

Tidy Towns Competition 2013

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Borris** Ref: **35**
County: **Carlow** Mark: **275**
Category: **C** Date(s): **23/06/2013**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2012	Mark Awarded 2013
Overall Development Approach	50	42	43
The Built Environment	50	35	36
Landscaping	50	36	37
Wildlife and Natural Amenities	50	29	30
Litter Control	50	36	37
Sustainable Waste And Resource Management	20	7	8
Tidiness	30	19	19
Residential Areas	40	28	30
Roads, Streets and Back Areas	50	27	27
General Impression	10	8	8
TOTAL MARK	400	267	275

Overall Development Approach:

There seems to be an unending surge of energy in Borris – quite a different matter to the comparatively lacklustre atmosphere of 20 years ago when this adjudicator first visited the town and no one could point him in the direction of the former railway station! All that has changed and the townspeople are now distinctly aware of their past as well as their present. Thank you for the rich collection of print material – that which was not immediately relevant to the marking of this competition was put aside and will be read as a matter of interest, especially the wonderful Hidden Bridges and Mountain Rivers and Conservation and Management Plan for Borris House. The Pride of Place Awards document, the article on the Viaduct Walk, Dr Hickey's Improving Wildlife Habitats in Borris were studied along with your comprehensive entry form. Please staple or bind all documents – remember that they travel with those of 21 other centres. Your ordnance survey and schematic maps were both most helpful.

The Built Environment:

The two most striking visible buildings, now better appreciated than they used to be, are The Mill with its red-shuttered window openings and the viaduct. Borris House was not visited because it was not open on adjudication day. The perpendicular church with its Cobdenesque belfry must be unique; the cluster of religious-educational buildings surrounding it is rather remarkable. The Vocational School was spic and span on the date of the visit and its recreation grounds well kept. The cottage-orné Railway Station (now a residence) has mercifully been preserved. The portcullis-type gatehouse to Borris House fringed with young trees was admired as was the nearby Gothic monument. It was learned with satisfaction that the Step House Hotel won Best Business in the Pride of Place awards; its restrained colours set off the bright floral display admirably. The red pump attracted the eye. Much of the character of Borris derives from its private homes and cottages – these will be mentioned below.

Landscaping:

The wall and pole-hung containers of geraniums, petunias and other plants with their moisture-retaining bases, complemented by many window boxes and tubs across the street, are a real triumph of design and maintenance. The young streetside trees were seen to be doing very well. The playground is colourful and spotless. Raised beds in Bog Lane caught the attention as did numerous glimpses of private plantings, particularly those making use of walls and stonework. Ideally planters/crocks/tubs should not be placed on grass but rather on paving or

gravel. The picnic area in the town centre was admired .

Wildlife and Natural Amenities:

Improving Wildlife Habitats in Borris is a concise and judicious study that 'will provide for and encourage wildlife' into the village; it considers, among other things, the importance of ecological corridors that could be created 'by linking the graveyards via gardens and parks with the wider countryside'. Sites are identified, and their management . There is also an inventory of trees, shrubs and herbaceous plants and the conditions required for each group. Information and interpretative signage is first class at a number of points in the town. The manner in which mature trees appear to emerge from Borris House into the linear park and merge with the young trees is magical. The start of the Viaduct Walk was noted and also the transient Barrow Way. It was good to read that National Tree Week was observed in the town with tree-planting.

Litter Control:

You do not say if you are plagued by illegal dumping close to the town as happens in some other centres. You mention that you participate in the National Spring Clean campaign, are members of the Carlow Local Authorities Litter Action League and have the support of FAS workers: with all these safety measures surrounding you it is no surprise that the town was remarkably free of litter on the date of the visit. However, it would be preferable if time did not have to be used by civic-minded people to pick up the rubbish of the irresponsible; well done to all those who do this.

Sustainable Waste And Resource Management:

The photographs of your WEE collection tell their own story. It is clear that Borris has taken to the precepts of waste minimisation, recycling and biodiversity. Easy directions are given in Dr Hickey's paper on the making of compost; in the same paper the public is urged to install water butts. The statistics you quote show how much waste is collected annually and you are busy instructing the public not to create waste. The bring bank in the town centre was clean and accessible but one wonders if, visually, it intrudes upon a picturesque scene.

Tidiness:

The approach to Borris from Bagenalstown was marred on the date of the visit by an untidy, superfluity of advertising and signage, some of it occasioned by the most innocent of sources such as the sellers of fruit. It is either a dignified junction or an untidy intersection. A rusty corrugated iron roof was seen from the Myshall Road. The town was relatively tidy nonetheless. The frontage walls of Leinster Marts were tidy but the car park required attention. When weeds are poisoned they leave a brown smudge. Several commercial frontages were well presented, among them Whelan and Keenan.

Residential Areas:

One of the chief delights of Borris is the long run of 19th century houses on the one-sided Main Street, varying in design and materials in a remarkably attractive way. Many 'quaint' homes were admired, some with bargeboards and dormers, others with superb granite door-cases and gate pillars. Beside these, almost all residential areas are placed in the architectural shade. A terrace of flat-fronted houses at the lower end of the street caught the attention because of the gentle use of colour. The retention of mature oaks in Lodge Court, supplemented by recent tree planting, gives a real sense of style to this development; there are lawns and colourful beds – but why does the lower boundary have to look so unkempt? Several boundary walls were in need of cleaning in Oak Court though the houses are well looked after. Woodlawn is a neat development; a few minutes work would clear the shrub bed of weeds. The bright terrace by the former Railway Station creates a pleasant enclave with the older buildings.

Roads, Streets and Back Areas:

The stone wall at Ballytiglea was so well worth reclaiming. At the other end of the town the planting backed by a granite wall makes a pleasing arrival or departure feature. The exterior of the GAA Park could do with freshening up. Granite is everywhere, whether dressed or rough; various styles and methods of wall building are exemplified in Bog Lane. Street and residential name places were favourably noted as were traffic calming measures. Road surfaces within the town are variable, pavements mainly good. Borris deserves more handsome lamp standards than the present ones and the overhead cables should be removed from the skyline at the earliest possible moment that finance becomes available.

General Impression:

You have commissioned a number of studies and it is from their scientific methods that some of the future projects will derive their authority. Meanwhile you have a very energetic committee and obviously a very community-conscious public. One would like to hear more about the activities in the schools as far as these are relevant to the work of the Tidy Towns. Wild Life and Biodiversity. Every good wish for your continuing rise up the Tidy Towns ladder.