

HERTFORDSHIRE VILLAGE OF THE YEAR 2005 JUDGES' SUMMARY REPORT

INTRODUCTION

Once again the judges have faced a difficult task. The enthusiasm shown by every village is quite astounding and this applies to the smaller as well as the larger villages. We congratulate them all for showing us such vibrant and thriving communities. We really do appreciate the hospitality shown to the judges especially in the hot weather we experienced during the judging this year.

ENVIRONMENT

This is not just a leftover from the Best Kept Village Competition. It is important to strike a balance between the carefully mown open spaces and the apparent unkempt areas where the wild flowers and fauna can thrive. However you can't just let large areas of your village go to seed! The winning village has extended its influence on the environment since last year with a number of imaginative projects including the establishment of safe bridleways across the village. Individual projects receive support from a number of different sources including the Parish Council, local residents groups, outside bodies and local business.

Commendation: **PIRTON**

Winner: **ICKLEFORD**

BUSINESS

Businesses can play an important part in a community. Questions the judges ask are: do Parish Councils make efforts to involve the businesses in the life of the community? Do they take active steps to encourage small businesses to start up. Businesses not only provide employment for local people but - if they take an active interest in the community by supporting local events or perhaps giving the benefit of their expertise - they can contribute to the general feeling of well-being in the village.

Commendation: **HERTFORD HEATH**

Winner: **WOOLMER GREEN.**

YOUNG PEOPLE

What judges look for is not only a wide range of facilities for young people, but also how they take part in village life. We were deeply impressed in many of the villages. Pre-school and Primary ages are well catered for. The judges greatly admired all the schools we were shown. There was strong evidence everywhere of schools working for the community and a happy atmosphere. It is more difficult to cater for the needs of young people of secondary school age. Solutions include provision of transport to entertainment outside the village. Several villages encourage young people to have a say in local affairs through Youth Councils. We greatly admired the volunteers and parents for their dedication to the Venture Scouts, Guides, Brownies and Youth Clubs despite the difficult Child Protection Policies. Cycle tracks, skateboard tracks, football and cricket are only some of the many splendid village activities. One of the many initiatives the judges especially liked in this year's winner was their Youth Parish Council which has control over its finances, meets regularly and runs events to raise funds.

Commendation: **PIRTON**

Winner: **FLAMSTEAD**

DOROTHY ABEL SMITH AWARD

A new award this year is for a young person who has made an outstanding contribution to village life, presented by Village of the Year Judge Dorothy Abel Smith in memory of her parents. Long-time CPRE members with a great commitment to Hertfordshire life, they always encouraged young people. Nominations were invited and four were received. It was a difficult decision but the winner is a young lady who has been active in her village from a very young child, has won the silver Duke of Edinburgh award, is a keen helper at Rainbows, babysits for many village families and, since passing her driving test, uses her car to help many friends and neighbours

Dorothy Abel Smith Award: Jodie Bryant of Flamstead

OLDER PEOPLE

Aren't older people lucky to live in Hertfordshire villages? Our commendation went to a small village that has made a local nursing home feel part of the community in so many ways, including making sure that Father Christmas makes a 'pit stop' at the home to take the residents with him to the Green Man to join the rest of the village in the celebrations. The winner runs Sunday teas throughout the summer, not just for visitors and older residents, but by older residents themselves. Links have also been developed with the local school with older residents helping with reading, passing on craft skills and talking about their lives and experiences.

Commendation: **WIDFORD**

Winner: **BRAUGHING**

BUILDING COMMUNITY LIFE

This category has been sponsored by DEFRA, The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, who were responsible for most of the questions. It is concerned with community relations, the communication between the Parish Council and the local residents, the relationship to those needing help in the community and the welcoming of people into the community. Also important is the provision of facilities and activities and how people feel about their community. The judges decided to share the £500 prize money between three awards: Most Improved Community, Best Community Project and Building Community Life

Sometimes when a village has won awards in the past the Judges wonder what, in addition to all their other attributes, the village can show in the way of progress. However the Judges who visited the village that has won the Most Improved Community Award were not disappointed. With great efforts being made to improve the village hall, the undertaking by a new member of the community of Parish Paths Partnership activities and the recognition that, although younger children were well catered for, the acquisition of a recreation area would offer something to older children.

Most Improved Community: **FURNEUX PELHAM**

The Best Community Project Award has been won by a village that has won many awards but still keeps coming up with ideas for continuous improvement, including a Disabled Access Footpath Scheme

Best Community Project: **REDBOURN**

The Building Community Life winner encourages the young, is concerned to preserve the environment, has many activities for all ages and yet is also able to actively support in a wider dimension those in another part of the world who need help. All this from a village which is a first-time entrant to the competition.

Building Community Life Winner: **BARKWAY**

PETERKIN AWARD

The Peterkin Award is a recognition of individuals or organisations who have made an outstanding contribution to village life. Sometimes unsung, but the village would not be such a good place if they did not play a significant role. This year, for the first time, nominations were invited. Seven were received, and the decision was extraordinarily difficult. This year's winner goes to someone who celebrated 'retirement' by taking on the rôles of village warden and caretaker of the village hall; he was described in his nomination as deserving a WMD (Wilstone Medal of Dedication).

Peterkin Award: **COLIN REEDMAN OF WILSTONE**

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

The IT winner represents Hertfordshire in both the Regional and National Competitions. Recent nominees, Braughing and Brookmans Park, have both won the Regional Competition. In looking for an outstanding county winner to go forward as our representative, one thing which impressed was the deletion of out-of-date forthcoming events, combined with up-to-the-minute reporting of current activities. A prime example of this came from our winner. A report of the Village of the Year judging visit, complete with photo, was published on the very day.

IT Winner: **REDBOURN**

SMALL VILLAGE OF THE YEAR

A small village constitutes up to 500 people on the Electoral Roll. This year's winner has a total population of only 350. Notwithstanding which, it is active in all the categories with an astonishing array of interest groups for everyone, including a conservation group, a Parish Paths partnership and a printed map. Several successful commercial and industrial businesses are welcomed and support the village. There is a Nursery School and facilities for young children, activities and help for teenagers. For older people there is a transport scheme.

Small Village of the Year: **PRESTON**

VILLAGE OF THE YEAR EAST

The village which has won the award for the East of the County, although not a large community, has a vibrant feeling that was very obvious to the judges. There is a caring attitude to all aspects of village life and their local businesses are very supportive. They are proud of their community and take care of their environment.

Village of the Year East: **BRICKENDON LIBERTY**

VILLAGE OF THE YEAR WEST

Though close to a major conurbation, the winning village manages to maintain and develop its own identity. The Parish Council canvasses the whole village, young and old alike, on matters involving the community such as the annual village funfair. Weekly lunches for the elderly are held at the local school together with the children. The local children also entertain the elderly, if entertain is the right word, in a preserved air-raid shelter! A major project is the upgrading of all village footpaths that has been carried out mainly by volunteers with some initial professional help. Along the way the old stiles have been replaced with kissing gates again with local business support. Finally, perhaps it should be mentioned that planning permission has been granted recently for a new burial ground. Hence it can be seen that all sections of the community are well catered for.

Village of the Year West and Overall Winner: **POTTEN END.**

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION/AN ENTRY PACK TO HERTFORDSHIRE VILLAGE OF THE YEAR 2006: Jo Simson Village of the Year Administrator, CPRE - The Hertfordshire Society, 31a Church Street, Welwyn, HERTS. AL6 9LW. Tel: 01438 717587, email office@cpreherts.org.uk, www.cpreherts.org.uk