

Tidy Towns Competition 2009

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Clonakilty** Ref: **669**
County: **Cork(West)** Mark: **301**
Category: **D** Date(s): **25/06/2009**
22/07/2009

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2009
Overall Development Approach	50	44
The Built Environment	50	43
Landscaping	50	40
Wildlife and Natural Amenities	50	30
Litter Control	50	33
Waste Minimisation	20	15
Tidiness	30	18
Residential Areas	40	31
Roads, Streets and Back Areas	50	38
General Impression	10	9
TOTAL MARK	400	301

Overall Development Approach:

Congratulations to the Clonakilty Tidy Towns Committee for participating in the Tidy Towns Competition 2009. Thank you for your submission and for the various maps. The hand drawn map with the street names and amenities was of particular interest and assistance. The highlighting helped lead the adjudicator to important destinations. Your submission is not only an account of works planned and undertaken in the current year but a road map for future development. With such a big committee one wonders how you get anything achieved. Not all can be involved in the planning so some of the number must be 'workers on the ground' only. One would like to know how the functions of this committee are divided. The voluntary support you have in your work is reflected in the appearance of the town. The support of business is reflected in the investment in enhancing the appearance of Clonakilty. The tone of your submission suggests that there is a working trust between your committee and various agencies, most especially the Town Council and Fás. Other centres might challenge your claim that your involvement with the schools is 'unique'. But that your involvement with the schools is effective is beyond quibble. One wishes you well in your endeavours at enhancing the quality of life of the people who live in Clonakilty and one wishes you well in the competition.

The Built Environment:

The Churches of Clonakilty suggest a multi denominational society thrived. One denomination has not survived and the Post Office takes good care of the building. No information plate was found on this building and it is a pity if none exists. Churches are an attraction in Clonakilty. The railings about the Catholic Church set the Church and environs off beautifully. The Boys National from 1884, now the parish office, gives a further lift to its surroundings. Despite the obvious renewal that has taken place all along the main street from Wolfe Tone Street to Pearse Street, Clonakilty has succeeded in retaining a traditional streetscape. The facades, the shop signage, úsáid na Gaeilge, even the chimney stacks all combine to create its unique flavour. Add in the more modern painting shades and the introduction of hanging baskets and window boxes

and the charm is complete. The distinctive Gaelic flavour comes from the street names, the street name signs and the Gaelige. The Gaelige proliferates and is not confined to names like Ó Donnabháin or An Teach Beag but to descriptions of trade such as 'óstán, fiacloir, nuachtánaí, rothair ar díol, & comh'. 'Glantóirí' revives memories of school long ago. The absence of tacky, vinyl shop fronts is hardly noticed because they do not exist. Gearóidín's, Kerrs Bookshop, de Barras, O Donovans, the Imperiel, the Clonakilty Wine Spirit and Beer Co., or John Lowney define the styles that are acceptable. The benefits of strict planning guidelines are obvious. Even the Chinese at Sea Palace have bought into their new identity. Fortunately for Clonakilty most buildings on the main street are occupied with one glaring exception. Hints of Clonakilty's history are retained not just by the memorial to the Battle of the Big Cross in 1798 or the Michael Collins but also through information plates telling us that ducks were fed along here or Ó Donabhán Rossa's wife was born where one now stands or that ladies of the night were welcome in Clonakilty once upon a time. What really excites is that the 1798 memorial is the result of the respect of the people of 1898. The Clonakilty people of 1998 were not found wanting when their turn came. Leave the main street and enter a new world. The stream through town has possibly been one of the reasons why Clonakilty developed at this spot. Now it is honoured with the maintenance and renewal of many of the older buildings of the town in its environs. Bridges have been restored and their appearance modernised. New buildings styles seem to gel with their surroundings. The sound of flowing water is a constant presence. A visit to Spillers Lane reminds one of the model street out at the Model Railway Village. The gaggle of sounds must surely echo those of times past. Fortunately the smells have changed. A feast. Buildings that sparked the adjudicator's imagination were the Courthouse and An Ghráinseach. One learned more about the history of neighbouring villages at the delightful Model Railway Village than one did during the survey of those places. Mention of the linen and brewery industries reminds one of your determination to pursue these themes, a worthwhile project. The plate telling us that the preservation of the brewery chimneys is in hand speaks of a society mindful of from whence it came. But one must not neglect the modern buildings. The Credit Union building fits into its august surroundings hand in glove. The Dunnes Stores complex is superb in appearance. This Dunnes building seems to have a design unique to Clonakilty. To add to the experience one spies the Old Mill site through the trees. Other buildings admired are the Cope Foundation and the BIM building. Out of town but within the compass of Clonakilty society is the new GAA facility. What an outstanding amenity. Right in the heart of town an all weather facility to cater for those who do not want to travel to the GAA grounds. Everybody catered for.

Landscaping:

Provision of colour throughout the year is a priority, as your submission informs us. Provision of summer colour is a planned exercise in Clonakilty and most successful. The provision of a variety of presentation styles, the deployment of colours to certain areas and functions, the planned heights of the arrangements create a sea of colour. There are places where one feels that the provision is a bit haphazard and dependent on a willing property owner. Local authority buildings do not let the side down. Halla an Bhaile is wearing its newest suit and is gaily bedecked with summer colour. Neighbouring buildings add to the colour, not only the Fás workers water plants. Little did that lady at the upstairs window know that she was apologising to the TidyTowns adjudicator when she nearly drenched him as she watered the window box. The apologetic laugh suggested that similar episodes have occurred before. This is the spirit of TidyTowns. Thankfully it seems the only spray used by the firemen is on the many flowers all about them. One wondered at the location of the planter at the 1798 memorial. The telephone kiosk is awaiting redemption. This area is in need of renewal as the general appearance was littered and dirty. There are spectacular pieces of landscaping throughout Clonakilty as for example at the entrance to the Park Cinema/ Park Hotel complex, on the various approach roads, at the Community Hall. It appears that all opportunities for landscaping are welcomed. Upkeep is of a very high standard.

