

Tidy Towns Competition 2017

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Mountmellick** Ref: **416**
County: **Laois** Mark: **279**
Category: **D** Date(s): **08/07/2017**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2016	Mark Awarded 2017
Community Involvement & Planning	60	47	45
Built Environment and Streetscape	50	37	39
Landscaping and Open Spaces	50	37	38
Wildlife, Habitats and Natural Amenities	50	28	29
Sustainable Waste and Resource Management	50	18	19
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	49	48
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	50	32	33
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	50	28	28
TOTAL MARK	450	276	279

Community Involvement & Planning / Rannpháirtíocht an Phobail & Pleanáil:

Fáilte Móinteach Mílic! Welcome Mounmellick to the Super Valu 2017 National Tidy Towns Competition. You have a good membership with 11 people on your committee and another 6 to 8 who volunteer. You mention the Men's Shed and the Yarn Bombers as two other bodies who assist you. You say that you have monthly committee meetings from February to August and monthly meetings with a staff member from the local authority. Does the committee meet at all between August and February?

You list a number of agencies bodies and businesses that have supported your activities in various ways. You communicate through traditional and modern methods. This is good as it reaches to audiences of all ages. We hope that you circulate minority churches in your area when you mention 'the parish newsletter' as one of your communication methods.

You visit your local schools who are Green Flag holders. The Scout group help on a regular basis.

You have been entering the competition for 22 years and have made big changes in that time. You are very conscious of the help that you receive from the local authority, the residents associations, the Community Employment Scheme and numerous other groups, and you feel that the attitudes (which have changed you say) could not have happened without their involvement.

Thank you for your new "three-year Tidy Towns plan 2017 to 2019." You have four overall objectives listed, and you include your work plan for 2017. You list approach roads in relation to your proposed planning for 2017, as well as "the heritage section, the main Street and amenity areas." However you do not give any proposals for 2018 other than five or six lines about the Riverwalk, riverbank, approach roads and work proposed on the old Maltings. We would have liked to have seen your proposals for 2018 in more detail, and also your plans for 2019. Not all proposals will depend on a large amount of funding. We would also suggest that you would include all categories of the competition in your plan, and layout your plan under the various category headings for each year. Last year's adjudicator asked you "to try to ensure all categories are covered for planned projects for your future town plan to help you gain marks in all areas of the competition." Perhaps you can revise your plan next year to include the suggestions of last year's and the current year's adjudicators. What you have in essence submitted is a one-year plan. Whereas a five-year plan can be long-sighted and difficult to gauge, a one-year plan is a little short sighted. We perfectly understand that not all planned projects can be achieved, but that is no reason not to include what you consider at this stage to be feasible within your resources (not necessarily all financial resources) for a three-year period. Having a three-year plan also helps you to see where you are making progress, and also to see categories where you can make more progress. And you should tell us about your consultation process locally in drawing up your Tidy Towns plan. You should also let us know that you have consulted any statutory and non statutory plans

relevant to your town such as the County Development Plan and the Mountmellick Local Area Plan (which you do not refer to at all) in drawing up your Tidy Towns plan.

You have submitted three copies of the Mountmellick Heritage Trail map/plan but you do not appear to have submitted any map which shows the entire town, nor any map which shows your projects to be considered for this year. In your letter you say that you have included a Mountmellick area map. This in fact it is just a copy of the Heritage Trail map with three or four items added. Unfortunately the Heritage Trail map does not show the full extent of the town nor show and name all housing estates. Streets were 'truncated' on the heritage map, as it only needs to show the heritage items you chose in 2000 to be included. It is important to show the entire town right to the boundaries of your working area. Whereas you did add approach road names to some of the streets on the Heritage Trail map, you did not name all approach roads. Moreover you did not number the projects for this year throughout the entry form. Section 3 of the guidelines on completing your entry form asks that each new or continuing project for the current year should be identified by number in your entry form under the correct category and these projects should also be shown with the same numbers on the key to the town map (where the projects are ones which can be mapped).. We recommend that you carefully study the guidelines to completing your entry form annually. Do not leave it to one person or do not leave it until the last minute. Sometimes groups get so involved in working on the ground that they rush putting the entry form together. It is very difficult for an adjudicator on adjudication day when there is no map available showing the entire town which needs to be adjudicated, nor showing the projects which have been completed during this adjudication year and which you list in your entry form. It means that the adjudicator has to search for the projects. Moreover, it makes referencing this report difficult and possibly inaccurate in places due to the lack of required maps. The fact that last year's adjudicator asked you to "mark on the map exactly where the projects you wish to be visited are located in the town" makes the fact that you neglected to do this again this year more surprising and somewhat disappointing. Please carefully read the requirements for mapping your town for the purposes of the competition contained within the entry form. You are not doing yourselves justice by omitting to do this.

