



**ROOTES**

# The Singer Gazelle

By Nigel Hughes

Edition 2

**The All New Singer!**

# ROOTES

**SINGER**  
MOTOR CLUB

### Special Points of Interest:

- \* How Singer became part of the Rootes Group
- \* The Gazelle Story and Model Variations



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**The Story of the Rootes Group** starts in a small cycle shop in Hawkhurst in Kent in the latter half of the 1800s. Here William Rootes Snr ran a successful business. He had two sons, William Edward, born in 1894, and Reginald Claude, born in 1896.

William, or Billy as he was affectionately known, was an ebullient youth who had a passion for mechanical things - particularly motor cycles, which he raced with considerable success. As they grew up, neither son showed any interest in getting involved with the family business, so when he left school it was decided that Billy should join Singers as a penny an hour apprentice in the hope that the experience would stand him in good stead for the future.

The year was 1909, and Singer were still very much in the early days of car production, their main product having been a wide range of well designed pedal cycles and some motor cycles. By all accounts Billy enjoyed his time at Singers, and was regarded as a model apprentice, showing great innovative skills and engineering promise.

Billy Rootes never forgot the happy years he had enjoyed working at Singers, and ever after regarded the company with deep affection. His rise to fame and the success of his business ventures were meteoric, and by the 1920s he and Reginald had formed Rootes Distributors, eventually becoming the country's largest car distributor.

In the years that followed they were drawn into financially supporting some of the companies they represented, and soon found themselves taking over Hillman and Humber, becoming car manufacturers in the process.

Billy travelled widely, and during visits to America he had seen and studied the mass production techniques of General Motors. Back home in England most cars were still made utilising hopelessly outdated manufacturing processes, and as such operating with heavy overheads per unit produced. In the next two decades the Rootes brothers were to play a major role in transforming a large part of the UK motor industry into a more efficient mass production operation, saving a number of the most famous motor businesses in the process.

When war broke out, Rootes was in strong financial shape and had large manufacturing sites centred around the Midlands. During the war the company built 30% of all bomber aircraft, 50,000 aero engines (including 10,000 parts sets for Merlin engines which Rolls Royce would assemble) repaired 21,000 of all types, 60% of all armored cars and 35% of all scout cars, plus other reconnaissance vehicles. The company assembled 20,000 vehicles imported from the USA, repaired 12,000 others, made 300,000 bombs, 5 million fuses and 3 million ammunition boxes, and were chosen to build thousands of Hillman Minxes and Humber Snipes, accounting for 11% of the total UK output of wartime vehicles.

By 1945 Rootes were ready to embark on an ambitious post-war model programme. They had the financial resources and the technical capability to do this, and with massive factories



## The Singer Gazelle

During the mid fifties Rootes Group spent much time negotiating with Standard Triumph to form the basis of a merger of the two concerns, however after 18 months these were abandoned

strategically placed, were ready to take the Rootes Group to its peak.

Like many other old established car makers, the war saved Singer from financial disaster. During the conflict the firm prospered - it's factories were never too seriously damaged by bombing to stop production, and a steady stream of war work ensured packed order books.



After the war, Singer continued with the same basic 1939 models, the 2-door Nine Roadster and 4-door 'Super Ten' and 'Super Twelve' Saloons, but with slightly larger engines, 4-speed gearboxes and other improvements.



The directors felt sufficiently confident to invest in the development of a new saloon - the SM 1500 - to replace the Ten and Twelve. Assembly was to be concentrated on the Birmingham factory site, but this was an amazingly unsuitable six storey building, where chassis assembly was located on the fourth floor, body, trim and paint on others, and final assembly on yet another!

From 1949 to 1955, Singer built the



same two basic models - the four door SM1500 Saloons and the two door Roadsters. Both cars used the same basic overhead camshaft 1500 cc engine and four speed gearbox, but did not sell well, and, not surprisingly, with the limited production capacity from the company's two sites, by 1954 Singer Motors were in serious financial trouble. The company desperately needed new models to survive, but could not afford the huge investment this required. A new fibreglass bodied Roadster, the SMX, was shown, but never put into production, and sales of engines to HRG never reached the numbers hoped for.

