

Tidy Towns Competition 2009

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Clonmel** Ref: **516**
County: **Tipperary(South)** Mark: **290**
Category: **G** Date(s): **06/06/2009**
24/07/2009

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2009
Overall Development Approach	50	43
The Built Environment	50	40
Landscaping	50	35
Wildlife and Natural Amenities	50	29
Litter Control	50	39
Waste Minimisation	20	12
Tidiness	30	20
Residential Areas	40	31
Roads, Streets and Back Areas	50	33
General Impression	10	8
TOTAL MARK	400	290

Overall Development Approach:

Congratulations to the Clonmel Tidy Towns Committee for participating in the Tidy Towns Competition 2009. Thank you for your submission, hard copy and DVD, the supporting material and for your maps. The booklet is very well presented. The map with highlighted areas and projects was of greatest interest. The descriptions of activities in Clonmel and the photos, such as the celebration of the 400th anniversary of gaining your charter, give the outsider a flavour of life in Clonmel. As you include a lot of material, ensure that this material is relevant to this competition. Well done on having your work acknowledged by winning an Environmental Award in 2008. You go about your work programme by liaising with the staff of the Borough Council, Fás, Residents' Associations and others, a most effective approach for a voluntary group. One would like to hear more detail on your engagement with the schools and their efforts to gain Green Flag Status. You list your achievements down the years and the list is most impressive. As your marks are now within touching distance of the ultimate prize, you should compile a 3 -5 Year Plan, which would focus on your ambitions as a committee, would clarify where marks are being lost, would reinforce where your strengths lie. In so doing, your committee would continue to enhance the living experience and the environment of the people of Clonmel.

The Built Environment:

Clonmel is a unique town, in that much of its heritage still stands proudly in stone, in that much of its history is commemorated in plaques about the town, in that buildings of yesterday are maintained, so as to add interest to the modern buildings and renewed streets, that flourish about them. Heritage buildings are maintained like new and add to the character of the town. Many of the business fronts are a treat. It may be unfair to single out a few, for the list is a long one. Ó Fianghusa and Ó Muineacháin deserve mention. The row of fronts at 'Every Blooming Thing' creates a sense of fun. In other cases, the tackiness of some modern chain stores signage needs to be tackled, for they spoil the desired creation of the architect. Modern retail outlets, such as

Poppyfields and the Tesco centre, not only make Clonmel a sought after business centre and show that Clonmel is a prosperous place in which to live, but they bring colour and excitement to their surroundings. The area about the Lobby and the Indian Ocean is a funky, sassy corner. Such a pity that the ravages of the economic downturn are already taking their toll along this street. A stone sign, Quay Car Park, needs to be brightened up. Many of the streetscapes are a treat and they are enlivened with a mix of traditional and modern design. O'Connell Street is an example. Tierney's and Fitzgerald's add interest. Heritage buildings at both ends of the street delight. The Jail survives and nestles proudly in the midst of the modern design all about. Adding further interest to the built environment of Clonmel is the numbers of older buildings, which have survived and thrive in their new usage. Examples are Richmond Mill and the old Post Office building. Does the traditional front at DW Parke, now a museum piece in its natural setting, have any chance of meaningfully surviving? Mick Del's Square deserves mention in any survey of Clonmel. The plaza effect had teenagers hanging out and relaxing. Civic buildings also add to the town colour and architecture. The County Council offices, the Garda station, the library, the post office are all fine buildings. Schools throughout the town are meticulously maintained, with Scoil Mhuire na nAingal deserving of special mention with its gay, carefree colours; a joy.

Landscaping:

Clonmel is blessed by having a natural landscaped backdrop, which is ever present, and needs no maintenance from a committee. The work that has been undertaken by various committees down the years has added colour and excitement to the town. The N24 is an exciting experience for the driver. When one arrives from the golf club, one is welcomed by the two beds of dwarf dahlias in full colour. There are places, as at Gravel Walk or O'Neill Street, that would benefit from the introduction of colour. All around the town outskirts, one experiences the labour of landscaping love, often just a pleasure to the eye and on other occasions to soften the harshness of industrial and retail buildings. One enjoys the 'Welcome Clonmel' chiselled hedges at the roundabouts, the quirkiness of the 'Slán Clonmel' evokes a smile. The concerted effort to bring colour to Clonmel is everywhere to be seen.

