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Motoring For Fun – A tour in south-west Wales in a Rover Maestro

Published: February 10, 2021

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Online version: <https://www.wheels-alive.co.uk/motoring-for-fun-a-tour-in-south-west-wales-in-a-rover-maestro/>



An idyllic autumnal trip to the far south-west of Wales.

Kim Henson drove westwards in a Mustang that has been family-owned since new.

(Kim adds: DO NOT GO THERE NOW!! Of course I realise that as I write this – during the 'Covid-19 lock down' – in February 2021, at the moment long-distance 'motoring for fun' and touring on holiday in Britain is not possible, nor even permitted. However, I feel that Wheels-Alive readers might enjoy reading about motoring excursions from happier times, so here's one included in the spirit of optimism as we look towards being able to undertake such trips again before too long.



I hope that you enjoy this story and find it cheering...).

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October 2018... After a frenetic year of work-related activities for both of us my wife and I had been looking forward to once more 'escaping' for a few days and spending some time in Pembrokeshire (plus western parts of Carmarthenshire). This is an area of south west Wales that we used to visit often on family holidays with our children when they were young. However it had been several years since we had ventured that far west, so we decided to rectify that situation. With accommodation booked at short notice near Tenby, off we set...

For this trip I was tempted to take our Austin A60 (which we frequently used for family holidays in this area), or my old faithful Austin A30 (also no stranger to Wales), but on this occasion decided to give our Rover Maestro 1.3 LX an airing. Bought new by my late mother in 1990, and family-owned since that time, it has always been well-liked by us. From previous long-distance trips and holidays, all around England and Wales and as far away as mid-France, we knew that it would be a comfortable, capable and economical companion for this excursion.

Our journey to Pembrokeshire from our home county of Dorset was completed easily and enjoyably within a few hours, and after our first night in Wales, we were ready to explore.

WISEMAN'S BRIDGE, SAUNDERSFOOT AND LAUGHERNE

Our first stop was Wiseman's Bridge, a small coastal village just to the east of Saundersfoot. With easy to access free parking along the water front, plus a wonderful expanse of beach whichever way you look, it is a favourite place for our family. On this occasion we ventured to the Wiseman's Bridge pub overlooking the beach, and sat in the fresh air in the sunshine over a morning coffee or two. We were fortunate as the weather was fairly warm and dry.



A subsequent walk westwards along the coast towards Saundersfoot was refreshing as we passed by peaceful hilly countryside just inland, while the sandy beach to our left met gently rippling waves at the water's edge. For some way we followed the elevated and wide paved path, which took us through one of three man-made tunnels near Saundersfoot. A series of tunnels was constructed in the 19th Century to allow the movement to the port of Saundersfoot of locally mined minerals - initially in horse-drawn wagons on rails, and later by means of steam engines specially developed to fit the low-roofed tunnels.



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Having emerged from the tunnel, we found a welcome snack bar and enjoyed a sandwich in the sunshine, before continuing our walk. We ventured onto the beach and followed it westwards for some way, while breathing in the fresh sea air; before long we arrived in Saundersfoot.

Exploration of the busy harbour area on foot was something we had never done before, and worth the time spent. We then meandered back towards our car, this time deliberately cutting inland, up and over the steep wooded hills which afforded glorious coastal views through the overhanging trees.



By the time we returned to our Maestro in the late afternoon, the sun was shining more brightly and we drove eastwards to Laugharne via Amroth, from Pembrokeshire into Carmarthenshire along the 'coast' road to Pendine (where car and motorcycle races and land speed record breaking attempts were often held on the seven mile sands, in pre-World War II days).



We parked and enjoyed waterfront views close to the medieval Laugharne Castle, and walked along the coast a little way to see 'The Writing Shed' (with estuary landscapes galore) in which Dylan Thomas wrote many of his famous works, including 'Under Milk Wood'.

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As the sun went down we used the main A477 to quickly return to our overnight stop near Tenby.



A beautiful sunset at the end of our first full day in Wales.

PEMBROKE, ANGLE AND BROADHAVEN SOUTH

The next morning we drove the few miles into Pembroke, with the riverside park, main street and prominent, impressive medieval castle all so familiar to us from many family holidays a few years ago. While here we enjoyed an hour or so looking around the town's fascinating Museum, located in the old Courtroom on the first floor of the Georgian Town Hall, a Grade II Listed building.



