

Description of Incident
Collision between [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]
Dr Richard A. Bartle
18th March, 2011

Date: 3rd March, 2011
Time: Around 2:30pm
Weather: Overcast
Visibility: Fair

I was visiting Sainsbury's Stanway store to do some mid-week shopping, and parked in the store's car park. Normally I reverse into parking spaces, but on this occasion there was room to drive straight in because there were two adjacent spaces and I could swing round.

Having done my shopping, I returned to my vehicle ([REDACTED]) and started the engine. The space next to me (to my left) was still vacant. Another vehicle approached from my right, its driver looking for a parking space. To the best of my recollection, the situation at this time was as in diagram 1:

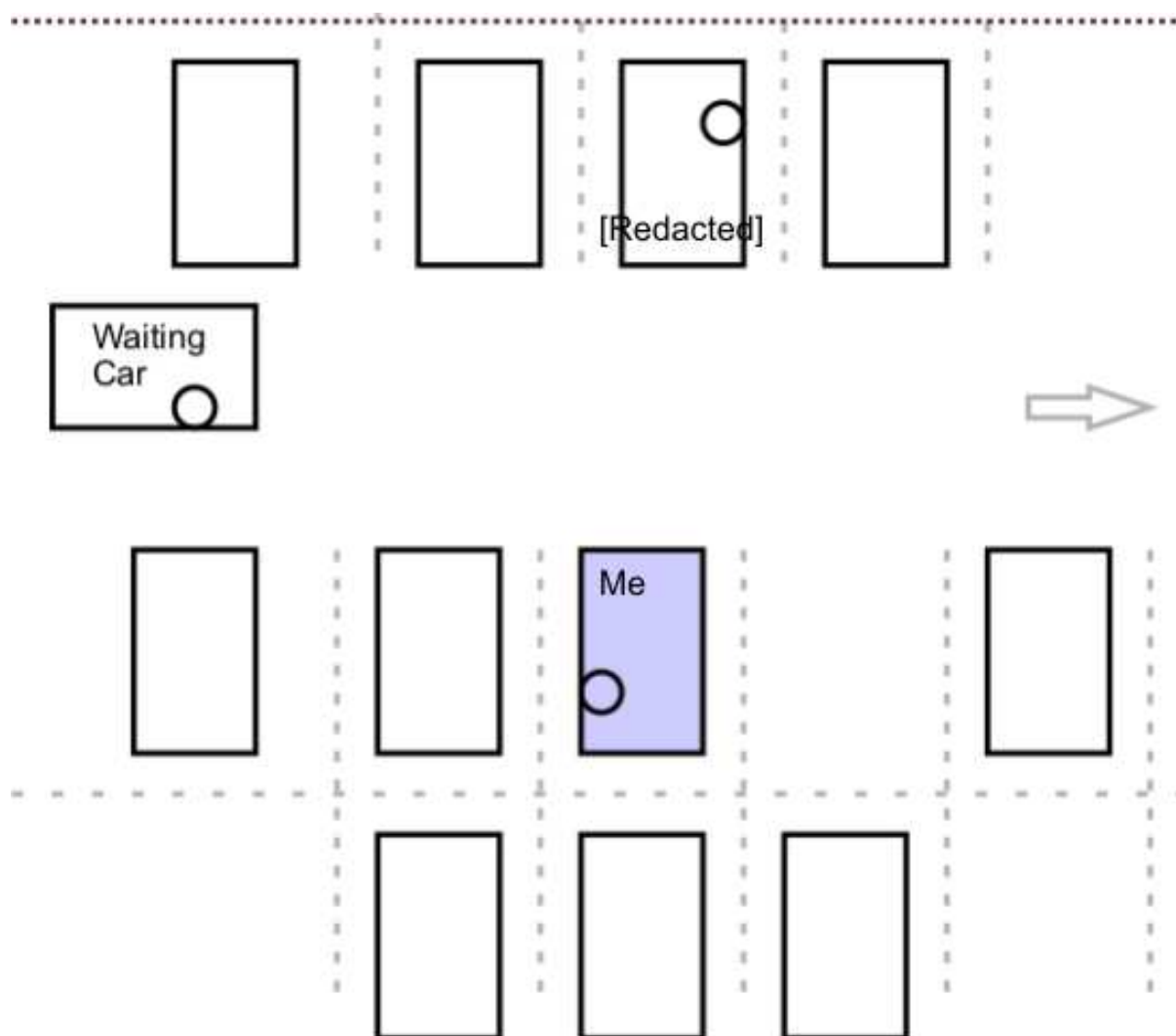


Diagram 1

I was aware of the Waiting Car, which I took to be waiting to occupy the space immediately to my left. I would have preferred for it to have waited a little further back, as it did not leave a great deal of room for me to reverse out in front of it. I considered reversing clockwise, so as to face the Waiting Car, but the road was one-way; I therefore resigned myself to have to reverse anti-clockwise towards

