To EV or not to EV – that was the question!!

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John Jacobs describes his personal automotive journey from a Morris Minor 1000 Traveller to an all-electric MG4, and recalls all the cars

he has known along the way to ‘going electric’. Here’s his story…

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Part 1 – From ICE to EV

When I started driving way back when I was 17 (1970) you would never have thought that the world would have changed like it has!! And not necessarily for the better in many many ways!

My first car was a Morris Minor 1000 Traveller – the one with all the wood around the rear of the vehicle. I loved that car and it went all over southern England in the few years I owned it.The car was similar to the example shown in the photo below:

A list of all my vehicles (both personally owned and company cars) is provided at the end of this feature.

Fast forward a lifetime of motoring to 2022. My Volkswagen Polo 1.2 Match Automatic (DSG) was now over 6 years old and starting to show the signs of problems to come, in particular with the DSG gearbox and the Engine Management System. It was time to change but the big question was – what to change it for?

So, the debate and research started. When it comes to replacing a vehicle I'm one of those "old farts" who does all the research first.

Step 1 – Requirements

The process starts with making a list of our (not just my) requirements for the new vehicle. Requirements such as:

- Purchase Cost
- Service Cost
- Service frequency
- Fuel type
- Body shape
- Number of doors
- Specification / trim levels

and the list goes on sometimes hitting over 50 requirements.

Step 2 – What's out there?

The second step in the process was to create a list of vehicles that are approximately within our budget – sometimes this is a list of 20 or more but usually it's more like 10.

We looked and we looked and we discussed and discussed. –he final decision was its time to go electric – none of the petrol or diesel or even hybrid rubbish, but full on electric.

As you can imagine, that made the list of available vehicles very different to the one we started with, and it also made the requirements very different indeed. Additions to the requirements included:

- Battery type
- Battery size
- Range

At this point it felt as we were having to start again!

We fell into the trap that a lot of people do with electric vehicles, notably regarding the

published WTLP Range figures, which are very very misleading. More on this later in Part 2.

The biggest requirement we had was being able to go from deepest darkest Wiltshire to central London and back on a single charge.

Step 3 – Online research

The internet is a wonderful place to go and see what's available with most manufacturers having full technical specs for all vehicles available to peruse.

Most of July and August 2022 was spent researching what manufacturer had what models available at what specification levels and prices that came close to our requirements.

Many marques were discounted due to poor range or excessive purchase prices and, in some cases, the pure size of the vehicles. I don't want a big SUV, it's not our style and such a waste in our opinion. Size ended up playing a bigger role than we thought it would in the end.

Step 4 – The shortlist

Time had come to stop looking at online information and actually get out and look at the serious contenders. We ended up with four manufacturers and two models from each. They were:

- Hyundai ioniq
- Hyundai Kona
- Kia EV6
- Kia Niro
- MG MG4
- MG ZS
- Volkswagen ID3
- Volkswagen ID4

We identified the “local” dealers and duly visited each in turn for look at the vehicles in the showrooms to try and reduce the number of vehicles down to a couple to test drive. During September 2022 we went to each marque and crawled all over the selected vehicles in the dealerships. This produced a short list of three vehicles that we had decided to test drive.

Step 5 – The Test Drive

The vehicles selected for test drives were:

- Kia Niro EV Level 3 long range
- MG ZS Trophy Long Range
- MG MG4 Trophy Long Range

During October 2022 the dealers were contacted and appointments made. This resulted in yet another list being created. This was the final comparison vehicle to vehicle, including some very subjective thoughts on how we felt the vehicle met our requirements.

Step 6 – The Decision

Test drives happened. It’s really surprising how you can do all the research in the world and you can crawl all over the vehicles but when you actually get in them with the keys, it’s a whole different story.

Having driven the three models on the short list, we went back to some of the “nearly made it” models and had another look because we weren’t certain if we had rejected them too easily.

No, we had got it right.

Interestingly, one marque wouldn’t even let us drive their vehicles – they insisted the manager would take us up and down their forecourt to see how the vehicle performed. Needless to say, we didn’t go back there!

Post test drive analysis completed. Many conversations between us and with dealers which resulted in a final short list of one! The MG MG4.

On 21st October 2022, following a second and third test drive, the order was placed with an expected delivery of sometime during the first three months of 2023. Now the wait began!!

Step 7 – The wait

Once the order had been placed, the dealer said he would keep in touch with us to let us know progress. He was good to his word, during November we had a couple of calls from him updating us on progress. Then during December – nothing.