The Maestro rests in Pembroke – by a shop full of interesting things, including some classic vinyl LPs.

We then headed the Maestro westwards once more, to the isolated headland just past the far-flung village of Angle. While walking along the coast here we watched a huge oil tanker negotiating the narrow channel seawards from Milford Haven. On the dull autumnal day when we visited there was no sound apart from the wind, plus birdsong. The fresh breeze, blowing in from the Atlantic, was bracing, and lovely to experience, but in due course we were happy to return to our warm Rover for a snack lunch and a cuppa, enjoyed while looking out to sea from the car park.



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Duly fortified, we drove south, stopping at the wonderful, expansive sandy Freshwater West beach, which has featured in many films. Situated in the car park here is the Café Môr, said to be 'the first of it's kind solar-powered-mobile-converted-fishing-boat-seaweed-kitchen'. We had just enjoyed our picnic near Angle, otherwise would have indulged in some of the many tasty goodies on offer here, but we did sample a coffee, again enjoyed while taking in the sea views from this south-west tip of Pembrokeshire... Just a word of warning if you are ever tempted to enter the water here, and/or go surfing; swimming and surfing can be very dangerous due to strong rip currents in this area.





[The wonderfully spacious sandy beach at Freshwater West.](#)

Continuing south-eastwards through the village of Castlemartin and past the military ranges nearby, our next stop was Broadhaven South beach. During our family holidays in this area we would often spend long hours here. From the National Trust car park high up at the western end of the beach, it's a fairly steep, but not difficult, trek downhill to the sand. This delightful beach – one of our family's favourites anywhere – is a long and wide sandy expanse, where in the summer time swimming is a delight, and with rocks and their attendant rock pools galore, at either end of the beach. Our children always used to love spending time here, as we did.



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Broadhaven South beach, as viewed from the path leading down to it from the National Trust car park.



[Rocky outcrops to explore at Broadhaven South.](#)

On the October day when we visited on this occasion, the skies were grey and overcast, but my wife and I spent a long time walking along the water's edge, and, in my case, climbing over some of the rocks at low tide, to explore many of the tiny coves and caves covered by the water at high tide.

A word of warning about this too... The incoming tide can easily leave you stranded, unless you are vigilant when the tide turns from its low point, and straight away start heading back up to the main part of the beach as the waters rise. The cliffs in this locality are steep, high and dangerous/impossible to climb...



On this occasion I saw the waters start to turn at low tide, taking this cue to follow a narrow path up the slope at the eastern end of the beach, onto the hills high above it, from where beautiful views out to sea and along the coast were on offer.

We then turned inland, past the sand dunes at the 'back' of the main beach and following the path alongside the Bosherton Lily Ponds (National Trust), a peaceful area where water lilies grow in profusion and look especially beautiful if it's sunny, and where wildlife is abundant all year round. Even on the quiet, dull day when we went there, the swans were gracefully swimming up and down in the ponds, and it was an enjoyable walk with few people about.





Swans and water lilies galore at Bosherton Lily Ponds, adjacent to Broadhaven South beach.

Eventually, after a mile or so, we reached the car park for Bosherton, then walked back along the narrow but quiet lanes to where our Maestro was patiently waiting.



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The total



distance on our 'circular' walk was around four miles, all of it enjoyable.

I should add that the coastal path in this neck of the woods is also well worth exploring if you have time; the coastal views are remarkable – but keep well back from the cliff tops...

It's worth mentioning too that there are well-maintained toilets available in the car parks at both Broadhaven South and Bosherston.

COLBY WOODLAND GARDEN – THEN NORTHWARDS

The next day was forecast to be very changeable, weather-wise, but we headed for the Colby Woodland Garden (National Trust), near Amroth, and explored the extensive grounds, including the fastidiously maintained gardens, the river valley with its winding walks, and the tree-covered valley sides.

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We appreciated a warming snack lunch in the café, and for a while braved torrential rain which carried on for some time and eventually we curtailed a longer walk we had planned.

We then drove via Haverfordwest due westwards and through the coastal villages of Broad Haven and Little Haven, then turned northwards and took the coast road through Nolton Haven, towards Newgale. We stopped at various vantage points along this route, to take in the beautiful coast and sea views, which abound.



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The approach to Little Haven...



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Driving northwards along the coast road towards Newgale.