the Waiting Car. Because of my concerns as to its proximity, and a slight suspicion that its driver might also notice the issue and decide to move on, I was being cautious when I began my manoeuvre; I reversed slowly.

I was also aware of [REDACTED]'s vehicle ([REDACTED]) behind me, as I could see it in my mirrors. At the time I began to reverse, it was stationary. I did periodically check my rear-view mirror, but did not spot that [REDACTED]'s vehicle had begun to move; because of the architecture of the vehicle, the view presented to me in my rear-view mirror was that of a horizontal white line of roof above a black window, so there was no perspective change that might have signalled to me the vehicle was reversing. Also, I could not see its reversing light.

When I had engaged reverse gear, the reverse parking sensor for my vehicle had started to make its customary beeping noise. I was expecting this, due to the presence of the parked vehicle to my right. However, suddenly the frequency of beeps increased, meaning that the rear of the car was close to another object. I braked just as the sensor switched to the steady sound that it makes when an object is within about 30cm. I then heard the sound of impact. I can not be sure whether at this point my vehicle was stationary or was still moving; if it was moving, however, it was moving very slowly and decelerating.

To the best of my recollection, the situation at this time was as in diagram 2:

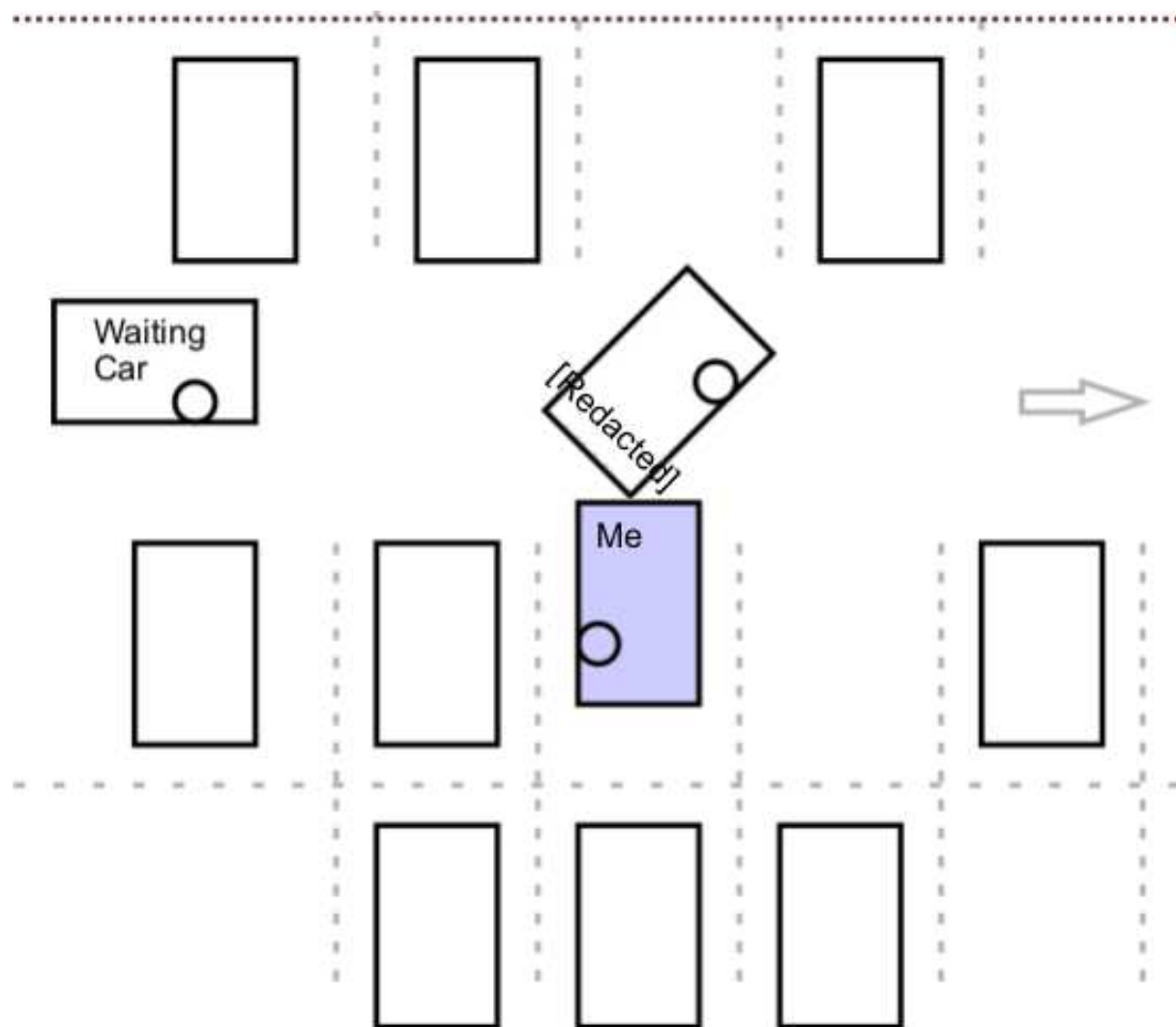


Diagram 2

My initial reaction was one of surprise: I had not believed there to be anything behind me, so was not expecting to hit anything. I was primarily concerned about getting out far enough that I could turn without becoming awkwardly close to the Waiting Car. Having not noticed that [REDACTED]'s vehicle was moving, I can't say how quickly she reversed out of

her space; it was clear that she had reversed considerably more than I had, though, as I hadn't even begun to turn whereas her vehicle was well on the way to straightening out.

I drove the metre or so back into my parking space, then left my vehicle to discuss the incident with the driver of the other vehicle ([REDACTED]). She was clearly agitated, but (unsurprisingly, given the speed of the collision) appeared to be uninjured. I don't recall the exact order of the points she raised in the ensuing conversation, but she stated:

- She had seen me reversing and had used her horn three times. I did not hear any use of the horn.
- I needed my eyes testing. I told her I had had them tested less than a month earlier and was passed as fit to drive without needing to wear glasses.
- The vehicle was new and she had only been driving it for a month. I don't know how many times she had cause to reverse in that period.
