

**Norton in Hales,
Heart of England
Village - Gold &
Category Winner**

Shropshire in the Heart of England has many hidden gems, but few can boast the total community commitment of Norton in Hales. The whole village seems to be behind the Bloom initiative and obviously has been for a considerable number of years. The streets were incredibly clean and almost every front garden was immaculate, testimony no doubt to the hard work and community spirit that lies beneath this rural haven. The sympathetic planting and high quality of maintenance of all public open spaces by the volunteer workforce is a model that others often try to emulate, but few succeed. This has been complimented by the investigation and subsequent discovery of the birthplace of the father of the industrial revolution in Sweden, Samuel Owen, and has helped this community to be able to retain the highest honour Britain in Bloom can bestow on any community: a well deserved Gold Medal. Well done!

**Horticultural
Achievement**

Areas of achievement

- . The imaginative and interesting mix of sustainable and seasonal planting in some of the beds and borders.
- . The impressive floral displays at the village hall, bus shelter and village green.
- . The private residential gardens seen throughout the village were exceptional, of special note were the new low cost housing site and the garden of Mr and Mrs J Mayer.
- . The high quality grass maintenance throughout the entry, especially in the areas looked after by John Lovatt.

Areas for improvement

- . It was felt some areas of planting within the village were a little sparse, especially the newly planted and mulched area at the end of Griffin Close. Consideration could also be given to replanting some of the beds around the church, using similar designs to those in Church View.
- . Perhaps look to developing a larger bed for the school to annually design and plant using a range of flowers and vegetables.
- . The appearance of the Public house detracted from the village's overall impact, although it is recognised the problems with ownership are hampering the group's efforts to tidy it up.
- . It was felt that the recreation ground car park detracted from the appearance of the well maintained sports facilities.

**Environmental
Responsibility**

Areas of achievement

- . The excellent research work undertaken and the preserved "Blooms" of iron ore which helped portray the areas history as the birthplace of Samuel Owen the father of the industrial revolution in Sweden. This was so aptly celebrated on judging day, with the unveiling of a plaque, by a Swedish author of a book on Samuel Owen.
- . The restored Norton in Hales Finger Post on the village green, resplendent in it's original black and white livery.
- . The area at Parton's Pond with its new interpretation board in place. It was noted this is mentioned in the portfolio as an aspiration under future plans.
- . **All** the roads and footpaths in and around the village were spotlessly clean with no

litter, detritus or weed growth evident; well done! .

Areas for improvement

- . Perhaps some further research into the control of the blanket weed may help to control this problem in Parton's Pond.
- . The bike rack at the school could do with a coat of paint.
- . Using the restored finger post on the village green as a mode, try and restore the rest of the finger posts within the village.
- . It was felt by the judges that the tubs at the horse wash were out of place and a more strategic approach needs to be taken with rationalisation of the existing containers and the possible introduction of more appropriate planters or features.

Community Participation

Areas of achievement

- . Norton in Hales has probably the longest history of taking part in various village environmental campaigns the judges have ever seen; such a long provenance certainly shows the "Bloom" effect over the past fifty or so years.
- . The use of the A Board raising awareness of the Bloom groups activities.
- . The pre-school caterpillars group, a great way of involving children from an early age and so aptly named.
- . It was great that on judging day, as we suspect as at every Bloom event held in the village, there was such tremendous support from all the residents, parish councillors and local children.

Areas for improvement

- . Perhaps develop some more sponsorship opportunities for individuals or businesses to support the work of the group.
- . It was felt that the fifteen-minute presentation was a lost opportunity to sell to the judges the Bloom concept, especially the obviously high level of work going on all year round.
- . Perhaps invite the local press along to future Bloom judging days, using the opportunity to raise the profile of the group's activities to a wider audience.