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ONE MAN'S DREAM ● EV B TEST DRIVE ● PRIDE OF LONGBRIDGE 2022

The Electric B pictured outside
The Lygon Arms, Broadway



By Colin Grant and Andy Knott

EV B TEST DRIVE

Following our article in the February issue of *Safety Fast!*, entitled Time to B Electrified, which was an introduction to Vital Spark's modified MGB GT EV, we have now had the chance to get behind the wheel and take it for a drive. We were very impressed with the conversion concept and the fact it could be carried out by a competent B owner in their garage at home, but how does it feel out on the open road?

Having only driven two EVs before, and those being MGs on a press day test

route, Colin hadn't really any experience to fall back on, so got in the MGB with no preconceived ideas. He has of course driven modified MGBs, the amazing Frontline LE 50, highly tuned V8 conversions, but an electric B... no. Andy on the other hand has had an MG ZS EV for the past two years so is used to electric cars; even so, when the EV MGB was being moved out of Vital Spark's premises the lack of sound caught Andy unawares. On a modern EV, the sound of the electric handbrake releasing makes you look and

be aware it's about to set off. It seemed strange seeing a silent classic making its way out towards the car park.

Vital Spark's electric guru Paul Wawiorko introduced us to the car. Paul has been involved since the start of this project, and his enthusiasm for the car is infectious. He explained the controls and the use of the gearbox in detail and drove the first few miles to show us the ropes. With trepidation Colin got into the driver's seat...

No sound! I wanted to turn the key to start it, but although a key is used, it's only



there to boot up the system and then you must press a button to initialise the electric motor and its workings. I found myself subconsciously pushing in the clutch and engaging first gear. Paul corrected me and suggested third or fourth. I chose third and gently pushed the throttle. The car pulled away as if by magic, I pushed a little harder and the car shot off like a rocket, wow! What power, and the torque! It was just amazing, so effortless. I came to a junction and went to change down, but Paul reminded me it wasn't necessary. He suggested I try fourth gear, which I did, and pulled away from the junction easily. The other gears can be used to give a bit more oomph when pulling away or you can just leave it in fourth.

On the road the car felt like any other well sorted MGB. Handling was excellent, with the brakes pulling you up with ease. On the move you had some of the normal sounds to keep you happy, wind noise and the odd squeak and rattle but of course not the burble from the classic B engine. The top speed has been restricted to perform sympathetically to a standard B with 0-60mph achieved in around nine seconds. It's no slouch and can easily keep up with modern traffic. I even tried the three position regen braking switch to feel the effect it had on the car. The instruments are standard but not all are used, and will be replaced with lookalike items but will show battery usage etc. The maximum range is around 130 miles, dependent on what other auxiliaries you are using and climate



conditions. It only took a short time to adapt to this car and by the end of the test I really felt at home.

Andy, being used to electric cars, got in pushed the button so the electrics sprang into life, and set off in fourth gear with no issues. The Netgain electric motor has plenty of torque, and is only really limited by the internals of the standard MGB gearbox used on the Vital Spark EV MGB GT. Even so, the car felt sprightly with a good turn of pace and that gratifying instant EV response that comes when planting your right foot on the throttle. With the relatively standard brake and suspension setup, Andy felt the power and performance of this MGB GT were just right, and more than adequate for keeping up with modern traffic. Once you

got rolling you honestly wouldn't really know you were in an EV, with the wind noise, tyre noise and other associated noises which drown out the B burble whilst cruising along in fourth gear; to all intents and purposes you were in a standard MGB GT. In Andy's modern EV he does a lot of 'one foot' driving, allowing the braking regeneration system in its maximum setting to slow the car down. With the MGB GT EV regeneration system you were able to do this as well, allowing charge to go back into the battery when slowing and also extending the life of your front brake discs and pads. Andy found the MGB a very competent classic EV to drive, and with Paul's enthusiasm, understanding of EVs and drive, it's clear to see that Vital Spark will be forging ahead with new ideas to



improve their cars well into the future.

When Colin was asked if he would like to own one, his reply was: "Yes I would." Would I feel guilty if I had converted a perfectly good car? No, as for some people there are good reasons why they would like to convert one, such as the restrictions in big cities like London on petrol and diesel cars, and where ever increasing fuel prices and congestion charge zones make an electric vehicle a viable alternative.

Overall, the MGB GT is a very enjoyable EV experience and one that we can see is going to only get better, and it was great spending time with the enthusiastic Vital Spark team and hearing of future plans. The MGB GT we tested here will be on display at the MG Car Club's event of the year, MGLive! on June 11-12 if you would like to come and view it for yourself.

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