Built Environment and Streetscape / An Timpeallacht Thógtha agus Sráid-dreacha:

Thank you for the excellent Mountmellick Heritage Trail brochure. We understand that this is taken from the boards erected as part of Mountmellick Heritage Trail in the year 2000. However as no date appears on the publication, so we do not know when it was published. You do not tell us. However as last year's adjudicator did not mention this publication it may be recent. Nonetheless we credit you with a great appreciation of your built environment and streetscape. We were very interested - not alone in the landmark buildings which are on the Heritage Trail but in your built heritage and streetscape generally.

Together with the local priest you have secured a heritage grant to improve the Town Hall. We look forward to hearing more about this in 2018, and we assume that you will obtain professional conservation architectural advice on the project. Does your local authority engage an Architectural Conservation Officer? Does it have an Architects Department? If so you may be able to obtain this advice from your local authority.

The second project which you mention under this category is the old railway house. As this is now a dwelling, we also credit it under the Residential category. We admired the railway station sign - still intact and the signal and old lantern as seen from the adjacent road. Well done to the people who protect this heritage. You have mentioned nothing about what appeared to be the site of two railway bridges around the perimeter of the town also. Could something be made of this railway heritage in the future?

The 'gas pole' which you refer to on the N80 is now serving two functions - number one you are looking after its maintenance, and also using it as wildlife habitat which we credit you for under the Wildlife category.

You say "please note old Maltings site beside the stud is now owned by Laois county council tender has been excepted (we presume 'accepted' is meant) to construct a wall around this site" The old Maltings and security fencing certainly do not look great on such an important approach to the town. Luckily the eye is somewhat distracted by the specimen mature trees on the other side of the road. There was an amount of rubble accumulated on the site. What are the local authority's plans for the site eventually - and what kind of a wall is intended?

Well done on painting the street furniture. We are glad to see that you have been able to fix the lanterns in O'Connell Square. We note that you have addressed the issue of the old Civil Defence building, but that work is under review due to structural concerns.

You are working with the local authority to improve signage. Your heritage trail is excellent. It is good that the parking spaces which are available can be used so was to take some of the traffic away from the good heritage areas of your town. We note that the Men's' Shed provided the window boxes which we admired at the Garda Station. The Garda Station looked well with its good stone wall road boundary.

You have undergrounded a considerable amount of cabling in the town in the past, and street lighting is attached to the buildings. This means that one can really enjoy the streetscapes without the distraction of overhead wires. It would be a pity therefore if the proliferation of projecting lights over shop name signs and projecting advertising were to replace the situation and detract from the streetscape. Projecting signage over shop fronts is intrusive, and where possible down-lighting which is recessed and discreet should be chosen. Projecting signage when uncontrolled detracts from the visual amenity of the streetscape.

What appears to be a Community Building in Wolfe Tone Court was presented really well - with shrub bedding

around its perimeter.

The Top Oil premise was well maintained - if a little bare, and would benefit from some judicious planting.

St Vincent's Community Nursing Unit was generally well presented, but two empty pots at the gate could be removed. The gatepost needs repainting, as does the boundary wall.

The complex containing Supervalu and the primary care building was clean, but rather bare. We would suggest that the perimeter walls might be planted. There was too much advertising on the walls. Supervalu itself looked well and the roundabout nearby was admired. A building facing the junction here including a barbershop needs freshening up - especially as this is at a strategic location.