We happened to be in the vicinity of the dealership one afternoon a couple of days before Christmas so we popped in as we hadn't heard anything. The guy we were dealing with had been off sick (and still was) so one of his colleagues helped us.

Computer keys were "hammered" and references checked and BINGO! Our car was actually sitting in the compound just outside the door. It had arrived the day before with a delivery of 7 others.

A collection appointment was made for 29th December 2022. The excitement carried us through what turned out to be a very traumatic Christmas (for non car-related reasons).

Step 8 – The Handover

Thursday 29th December 2022 we took a taxi from home to the MG dealership in Trowbridge, Wiltshire, for our appointed collection time. We were a bit early due to availability of taxi and lack of rush hour traffic but we were made very welcome and started the handover process. The salesman, Billy, did a wonderful job of explaining what the vehicle had to offer. Three hours later and almost totally confused (these cars are brimming with clever technology) we got in and drove the vehicle home.

John’s new MG4 at the MG dealership.

This was probably the best handover process of all, with the exception of the first Mercedes Benz that I purchased from a dealer in Birmingham.

MG were not very forthcoming with the little extras that normally go with a new vehicle purchase but I’m guessing things have changed these days and you don’t get free mats, or umbrellas or mugs or anything like that! They used to just add a little extra to the experience.

Conclusion

This sounds like there was a lot of work that went into the purchase of the new vehicle. Well, it's not the first time I've done this and probably won't be the last but believe me, it is so worthwhile.

I have purchased two new vehicles in the past where I have not done this type of research before making the deal – and both were the wrong purchases to make.

Unfortunately, I don't have the funds to purchase a vehicle for up to £65,000 without getting it right! My tip for anyone purchasing a vehicle is to do your research!

Part 2 – The EV Life

We took delivery of our first electric vehicle on 29th December 2022, right at the end of the year. The idea was to start the new year with a new mode of transport and to join the electric revolution.

It’s now four months on and life has been interesting to say the least. We have only managed a paltry 3,000 mile in those first four months, which for us is absolutely nothing, so you could say we as still getting used to the MG4.

Overall, the build quality and performance of the vehicle is excellent. As with all things new, there are a few annoyances but they will get sorted over time. The ‘slide show’ below shows

a few aspects of the MG we bought…

This slideshow requires JavaScript.

One thing I found very helpful was to join the MG4 UK Facebook Group (there are other groups out there that can be equally as helpful but we use the MG4 UK Group the most). There have been a lot of discussions about things that go wrong or aren't right and tips on what to do with the vehicle that have helped us in planning our journeys and living the electric life.

Biggest thing I have found is the WTLP Range. Goodness me, does this vary. WTLP is the figure that is quoted by all marques to show the range a vehicle will cover on a full battery. Well, they are rubbish.

The range of the vehicle, as with traditional Internal Combustion Engines (ICE), vary according to how you drive, how much load you have in the vehicle (people and luggage), but most importantly the temperature. During the colder months of January and February we were lucky to get 160 miles out of a full charge (returning a rate of 2.1 Miles per Kilowatt hour (m/KwH). Now the weather has started to warm up we are seeing this figure improve. Our most recent trip of some 86 miles has given us 4.2m/KwH which equates to a range of approx 260 miles.

Let's address some of the many things people question when looking at getting an Electric Vehicle.

1 – Range

The published range of any Electric Vehicle (EV) is a thing called Worldwide Harmonised Light Vehicle Test Procedure (WLTP). This measures the range of a car travelling at an average speed of 30 miles per hour in summer temperatures from a 100% charge to 0%.

WTLP is a standard that is supposed to mean every EV can be measured according to a

stable figure. But, as the definition states, it's an average speed of 30 mph and it's also "at summer temperatures". Obviously Summer temperatures vary from country to country so now some manufacturers / dealers are saying that 'summer temperatures' equates to 20 degrees Centigrade. Personally, I think the jury is out! The figures don't seem to mean much except to give the prospective owner a (very) rough guide to the range of the vehicle.

For my particular vehicle the WTLP is 281 miles. Closest we have come so far is approx.. 260 but as yet we haven't run the battery down below 15%.

2 – Charging in the wild

Politicians talk about the great North / South divide and the South "always gets everything". Well, from our experience, there is also a north / south divide when it comes to EV chargers – only, in this case, the south is particularly badly served by comparison to the north. Yes, it's getting better but there are still areas, in particular Devon and Cornwall, where EV chargers are very rare.

Assuming you can find a charger which hopefully is working, how do you pay? There have been many column inches written about the various apps and membership cards that are available, mostly by subscription, which reduce the cost of charging your vehicle in the wild. Which one, if any, you decide to go with will depend on your driving habits and what best fits your circumstances. We haven't got any. We rely on our home-installed Zappi charger (photo below) to get us going with a 100% charge. Usually, it's enough to get us to our destination and back.

