

POLICE NOTEBOOK

HELLO THERE! Firstly, apologies to all readers who have kept to the speed limit over the past weeks. Regrettably, I just haven't been able to get the old "hair dryer" out as I've been re-assigned on several days to do "shift cover", which effectively means that I haven't been able to tend to my primary duty as your Beat Officer.

Prevention of speeding has been very much in the news of late, so it is appropriate to continue on this theme. You may know that your respective Parish Councils have signed up to a new anti-speed campaign, "Speedwatch".

This scheme is a joint venture between Councils and police. The first thing to note are the posters advertising the fact that the scheme is in place in a particular area. Apart from the police input (of "booking"/advising offenders) the involvement of local schools is helpful, with projects such as traffic count, poster design and sometimes speed assessment being carried out by the young people.

This has the very useful effect, not only of bringing the speeding problem to the children's' attention, but also to that of their parents – who are more likely to heed their youngsters' warnings than those of the police! In common with most rural areas, our roads are prey to the activities of reckless motorists using the highway as their race track. Statistics show that there are eight times more traffic accidents on rural roads than on motorways – and a contributory factor to this must be excess speed.

It must be said, though, that not all offenders are passing through the area – now I know you're going to find this hard to believe, but a fair proportion of offenders are local! The usual remark from this category, when "netted" is: "You should be in they're always speeding there!" Luckily, we were not there, so were able to detect you!

There is even talk of a rural speed limit of 40 mph, and the introduction of fines for being even just one mph over the 30 mph speed limit – you have been warned! While I'm at it, I might as well mention the large percentage of local car-users who seem to forget they have seat belts in their car – so here's another £20 saving tip: BELT UP. It's no good saying to me, or another equally friendly colleague(!) that you had forgotten to put it on for that day only, it's not nice to tell such fibs! Certainly, one look at *my* face will tell you I wasn't born yesterday!

I don't wish this to sound like a sermon, I really do care for your welfare, so have to be cruel to be kind! I think that's about it on the motorist front. I'm sorry if it sounds like I'm picking on you but some do make themselves rather conspicuous by their irresponsibility!

And finally, I may be on the move (already!). Regrettably, for me, that is the case. From January 25, I will no longer be your Community Policeman. Rationalisation of current resources has resulted in the decision that the Wychwoods, from that date, will be "shared" between two ABOs, who will each take on part of this beat, additional to their own current areas of Leaffield and Burford. (cont.)

The exact split has yet to be decided, but you will be the first to know! I hope to arrange a Parish Forum in the coming weeks, at which the Sector Inspector, Arthur Saville, will be able to answer any queries or concerns you may have regarding the proposed policing of this area. Details of the venue, and date, will be publicised, so watch your parish notice boards! That's about it for this time-I'll look forward to seeing you around.

One final thought. I was recently requested not to park outside somebody's house because of their concern that their friends might think they were in trouble with the police. Please be assured that we do sometimes visit homes where the occupants are not in any trouble – if the lady who spoke to me could pass that on to her friend, I'd be obliged! 'Bye for now.

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MARTIN MAGIC

Here we are, a pair of born and bred city dwellers, happily transplanted to Shipton. Imagine our excitement and surprise when we discovered a house martin nest under the overhang of the roof in a perfect vantage point for us to observe the birds without disturbing them. Previously, my only experience of bird watching was avoiding the nasty pigeons which litter London, and leaving a wide berth for the swans who foul the footpath around the Serpentine. Clearly, birds were not my favourite creatures, but all that changed when Martin magic happened at our house.

I know so little about house martins' habits that I consulted books from the Wychwood Library and elsewhere. As well as preferring human structures for nesting, apparently they like humans too. Could it be that vestiges of the city linger with us which attracted the birds to us? Whatever the reason, we consider it a positive omen that they chose our house.

Although wild, house martins are enormously affectionate, I read. My husband carefully removed a baby bird from our lawn to a higher place after its first attempt at becoming airborne failed. We hoped flight would be easier from the new position. Hours later the bird had disappeared so we were pleased the second attempt had been successful. I read of an avid bird watcher who was highly complimented by a house martin which landed on his left shoulder, walked across the back of his neck, settled on his right shoulder, closed its eyes, tucked its head in its wing and went to sleep. Could I have that treat to look forward to next year?

I understand that house martin families still go home to their nests to sleep well into the autumn, but they are much tidier now, so I'm off to scrub the window sill of all the muck they have left behind for us to clear away. Never mind, its a small price for such a lovely experience.

We wish them Godspeed on their long migratory journey and hope they feel welcome again at our house next year.

Peggy Walmsley.