

Kildwick – Best Kept Village

Introduction

From the late 1970s until 1990 Kildwick participated in the “Best Kept Village Competition” organised by the Yorkshire Rural Community Council.

The early part of this period was the time in which Kildwick was part of the Bradford Metropolitan area and, consequently, was in competition against other villages in the West Yorkshire area, rather than against some of the more “chocolate box” villages of North Yorkshire.

The competition took place every two or three years and reflected the care parishioners took of their community, which were judged on criteria such as: well-maintained properties, the condition of walls, well cut grass, lack of litter, presence of litter bins, memorials kept in good order, bus shelters, hedges kept cut, gardens tidy, general lack of weeds, signs, gates, stiles, pub car parks and their environments all being kept in excellent condition.

After entering the competition the villages had a certain length of time to get their environs into good order. They were then judged, but not notified of the date.

1977 – Kildwick, runners-up

In order to prepare for the judging, the village was divided up into sections with people taking particular responsibility for their own section whilst also helping out in other areas as and when required.

Litter picking took place throughout the judging period, preceded by a huge initial clean up during which a four-ton lorry was filled with rubbish.

All that summer, the Chairman of the Parish Meeting took it upon himself to mow all the grass verges up to the top of Priest Bank Road and round by Kildwick Hall and, as it was not known which parts of the village the judges would look at, the entrance and exit to the village were kept in immaculate condition.

In the event, the 1977 the competition was won by West Bretton. But Kildwick was one of the runners-up and received a tree – which was planted in the churchyard. (The other West Yorkshire runners up were Badsworth, East Bierley, Heath, Notton and Thorner.)



The judge's report remarked:

Kildwick has a very large Churchyard, which was well maintained, and is being very wisely utilized. One area, with newly planted trees is used as a car park, another part has been cleared under the 'Job Creation Scheme', whilst in another part sheep were grazing, and a little further away an additional area is in use as a Churchyard, and is excellently kept. Below the Churchyard the garden round the War Memorial was of a high standard and well kept. The school was above average, and the Judges commended the two small corners on the verges outside its wall which had been planted in Jubilee colours. The inn/hotel was of good appearance, and had a large tidy car park. Tree planting had taken place on the canal banks, and the canal appeared to be clean. No litter of any significance was seen. Shops and Warehouses were good, and walls, fences and hedges marked well. A number of excellent gardens were seen, and a pleasing feature was the lack of any glaring advertisements. Overall an entry of high standard and a very worthy finalist.

1979 – Kildwick, runners-up (again)

Another entry, with the same result.



The judge's report included a comment on the recent (and temporary) separation of Farnhill (which was part of Craven) from Kildwick (part of Bradford Met.).

An unfortunate mutilation of the village boundaries has taken place as a result of County Boundary changes. This has resulted in only a part of the built-up area of Kildwick proper being included. The area to be judged took the form of a rectangle with farmland forming the core of the box. The development was therefore peripheral, the bulk occurring around the Church and the White Lion public house. Kildwick Hall and its environs were an attractive feature as were the farms. The Churchyard was well maintained, but the small car park just inside the Church gates was a little incongruous. Both approaches to the Church were good and the War Memorial was a focal feature at the southern entrance. The walk up to the canal from the Church was very tidy and attractive, but the gate giving access to the canal tow path was designed for more slender mortals than I. A difficult village to judge because of its diffuse nature, but on the whole it was very pleasing.

Note: It does seem a little unfair for the village to be criticised because an ancient wicket-gate was too narrow for a plus-sized judge to use. It's also difficult to see what could have been done about the village being "too diffuse" to judge properly.

1982 – Kildwick win !

By the time Kildwick applied to take part in the 1982 competition it was clear that this would be the village's last chance to win in the West Yorkshire region. Kildwick had succeeded in its long fight to leave the Bradford Metropolitan area and it was clear that by the time the competition was run again the village would be part of North Yorkshire.

A supreme effort was made to ensure victory. Bradford Met helped by emptying the litter bins placed by the villagers, and also bedded out the Memorial Garden. Pupils from the village primary school were also involved, keeping the recreation ground tidy. Part of the churchyard was fenced off and sheep used to keep the grass down. Extra trees and bulbs, bought with money raised at social events, were also planted around the village.

For some 18 months there had been a half sunken canal pleasure boat sticking out of the canal and looking very unsightly within the area that was to be judged, and so the Chairman of the Parish Meeting asked a friend of his who owned a tractor to bring it down to the towpath where they attached the wreck of the boat to the tractor and towed it further down the canal until it was out of the judging area.

There were other smaller incidents. One involved a lady who had parked her car near Barratts bridge and was sitting in the car eating sweets and throwing the wrappers out of the window. The Chairman was cutting the grass at the time and noticed this and, having picked the wrappers up, tapped on the window and said "I think these are yours, madam" and dropped them back into the car. A further incident involved a resident of the village who was making the tea for the Parish Rooms and who emptied a commercial-sized teapot full of dozens of used tea bags out on to Parson's Walk. She was reminded in no uncertain terms that Kildwick was in the middle of the Best Kept Village competition.

After the judging in 1979 it had become clear that identifying the position of the boundary between Farnhill and Kildwick had been an issue and that Kildwick had been "marked down" as a result of the state of the garages on Buckler Hill. In order that such confusion should not occur again, the Chairman of the Parish Meeting wrote to the organisers asking that the judges contact people who knew the precise boundary before they started their work.

All the hard work paid off, and the village was judged "the worthy winner".