- A small child could have been killed if it had been behind me. I concurred that had a small child been behind me, it could indeed have been injured had it been caught between our vehicles.

I took a photograph of the damage sustained by [REDACTED]'s vehicle, shown in photograph 1.



Photograph 1

It had a short scrape perhaps 20cm long where paint had come off the bumper. There was no evidence of any structural damage: no dents, no movement in the bumper assembly. It seemed to me that this was not going to cost much to repair – perhaps £20 or so.

The damage to my own vehicle was even less, as seen in photograph 2 (it's the two short horizontal lines, measuring 1cm, then a 2cm gap, then 6cm):



Photograph 2

From the relative lengths of the scratches and the points at which the vehicles collided, it seemed immediately obvious to me that [REDACTED]'s vehicle had been moving at the time of the collision. Indisputably, she reversed into my vehicle; what I can't be sure of is whether I also reversed into her vehicle or whether my vehicle was stationary at the time. As I said earlier, though, if my vehicle was moving, it was not moving very fast at all and was decelerating because I put the brakes on when I heard the close-proximity sensor alarm.

[REDACTED] and I exchanged business cards so we could later contact one another by email. Because the damage was so minor, I did not expect there to be any insurance claims; for this reason, I did not approach the driver of the Waiting Car or anyone else to ask them to be a witness. [REDACTED] also did not approach anyone, and left the scene shortly before I did.

Five days after the incident, [REDACTED] informed me by email that at the weekend she had examined her vehicle further and decided to make an insurance claim after all. I contacted my own insurance company, and although at first opted to make a counter claim, following discussions with RSA advisers I withdrew this as the cost to repair my vehicle will be much less than the excess on my policy. Because I was unable to prove that my vehicle was not moving at the time of the collision, I took the adviser's recommendation to accept 50% liability for the incident (although actually I believe I was less than 50% responsible).

This afternoon, I went to Sainsbury's Stanway and obtained permission from the manager for the store's security staff to pull up whatever CCTV footage they might have of

the incident. However, there is only one camera covering what is a very large car park, and it was not the opinion of the CCTV operators that the incident occurred within the camera's area of surveillance. I am thus unable to furnish an independent account of what occurred.