

Tidy Towns Competition 2008

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Castletownroche** Ref: **493**
County: **Cork(North)** Mark: **278**
Category: **B** Date(s): **26/06/2008**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2008
Overall Development Approach	50	41
The Built Environment	50	37
Landscaping	50	40
Wildlife and Natural Amenities	50	28
Litter Control	50	34
Waste Minimisation	20	6
Tidiness	30	19
Residential Areas	40	29
Roads, Streets and Back Areas	50	36
General Impression	10	8
TOTAL MARK	400	278

Overall Development Approach:

Congratulations to the Castletownroche TidyTowns Committee for participating in the TidyTowns Competition 2008. Thank you for the simple, yet most helpful map which steered the adjudicator about the village and ensured that he missed nothing of importance and could visit all of your most recent work. This year is a defining point for your large committee as you come to the end of the present 3 Year Plan. That plan was very much dictated by the structures and marking schemes of the TidyTowns Competition which is a worthwhile approach. As there has been much development in Castletownroche and as that development is ongoing you might consider taking a more holistic approach in your new plan, based on the changing needs of your village and the betterment of the community while not neglecting the parameters of TidyTowns. In so doing your marks could improve even more rapidly. You appear to have great support in your community. You might share with us what amount of money you spend in any given year. The annual collection does not appear to be your only source of funding. Your engagement with the local agencies appears meaningful. It would be interesting to know in what way these various bodies assist you advance your plans. This adjudicator would like to see you encourage the school in attaining Green Flag Status. Do the pupils help you in any specific ways? Your comments on 'your experience' of the competition are interesting. One hopes that the new members of your community share in the social interaction mentioned and that they are being encouraged to join in the heave for better marks in the TidyTowns Competition. Any group that is sufficiently inventive to have an independent assessment of their village with a view to improvement deserve success.

The Built Environment:

Castletownroche is in many ways a tale of two villages with the riverside buildings representing the relicts of previous enterprise and culture and the upper village the centre of living and enterprise in to-day's age. That

lower area is a museum piece carefully manicured and a stage to dramatise the happenings of bygone days. The board proudly remembering T P Keenan illustrates the village pride not only in its 'rustic bridge by the mill' but its pride in the illustrious people who lived in that past. The village up the hill can also be described as a tale of two ages, though more recent ages. The unoccupied buildings and, regrettably those buildings showing signs of neglect, illustrate the change in village commerce. Some of those buildings are nicely treated so as not to be injurious to the streetscape as at the creamery and the entrance to Shinnick Place but right alongside is another story. Disused petrol pumps must be removed or be decorated as artifacts and maintained as is the green fountain in Chapel Street. Otherwise they represent dereliction awaiting their inevitable fate. But there is also evidence of the vibrancy of a commercial town. Many of the shop fronts illustrate the symptoms of thriving businesses, for instance, 'The Spinning Wheel', 'The Rockforest Bar' or 'Duffy's'. Other shop fronts and signs display the plastic tackiness that is more appropriate to an American mid west town and detract from the streetscape. Buildings such as the school, the Church, the Garda Station, the Community Centre are in fine repair. After the Community Centre there is an enclosed hard surfaced open area used for football. While the chain link fence does nothing to enhance this area the provision of a ball area in the centre of town has a value too. A case of conflicting priorities and someone decides. One would have to admire the affectionately painted railings at the fabulous Church of Ireland site.

Landscaping:

The landscaping throughout the village illustrates the care and affection that is showered on Castletownroche. One awaits landscaping developments in the new estates with eagerness. The standard to aspire to is at Shinnick Place. The newer town or the upper town could be such a wonderful counterfoil to the area around the river and one hopes will be treated in a contrasting manner in order to illustrate the two ages of the village life. There is no stone cliff backdrop here so a different ploy must be used. Such landscaping can bring unity in its diversity and will need careful planning. Your next three year landscaping plan should make for riveting reading. Already the gravel beds speckled with a carpet of summer colour by lupins, hostas and shrubs suggests a different philosophy. You are still working hard at the maintenance of already landscaped areas. The grotto is a delight and all is freshly painted. Superb. The Birds of Peace sculpture is, maybe, a new dimension to your village architecture and landscaping. Plaques displayed by previous generations of Tidy Towns Committees are well maintained also. When one looks out from the Mill car park picturesque landscaping greets the eye no matter which way one turns. Picnic tables suggest that this is no doll's house but are an invitation to come, sit and be at peace. Freshly painted flower barrels suggest continuity in the work of previous committees and the colour adds glamour. One notices both shrubs of permanent colour complimented by seasonal colour also. There are many other areas that not only bring colour but suggest 'mortas cine' as on the way to 'An tSlí Ghearr'. The centre of town is enlivened with the flower poles and window boxes.