Scoil osef Naofa looked bare and did not display any Green Flags.

The cemetery walls need repainting. Nearby a metal waste access could have less signage/notices? As we have no map for this area, and we saw no name sign around - we are unsure of the name of this road.

There was an interesting double hooped farm gate at the pull-in on the Rosenallis approach road. Traditional farm gates are becoming rarer and are part of your built environment worth protecting.

A premise on Wolfe Tone Street with a high white gable and blue door frames would benefit from the repainting of the parapet wall areas. The Kavanagh public house nearby would also benefit from a repaint - including its name signage and the removal of faded signage on the junction at first floor level. Across the street advertising on the upper gable of the Londis property was clean, but detracted from this junction. Both properties were not enhanced by the number of wires on the electricity pole at Kavanagh's corner. There was a little clutter on the footpath outside Londis which might be reduced for mobility and visual amenity reasons.

The Courthouse is beautifully maintained, and we very much liked the elegant name sign in Irish and English. The entrance to the library is discreetly tucked away at the side of the Courthouse. We admired your excellent Mountmellick Heritage Trail plaques at this stop number three - as elsewhere. Near the Courthouse we saw the well presented memorial to the 1798 rebellion.

O' Connell Square looked very well on adjudication day, and we admired the hard landscaping and the buildings surrounding the square. In particular we admired a three-storey three-bay house with red door and delightful fanlight. Another very good fanlight and retained timber sash windows were noted on a three-storey four bay house with carriage entrance. We noticed that this was the Quaker Meeting House. The Post Office nearby was brightly painted in the traditional green colours, but we considered the amount of signage in the windows to be excessive. Some buildings are in need of attention such as the building which is 'for sale' and has a car service centre notice beside its courtyard/rear entrance. We hope that such properties will soon find new careful owners. Just off the square there is a little laneway which could be upgraded - you give this no name on your map. You have a lot of Protected Structures in Mountmellick as we have seen from viewing your County Development Plan. Well done to the shops who have painted their premises in the square. You name these as Nora's cake shop, McElwees Pharmacy, and Victor Cox Drapers.

Mountmellick Community School is at a strategic location in the town. We wondered if the planning notice on the school gate pillar (notice dated October 2015) was still current. If not it ought to be removed. Meanwhile we admired the bright temporary yarn bomb exhibits which brightened up the entire frontage. We particularly liked the sentiments expressed in the 'small town big heart' banner. The gates and railings of the school are attractive, and the site was neat.

Patrick Street is a very fine street with many fine properties and others needing attention. Some wooden entablatures on shop fronts were admired. We are glad to know that you are working with shops in O'Connell Street to maintain the shop fronts. We also note that you are working with owners of derelict properties.

Well done on the trellis and brightly painted door and windows treatment which you have given to the blank wall in Wolfe Tone Street. The derelict site really did look like a cosy single-storey house frontage! The trellises and the planting added very much to the effect. We admired the artistic work on the old Central garage. Both were very cheerful and bright. At another point in the town we loved the treatment you have given to the white and grey house which appears to be unoccupied, but has a sign 'office to rent' on a first-floor window. The curtains looked quite realistic!

On the junction of Emmet Street and/O'Moore Street the hard landscaped area was a little 'overcrowded' with signage, seating, planters, fingerpost signage, a three tiered planter - together with a butcher's advertising signage. On O'Moore Street we liked the Tom & Vrons shop front, although the lower part of the wall and pillar areas could do with repainting. The satellite dish under the eaves on the front elevation also detracted from the overall impression.

A bookmaker's premises on a junction needs attention. The Country Life premise is in need of repainting - as is the adjoining property. The Glanbia entrance on the junction and beside the Methodist Church has a plethora of signage which looks very poorly. Could these signs be amalgamated into a free-standing well designed unit? On the other side of the same church (and between it and the Bank of Ireland) is a building sadly in need of attention - sooner

rather than later.

