Blackpool here we come… Motoring For Fun Road Test

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George Loveridge took the new MG HS PHEV (very distant relative

to BMC's B-Series!) to the Irish Sea Coast. Here's his story of the trip…

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Myself, my girlfriend, my best friend, and his girlfriend, all booked a holiday to Lytham St. Annes back in February 2021, with extreme optimism I might add, in the hope that one day Covid-19 case numbers would have dropped, and people may actually be allowed to mix and travel once more. However, to our delight, the country did open up again at the start of the summer which of course meant that we could have our little get away at the coast. There was significant debate as to whom would drive to our destination; we all have a licence; we all have cars… Do we take two cars? We pondered.

"You're not taking your Triumph Herald", I was told many times by the group. So, after a few enquiries via email, I had managed to secure a week's loan of LD21 XYO, a 2021 MG HS PHEV 'Exclusive' from MG's press fleet. A somewhat different driving experience from my Herald or indeed my Rover 45, but I am fascinated about what the motoring world will be post 2030, so a Petrol Hybrid Electric Vehicle is arguably the perfect starting point to break in gently…


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George, ‘Meg’ and friends, ready for the journey…

On the morning of Monday 23rd August, the four of us loaded the MG, which by this point had been christened ‘Meg’, with our luggage for the three nights that we would be away for. Of course, being a hybrid, I had taken the time to charge the battery, taking four hours to charge from 0 miles electric range to its capacity of 32 miles. Granted, a long time to wait for 32 miles but when not using a three-pin plug at home, a fast charge will fully charge the car in about half an hour.

The 448 litre (15.82 cu.ft) boot was just about large enough to fit our cases and coats into with the cover over the top to prevent prying eyes from looking at my smalls in the luggage compartment… With the power tailgate closed and with the boot full, we could enjoy Meg’s

spacious cabin. The panoramic sky roof allowed for an airy feel and let in lots of sunlight, making a long journey feel effortless. Our destination was 87 miles away, and the black leather one piece sport front seats were extremely comfortable, providing ample support across the back and shoulders. My chiropractor will be impressed!



On the road, Meg was quiet, composed and just ate up the motorway miles… phrases used all too often when describing a car, however they're most appropriate in this instance. We hit significant traffic past Preston; no bother as under 30 mph Meg would drive itself… Accelerating and braking on its own whilst keeping a safe distance from the vehicle Infront. Very comfortable.

When I'd taken back manual control again, as manual as you can get with lane keep assist and a 10-speed automatic gearbox, we arrived at our hotel right on the front of Lytham St. Annes. To my amazement, the hotel's car park had just one electric car charging point, so of course I utilised that virtually as soon as I'd put the gearbox in 'Park'! Across the 87-mile journey, the MG had been extremely efficient; when we left home the car had a total range of 255 miles combined, but after a regenerative cycle on the move we arrived with 288 miles combined range. If that's the future of motoring I'm onboard! Post checking in, we all enjoyed a fish and chip lunch on the front. Mandatory when one is at the seaside.



Following our lunch, we had a walk around St. Annes, making plans for the week, and exhibiting the Yorkshire war cry at the hire charge for the beach huts along the promenade,

“How much?!”. Prior to driving the HS PHEV, I had never driven an electric vehicle, and it is amazing how quickly you get used to the lack of engine noise. The sound of the traffic on the roadside became extremely noticeable after leaving the refined splendour of the hybrid MG. Happy in the knowledge that Meg was charging and locked in a secure car park, we all went for a swim in our hotel and prepared for dinner.