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In between blustery showers, sunshine bathed the coast...



Our Maestro rests awhile as we enjoy the views...

From Newgale it was a short hop into the tiny city of St. Davids, with its cathedral which is well worth a visit, although on this particular day it was getting late so we chose to carry on a few miles to the west, stopping at the historic diminutive harbour at Porth Clais, then the beach at Whitesands Bay on the west coast. Here, apart from the lovely sandy beach itself, adjacent to the large car park there is a memorial, in the form of a refurbished propeller, to the four crew members of the United States Air Force Marauder aeroplane that crashed in fog on the Carn Llidi Mountain, on 4th June 1943, killing all the crew.

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PLEASANT VALLEY – AND TOWARDS ST. DAVIDS

The next morning, we carried out some more local exploration around the Saundersfoot area, and from Wiseman's Bridge headed inland to the beautifully-named 'Pleasant Valley'.

Here we stopped to explore on foot the extensive remains of the old Kilgetty Ironworks, dating from 1866 and a hive of heavyweight industrial activity in the late 19th Century.



Part of the once-vast Kilgetty Ironworks, Pleasant Valley.

From there we walked along the uphill trail through the woods to the disused Grove Colliery – dormant now but in its time a very busy and important source of coal.



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Quiet today, and inhabited only by birds, is this tower at the once thriving



Grove Colliery.

Some comprehensive interesting information boards, showing how the ironworks and colliery buildings would have appeared and operated in their heyday, helped us to understand the scale of the operations there.

LLYS-Y- FRAN, THEN HOMEWARD BOUND

On our final day in Wales, we again drove northwards, this time by-passing Haverfordwest and eventually reaching the Llys-y-Frân reservoir, with its impressive dam and quiet, relaxing country park. There's a large car park high on the hill above the reservoir, affording glorious views in good weather, and it is also possible to drive around/behind the 100 ft (30 m) high dam itself, giving an idea of the scale of the project when it was being built.



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The dam was constructed between 1968 and 1972, and incorporates a hydro-electric power plant that was upgraded in 2008.

The reservoir is used for a variety of water sports, and for fishing.

Recent extensive refurbishment has been carried out to the country park visitor centre here, and at the time of writing (February 2021) it is hoped that it will re-open in the spring.

Towards the end of the afternoon we drove south through Haverfordwest, then took the B4327 south-westwards to the remote village of Dale, admiring peaceful sea views on the



way, as the sun went down. It was almost dark when we left here for our last night in Pembrokeshire.



The next morning it was time for the long drive back to Dorset, but the journey was accomplished easily in the Maestro and in good time without rushing.

CONCLUSIONS

On arrival home, after just a few autumnal days away, the now mud-stained but easily-cleaned Maestro had covered 793 trouble-free miles, averaging 40.1 mpg. Interestingly this figure was almost exactly the same as achieved in the same car during a trip of 1,140 miles



around the north of England, in 2014 (and covered in another feature in this 'Motoring For Fun' series). No top-ups of engine oil nor coolant were required.

From our faithful Rover we had enjoyed some spectacular, beautiful views in Wales, and with most roads almost empty of traffic. The car had cruised easily at motorway speeds to and from Pembrokeshire, and through the twisting, hilly lanes of west Wales the 1.3 litre 'A Plus' engine seemed happy pulling hard when required in the lower gears.

In addition to our enjoyable drives, on each day we had made a point of exploring many different areas of the coast and countryside on foot, covering several miles each day and enjoying every moment. It was great just to be out in the countryside or on the coast, and breathing in fresh air in abundance.

When the current Covid-19 nightmare eventually eases and we are allowed to travel (safely) once again, we hope to return to Pembrokeshire for further exploration of this lovely area.

Wheels-Alive Tech. Spec. in Brief:

Our Vehicle: 1990 Rover Maestro 1.3LX five door hatchback (family owned since new).



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Engine: 1275cc 'A Plus' overhead valve pushrod in-line four cylinder, 69 bhp @ 5,600 rpm; 102 lb.ft. (77 Nm) torque @ 3,500 rpm.

Transmission: Five speed manual gearbox, front wheel drive.

Performance:

Top speed: 95+ mph

0 - 60 mph: 12.5 seconds



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Fuel consumption: 35 to 48 mpg (actual figure achieved on this trip, over 793 miles, 40.1 mpg).