Wildlife and Natural Amenities:

The adjudicator must admit to feeling somewhat cheated having used an amount of shoe leather to locate the various wildlife projects mentioned. The garden at the Model Railway Village could have been another landscaping venture. One accepts that it is still a work in progress. The wild flower garden at Tobin's Bridge could also have been a building site awaiting the green shoots of economic recovery. Access was barred by a locked gate. There was nothing to indicate that this is a dedicated wildlife area. Churlish. But there is no denying the work done in this wildlife haven.

Litter Control:

Your committee is obviously engaging with the schools in the fight against all sorts of litter and the gum plague. The employment of your litter warden is further proof of your determination to keep Clonakilty litter free. Most of the measures taken by you involve collection. But litter is still a problem for you in the town and at various locations on the outskirts. The area of the Cinema looks shabby due to littering and lack of maintenance. Maybe greater emphasis needs to be placed on litter reduction. It was good to see no graffiti in the town.

Waste Minimisation:

The work you are doing in encouraging the schools to pursue Green Flag Status is laudable. The success rate is admirable. Your recycling centre should be the envy of every town in Ireland. It is busy. It is welcoming. It is clean. The surrounding landscaping even made the facility more discrete but the locals do know where to go. A highlight. This centre supports your Bring Bank centres in town.

Tidiness:

Apart from the roundabout at the Cork approach road to town and the surrounding area of that roundabout, and one has to accept that there are ongoing works there, Clonakilty presents itself as a cared for town. Despite the busy N71 passing almost through the town centre, there is a calm nature to the traffic. The one way system appears to work satisfactorily for the motorist. The adjudicator was on a bike for some of the survey and wished he was being paid by the mile! One wonders how so many cables could have survived along main street. The distinctive street sign at Kent Street needs to be brassoed. Generally signs are well maintained and clean, the street names being particularly attractive.

Residential Areas:

The determination of the Town Council to have boundary walls of residential estates faced with stone creates definition and prevents the inevitable build up of grit. I read in last year's report that 15% of space is deployed to amenity. Hence the fine new estates all over town with attractive landscaping, elegant entrances, well maintained and ample open space and plenty of tree planting, as at Woodlands. These new estates have high standards to aspire to if they are to outdo the fine traditional housing on the approach roads or the many attractive terraces that adorn Clonakilty. A glowing example of one of these is on Casement Street. Clonakilty Retirement Village is an example of the value system of the people of the town. The elderly are catered for in the most pleasant surroundings. It is disappointing to visit a fine estate like The Miles and find kerbside weeds, a rarity in one's travels around to the estates. The railings at Millgrove Estate are special. Estate signage for the most part deserves mention as at Willow Park, Ard Carraig and Inis Síoda. There is one smaller estate nearer town that does need attention.

Roads, Streets and Back Areas:

All approach roads into Clonakilty hint of the delightful experience that awaits the visitor. One is greeted when arriving from Rosscarbery with islands of summer sunshine colour. Coming from Cork one sweeps through a tree lined tunnel down the hill. Mind you, arrival at the roundabout here is somewhat disappointing, when compared to the other roads. Fine houses greet one on other approach roads. On the Ring route one is distracted by the surrounding wildlife beauty. In other places a fuchsia hedge brings definition. As regards the back areas of Clonakilty, one is invariably treated to another attractive shop front, a heritage building, or an island of landscaping, banks of summer flowering or the sound of running water. The litter spoiled the experience of Connolly Street.

General Impression:

Clonakilty is full of interest. It took ages to survey because one wanted to savour the surroundings. In this report one mentions only some of the wonders. You say the secret of your success is 'co-operation'. You pay tribute to your Town Council. The secret of your success is your respect for the rich legacy you have inherited, whether that be in the industries that sprouted buildings and their chimneys, in the various religions that co-existed in less tolerant times, perversely in the warriors who fought the ancient foe, in the language of your forebears, in your respect for the power of nature. That respect for your past is what allows old and new to blend. Your cultural evenings for your asylum seekers are the human face of this respect.

Second Round Adjudication:

Your many colourful shop fronts are well set off by the range and extent of hanging baskets and window boxes. The mature trees on McCurtain Hill and elsewhere, noticeably in Emmet Square, contribute to the greening of the town. The rebirth of the area, Old Brewery Lane with the infill housing, each with a distinctive coloured over door porch like canopies, was a delight to view. The many historic items, statues and plaques - The Linen Hall (1817) Collins Statue, Emmet Square fountain - among others added great interest to our unhurried exploration of Clonakilty. The atmosphere of Spillers Lane was infectious and enjoyable. The River flowing through the town is an asset of great amenity value, not yet been fully availed of in terms of either wildlife or landscaping. The number of closed and deserted business premises, especially those in high profile locations, unfortunately is a difficulty challenge, with which you will continue to be faced. The small square

fronting the Medical Centre and Courthouse, with its interesting item of street furniture (former pump?), was of interest. The colourful houses at Casement Park caught the eye. The fine sculpture on the Cork Road, the Grotto extensive planting and verges made for a very impressive entrance to the town.

Many thanks and congratulations for the most useful map.