

**CPRE Gloucestershire  
Bledisloe Cup 2008**

**South Cerney – Runners Up**

**Report of the Final Assessor**

**Introduction**

This year I was greatly helped by having before me, as I made my visits, extremely thorough reports written by volunteers organised by CPRE staff. I am grateful to all those who conducted the first and second rounds of judging.

Even more important was the quality of the written submissions made by the six villages that reached the final round. To have a clear map, even if hand drawn, and a couple of pages of text pointing out what is so special about the place and where the effort to make things happen has come from is such a benefit to an outsider trying to make sound judgements.

So many Gloucestershire villages have a built core that dates back to pre-industrial days. Fashioned out of local stone, or in the Vale with wooden frames, the buildings and the roads were on a scale that blended well with the rural landscape. It is to everyone's credit that, for the most part, the heritage of the past has been adapted skilfully to accommodate new uses, new lifestyles, new businesses and new people. Problems can arise when property owners become part time residents or are absent for long periods. It then becomes a test of their commitment to the area to keep up the community spirit which so vital to maintenance of the character of rural Gloucestershire. I am pleased to say that all the villages in the final round demonstrated that they had people able to show the very highest levels of commitment to the common good.

**South Cerney**

South Cerney is a vibrant place with an active community, shops, pubs and an outstanding recreation ground – the Upper Up playing fields.

The village hall has been awarded Hallmark Part 1 accreditation, the first village in Gloucestershire to achieve this status. The award is formal recognition that the hall is well maintained and run. The management committee is now committed to making further improvements and will be striving to reach the next level of recognition.

The Upper Up playing fields are not just places for sport, as the name implies, but a thoughtfully designed and well managed mosaic of spaces for people of all ages – children, teenagers, and older age groups. Attention has been paid to enhancing the landscape with the planting of a new hedge to the west of the cricket pitch and carefully staked trees each dedicated in memory of local people – a brilliant way in which families can remember loved ones and at the same time contribute themselves to the improvement of a communal area.

The pond and picnic area are features of special note. Separated by some distance from the mountain bike track the pond has become a haven for wild life and a quiet corner in which to enjoy some quiet recreation. The newly erected multi use games area and youth shelter, also separated from the other uses, indicate that the needs of younger children have been carefully considered.

All of these projects have clearly required collective effort, considerable thought, forward planning, and negotiating ability. It is good to see the Parish Council working as a team with other local community groups, and with the District Council. The formation of the Youth parish Council, the first in the Cotswold area, is yet another indication of a community looking to the future, not just the past.

Community composting has been proposed by a group of local residents with the backing of the Parish Council. This again indicates that people are thinking of their environmental impact and the need to play a part in reducing the 'carbon footprint' of the village. Perhaps in future years South Cerney will lead the way in other carbon reduction measures. In other places groups of concerned citizens are meeting to devise ways of moving towards low carbon lifestyles, saving themselves money and while doing so combating climate change.

The physical appearance of the roads, pavements and verges has been given careful attention. All parts of the village just look clean and well cared for.

## **Conclusion**

It is not easy to reach a decision between two very different villages, each with its own distinctive character. What they both have in common is evidence of strong community support for the challenging tasks of maintaining the quality of the environment and working hard to enhance it wherever possible. Keeping the communal places clean and tidy requires effort wherever one lives. When villages do these basic tasks well there is, it seems, a greater willingness to take on more difficult projects as South Cerney has done.

For South Cerney I offer my congratulations for the splendid achievements of the past few years, particularly in relation to the Upper Up playing fields, an exemplary project to make the most of what I guess was, in the past, a fairly monotonous expanse of mown grass. To convert it into the mosaic of uses catering for the diverse demands of the village community deserves recognition. I suggest it is re-named to reflect its modern multi-purpose function and entered into a creative landscape planning competition.