The Church of Ireland and Catholic Church were both well presented and a credit to the parishioners of each church and their clergy. However on the corner of Market Street and Pearse Street - at the junction leading to the Church of Ireland - improvements to the building containing the charity shop would set off views to the Church of Ireland in a much better way.

We admired the harp and other signage on the Catholic Institute.

The hard landscaping at Mountmellick Community Arts Centre would benefit from some boxed planting.

We admired the traditional red pump on the outskirts of the town which at present was 'clothed' in pink floral yarn bomb dressing!

Landscaping and Open Spaces / Tírdhreachú agus Spásanna Oscailte:

The landscaping at the square looked well and the juxtaposition of hard and soft landscaping here is effective.

Your various incidental landscaped spaces on approach roads - as discussed under the Approach Roads category - are unusual and with some extra attention over the coming years can really become outstanding introductions to your town.

Well done on the planting at the roundabout at Supervalu.

The Peoples' Park is a delightful amenity for the people of the town – for all ages and groups. It is a lovely mature setting and is easily accessed from all parts of the town. It is also good that it is located close to the Development Association premises. Well done on your involvement here.

We noted the Slí na Sláinte sign outside the Garda Station. Could you mark the Slí route on your map next year?

We noticed a hanging basket bracket (empty) on a power pole Wolfe Tone Street. We have been advised that it is dangerous to attach hanging baskets to power poles.

You have been involved in sustainable planting and in ensuring that pollinator friendly planting happens.

As the Derrycloney amenity area is well outside the town, (and you gave us no map with which to find the site) we are not in a position to comment in relation to works there. We understand that this site was formally opened before last year's adjudication (We assume that last year's adjudicator visited the site from reading last year's adjudication report - as they seemed to have a copy of your Biodiversity Plan in hand and it obviously contained a location map for the site) but we did not have a copy of the Biodiversity Plan. It appears that you submitted a copy of your Biodiversity Plan last year - but remember that each adjudicator only receives what you submit in the actual year of adjudication. Do you feel that the relevance of this site is such that it is used daily by people from the town? Or is it a more regional amenity? We feel that perhaps you should be concentrating your energies on areas within the town itself unless it is a town specific amenity. We just do not know! You certainly appear to have been involved in making sure that pollination is taken into account in the landscaping, and you appear to have been working steadily on the project with the other groups involved.

Wildlife, Habitats and Natural Amenities / Fiadhúlra, Gnáthóga agus Taitneamhachtaí Nádirtha:

Well done on securing funding to revamp the riverwalk at Mountmellick Development Association. You have achieved this in association with the local fishing club. Well done to the club for their cooperation. We look forward to hearing more about this. Would the fishing club help you to survey some riparian habitats? Have you thought about commissioning a specific plan to ensure that wildlife habitats are very much part of the proposal and are fully taken into account in the overall development plan? Perhaps you already have such advice in your Biodiversity Plan?

The bug hotel at the Peoples' Park will be of great interest to budding environmental scientists!

The 'gas pole' which you refer to on the N80 is now serving two functions - number one you are looking after its maintenance, and also using it as wildlife habitat.

We observed your Wildlife Zone on the Portlaoise Road. How did you decide to locate your Wildlife Zone here and what surveys did you undertake on this land?

We suppose answers to these questions are contained in your Biodiversity Plan - but we do not have a copy. It appears that you may have submitted a copy last year - but remember again that each adjudicator only receives what you submit in the actual year of adjudication. We wondered if you have had any Bat walks to study the occupants of your riverside boxes.

We observed some hedge cutting on road L20974. Remember that it is permissible to trim hedging along cultivated ground (e.g. gardens) throughout the year. However with regard to hedge trimming bordering non cultivated land - you are reminded that it is an offence under the Wildlife Act 1976 and Wildlife (Amendment) Act 2006 to cut vegetation in a hedge or ditch on lands not cultivated between 1st March and 31st August annually - this is for the

protection of nesting birds. Before trimming any such hedges please consult with your local authority who will deal with this issue if there is a safety aspect involved. Birdwatch Ireland also has an informative webpage which deals with this issue.