When in, near or around Blackpool, you’ve got to have a look at the night life, the town comes alive at night. So, after a rather filling meal at The Miller and Carter, we got Meg’s sat nav to take us to Blackpool Tower. Like Blackpool, the MG HS really does come alive at night, the ambient mood lighting was most welcome, especially with the ability to change to any colour that we fancied; on this occasion we went with red, matching the vehicle’s Farrington Red bodywork. Fortunately, it was warm enough to have the sunroof open even at night, which was extremely special, the additional opening in the car made us feel closer to the sights and sounds of Blackpool, while being wrapped in the safety of the MG. Tempting though the Donkey rides were, we were all satisfied enough in the car…


LD21 XYO
©George Loveridge



Following our ‘night on the town’ we arrived back at the Hotel, and we discovered, much to my disappointment, that a car had partly blocked the electric vehicle charging point. Annoyingly, I had been relying on this space to be available as I had been driving around St. Anne’s and Blackpool on full EV mode, meaning that I had drained the range to 7 miles. Yes, we had over 200 petrol miles left, however the range anxiety was already creeping in… Encouraged by my passengers, I managed to squeeze the SUV into the tight spot at a rather awkward angle – although not utilising the 360-degree parking cameras, as in the dark they didn’t show up anything on the 10.1-inch LCD display. Having reassured myself that I cannot only park a 1960s small saloon, but also a family SUV, I plugged Meg in and went back to our room.

Day two of our adventure, and we had tickets to the thrilling Blackpool Pleasure Beach, therefore our trusty steed was only required for the 4 mile drive up the coast to some secure on-street parking. Having been on charge all night, I was greeted with a full 32-mile range upon pressing the start button in the morning. Most satisfying. Having parked on the front, we headed for the attractions.





A most convivial and jovial time was had at the pleasure beach, despite the huge numbers of those whom attended the theme park that day, we certainly got our money's worth. Our action-packed day was concluded nicely by a gorgeous sunset that I was fortunate to capture on camera, getting the aperture and shutter speed just right!



Our third day out consisted of strolling around the town in St. Annes; going into unnecessary shops, buying big band swing CDs from charity shops… As a result of our ambling about, Meg was not required. However, she needed the rest because I wanted to take her up to the Lake District, Lake Coniston to be exact.

After we had checked out of our hotel, we got on the road again to head up to Lake Coniston, a beautiful location with some fantastic roads to see what the MG was like on the twisty bits. To our disappointment, the last few miles of the M6 was completely blocked… standstill traffic for two hours; typically, our turning was only two miles from where the delays had started. Meg was most comfortable despite the delays, with the sunroof open, a

vast inventory of digital radio stations at our disposal, we were occupied and comfortable enough in the stop-start misery.





As a result of the congestion, Coniston was extremely busy upon our late arrival. By this time, it was fast approaching 14:00, a lunch stop was definitely required. Sadly, there was a distinct lack of parking in or indeed around the historic location; the search for a lunch stop continued. The MG didn't get the chance to follow in Campbell's footsteps in setting any speed records as its guidance system navigated us through very narrow and steep roads. An interesting experience, but not one I would like to repeat in a very wide and expensive SUV!

After finally finding somewhere to park and eat in Ambleside, we all quickly concluded that the Lake District on a hot August day was perhaps not such a good idea, the tourists were out in full force. Having taken a short stroll around Lake Windermere, we got back on the

road to head back to Yorkshire.



Conclusions:

A most enjoyable trip to the coast, and the lakes, and typically British in the way that not all went to plan. However, it was a pleasure to have had the octagonal badge Infront of me whilst on the road; refreshing to see a ‘British’ brand, MG, provide attractive transport for a seaside holiday in the UK once more. The hybrid system did take some getting used to, but once accustomed to it, one can be convinced that this is an adequate way forward for the motor car.



Wheels-Alive Tech. Spec. in Brief:

MG HS PHEV Exclusive:

2021 Petrol Hybrid Electric Vehicle SUV.

Engine: A 1490cc petrol engine, accompanied by a 90 KW electric motor. Making 258 horsepower, and 273 newton metres (201 lb.ft) of torque combined.

Transmission: Ten speed automatic gearbox driving the front wheels.

Performance:

Top speed: 118 mph

Note: Very quiet and smooth at 70 mph on the motorway. The automatic gearbox takes a long time to kick down when trying to extract some of the power.

0 – 60 mph: 6.9 seconds

Fuel consumption: 160 mpg combined with both power units.