Wildlife and Natural Amenities:

Clonmel is not only blessed with a river that looks benign in June and is a wonderful leisure resource, but it is blessed by its location in a valley surrounded by verdant hillside forests; a wildlife paradise. Well done on the research into wildlife in Clonmel that has been on-going. Well done on the Wildlife Wilderness Gorge. For this adjudicator, the fact that such a sight exists and the presence of the sign is the most impressive aspect of this project, is most welcomed. This adjudicator would wish to be informed as to which 'wild plants and animals' are provided with 'sanctuary' at the Gorge, as referred to on page 19 of your submission. Access to information in your wildlife projects, as at Toberheena, is also important. Glad to see that you are acting on the advice of last year's Tidy Towns report. The railings along the riverside make the river visually accessible. The walkers along the riverside show how much pleasure the river on a summer's day can bring to the locals. The flood relief works are testimony to the menace of the river.

Litter Control:

It is important that you can influence Borough policy regarding litter by having your representative on the Clonmel Litter Committee. The worrying remarks in the second adjudication report of 2008 did not reflect the experience of this adjudicator. In fact, on a busy Friday and Saturday one felt that the town looked remarkably litter free. Even the dogs seem to have reacted to the first adjudication. All the work in schools pursuing Green Flag Status may be having an influence on the mindset of the younger generation and they in turn influence attitudes at home. Unfortunately, the war with litter is ongoing, so good luck on the day of the second adjudication this year.

Waste Minimisation:

Reference has been made to your influence with schools and the Green Flag Status. Awareness among the young is a key element in the waste minimisation section. The fact that you have enlisted the assistance of local industry is another prong in the waste minimisation approach. The energy saving actions been taken by Abbot Vascular are equally laudable. Maintain contact with local industry and note any good practice in energy saving, as you have done in the case of Bulmers. Last year's report asked how you are raising awareness among households. Well done on the condition of the many Bring Banks, one encountered around town.

Tidiness:

It is difficult for a town to look tidy throughout, when serious work is being undertaken along the river bank. Yet one hardly notices the impact of the work as one potters from one listed building to another. The new wall

already constructed is attractive in its stone design and material. The Suir Island area seems to be suffering most. And still the Bridge Bar and its three neighbours stand up defiantly against the dust and decay all round them. The results of your work with owners of derelict buildings can also be seen because we hardly noticed the problem, the area around the back of the court house being an unfortunate exception. Signposting is of particular importance in Clonmel and is effective. The finger posts throughout the town are not only useful to the visitor, but most attractive. Information plaques provide information on historical events, as the one telling us that we are at the northern gate to town. Cable free areas are a treat, but some areas, like at Irishtown, are badly spoilt. Car parks seem to abound and are well integrated into the areas of high demand, for example in the vicinity of Market Place.

Residential Areas:

Clonmel is a mix of the modern and the established, reflecting the general image of the built environment of the inner town. The older, more settled estates are generally presented with pride. The area around Ard na Gréine must be a joy to live in. Older estates like Davitt Avenue are proudly maintained. The newer estates have their grander entrances, fine open space, modern design and attractive landscaping, as at Gort na Manach or The Vinery. But the many older terraces of Clonmel reflect the heartbeat of the town in their cosy, cared-for, colourful intimacy, for instance the delightful houses at Princes Bar. But the newer terraces are not to be outdone either with their mainland style balconies, their dormer facades and their bright, fresh colour. The contrast between Davis Walk from 2000 and the 1912 terrace up the road sums up how old and new can contrast, but not clash.

Roads, Streets and Back Areas:

Clonmel is unusual, in that there is the outer by-pass road that may be the only flavour the passer-by will ever get of the town. The maintenance of the approach roads to Clonmel is a challenging task. In some places, the results are magnificent, roundabouts that are full of interest and pleasing to the eye, generous planting, neat verges, weed-free kerbs. In other cases, the image is disappointing, as the maintenance work is neglected and verges become litter gatherers, as in the area of Powerscourt Centre and in the vicinity of Tesco. The most impressive approach road to Clonmel must be the drive from the golf course, with its sweeping drive to town adorned by fine homes and princely trees. But the more business orientated approach road from Waterford is worthy of note, too with Dunnes, Lidl, Texaco, Nissan and the new Marks and Spencer integrating their mass of building with the traditional and modern residential surroundings through astute use of landscaping. Fine roadside walls give a clean, neat impression and the motif is sometimes varied, with the use of railings as at Powerscourt Way or the Fethard Road. Generally, cyclists are well catered for with cycle lanes. One of the treats of a visit is the network of streets that connect the town centre, making access to the Heritage Trail or to the shopping areas a joy for the outsider. St Catherine's Street provides such a conduit, and is well maintained. A stroll around Morton, Gladstone, William, Kickham streets and St Mary's Road is a magical mystery tour of visual variety with buildings from different eras, modern like the Day Care Centre, old like the convent and its adjoining red brick Church, ancient as in St Mary's cemetery, restored as in O Muineachán's, the renovated and the ruin, the derelict and the delightful, all feast the eye. Sometimes the mass of fly posting caused annoyance, as in the area by the Lemon Grass.