You might engage with the County Heritage Officer - and with the County Biodiversity Officer - if your County engages such an officer also - in exploring ways in which to further your knowledge and interpretation in this category. The Tidy Towns Handbook is also there as a relevant helpful publication. The Heritage Council's 'Wildlife in Towns and Villages' booklet is another useful resource. Perhaps you could involve the schoolchildren in an initial simple survey of wildlife and biodiversity. Or perhaps you might have a third level student in your midst who is studying Natural Sciences and might be able to get a class project together to help?

We are glad to see your interest in sustainable and pollinator friendly landscaping. We wish you luck in the "Lets go Buzzing" local authority pollinator award.

Sustainable Waste and Resource Management / Bainistiú Acmhainní agus Dramhaíola Inbhuanaithe:

We are glad to know that you are attending workshops on various ways to promote waste management.

The water butt at the Community Employment Office will be of benefit to the Men's Shed for their polytunnel. You are also in consultation with Mountmellick Development Association and the parish authorities to install water butts at their premises. Have you had good feedback from the 20 houses that are taking part in the water butt initiative? Some statistics with regard to actual conservation of water ensuing would be good - even if the figures are approximate figures of litres of water saved.

Would you consider joining the Green Homes scheme? Can you link up more perhaps with the knowledge ascertained by the students in their Green Flag work?

Would the local businesses get involved in their own waste audit? We would strongly recommend that you contact the Environmental Awareness Officer of your local authority whom we are sure would be very happy to advise you as to how to advance in this work/category

The Tidy Towns Handbook will also help you to come up with ideas. This adjudication category has been expanded and updated with a new advice sheet prepared for communities in 2014. You may find this information sheet on the Tidy Towns website or you may request a copy of this advice sheet if it is not already in your possession (from the Tidy Towns unit HQ). This will help you also to understand and move forward in relation to sustainable waste and resource management. There is also a local waste prevention website - which you can link to from the Tidy Towns website.

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

Well done to the local authority who continues to support you with weekly litter picking, and one of your committee members continues weekend litter picking which you say is of huge benefit to the town. You are in the process of erecting anti dog fouling posters. The town was litter free but we noticed litter elsewhere. On the road where the Lifestyle Mobility premises are located there was a 'necklace' of litter along the hedging. The speed limit discs were both missing from the poles and parking on the footpath was evident. Rough temporary old signage takes from the decent Bay Road signage near the commercial premises. We observed some car wash fly posting.

A little litter was noted at the training complex outside the boundary on the Portarlinton road approach. There is a very large housing apartment enclave of Patrick Street (not shown on your map) where there was an amount of kerbside litter. We also noticed a little litter on the right-hand side in the area of the speed limit sign on the Rosenallis approach. We also noticed a little litter along the base of the riverside wall on the approach road to Manor Street

We observed very dirty fly posting at the junction Manor Street and Wolfe Tone Street. Fly posting was noted on a pole beside the Tullamore/ Killeigh/ Portlaoise/ and Emo/ Portarlinton fingerpost directional sign (beside a pale pink coloured house with maroon coloured door).

Gates needs painting at Conor Davis Park. On the L20974 roads a Rosenallis sign needs relettering.

The Midland Scrap gate area might be painted.

You say that what you name as 'the Garoon amenity' area across the road from the newly painted pump on the Rosenallis approach has been revamped. The revamping must have just been to the name sign and the grass and floral bed beneath - as on the town side of the town name sign the site was very weedy, and the concrete post fence along the entire site was poor in appearance. The 'wishing well' area was also weedy. Perhaps you should have been more specific about what you did here, and perhaps you should have let us have a 'before' and 'after' photograph.

The recycling centre at the garage was clean insofar as there was not any litter around other than a bottle and a few pieces of paper. However the bins were very grubby (other than the clothing bank which was presentable). The security railings behind the bins and the lack of any amelioration of the site in the form of any type of landscaping - or planting against the railings for instance - made the entire site quite sterile in appearance. The recycling centre at

Supervalu was functional and litter free. However the white bins were grubby. The walls behind the five receptacles were also in need of repainting. Some brightening up of these recycling areas is highly desirable. There are many towns and villages throughout the country where the recycling areas have been made into attractive and yet functional locations

Satellite dishes on the front elevations of houses along some streets were observed. Satellite dishes are a modern phenomenon and look poorly on front elevations. In fact planning permission is required to so locate a dish. Have you any policy in relation to the control of such? Rows of satellite dishes along terraces of houses and along street properties detract hugely from the streetscape and look very untidy.

