trees would be a welcome feature of the brightly painted small (un-named) estate off Analore Street; bright colour was also seen to be a feature of O'Neill Park. Individual Victorian and Edwardian homes on the Newbliss road were admired. It is good to read that you run a garden competition and that you present trees to each neighbourhood.

Roads, Streets and Back Areas:

Paving, street furniture, parking bays and lamp standards in the Diamond should be mentioned again here because they are of such good quality. The treatment of Fermanagh street is also imaginative and effective. Most of the main approach roads are well surfaced, though the Newtownbutler road probably less so than the others. Some 'backs' were mentioned under 'Tidiness' above along with some less than prepossessing roadsides.

General Impression:

From the foregoing, it will have been seen that what strikes the visitor who does not have daily experience of the town is that the principal buildings and the main public streets and squares are very well maintained, that landscaping is good though sparse compared to other medium-sized towns, that residential areas are well kept, and that some ugly sites and poorly maintained areas give a poor impression. It is therefore clear where the most work is needed - and this will come as no surprise to the committee and to the residents and business-people who work so hard to improve their native place. This adjudicator looks forward to another visit to Clones to see what is bound to be progress under this far-sighted committee in future years.