Photograph by, and copyright, Kim Henson.

On a few occasions where we have needed to re-charge we have used motorway services chargers – at the moment they have all been GridServe.

The first time was traumatic, but subsequently it has been hassle free. The motorway chargers tend to all allow contactless payment. As it's still early days for us, we will have to see where this goes and how our driving changes as to using a discount card or not.

Photrographs below: The charging door open blue light shows rough charge level currently at 68%. The second charge door open shows plug removed that allows you to use CCS charging (fast charge at motorway services etc).

提示！请勿打开状态冲洗
以及暴力开关
Please do not open flushing
and violent switch
DC
C
K

3 – Technology

Most EVs are stuffed full of technology which is mostly driven by computer software. I spent my working life in computing of one sort or another and I know from bitter experience how difficult life can be when confronted by computer software. EVs are no different. The vehicles today as so sophisticated; they can do and analyse so much it becomes baffling!

Comprehensive information display. Photograph by, and copyright, Kim Henson.

Someone asked me about tips for setting up the car. My response was “Get in, drive it, enjoy it, love it, then worry about setting it to your needs.” So many people want to play with this bit or try that setting before they really know the vehicle. In reality, 99% of owners of electric vehicles will only change about 2-3% of the functionality held within the systems on the vehicles. There really isn’t any need to play unless you have nothing better to do!!

4 – Conclusion

Four months into ownership of our first EV and we are still loving it. We are about to go off on our first long trip into deepest darkest Devon and I think it’s going to be challenging but if you plan, plan and plan you should be alright. Just like travelling when I first started driving back in 1970, you had to plan, plan and plan your trips then. In the intervening years we have got lazy, especially with things like Sat Nav to dull our senses.

Here's to many years happy EV travelling.

My Vehicles

Below are details of the cars I have lived with, from when I first started driving way back in 1970, at the tender age of 17, right through to the present day in 2023, I'm 70 this year.

I have had the pleasure of owning and using many different vehicles. Some were absolute wrecks, others were pristine showroom quality new vehicles. Here's the list, as far as I can remember them…

Make / Model	Purchased	Body Type	Comment
Morris Traveller	Second hand	Estate	My first car. British Racing Green it was. Certainly needed a lot of work doing on it especially around the brakes and braking system. It ran and drove very well but the drum brakes left a lot to be desired.
Riley 1.5	Second hand	Saloon	My then girlfriends mother's old car. Grey in colour (although it quickly became blue!). Twin SU Carbs and stage 2 tuned engine. it certainly went very well. As many did back in the day, I modified the car with spot lights, bucket seats and smaller steering wheel.
Morris 1300	Second hand	Estate	My then girlfriend's (different one) uncle's old car. It was the classic 1100 / 1300 shape with (what turned out to be my first) automatic transmission. Caused me nothing but trouble.

Make / Model	Purchased	Body Type	Comment
Citroën DS Club	Second hand	Saloon	Burgundy colour. Terrible car.
Hillman Hunter	Second hand	Estate	Blue. My eldest daughter nick named it “Earwig” as the registration letters were EAR. Took this on my first foray into France. That was quite the adventure.
Morris Marina	Second hand	Saloon	A sort of mucky yellow / brown colour. nick named “You Orrible Rat” as registration letters were UOR. Nothing much to say about this apart from my first wife learnt to drive in it!
Ford Cortina Mk IV	Second hand	Saloon	Another blue one. nicknamed “nut” as the letters were KPR.
Ford Escort Mk II	Second hand	Saloon	White and a total “Dagenham Dustbin”. you could see more daylight through the floor than you could through the windows.
Ford Sierra 1.6	Company Car	Hatchback	First company car. funny, yet another blue one!!
Ford Sierra 2.0 GLS	Company Car	Hatchback	Temporary loan car as the 1.6 had been smacked by a neighbour in her Opel and very badly damaged. Loved this one. It was black and the 2.0 engine together with the GLS trim made it a really nice care to drive and ride in.

Make / Model	Purchased	Body Type	Comment
Ford Granada	Company Car	Hatchback	The ex- managing director's car. It was a fawn colour. The Black Sierra had to go back as it had reached its allotted mileage.
Peugeot 106	Second hand	Saloon	Purchased to temporarily replace the company car that had to go back when the company folded. Never did get to the bottom of the overheating engine problem.
Ford Sierra XR 4×4	Company Car	Hatchback	Up until this point, this was the best car I had been fortunate enough to have the use of. I was in Scotland at the time and put the car through its paces during the winter months and used its full 4×4 capabilities. Put more than 100,000 miles on this one in less than 3 years.
Mercedes 180E	Company Car	Saloon	Had intermittent use of this car when in London on business. At this time Mercedes still suffered from the hard seat problem – it was like sitting on a plank of wood! Nice to drive!