In 1954 the firm's overdraft reached £206,000 and they reported a loss of £89,000. A four day week was introduced during the following winter, and by the end of the 1954/55 financial year the overdraft was reported as having reached £500,000 and the firm had lost £140,000.

Whilst things looked bleak for Singers, over at the Rootes Group things were a very different story. In 1955 the Company sold 104,913 vehicles - 58,729 for the home market and 46,184 for export. Rootes were far more interested in the export markets than any other British manufacturer, and they had progressively built up a worldwide dealer and service network, with an 11.7% market share earning a healthy £3.6 million profit.

Sir William Rootes - he had been knighted during the war - knew Singers were in trouble, and commenced what was to become a complex and long process which eventually led to the acquisition of the company and the promise of a brand new model the company could be proud of. The first meeting of the Rootes/Singer Motors Board took place in December 1955 and in January 1956 Rootes took over officially. During the next year Rootes set about re-organising the whole of Singers systems and re-financing the firm. By the end of that first year they reported a staggering £600,000 loss, but by the end of the 1950s Singer would once more be back in the black and making healthy profits.

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Singer

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£3.6 million.

The man in the Singer  
is the man in  
the house



THE SUPER TEN SALOON

There are three Singers - the Nine, the Ten and the Twelve. Each, in its own way, has proved for some time, to more than commonly well worth waiting for.

**SINGER MOTORS**

SINGER MOTORS LTD. BIRMINGHAM AND COVENTRY

Under Rootes ownership the styling and engineering teams were tasked with developing the new Singer. They quickly identified that the older 1500cc Singer ohc engine could be shoe-horned into the brand new Audax body shell, and with subtle detail improvements the Singer product was positioned high up in the Rootes model range just behind the prestigious Humbers. At this time Rootes engaged Raymond Lowey's design team in America, who had been responsible for the impressive Studebaker Hawk and Starliner



models, and consequently there are a number of similarities

between the trans-atlantic designs.

It was against this backdrop that the new Singer was launched in September 1956 as the Singer Gazelle.



At this time the Rootes Group range did not include a small car, and a decision was taken to develop a brand new small car. The project was codenamed Apex, and eventually became the Hillman Imp - Singer Chamois - Sunbeam Stiletto.

The new car suffered with a number of inherent design faults that were not fully evaluated or remedied, and within months of the launch hundreds of unhappy owners were filling service departments.



This brilliant little car, that was clearly more advanced than anything on the market, better looking and so vital to

the Rootes Group, would never fully regain its full credibility or deserved market leadership.

In September 1961 the Rootes Group became embroiled in an industrial dispute that started at the British Light Steel Pressings factory in Acton, where components were made for virtually every model in the Rootes range. It was an odd sort of strike which developed into a personal struggle between the Acton shop-stewards and the Rootes Family.

As the strike dragged on it led to the complete stoppage of all car production, with such a harsh effect on the liquidity of the Group that some of the major dealers were lending the hard pressed company money to tide it over. The strikers received no backing from the unions involved, who kept urging them to go back to work.

In the end, after 13 weeks, the Family won and the strikers drifted back, minus the shop stewards who were sacked, but the victory had been a very costly one.

In 1962 the Group built 147,535 cars but made a huge loss of £2 million.

In 1964 with the Group in severe financial difficulties, Lord Rootes and Sir Reginald flew to America and met with Lynn Townsend of Chrysler and there signed a deal.

In return for 30% of the voting shares and 50% of the non-voting ones, Lord Rootes gained for the hard pressed Group, £12 million of Chrysler money plus a Chrysler underwritten £15 million rights issue. Although to the outside world everything seemed the same, soon Rootes would be absorbed into the vast Chrysler marketing machine and lose much of its identity.

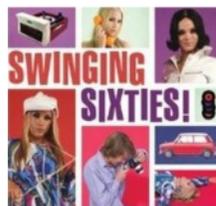
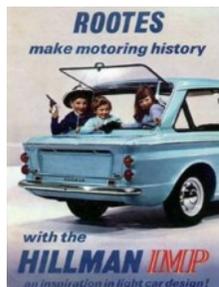
On 12th December 1964, Lord Rootes died. He was 70 years old.

