

On parking with due consideration

How do you regard the bit of street outside your house?

I ask because of a couple of annoying instances of what I think has been misuse, cases of people taking advantage in a careless and annoying way.

Other than to say it happened in New Plymouth, I can't name anyone or the locations in either instance because there would be conniptions.

The first involved a small black car parked outside a friend's house for many weeks. Nobody can be sure how long, because nobody noticed it for a while, and when they did - because it gradually became a nuisance - none could recall when it arrived.

It was parked in that way meant to show a modicum of consideration but which has the opposite effect – in the middle of a space that holds three cars, a driveway crossing at each end. It's supposed to be helpful, but if you're visiting the house on the right hand end, you have to back in to park.

Nobody minds that on occasion, but when you find yourself having to do it every time you call in on your friends, it starts to be noticed. "Who owns the black car?" you ask. "What black car?" "The one that's been parked outside your house for weeks." "Oh, that one...dunno." And so on.

Near neighbours are asked. Nobody knows. An inspection of the car shows it has such a build-up of pohutukawa tree debris in the windscreen wiper well it must have sat there for months. However, the WOF is current.

I offer to follow it up, and the first step is to go online to the police website to see if it's stolen. No. Next is an email to the council to ask what can be done. Nothing, says the man who calls back, until the WOF is a month expired; then maybe they can tow it away.

He says the rules changed some years back after an Auckland couple went overseas and came back to find their car impounded.

The WOF has about six months to go. That seems a long time, so I call in at the cop shop. They are similarly restricted, but out of my hearing someone calls the Auckland number on the registration. It's apparently answered by a person with no English, in what sounded like a restaurant judging by a background racket of things being chopped up. No progress there.

I returned to the friends' place, backed up, parked, went in to admit defeat. But one of them said: "I think we've cracked it.". Someone in a house a few more doors up the street thought it might belong to someone they knew who was working in Auckland. Next day the car was gone.

What are we to make of this? One reaction might to say settle down, Jim, you impatient old fart, no crime committed there. And I'd agree, if not for what happened next: someone I know didn't get their rubbish collected.

He has a car parked outside his place, in the same "considerate" way in the middle of the gap. The space to his crossing is tight. Someone delivering a meal to someone off his driveway had a biggish car that lingered briefly over one end of the crossing,

apparently obscuring his half-size wheelie bin at the kerbside. The collector missed it.

Waste Management was helpful, apologised for the slip (not their fault) and sent around a truck next day to take the full bin and give him a new one. Good service.

He asked the neighbour if he'd mind shifting the car forward a bit so there wouldn't be a repeat. The neighbour tried, but couldn't start it; it had sat there immobile for more than a year.

He said he didn't actually own it, having expressed an interest in buying it at one stage. The deal never happened. He would ring the owner. That "owner" turned out not to be the actual owner, who is someone else. He would come around and remove it, though. That was a month ago. The car remains.

Do any of us have rights in such a situation? Bugger all, it appears. The complaining Auckland couple seem to have paralysed the entire country when it comes to the enforcement of considerate suburban street-side vehicle behaviour.

Could be worse, I suppose. I recall Italian city streets where jammed-up, grimy parked cars looked like they hadn't moved for decades.