Wildlife and Natural Amenities:

You have been made fully aware over the years of involvement with Tidy Towns of the potential of Castletownroche in this section. The cormorant of last year's report was also on duty this year. Or was it a heron? There is ample feeding for birds in the lush vegetation and in the river. Birds can have no complaints. Maybe the adjudicator missed them but one did expect information boards. One would expect nature walks so evidently you are encountering problems in this area, though your future projects suggest that you are making progress with a river walk. Your three year plan shows very little evidence of promoting the well being of your natural, native wildlife. Next year's plan might have a section on biodiversity.

Litter Control:

One noted very few bins about. Maybe that is because there is no great need for them!! There was very little litter to be seen anyway. But in a well manicured area a plastic bottle is a black spot. One notes that you have no further projects planned in this section and one also notes that you do not participate in Community Cork anti litter competitions.

Waste Minimisation:

Well done on the Bring Bank and on the recycling of cardboard. It could benefit your committee to study the booklet 'Race Against Waste'. Such a study would stimulate new waste elimination projects for you. The emphasis in this section is on minimising waste in your community and devising projects to minimise commercial and domestic waste.

You could encourage the school to try to achieve Green Flag Status. The pupils would learn much about recycling, reusing, reducing and composting. They would be involved in waste minimisation projects and would bring their new found skills, their new found knowledge and their new found enthusiasm home to the generations at home.

Tidiness:

Overall Castletownroche presents a tidy image contributed to by reasonably successful weed control, generally effective treatment of derelict buildings, good footpaths and well maintained open spaces. Castletownroche is a village in transition. In a time of transition it is inevitable that there will be poles that have become redundant. Keep a look out for old rusting examples and take them out of their misery. The disused petrol pumps need attention. Poor road surfaces have been mentioned. There is some footpath clutter, a sensitive topic.

Residential Areas:

The ivy clad house at the bridge proclaims a welcome to Castletownroche. Individual residences throughout the village display a pride in their place through design, maintenance and colourful gardens. There are wonderful older residences on the Doneraile Road, just off main street which are full of charm and eye catching colour.

For the present the new estates do not add a lot to the village scape as they have not bedded in fully. Mullavale will be a vital location for the appearance of the village but still needs more time to enhance that side of town as Caisleán an Easpaig is just beginning to show promise. Hunter Place across the road exudes pride its achievement in contributing to village life over many generations but still holding its own, in its colourful fronts and its fine open space. The new gravel landscaping helps to compliment the buzz. Shinnick Place is another mature estate which benefits from great landscaping. Hopefully these estates will have their individual associations and be an asset to your work, if that is not already the case. Your 3 Year Plan suggests that there would be inter estate competitions but does not mention the nature of these competitions. Update us next time.

Roads, Streets and Back Areas:

One has a sense of something special on arrival to Castletownroche from Fermoy. The village name stone is unique and proclaims a sense of past and a sense of pride. The approach from Mallow is more mundane with a poor site as one arrives. The stately walls one meets on the approach from the Blackwater Castle side create the atmosphere of a heritage town. The sign for the Dinosaur Museum raises a question in the adjudicator's mind about how ancient is heritage in this village. These walls are replicated throughout, are in fine condition and create a sense of past as well as present care. If approaching from the Kildorrery end one is treated to the sylvan tunnel effect by the trees. So the visitor has an aroused anticipation before ever they see a shop front. Your work in exposing the overhanging rock is admirable as it now enhances the surrounding landscaping. There is a well measured balance between mowing of the roadside verges and allowing the wilderness to express itself. Some road surfaces need attention as on the way to the GAA pitch. As one leaves the main street one is pleased that the high standards are maintained with no evidence of dumping or decay.

General Impression:

Even on a wet day a visit to Castletownroche is something one wishes to repeat. What a sunny day would do for the experience. One has a sense of living in the past when one canters about one end of the village. One senses the success of the Celtic Tiger when one visits the other side. Two remarkably different experiences within a hill climb of one another. The quality of your work is to be experienced in both these diverse ages, in the two parts of the village. You know where the greatest challenges now lie for Castletownroche. Good fortune in tackling these challenges.