Rootes cars were always renowned for offering just that little bit more than their rivals and much of the subtle eye for detail emanated from the top man himself who always personally tested new models and gave his opinions.

Lord Rootes had built up a great motoring dynasty without which many fine old English names would have vanished many years before.



**In 1959 Sir William Rootes at 64 years of age, began to draw back from the day to day control of the firm. In the 1959 New Years Honours List he was made a Baron—becoming Lord Rootes of Ramsbury**



**William Rootes quote:**

"No other man-made device since the shields and lances of the ancient knights fulfills a man's ego like an automobile"



## The Gazelle Story.

One of the main planks of the Rootes take-over of the Singer Company was the promise of a brand new model the company could be proud of.

During the next year Rootes set about re-organizing the whole of Singers systems and re-financing the firm. The year-end loss posted for 1956 had risen to £600,000, but by the end of the 50's Singer would be back in the black and making healthy profits once more.

Once under Rootes ownership, the styling and engineering teams were tasked with developing the new Singer. They quickly identified that the older 1500 cc Singer ohc engine could be shoe-horned into the brand new Audax body shell, and, with subtle detail improvements, the new car was positioned high up in the Rootes model range just behind the prestigious Humbers.

The all-new Audax body styling was a creation of Raymond Lowey's design team in America, who had been responsible for the impressive Studebaker Hawk and Starliner models, and there are a number of similarities between the designs.

It was against this backdrop that the new Singer, the Gazelle Series I, was launched in September 1956.

## Gazelle Series I.

Inside, the level of trim in this luxurious new car was pitched at the upper end of the medium sized car market. Smart, pleated vinyl contrasted with outline piping and polished walnut veneered facia and door cappings, along with deep pile carpeting and extensive sound deadening.

The Series I was available as a four door Saloon and two door Convertible. The purchase price was £898 7s 0d.

Fitted with independent front wheel suspension with coil springs, and a wheel-base of 8' - 0" the car had an overall length of 13' 7½".

The research and development teams, along with the stylists, were continuously refining the finish and engineering specifications of the model ranges, and along with input from the marketing department, Singer became more integrated into the Rootes manufacturing set-up.

Thus it was that with barely 12 months under its belt, the the Series I was replaced by the Series II, by which time 4,344 Series Is had been produced.

## Gazelle Series II.

With the launch of the Series II in October 1957, the front of the car was changed to include horizontal chrome vents which incorporated side and indicator lights on either side of the oval centre grille. Side flashes were added, pointed at the front and filling almost all of the rear wing panels.

The headlights were given deep chrome cowls, and the now famous Gazelle motif was added to the bonnet.



## The Singer Gazelle



The Gazelle script badges remained on the front doors. The capacity of the fuel tank was increased from 7¼ gallons to 10 gallons. Overdrive became an option available at extra cost. There was also a new body style - the Estate.

1,582 Series II cars were produced, making it the rarest of all the Gazelles.

### Gazelle Series IIA.

Shortly after the introduction of the revised Sunbeam Rapier model in February 1958, Rootes decided to install the same 1494 cc power unit (with single Solex carburettor) in the Series II Gazelle, which was still using the original Singer OHC engine. At the same time a Burman re-circulating ball type steering box was added.

The outward appearance of the Series IIA remained the same as the Series II.

When the Series III was announced in September 1958, 3,824 Series IIA had been sold.

### Gazelle Series III.

Gazelles were now available in three model variants - Saloon, Convertible and Estate.

The main changes were to the side flashes, which were narrower, less pointed at the front with the Gazelle script badges inset, not so deep on the rear wings, but extending around the rear and lower boot.

The Series III remained in production until September 1959, when its replacement model arrived, by which time 10,929 had been made.

### Gazelle Series IIIA.

In September 1959, the appeal of the Gazelle was further enhanced by yet more subtle design improvements, these all coming in the guise of the Series IIIA.

The rear wings received a touch more of Lowey's Studebaker styling, with the upper edges of the wing rolled over to make a pronounced fin profile,

The saloon and convertible models were given a revised rear light design, with three separate light units replacing the single unit. and chrome edged, colour co-ordinated front headlight cowls were added.



