

Sunnyside Smallholding; Electric Blue II

Earlier last year, I wrote a little article called Electric Blue, all about our decision to buy a bright blue electric car. For me, self-sufficiency is not just about growing my own food but also harvesting my own energy. This involves using wood to heat the house and solar panels to produce electricity from the sun. Swapping our diesel car for an electric car was a major leap forward towards energy self-sufficiency and with a new year upon us, I thought I would review our journey into electric car ownership.

The car (MG4) is a joy to drive, the smooth, constant power of the electric motor gives a better drive than the very best diesel or petrol car that I have ever driven. A simple electric motor is naturally smooth, quiet and powerful, something that is difficult to achieve from even a very complicated and sophisticated internal combustion engine.

Although initially more expensive to buy, the car's running costs have been unimaginably low. Road tax is free, but that won't last. As more of us drive electric cars the government cannot afford the loss of income. The service cost is tiny, no oil/filter to change, no air filter, no fuel filter and the brakes hardly wear because of regenerative, energy recovery braking. A service is mainly just a visual check and costs a tiny fraction

of that for our previous diesel car. So far so good but charging with solar power also means zero fuel cost for about 4 months of the year. On a long, sunny summer's day, our domestic solar panels (7kw) will produce enough electricity to drive about 200 miles. I still find it hard to get my head around that, just how powerful the sun is. Not every day is sunny but even mains charging is a lot cheaper than the equivalent petrol cost. A full charge on night-time rates is nearly ten times cheaper than petrol. Imagine if you could fill up your family petrol car for about £8. On top of all that, there are no charges to pay in cities with low emissions zones.

What surprises me is the strength of anti-electric car sentiment both in the media and in everyday conversations. I hear about; short battery life,

recycling problems, child labour in lithium mines, polluting power stations and slow charging times. With very little substance to these concerns, if I was a conspiracy theorist, I would think the big oil companies were behind some of this mis-information. In the meantime, I will continue to enjoy driving the electric car and saving a lot of money. As a hobby, I love old cars and have owned a couple of classic V8 Cadillacs in the past. However, I think that once most people have tried and owed an electric car, internal combustion engines will fade away just as quickly as steam engines did in the past.

By the way, our bright blue, electric car is called Dory. Anyone with children in their 20s who enjoyed a fishy film back-in-the-day, should be able to work out why.

