

## Westminster's helpful approach is just the ticket

FINALLY some parking sanity. Westminster Council in London is adopting "soft enforcement", where wardens are more likely to give written or verbal warnings than actual tickets. Councillor Danny Chalkley (I've met him and he's a decent bloke) says: "If people make a mistake or get confused, we'll listen."

But persistent offenders with a record won't get any leeway and the scheme is aimed at genuine cases or visitors to London. Feedback from parking attendants will help identify zones where signage, lines or bays are confusing.

There's even a free guide to parking in the area. Other councils, please take note.

## At last, iPhone users get a proper sat-nav mount



FOR £99, iPhone users can now buy a TomTom kit with a fixed position, vehicle-specific dashboard mount, complete with GPS booster and built-in microphone. For more information, check out [www.tomtom.com](http://www.tomtom.com)

## Maserati for your final journey, sir?

"DEADLY" is the only word to describe this hideous hearse that was once a sensuous Maserati Quattroporte. The heroically ugly conversion has been carried out by Italian firm Intercar Modena and must rank as one of the world's most catastrophic pieces of coachwork. Mind you, beats going to the incinerator in a stretch Granada.



Hearse of horrors



Dimble's dashing dowager

## SILVER-TONGUED CLOUD

A ROLLS-ROYCE Silver Cloud once owned by veteran British broadcaster Richard Dimbleby is up for sale. Bought new by Dimbleby, the celebrated commentator at the Queen's Coronation and Winston Churchill's funeral, the '56 Cloud doesn't sound dear at £19,500. Shame it's in wedding white, though. More details on 07043 241887.

# Quentin



ADRIAN Turner's Ford Fiesta Zetec went through a pothole on a country road, buckling one of the alloy wheels so badly it has to be replaced. Is it worth trying to get compensation?

QUENTIN SAYS: Local councils are now paying out more in compensation than road repairs and this is why. Make sure you take pictures of the wheel, the pothole (with measurements) and the fact that there were no signs or cones warning of a dangerous surface. Get a written estimate for the damage and submit a claim to the local authority's Highways Department. It's also important to ask why the pothole hadn't been repaired.

# EVIL'S GOOD

## TO some it's the SUV Satan of the Road, to others it's a car for all reasons and seasons.

But what you need to know is that used examples of BMW's excellent X5 can now be bought for as little as six-and-a-half grand.

Punch X5 into the Auto Trader search engine and you'll come across plenty of early 2000W or X-plate 3.0s with under 70,000 miles and history for less than seven big ones. That's nearly five grand less than the cheapest new shape Range Rover.

### WHO'D DRIVE IT

Fashionistas with a family

CAP used car guide voted the X5 the used luxury car of the decade and if you buy a good one they're not nearly as ruinous to run as you might think. Service history is paramount, so never buy without it.

Expect heater blower problems (£500), weak front outer CV joints (£500), minor oil leaks from the rocker cover, power steering pipe issues and brake pads that wear out within 30,000 miles. Turbos can cause problems, but it's usually just the oil seal, which is a £200 fix. According to Warrantywise, the average claim for an X5 is £787, which is less than the SUV average, but they also report that many have been clocked, so paperwork and provenance are vital.

The 3.0d is the bestseller, but don't expect more than 30mpg and avoid the 4.4i, as that can be juicy and pricey to insure.

Find a cherished one and you'll have a 4x4 that's better to drive than a Mercedes ML, Toyota Landcruiser or Discovery... and will hold its value longer.

## BMW X5 ISN'T QUITE A



Some of the very earliest X5s are now right down to £5k

# Willson

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**Q** MY daughter was involved in a minor accident at a roundabout. The car in front braked suddenly and she went into the back of it, causing a very small scratch on its bumper. As the damage was so slight, she agreed to pay privately, rather than involve insurance. For two months she heard nothing, but in January she received an invoice for £468, which she thinks is ridiculous. What can she do? - *Jennifer Turner, by email*

**A** SHE really should have taken a photo with her phone and insisted that she wanted to see an estimate before any work was done. The long time-lag and large bill suggest someone's trying to pull your daughter's leg. It is unreasonable to expect her to pay this amount without seeing a quote first. Let them make as much noise as they like - her insurance won't give them the time of day and neither would a court.

# GOOD SIDE

# IS NASTY AS ALL THAT



**TECH  
FILE**

**Engine:** 2979cc 6-cyl  
**Power:** 231bhp  
**0-60:** 8.2  
**Max:** 128  
**In A Word:** A practical asset

X5 is heavenly on tarmac  
and heroic off-road



No pips  
in this OJ

## ORANGE GETS JUICED UP

CITROEN must be worrying the crap out of the suits at Mini. Their new DS3 Racing looks a serious piece of work. Limited to just 1,000 units, there's a 200 bhp 1.6 turbo petrol engine with 30% more power than the Sport model, 18-inch rubber, trick

suspension, wider track, lower ride height, four-pot brakes, tuned exhaust and remapped ECU. All of which proves that this isn't just a cheesy special edition with go-faster stripes and alloys. Don't you just love the orange rims and roof?



A very vibrant  
Vauxhall

## THIS VAUX OF DELIGHTS

DESPITE Vauxhall's woes, they're fighting back with the new Meriva mini-MPV, which I have to say looks really fit. Suicide rear doors, panoramic roof and uptown

interior make it feel funky and there's even a set of load-bearing rails running through the cabin to hang handbags, hats and curries on. Two petrol and three

diesel turbos will all be coupled to six-speed manual boxes and Vauxhall claim that it will drive every bit as well as it looks.



Minty...  
new Polo

## Potent Polo with proper poke..

WHO'D have thought the VW Polo would one day sport a seven-speed DSG box and electric diff? Well, the new Polo GTi does, with 177bhp on tap from a 1.4 TSi engine, lower springing and special dampers, plus GTi adornments. There's even a racy flat-bottomed steering-wheel. It's not cheap at £18k, but still six grand less than a Golf GTi.