Make / Model	Purchased	Body Type	Comment
Honda Accord	Company Car	Coupe	From this point on all my vehicles will be automatic transmission. Partly due to driving the XR 4×4 in London with its very heavy sport clutch which damaged my left hip and knee. Another 100,000 mile car. Bit of a problem with it was the service interval – every 6,000 miles. Colour of this one was fawn again – can't remember the posh name Honda had given it!
Audi A4 Avant	Company Car	Saloon	Here is another blue car. Dark blue this time. It was recalled by the leasing company after just 22 months as i had already done over 65,000 miles in it. Absolutely loved this one.
BMW 316	Company Car	Saloon	After the Audi was recalled, this was the heap of rubbish I was given to replace it. There was something seriously wrong with this vehicle. It wouldn't drive in a straight line for a start. Thankfully, only had this one for a couple of months.
Mercedes E Class 220 Avantgarde	Purchased New	Saloon	The first of my brand spanking new cars that I owned! Black in colour it was and still is the best vehicle I ever owned. I put 100,000 miles on this too until it was going to cost a lot to get it through the next MOT so it had to go.

Make / Model	Purchased	Body Type	Comment
Mercedes B Class	Purchased New	SUV	I say SUV, for I don’t know how else to describe it really. I hated it. Only kept it for a few months as every time I drove it I was physically sick. This one was also black
Mercedes C Class	Purchased New	Saloon	This one was Gun Metal Grey. Had the car 24 months and in that time it went into the garage 36 times – something to do with the engine / gearbox combination and the software no being able to cope.
Mercedes E class 320 Sport	Purchased New	Saloon	Black. Last of this particular shape and style so got it at a very good discount especially after all the problems with the C Class. Used this to commute between Bristol and Boston Spa. A real joy to drive. Only problem was, it came to its 2 year services which coincided with its 50,000 mile services and 4 new tyres. As I had to pay for this myself, it had to go. The expected bill was going to be around £7,500!! No way!
Volkswagen Passat 2.0 DSG	Purchased New	Saloon	Some sort of Anthracite colour – looked more like a very nice mix of black and brown. Very nice car. Had no problems with it what so ever. Took it to France a few times and loved it.

Make / Model	Purchased	Body Type	Comment
Volkswagen Golf 2.0 DSG	Purchased New	Hatchback	White. Time to come down in size as the Passat was just too big now for our needs. Used this to commute between Bristol and Heathrow and later Wiltshire and Heathrow. Everything was great until the water pump failed. and then the replacement failed too, and now all confidence with the vehicle had been lost.
Volkswagen Transporter T6 DSG	Purchased New	Campervan	White again. This one was purchased from Hillside Leisure in Derby. Lovely little camper van which we used and thoroughly enjoyed for our UK based holidays. She was called Daisy.
Volkswagen Polo 1.2 Match DSG	Purchased New	3-door Hatch	Another blue vehicle. Once the Golf had started to die on us, we looked again at our needs and decided we could go smaller again. Kept this one for some 6.5 years. Only annoying thing was the Infotainment would randomly show the date of 01.01.1970 and do nothing else. Usually, stopping the car, locking it, and starting again would clear it. The vehicle had many visits to different dealers to try and fix but they never did!

Make / Model	Purchased	Body Type	Comment
MURVI Morello	Purchased New	Motorhome	Based on a Ford Transit Long Wheel Base High roof this 2 litre automatic vehicle in Silver was converted into a motorhome by the team a MURVI down in Ivybridge. This currently has some 18,000 miles on the clock (reduced due to 2 years of Covid restrictions) and is still going strong. We love it!
MG MG4 EV	Purchased New	Electric Saloon	Camden Grey. This is the beginning of a story that hopefully will last a good few years yet. So far so good and what a great driving experience it is too.

Photo parade: Some of John’s cars through the years…

R63 BWS

Audi A4.

Mercedes-Benz E-Class E220 Avantgarde.

VW Golf.

VW Polo.

VW Transporter T6.

Grateful thanks to John for sharing his automotive story with Wheels-Alive readers.

If you are interested in reading our Wheels-Alive road test assessments of the MG4, please enter ‘MG4’ in the search box on the website.