

I stopped at the bank early this morning to take some money out of the machine. There was a large car park in front of the building and no cars, so I took a space close to the entrance. I got my money, climbed back into the car and began to reverse out, only to find my way blocked by another motorist who had abandoned his car right in front of the machine, not caring that now I had to manoeuvre round him to get out. Difficult enough for drivers in possession of even basic reversing skills, but a near impossibility for me.

What is it about reversing that I find so difficult? I can remember when I was learning to drive how my instructor would bark directions at me as I weaved backwards all the way to the end of the road. Is this the same skills-deficiency that means I have to hold a map upside down if I am travelling south?

However, I digress. Today I am not revealing any more of my inadequacies to you but having a rant about inconsiderate parking.

Yes, the people who park across two spaces in case their precious car gets scratched, the ones who take up half the pavement forcing wheelchair users or pedestrians with prams on to the road, or the ones in parent and child spaces where the child is so old that they are the ones driving.

But the worst offenders of all? Those who park in disabled spaces. I am not normally prone to acts of violence, but I really am tempted to do something to offenders so that they will be entitled to use these spaces for the rest of their days.

I'm not sure that it is actually against the law, as the car parks are on privately owned property, but until now the owners have been reluctant to be too heavy handed with people who, after all, are their customers.

Until now.

Asda are starting – in some of their stores – a new policy of enforcement against people without the orange disabled sticker who are parking in these spaces. They are taking a more reasonable approach than I would, and will be asking drivers to park elsewhere, although persistent offenders will receive a hard-to-remove notice plastered across their windscreen.

This reminds me of an experiment I was told about by a senior police officer (sadly not in this area). A young police officer was trying out a new number plate reader he had been given. It reads car registrations and matches it to various records held by the DVLA and the police. What the officer noticed was that if he used it in the disabled parking area of his local supermarket or fast food outlet, he got a much higher rate of positive matches than he did anywhere else in the town. Before you all start vigilante action against your disabled neighbours, I must point out that the offenders were the ones not entitled to park in those spots.

Unusually, his bosses took him seriously and decided to try the experiment across the whole area. They soon found that they were picking up petty criminals, people with warrants out for their arrest or fines owed, and shoplifters. The shops were delighted; they didn't want criminals frequenting their premises.

The conclusion was that people who are likely to commit serious crimes are also likely to commit more minor offences. So a burglar, say, is also likely to park inappropriately, to jump queues to skip bus fares, to speed. Remember the Yorkshire Ripper? He was initially stopped for a motoring offence, as was the murderer Robert Black.

I'm not saying that everyone parking in the wrong place is a killer, but perhaps Asda should take care about who they are dealing with. What a pity

that our boys in blue are too busy with their paperwork to give the supermarkets a hand. Maybe they could do more than just free up parking for those than need it.

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