

# Tidy Towns Competition 2009

## *Adjudication Report*

Centre: **Clonaslee** Ref: **410**  
County: **Laois** Mark: **286**  
Category: **B** Date(s): **25/06/2009**  
**30/07/2009**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2009
Overall Development Approach	50	45
The Built Environment	50	35
Landscaping	50	41
Wildlife and Natural Amenities	50	29
Litter Control	50	38
Waste Minimisation	20	10
Tidiness	30	18
Residential Areas	40	26
Roads, Streets and Back Areas	50	35
General Impression	10	9
<b>TOTAL MARK</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>286</b>

### **Overall Development Approach:**

This was the first visit of this adjudicator to Clonaslee for several years and many improvements were immediately noticeable. A great deal of planning and hard slog has clearly gone into the work. Your mission statement is admirable, especially the final phrase '...to make it a better place for people who live here' – and that is precisely what you are doing. Your relationship with voluntary groups and official bodies, as described on the entry form obviously has positive results. Thank you for the superb illustrated map, which made identification of the various features particularly easy.

### **The Built Environment:**

What is most interesting about Clonaslee is that, it is a now very rare thing, a traditional village in which the integrity of the main street is intact. This is of extreme importance. There are no significant intrusions to the fabric of the 19th century spine or core, any major developments being on the outskirts or in side streets, such as Scoil Bríd or the Community Centre. What is also of extreme visual or architectural importance is that the original church is still standing (though with a change of use), elegantly closing the perspective at the Eastern end. Any 'intrusions' to this streetscape are either of a very minor nature or are improvements, such as planting, the grassing of open spaces, and the positioning of handsome lamp standards. It is certain that people who lived here 100 years ago would not only be astonished, but also pleased. The Heritage Centre, with its smart railings, information boards and planting, is the dominant building. The Roman Catholic Church is well maintained, its limestone gate pillars being particularly admired. Scoil Bríd is a modern building of considerable charm. The Vocational School and Community Centre (now great architectural wonder, the latter!) are supremely well presented. Shops and business premises are well looked after, with a nice variety of colours and, it seemed, fewer mass-produced or plastic signs than there used to be. An example of a well kept and inviting business concern is Clonaslee Joinery.

### **Landscaping:**

The boulevard-like riverside entrance to the road leading towards Brittas Lake is a wonderful mix of true nature and nature methodised by man: trees and tubs, shrubs and hanging baskets. This is continued, but with slightly less exuberance in the road leading downstream opposite. The Green is beautifully nurtured (what is behind the lengthy mural?). Roses are notoriously difficult to get right – they make a splendid show here. The geraniums at the Heritage Centre produce vivid colour at the other end of the village and the planting in the square keeps you reminded of what an enormous amount of work goes into all the landscaping. The trim lawns and verges at the approaches to the village, and also surrounding housing estates and sporting facilities, are all part of the same effort. Fr Keogh Park is impressive, though on the date of the visit some weeding of the gravel edging was needed. Many private homes contribute significantly under the above heading. For example, the profusion of climbers and ramblers at Morissey's.

### **Wildlife and Natural Amenities:**

Tree planting and tree maintenance properly come under this heading. The young hornbeams appear to be taking well. The profusion of signposted tracks in the neighbourhood is unusual, with a wonderful choice of short or long walks available – Sweeney's, Ricket's and Knockastumpa were noted. On the date of the visit, the path to Brittas Lake was aglow with briar rose, honeysuckle, foxglove etc. Unobtrusive fishing stands and discreet parking are a feature. This adjudicator had forgotten the rich variety of both conifers and hardwoods on the slopes. The rustic bridge is a delight and the informational boards excellent. Fair dues to Coillte and their team. It was encouraging to read that a school walk was organised on National Tree Day.

### **Litter Control:**

It is good to read that Clonaslee entered the LCC Litter Challenge Competition and that there are two litter-picks every day. Is it known who drops the litter that makes so much litter picking necessary? Is it entirely the pupils of the Vocational School or do you think it is dropped by passing cars? Your letter to the Principal was read. Certainly plastic bags of litter shown in your photographs are horrifying in the amount, yet disclose the dedication of the young voluntary workers in collecting it.

### **Waste Minimisation:**

It is clear that you are promoting the message of waste minimisation to schools and to the business community in particular. The recycling point was seen to be clean and accessible and very much in use.

### **Tidiness:**

The village is unmistakably tidy, with incidences of dereliction decently boarded up or otherwise disguised. The north parapet of the Corragh River bridge was in need of attention at the time of the visit. It is very encouraging to read that you do not countenance fly-posting.

### **Residential Areas:**

The traditional houses of the village, many of them also business premises, are well presented and it is these, which give Clonaslee its genuine character. Individual homes on approach roads are mainly well presented too, often with front gardens that add considerably to the sense of local pride. A mansion on the road to Brittas Lake shares a view of its magnificent garden with passers-by. Housing estates are really very little different from those in other towns, though in Clonaslee there is the dimension of attractive landscaping mentioned above. Slieve Bloom Park is particularly well landscaped; the boundary walls of two or three houses were in need of freshening up with paint on the date of adjudication. Hillside View is also nicely landscaped, but even more boundary walls here were in need of painting. Clodiagh Way and the un-named estate nearby looked cheerful; builders' debris should be removed once construction is completed; there should be a clear distinction in estates as to what is 'lawn' and what is 'wild' – in the latter case the clover was a bonus. The house frontages in Beech close were probably the best presented of all.

### **Roads, Streets and Back Areas:**

Roadsides were beautifully trimmed for a long distance out – this was also noted under Landscaping. The appearance of the approach roads is greatly aided by excellent boundaries, whether stone walls, timber palings or hedges belonging to private properties. The surface of the main road is excellent. Pedestrian crossings were favourably noted. The zebra crossing needs painting. The lamp standards are of first class quality.

### **General Impression:**

It was a real pleasure to have the opportunity of revisiting Clonaslee and seeing the result of the initiatives that have taken place in recent years. To this adjudicator the unspoiled – in fact enhanced – traditional village street was especially encouraging; also the landscaping and the closeness to nature. Every good wish for your continuing work.

### **Second Round Adjudication:**

This adjudicator was particularly impressed with the hand-drawn maps that were provided with the application form. They were simply drawn, yet beautifully detailed. The village looked great on the day of 2nd adjudication, with a spotlessly tidy Main St. and well presented buildings. The arrangement of the town, with its well preserved Main St. leading to the Church retains its rural charm, as mentioned by the previous judge. The numerous clean heritage signs allude to the many activities that are available to locals and visitors alike. The lines of Hornbeam trees are great for year-round impact, but perhaps some colour is also needed. The Brittas forest information boards give great detail on the area's wildlife and cultural heritage. The woodland is a delight and a fantastic amenity so close to the village centre.

Clonaslee is a wonderful spot that continues to be enhanced by the local community – well done and keep up the good work

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