General Impression:

A most attractive experience of a visit to Clonmel is the ease with which one can move from one place of interest to another on foot. And there are so many places of interest. Another pleasant feature of the visit is the presence of information plaques throughout the town centre. Your town centre is a joy, despite all of the suffering of recent years. Your flood relief works bear hope for the future.

Second Round Adjudication:

I approached Clonmel from the Cashel side and discovered that I was in the town suburbs at reaching a roundabout with a signpost to the right for Ard Gaoithe business park, and as I continued down towards the town centre, the right hand side of the road was landscaped to a very high degree, with good green spaces and well arranged trees and shrubs, and these were particularly noticeable outside Abbott, Boston Scientific and further down outside the ESB. On the left hand side, there is a signpost for Clonmel and it tells us that the town is twinned with Costa Masnaga, Reading, Trofisch, Gangi and Eysines. However, this signpost is a bit faded. The signpost is located in an uneven stretch of ground, which is untidy with uncut grass and a lot of weeds, and it stretches down for a long distance. I discovered that there are a lot of people working in these factories and a local lady told me, in excess of 2,000 are employed there, and quite frankly, it is my view that this area urgently needs attention. The roundabout could be upgraded and suitably presented with shrubs and / or a sculpture to announce this industrial hub, and the left hand side of the road could be upgraded in a permanent fashion. Such improvements would create a positive image of a thriving town for visiting executives to the factory and for locals alike. As I got down further, the condition of the road verges improves considerably approaching the Cashel roundabout. To get a flavour of the approaches, I travelled along the

entire bypass road and there is a great selection of mature trees and shrubs in most areas. I liked the sculptures erected on the circular stone structures at the Moangariff roundabout. Most of the roundabouts had long grass and a consequent untidy look to them. The landscaping outside the Bulmers factory was great and the roundabout is an example of what could be achieved at the other roundabouts. I felt that the owners of Powerstown Park could be encouraged to improve the visual amenity of the entrance to the race track.

On my way back into the town, I visited St Patrick's cemetery and found it is maintained in superb condition and congratulations to all concerned with its upkeep. I met Paddy Hawkins and he told me he looks after the graveyard for the corporation, and I feel the people of Clonmel are lucky to have a man of this calibre at work in the graveyard. I loved the three buildings, the Catholic Church to the left, the Protestant Church to the right and the old house that is now used as an office. I note that some of these buildings need attention, in particular the back of the office / house, and I understand that there are plans to restore the properties. There are numerous headstones, some really beautiful and it was a special treat to come across one for Frank Patterson; written on the headstone is a verse from the song Danny Boy:

You'll come and find the place where I am lying
And kneel and say a prayer there for me.

Going back towards the town, I came across yet another roundabout with the centre of it constructed mainly with red bricks, it was beautiful and I felt easy to maintain. I loved the little children's playground. The town has developed in a well planned and orderly fashion over the last number of years and the new developments blend in very well with the older town structures, with a number of attractive streets linking on nicely to the town's main streets. I found that there are a lot of car parks provided to let the traffic flow along.

Down by the river, one admires the memorial to Allen, Larkin and O'Brien and this is a stark reminder of bygone days in Ireland. This area is absolutely beautiful and I loved the green railing, which occasionally attaches to a sturdy appropriate wall, the boats festooned with flowers and the baskets of flowers hanging on the railing are very attractive. There is a splendid walk along by the side of the river, with picturesque views of the river with the backdrop of the wonderful mature trees. The area looked stunningly beautiful on a July day, but my mind quickly reflects back to the pictures we have seen on the papers and TV stations of the floods in Clonmel, where this area would be completely inaccessible. I sincerely wish you well in the use of demountable barriers, walls and embankments, storm drains and pumping stations in your attempt to prevent or substantially reduce localised flooding of lands and properties.

The two maps supplied make it easy for adjudicators to locate various areas of interest in the town, and the Clonmel Heritage Trail brochure, that you also included, gives great history, especially in sketches and photographs, and it was special to admire these heritage locations and structures in real life. Well done. The tourist information board near the Lobby is a very well detailed map of the town.

I observed a number of Bring Banks around the town, they are maintained in great condition, and I visited the Cashel Road Recycle Centre which was very well presented, and I found it impressive that a range of 14 different items are accepted free of charge plus a further 12 items are accepted subject to a charge.

The first adjudicator has given a comprehensive report under the various headings of the competition, and I fully agree with the findings and, in particular the suggestion that you could devise a three to five year plan. It is not clear from your map as to where the town under your control actually starts. I feel there is potential in Clonmel to actually go all the way and win the Tidy Towns Competition, and in this context I feel that the committee of ten members is way too small for a town of this size, and maybe the numbers of the committee could be increased and responsibility be assigned to small groups in different areas. Congratulations on a great effort.