

Tidy Towns Competition 2008

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Callan** Ref: **987**
County: **Kilkenny** Mark: **185**
Category: **C** Date(s): **17/06/2008**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2008
Overall Development Approach	50	10
The Built Environment	50	28
Landscaping	50	26
Wildlife and Natural Amenities	50	10
Litter Control	50	30
Waste Minimisation	20	4
Tidiness	30	13
Residential Areas	40	25
Roads, Streets and Back Areas	50	33
General Impression	10	6
TOTAL MARK	400	185

Overall Development Approach:

Callan was inspected, as requested by the Callan Business Development Committee, though reluctantly, because a fair assessment can not be made without the input of the committee or a person designated by the committee – in other words by someone answering the questions on the entry form. For example, you do not tell us anything about what public agencies (such as the County Council, FAS etc) and other bodies support your work, whether with finance or in kind; you do not say how you communicate with the local community; you do not say whether there are residents associations in the town, or what engagement you have with schools, or if school pupils undertake voluntary work; you do not let us know if any schools have been awarded green flags, or if there are festivals or other events held annually, etc etc. Surely Callan Development has some kind of rapport with the people of the town that could be made the basis of a meaningful evaluation that would help your future endeavours in this competition. You did not enclose a map of the town as requested on the entry form; this is an essential requirement – we try to see everything but without a map with important sites or features marked on it it is likely that we will miss some of them. A nominal mark of 10, which is surely quite inadequate, has been given here for Overall Development Approach, due to want of information. A similar nominal figure has also been given under certain headings below.

Callan entered the TidyTowns competition over a period of years and was doing reasonably well when it dropped out for no reason that could be discerned. The town has a great deal more going for it than many others – its situation in rich agricultural land, its stock of fine buildings, its well-kept housing estates, its unusually diverse deposit of tangible historical and cultural associations. It would be a useful exercise for members of the committee to visit Aughrim, Co Wicklow, last year's national TidyTowns winner (as some other committees have done of their own volition out of sheer interest), not to copy but to observe what can be achieved. Twenty years ago Aughrim was a singularly uninteresting small town, without the natural advantages of Callan; yet through determination, creative energy, imagination and good taste the people of Aughrim made an annual concerted effort to improve their home place. It is certain that with the same kind of

expenditure Callan could do the same, and probably within a much shorter period of time.

The Built Environment:

The magnificent church – is it a memorial to Edmund Ignatius Rice? – with its pillared limestone portico and cupola, was under scaffolding on the date of the visit; its completed renovation will be greatly looked forward to. The former Church of Ireland church in the grounds of the Abbey – or is it a Priory? signposts differ – could form the centrepiece of a local museum or heritage centre, as has happened in several other centres; the somewhat neglected grounds could be attractively upgraded. The Callan Area Office – is it a former Workhouse? if so, it has been remarkably well converted – is a building of real distinction. Nearby the modern Fire Station is extremely well presented. The Court House is somewhat drab; it could be taken in hand, perhaps power-washed, and floral urns or something similar provided along its frontage. The Convent national school is well kept. The business premises in the main and side streets, where formerly the owners lived 'over the shop', are basically handsome but many of them have deteriorated and some shops have a proliferation of plastic and mass-produced signage that affects the streetscape adversely. The Co-Op building needs drastic remedial action: it provides a real visual blight in its street sector. By contrast, the West Court Retail Centre is of innovative design and enhances its sector. There are several very fine shop fronts, but unfortunately a number that have fallen into decay; among the former are O'Brien's Outfitters and Shoes, The Pharmacy, The Charter House – though the upper storeys are in need of a coat of paint – Molloy's Sculptors, Chips & Co, Power's (though it's facade needs freshening up with paint) and Adelphi House (with some of its rather obtrusive signage removed). Keogh's Model Bakery is superb.

Landscaping:

There did not appear to be any major landscaping project in Callan, though there are ample spaces and opportunities. One is the by-pass, the verges of which were overgrown; on a smaller scale, the entrances from the by-pass to the town, if imaginatively laid out with shrubs and trees, would give a very welcoming signal to visitors. The surroundings of the grotto were charmingly planted. The entrance to Laurel Court was attractively planted, enhancing this residential section of the town; nearby there were well nurtured rose-beds, but a section of roadside in between the two, which clearly had once been extensively landscaped, was overgrown with weeds on the date of the visit and struck note of neglect. A really fine recreational feature could be made of the grounds of the Abbey/Priory. Some tubs, window-boxes and hanging baskets were favourably noted.

Wildlife and Natural Amenities:

This is another category where an undoubtedly inadequate nominal mark has been given due to absence of information. The neighbourhood of Callan, with its splendid hedgerows, its river, marshland, thickets and adjoining woodland, must certainly provide ideal habitats for certain species, but you have to give an indication of what they are, and what lands are open for inspection. It is not possible for the judges to find, for example, bird boxes, without being given directions; or to know how many trees have been planted over the last twelve months without being told. (Trees are properly considered under this heading.)

Litter Control:

Litter control was reasonably good on the date of the visit. Please give information on whether litter is collected by the County Council or by a FAS worker; if there are voluntary litter-picks; and if school children are involved.

Waste Minimisation:

This is the lowest mark that has been allocated to a number of centres under this heading this year. In this case it is because there has been no information as to what steps are being taken to minimise waste products and also to recycle them. A bring bank was not seen, through inadvertency but also because there was no map with such features shown. You should make a point of studying the 'Race Against Waste' booklet, distributed free with other TidyTowns literature; you will certainly find advice that relates to your particular situation.

Tidiness:

There was considerable kerbside weed in many parts of the town. Obtrusive overhead wires and ugly poles mar potentially tidy streets; where poles and wires have been removed and attractively designed lamp standards provided as in the narrow street at the bridge, the visual amenity is immeasurably improved. Untidy shop signage has already been referred to, and also planted areas that have been allowed to become overgrown. Some dereliction was seen in the wonderfully picturesque narrow street by the bridge; this street is one of the principal charms of Callan and it should be sensitively conserved.

Residential Areas:

Some very charming and well kept traditional cottage terraces were seen on the Clonmel road and in adjacent

streets, clearly maintained with much pride by their owners. Near the Area Offices a neat enclave of modern cottages was seen; these may be homes for Senior Citizens; congratulations to whoever designed them; they have most attractively planted front gardens. Older town houses in the main street and also in West Street were admired. West Court is a very well tended recently built estate, as indeed are some others at the north end of the town; it is good that they are retained within the town by-pass area and not placed at remote spots that would make them car-dependent. Some residential streets and estates do not have name signs.

Roads, Streets and Back Areas:

Parking arrangements in the main street are ill-organised. There was double-parking and parking on pavements on the date of the visit. This whole street needs to be re-surfaced and re-paved, with designated parking bays; some trees may need replacement. Otherwise surfaces and paving were mainly good and there was an immense amount of serious road maintenance in progress in the north end of the town which will shortly be distinctly beneficial.

General Impression:

This historic town deserves better than it gets from the official bodies and from some of its residents. It could, with sympathetic planning and imaginative interventions, become one of the showplaces of the county. It is suggested that a 5-year Development Plan be created with professional advice, and that the priorities set out in such a plan are followed with determination and without haste. It is suggested that all sections of the community are made aware of what is proposed and that local organisations, including schools, are involved where appropriate.