



EAST MIDLANDS

JUDGES AWARD 2017

BELPER

For transforming Calders Corner into an area that is not only welcoming but very attractive to visitors

Doug Stacey
President
East Midlands in Bloom

Jeff Bates
Chairman
East Midlands in Bloom





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GOLD AWARD 2017

BELPER


Large Town Category

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President
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LARGE TOWN

 **Belper**

Gold Award and Category Winner, 181 points

Judged on 5thth July

Judge: Richard Stephen

Judges Award: For transforming Calders Corner into an area that is welcoming and attractive to visitors.

With the sun shining I arrived at St. John's Church and was greeted by the harmonious voices of Rough Truffle and the Chevin Singers. The introductory PowerPoint presentation by Anne (Water Theme) was most enlightening. The day continued to be good with a walk into Belper town centre via the Market Place, King Street and the High Street where many beautiful hanging baskets, floral tubs and troughs were on display. Throughout the tour I met many volunteers, Friends Groups and other notable organisations such as Transition Belper and the Wildlife Trust. The tour was varied, interesting and very enjoyable. Once again Belper has put forward a strong entry to the East Midlands in Bloom competition and we wish them every success in the forthcoming 'National' competition.

Areas of Achievement

Section A: Horticultural Achievement

The very colourful displays of Begonias at Field Lane (Water Wheel) and Memorial Park (Arched Bridge and cascading water) were particularly impressive. The amount of good quality floral displays across the town (Triple Towers and ground planted displays) and throughout the tour was outstanding. The colourful plantings on show at the Valliant along with the maintenance of the brook area and lawns were again impressive as were the floral displays at The Talbot Hotel, The Lion and the Grey Hound: all were a credit to the town. St. John's Church was well maintained (good hanging baskets and pots planted by Brownies / Rainbows) and it was well worth viewing the work carried out by Kate Pudney and Transition Belper at the Station where a number of developing mixed borders and wildflower beds were particularly good. Residential gardens significantly supported the overall entry with good displays along Lowlands Road, Wyver Lane and Leighton Way. This year Friends of Belper River Gardens and Council staff have worked well together and have improved the planting displays and cleaned up the walkways across the open space. The Flying Geese Roundabout was very good as were The Triangle and the recently renovated Calders Corner.

Section B: Environmental Responsibility

Each year the Wyver Lane Local Nature Reserve seems to get better and better. Tania from the Derbyshire Wildlife Trust provided excellent up to date information as to what had been happening and what was proposed in the future. This area is not only important to wildlife etc. but also to Belper residents and visitors to the town. The Strutts Community Centre Rain Water Garden is an amazing concept. Though still in its infancy the scheme works well and is a wonderful educational facility. A scheme similar to this could be adopted / adapted by the general public for their own gardens. The Heritage element of the Belper tour is always interesting and is a key feature of Belper's entry. Examples include the 'Belper' song, Town Crier, The Butts, Derwent Mills and the River Garden, Shooting Range, Fountain, Strutts Community Centre etc. I'm not quite sure if 'Mr. Potato head could be classified as 'art' in the landscape but he certainly makes visitors to the Methodist Church smile. However, there was plenty to see on route e.g. Flying Geese Roundabout, Poetry Trail, Children's poster pictures at the station, the floral bridge and water wheel not forgetting the Caterpillar Topiary outside McDonald's. Generally, the walking / driving tour were free of detritus, flyposting and dog fouling and the footpaths in Riverside Gardens were particularly clean. Signage and interpretation boards were good and very informative.

Section C: Community Participation

The presentation by Anne prior to the tour was a very good introduction to the Bloom activities and for information relating to other organisations. By the time the Town Crier (Terry Porter) had finished welcoming the judge to Belper, the people in Market Place were in no doubt as to who and why a strange man was wandering around with a clipboard. Whilst a visit to Belper School was not on the tour, the video outlining what the school had been doing was more than welcome. It was a pleasure to meet a number of the volunteers attending the Whitemoor Centre and to hear from them about the various plants they had been growing. The centre supplies a number of local businesses with bedding plants e.g. The Valliant. It was wonderful to see all the 'bunting' displayed around Belper. Congratulations for all their hard work. Business support for the Bloom campaign seems to be good; along with the very good volunteering/ partnership organisation participation this helps to make Belper a very good entry to the East Midlands campaign. The local radio station was obviously behind Belper, so it was good to have the opportunity to speak to them at the Memorial Park and ultimately a wider audience. Beth's Poetry Trail is a great idea and will no doubt bring a smile to those who find them.

Areas for Development

Section A: Horticultural Achievement

It was disappointing to see weed growth in some the road / street gutters / base of walls in a couple of sections along the route e.g. John o' Gaunt Way and Lowlands Road. Try to ensure that wherever the route is going it is weed free. The Bus Station (opposite the Methodist Church) is an important building / facility but the outside wall is very bland. Consider developing some kind of Mural (perhaps depicting famous Belper sites) on it or introducing planted hay baskets to brighten up the bare wall.

Section B: Environmental Responsibility

It was lovely to see Mr. Potato Head supporting the Belper initiative but it was a shame that the Methodist Church notice board was in need of refurbishment. Consider introducing an Information Board at The Butts. This was an important location within Belper's history, particularly as more information has come to light with regard to the shooting ranges. The overall tour is very good but, as in previous years, the walk down to the Market Place could be improved.

Section C: Community Participation

As mentioned earlier the introductory presentation was very good but it did exceed the time allowed and should therefore be time restricted without losing its valuable content. Whilst the Belper School video was good, next year the judges will be keen to see what the pupils have been up to over the last 12 months. It was good to hear that a way forward has been found to develop the Tea Rooms in the River Gardens. The judges will be keen to see what progress has been made. The Poetry Trail is obviously a good idea so I would consider developing more publicity in the form of a leaflet or some other publication.

A: 92 B: 45 C: 44 Total: 181