Residential Streets & Housing Areas / Sráideanna Cónaithe & Ceantair Tithíochta:

You continue to support residents groups with paint to help maintain boundary walls and derelict buildings in the area.

The People's Park is equipped to suit all ages and maintained to best standards

Twomey Park has indeed been shown on your Heritage Trail map. But we would like to see all housing estates shown. We assume the reason last year's adjudicator asked for it to be shown above others is because it was the winner of the Tidy Towns estates competition last year. You have decided this year that for financial reasons you will only hold your local competition every 2 to 3 years.

A senior citizens housing estate Wolf Tone Court was very well presented, and we particularly admired the display of potted plants at number four - as well as the garden on the left-hand side at the entrance to number one. The hedging and shrubbery here were exemplary! The delightful seat in a lovely green enclave of hedging and a semi mature tree looked really well. What a nice way to commemorate an estate opening rather than a tombstone-like engraved stone - so often seen!

We noticed some properties in need of painting such as a property near Londis.

On the approach road which leads to Manor Street we admired a lovely thatched cottage with its timber sash windows retained. Well done to the owners! Nearer the town a farmhouse with nice red gates looked well.

Manor Grove estate would benefit from more landscaping to 'counteract' the car parking areas.

The houses opposite the Garda Station looked very well.

Manor Court estate was leafy. Parking on the footpath was yet again noticed. Opposite the entrance to this estate would it be possible to plant the security fencing facing the entrance?

We admired a nice terrace of houses opposite the Hollow Bar, but a high white gable nearby requires painting. A row of terraced two storey houses on Wolfe Tone Street was very well presented. Just nearer town the houses- just beyond Londis and on the opposite side of the road - were gleaming!

There is a very large housing apartment enclave of Patrick Street. This as we have already remarked was not shown on your map at all. The estate had a huge number of satellite dishes on the front elevations of properties. Many weeds were noticed in the inner area of this development where the houses are located. And there was an amount of kerbside litter.

College Avenue also had the issue of car parking on footpaths in evidence. The 30 K pH speed limit sign as you approach the street from here was encroached on by vegetation.

We admired very neat terraces on the approach to the town near the Top Oil garage.

The name on the Esker Gate estate cannot be seen from the road and is semi-obsured by vegetation internally.

We admired a very well kept terrace of red brick houses on the Portarlinton road approach. Across from this we noted scaffolding on a derelict site. Perhaps this is hopeful - that by next year this site will be brought back to life. Nearer the town on the same approach road - a good long row of single story terraced houses were well presented.

The old railway house looked well.

Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes / Bóithre Isteach, Sráideanna & Lánaí:

On the Clonaslee/Rosenallis approach there is no name sign before the 60 K pH. We also noticed a little litter on the right-hand side in the area of the speed limit sign. We admired a pull-in area with nice semi mature trees and good wooden bollards, but the barriers at this pull-in are very rusty. The pump on this approach road has been painted. Well done to the active member of the active retirement group responsible! Could you ask the owner of the adjacent field to remove the box/tank -like item away from the pump wall as it detracts from the pump area? And if the person is willing - perhaps they would let you paint the field gate adjacent. We noted the nice seat near the pump on the footpath, but the area around its base was weedy. Nearer the town we saw another seat along the footpath - located in a nice shady treed area in front of a good stone wall. Yet closer to the town we thought that the white

railings along a long site needed repainting (a town pump is located on the footpath adjacent.) This approach was admired for its very weed free footpaths. Well done on this! The Pay and Display sign was bright and clean and located on a well mown grass verge. What presumably was an old railway bridge on this approach could be made more of.