## The Singer Gazelle



In 1962

Rootes Group  
built 147,535  
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the new small  
car project  
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Other changes were the fitting of twin Solex carburettors and special manifolding. A close-ratio gearbox with central gear lever also became standard. The body styling was further changed by the provision of a deeper windscreen.

Smiths Easidrive automatic transmission became an option available at extra cost. 12,491 Ser IIIA cars were produced.

### Gazelle Series IIIB

With the same outward appearance as the Series IIIA, the IIIB was given a Hypoid rear axle in place of the spiral bevel type. A single Solex carburettor was fitted, and refinements were made to the gearbox, including an improved filler to replace the dipstick. Thinner front seat squabs were fitted to increase leg-room in rear. 13,272 Ser IIIB cars were produced.

### Gazelle Series IIIC.

Launched in July 1961, this was to be the last Gazelle model to include an Estate in its lineup. The Series IIIC took the place of the planned Series IV, as during the 1960/61 period, Rootes had developed a new larger body design that was intended to replace the older Audax models. However, a last minute change of mind led to this new model being launched as a totally new Singer - the Vogue. Therefore no Series IV ever appeared in the Gazelle line up, and in its place came another version of the Audax body style - the Series IIIC.



This revised model embodied the very finest virtues of the Rootes dream, and it admirably acquitted itself on the road as an outstanding Singer car.

The new, larger Rootes 1592 cc engine was fitted, and both front doors were adorned with 1600 badges to signify this. This engine was fitted with a Zenith carburettor. Larger warning lights were fitted, and a heater became standard for the first time, while an ammeter and oil pressure gauge were options available at extra cost.

In February 1962 the Convertible was discontinued, and in March 1962 the last Estate was introduced. In July 1963 production of the IIIC ceased, 15,115 having been made.

### Gazelle Series V

This new Gazelle was introduced in August 1963, having received a number of major modifications.

A lower roof line allowed for a revised rear screen with no wrap around, and larger rear doors with fixed quarter-lights. The fins were removed from the rear wings, and the rear lights revised back into a single oval cluster.

13" wheels and front disc brakes were standard. Borg Warner 35 automatic transmission was an optional extra.

Inside the car there was a brand new full-width walnut dashboard and side door cappings, and individual, reclining front seats.

In its new format the Series V would serve the company until 1965, by which time 20,022 had been produced.



## Gazelle Series VI

This new model was fitted with the new Rootes 1725 cc 5 main bearing cast iron head engine. A lower rectangular grille was fitted. The electrics were changed to negative earth. The rear brakes were self-adjusting. 1725 emblems were placed on each front wing, with Gazelle script badges on the rear wings and individual letters spelling SINGER on the bonnet.

14,842 Series VI Gazelles were made.



## Gazelle Series VII (Arrows)

Production of this final version of the Gazelle family began in December 1966, with the formal announcement being made in January 1967.

This new Singer was part of the brand new Rootes Arrow range. Initially only Automatics were available, with the 1725cc engine. Later a Manual model was introduced, powered by a 1496 cc 5 main bearing, cast iron head engine.

The Series VII also came with a new badge adorning its nearside front wing - the Chrysler Pentastar.

Only available in Saloon version, this new car had rectangular front headlamps, a single chrome waistline stripe and horizontal rear lights.

The last Singer, a Gazelle, rolled off the line in March 1970, by which time 26,846 Series VII Gazelles had been made.



COMPLETELY NEW IN SIZE, STYLING AND LUXURY. A QUALITY SINGER, LOW IN COST AND ECONOMICAL TO RUN.

MAGNIFICENT VALUE FOR MONEY.

Consider what you get in the new Singer Gazelle.

Elegant, modern styling. Compact overall dimensions to fit the normal-sized garage.

Roomy 5-seater comfort. Quality finish and luxury appointments. Equipment on a generous scale. New instrumentation.

Fresh air ventilation and heating.

Comprehensive safety features.

Excellent driving vision. Big luggage accommodation.

And a new '1500' engine for smooth, economical performance.