Kildwick is a village with many natural pleasing features and the residents care for their property and the village. All the buildings appeared to be well maintained. The Church, Inn and the canal area really were excellent. The houses were in good repair and the gardens were colourful and weedfree. Walls were in good condition, but one or two of the garages were disappointing as weeds were growing round them. Very pleasing litter bin 'enclosures' had been provided. The notice board was good, the Parish Room had been renovated, trees had been planted, and walks have been re-opened. It is suggested that the sign on the Skipton road for the Church should be restored so as to bring it up to the high standard of the village. Great interest in the village is obvious, and Kildwick is undoubtedly the worthy winner of the 1982 West Yorkshire Best Kept Village Competition.

As its prize, the village received an oak seat (which subsequently disappeared !) and a cast-iron plaque which we kept on display until the next competition.

The presentation ceremony was held in the churchyard, followed by a very successful afternoon tea in the church. In accepting the prize, Mr Keith Midgley, Chairman of the Parish Meeting, said that after being one of the runners up twice Kildwick had been determined to win in 1982. He thanked everyone who had helped to keep the village clean and tidy and said that the following April the village was to move into North Yorkshire and so had a unique opportunity to win the award in both areas.

The event was reported fully by the local press.



**Well done
Kildwick**

The award for the best-kept village in West Yorkshire was presented to Kildwick on Saturday. attractive to both residents and visitors."

The memorial seat and plaque, which the village will keep until the next competition, have been placed at the parish church, where the ceremony was held.

Keith Midgley, chairman of the parish meeting, said the village had been determined to win after being a runner-up twice.

The chairman of West Yorkshire County Council, Bill Banks, said:

"The whole exercise as I see it is not just about winning. It is about a determined and combined effort to keep our villages and the county tidy and

Best Kept Kildwick



AN OAK SEAT in the grounds of Kildwick Church will provide a permanent reminder of the village's success in this year's competition to find the best kept village in West Yorkshire.

On Saturday, County Coun. W. Banks presented the seat, together with a wrought iron trophy, to Mr. Keith Midgley, chairman of the Kildwick Parish Meeting.

Present at the ceremony were Mr. M. G. Foster, chairman of the Yorkshire Rural Community Council, who run the competition, and Mr. J. Vofford, a member of Badsworth Parish Council, one of the other finalists.

Picture by Paul Oldham, Skipton, shows left to right, Mr. Vofford, Mr. Banks, Mr. Foster, Mrs. Banks, and Mr. Midgley.



Mr. Keith Midgley, chairman of Kildwick Parish meeting, with the Best Kept Village award presented on Saturday.

A proud day for villagers

Subsequent years – Kildwick unplaced

In subsequent years, faced with opposition from villages in the Yorkshire Dales, Kildwick was unable to repeat its successes of 1977, 1979 and 1982.

Judge's report for 1984:

In spite of the pressures of a busy main road a very good co-ordinated effort was obvious here to maintain the high standard which won first prize in 1982 in the West Yorkshire Best Kept Village Competition (Kildwick is now in North Yorkshire). The Churchyard was reasonably well maintained with some young trees. The Judges urged that the trees adjoining the Church car park should have their tree ties released soon to prevent further damage. The War Memorial garden needed attention. The new Burial Ground was reasonably well maintained and new trees noted. The school area was good and parish room neat and tidy. The Church Institute (next to the inn) had apparently received no recent attention and surrounding weeds were seen. The inn was bright and welcoming. Farmyards and a workshop were very tidy. The bus shelter was tidy and the unusual designed and substantial litter bins were well placed. The notice board was good, signs adequate and advertisements unobtrusive. The verges were well trimmed and hedges, fences and walls good. The gardens were well tended and colourful with pretty flowers. The children's play area was very tidy with trim grass, the picnic furniture was noted and sportsfield adjoining in excellent condition. The seats were in good condition and well positioned. The stream was free of litter and canal bank tidy with life-belts in position alongside. The Judges were impressed at the quality of maintenance of the sportsfield and the initiative of providing life-belts and awarded a bonus mark.

Note: Once again the judges appear to have wandered over the boundary. The lifebelts are on the canal-side in Farnhill.

Judge's report for 1987:

In spite of road by-pass construction currently in progress and constant noisy main road traffic, a good and attractive result has been achieved. The churchyard was well maintained as well as the new burial ground. The war memorial, nearby old stocks and sundial with colourful flowers surrounding formed a pleasing feature. The school and parish hall were in excellent condition but the church hall - understood to be used intermittently as a hostel by visiting groups was rather neglected with many weeds on its front. The Inn was smart and car park tidy. The farmyard was good. The children's play area was in splendid state and picnic furniture a useful addition. The notice board was good with clear information. Many gardens were lovely. The canalside area was pleasing and recent tree planting there noted. Very little litter was seen and the design of the waste paper bins commended. Seats were sound and well placed.

Once again a very good effort.

Judge's report for 1990:

The bypass road has produced a more peaceful atmosphere to this small village. It was felt that the new buildings were in keeping with a rural area. The churchyard was good but the 'new' burial ground not so tidy - grazing by sheep was complimented. The Parish Hall and Church Hall were in good condition. The school was well maintained and nearby sportsfield in splendid state. The Inn and Hotel were smart and welcoming as was the shop. The roofing firm's premises were tidy. Practically no litter was seen and wastepaper bins well sited and used. There were some lovely gardens but some flower tubs awaited attention. The garden area by the Church steps with War Memorial and old stocks was rather overgrown. Several seats and notice boards were in good position and condition. Once again, a high standard was achieved by this small population.

After this the rules for the competition were changed and judging concentrated more on the facilities available for organisations within the village, which Kildwick didn't have, and less to do with taking care of the village, and it seemed to the community that there would be no point in taking part under the new regulations.