On the approach which finally ends in Manor Street there is a lovely stone bridge over the river outside the speed limits - which appears to have been pointed crudely in cement in places. Nearer the town at a junction we admired the Fáilte go Mointeach Milic landscaped area. A little weeding around the edges would improve this unusual 'island' town name sign. We admired the ox-eye daisies and good shrubbery here. The walls and rails to the watercourse would also benefit from some attention. The 'stop' sign at the junction nearby was leaning. The wall of this watercourse which borders the long approach to Manor Street needed weeding at its base. We also noticed a little litter along this wall base. We admired the hedges with lots of meadowsweet, but also noticed some scattered litter along the road edges. The second 50 K pH speed limit sign was turned the wrong way around on the right-hand side on approaching the town.

Parking on footpaths was noted in many places throughout the town. This is detrimental to people with mobility issues or people with buggies. It also damages the footpaths. Can you campaign to have this practice disallowed in your town? We noticed such on-footpath parking at Manor Street and Wolfe Tone street junction - despite the existence nearby of an almost empty head-on to pavement parking opposite. Further examples of this practice were noticed nearer the town sign on the Manor Street approach. A concrete weedy wall and a very overgrown watercourse were noted on the approach near the traffic lights. The blue road sign re parking at the traffic lights was obscured by vegetation. We noticed another apparently old railway bridge here at the traffic lights.

The Portarlington road approach was in general well presented with good terraced housing. On this approach the black and white town sign on a raised bed looked well with good shrub planting at the Emo junction. Yet again on-footpath parking was observed on the Portarlington approach road.

Due to the fact that we had no map extending to the outskirts of the town we cannot say where we saw another Fáilte sign on a wrought iron arch. The sign would benefit from repainting. The Community Employment Scheme and the council workers support you with the manual labour needed to maintain your approach roads. You have erected 'watch' signs on all approach roads and you say that camera signage is to follow shortly.

Many street markings are in need of renewal and in particular street markings on the square need attention, including a wheelchair parking bay at the square. We noted a large empty sign (square) opposite a pharmacy just off the square. This appeared to be a road sign as it was located on the footpath near steps to a property.

We admired the Portlaoise approach which has a long lead-in from the junction. It is neat and leafy and was decorated with fibre bombing decor. Some advertising was observed attached to a fence at the estate just before Applegreen. We noticed a 'Subway' signage and occasional litter. Again we felt that the old Maltings and the security fencing outside looked poorly. We admired the gates to Annesgrove House. We noted the Sli na Slainte route on the road connecting the Portlaoise road via St. Vincent's Community Nursing Unit.

The road surface at the cemetery was very rough.

We would strongly suggest that you ask landowners along approach roads to paint field gates on the town approaches in a uniform colour which you might suggest. This gives a neat and definite feeling of one's approach to a town.

Concluding Remarks:

Your built heritage is an amazing resource in Mountmellick, and you appreciate this now for a long time. We sincerely hope that you will be assisted in its conservation. Mountmellick is a larger town than one imagines in passing through, and one that many people pass through without ever getting to know its attractions.

We were in town around the time of a yarn bombers Festival. This is a most imaginative and colourful occasion. It obviously involves a huge amount of work and in a great number of talented people. We congratulate all involved. The temporary displays really brightened up your town and drew attention to many buildings within the town. However we have to say that in one or two locations the displays seemed somewhat badly sited - as the displays distracted from the architectural integrity of one or two buildings. One of these was at the Courthouse. It is difficult to appreciate a building in this context where there is a distraction which is out of the ordinary. This may seem churlish as so much work went into the whole project, and the project was a temporary one. However one has to remember sometimes a visitor only visits once and is entitled to see an interesting building in its correct context.

With regard to the Courthouse we would also have to say that we found the erection of the war memorial to be in conflict with the architectural integrity of the Courthouse building. We would think that the war memorial should have a site of its own and not be in conflict or competition with one of your heritage trail sites of excellence. But that is purely a personal opinion. You are perfectly entitled to disagree and neither of these comments have any effect on your marking!

We wish you continued success this year and into the future. Go n-éirí libh i rith na blianta atá romhainn!