You will be proud to own a car like this.

Ask for a luxury demonstration drive!



## Summary of the Main Identifying Features of each Series Model:

**Series I** - Launched Sept 1956 in Saloon and Convertible format. Oval grille of vertical bars flanked by cow-horn chrome air vent rims and four vertical chrome strips on each side. Single chrome strip along two-tone paint line. Gazelle script badges on front doors. Chassis Nos: A760001 to A7604344.

**Series II** - Launched Oct 1957. Pressings each side of grille replaced by horizontal grilles incorporating the sidelights. Chrome cowed headlamps. Bonnet motif. 10 gallon fuel tank. Coloured flashes along length of bodywork, pointed at front, flared at rear filling most of rear wing panels. Gazelle script badges on front doors. Estate version introduced. Chassis Nos : A7800001 to A7801582.

**Series IIA** - Launched Feb 1958. Outward appearance same as Series II. 1,494 cc OHV Rootes engine introduced. Single Solex 32 PB carburettor. Re-circulating ball type steering box fitted. Chassis Nos: A7850001 to A7853824.

**Series III** - Launched Sep 1958. Centre front folding armrest. Side flashes less pointed at front, with Gazelle script inset, not so deep on rear wing panels, and extending around rear and lower boot area. Chassis Nos : A7900001 to A7910929.

**Series IIIA** - Launched Sept 1959. Side flashes finish short of rear wing tips. Twin Solex 32PB1S carburettors, special manifold. Close ratio gearbox. Central located gear lever. Deeper windscreen with slimmer pillars. Chrome-edged, colour co-ordinated headlamp shrouds. Three separate rear lights. Saloon and Convertible models have pronounced **outward turning fin** on upper edge of rear wings. Smiths Easidrive automatic optional extra. Chassis Nos: B7000001 to B7012491.

(Continued overleaf ...)

## The Singer Gazelle

**Series IIIB** - Launched Sept 1960. Outward appearance same as Series IIIA. Hypoid rear axle replaced spiral bevel type. Single Solex 32 PB1S carburettor. Gearbox improved and filler plug replaced dip stick. Front seat squabs made thinner to increase rear seat leg-room. Chassis Nos: B7035001 to B7043272.

**Series IIIC** - Launched July 1961. 1592cc engine. Zenith carburettor. Nylon-bushed steering joints. '1600' motifs on front doors. Fins removed from rear wings. Larger warning lights fitted to dash. Heater standard. Ammeter and oil pressure gauge optional extras. Chassis Nos: B7150001 to B7165115.

**(Series IV)** - In July 1961 Rootes Group announced the new Singer Vogue, using the body shell of what was intended to be an all new Gazelle. Consequently there is no Series IV in the Gazelle line-up.

**Series V** - Launched Sept 1963. Gazelle script badges set in rear of side-flashes. Oval single rear lighting unit incorporating brake, side and indicator lights. Rear wings no longer have fins. Rubber inserts in bumper over-riders. Wider rear doors with fixed rear quarter light. Squarer rear window line. Roof and bonnet lines lowered. Individual front seats. Redesigned dashboard with instruments located in-front of driver. Headlamp flasher. Rear floor mounted ash tray. Front disc brakes. No greasing points. 13" wheels. In Sept 1964 model updated with reclining front seats, full carpeting, dimmable warning lights, instruments with vertical markings and floor mounted gear lever. Chassis Nos: B7300001 to B7320022

**Series VI** - Launched Sept 1965. Full width radiator grille. Rectangular front side/flasher lights. SINGER name on bonnet. Rootes 1725 badges on front wings. Locking buttons for front quarter lights. 1724cc engine with cast iron head. Chassis Nos: B76000001 to B76014842

**Series VII** - "New" Gazelle Saloon launched Jan 1967. Arrow/Hunter body styling. Lucas rectangular 2FR front headlamps inset in new, full width grille assembly. Single chrome waistline stripe extends around rear of car. Rectangular rear lamps mounted horizontally. Initially Automatic only, with 1725cc engine. Manual models had 1496cc cast iron head engine. Chassis Nos: B711000100 to B712006800

