

The Singer Roadster 4AE - Based on material extracted from the late Bill Haverly's file on this unique car by our Roadster Registrar, Tony Gutteridge

It has been fascinating to read about this experimental/prototype Roadster in the material amassed by Bill Haverly, and it was thought our readers might like to know something about it. Bill built up the file from information revealed by his own painstaking

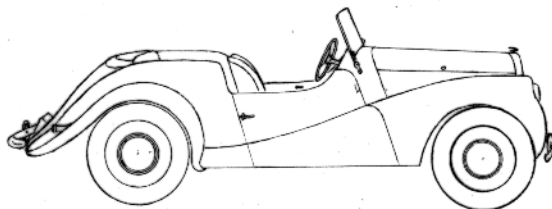


Roadster 4AE
Drawing by Bill Haverly

investigations, together with information from the Singer Company sales ledgers and material provided by Ashley Crossland - it was he who dubbed the car '4AE', being the next logical letter in the 4A series. Remarkably, Bill also managed to track down the only two photographs of the car known to exist, from which he was able to draw up these side and 3/4 front views, which show it was a quite attractive little car.

The last 4AD Roadster produced had chassis number 4AD3439Y. The experimental, fibre-glass bodied SMX Roadsters were built in 1954 on chassis nos E(1-5)X, then, in late 1955, a prototype new Roadster model was produced with chassis number 4AD3440Z. This, unlike the SMX, had an all metal body. The wings were fabricated from steel, with the headlights built in, SM1500/Hunter style, and their swept shape extended into the doors and beyond, to the rear mudguard. The rear of the car was similar to the 4AD, having the wood frame covered in aluminium panels. It is not clear whether the bonnet was steel or aluminium, or if the radiator grill was the same as the 4AD. A major improvement on the standard 4AD model was the adoption of hydraulic brakes on the rear wheels.

There is no information on why the car was produced, but with Roadster sales flagging, the apparent failure of the SMX experiment, and the SM1500 having been replaced by the Hunter in 1954, Singer must have felt the need for a face-lift on the Roadster in order to keep an open Sports model to run alongside the face-lifted Hunter. The one-off car appears to have had the engine installed onto the chassis and the body then built around it, to the extent that the engine could not be removed without virtually destroying the front bodywork, which was apparently held together and attached to the chassis by welding and rivets. It is reported that the car was 'unveiled' at the 1955 Motor Show, but pictures of it at the Show have yet to be found.



Roadster 4AE - Drawing by Bill Haverly

Most of Bill's research was carried out in the mid 1980s, when he contacted the previous owners. According to the logbook the car was first registered on 13 October 1955, ie, shortly after the Motor Show, and SOK 692 is a Birmingham registration. Factory records show

the first owner was a Mr S Hosegood of 'Westaway', 8 Downscote Road, Westbury-on-Trym, Bristol. Apart from the 'Endorsement Date' of 25/02/56 and 'Date of Warranty & Instruction Book Sent' of 13/04/56, no other information is given, although it does refer to a memo from a 'Mr Williams' dated 13/03/56. There is therefore a 4-month period from when the car was first registered to when it was sold to Mr Hosegood, which suggests

Singers possibly used it as a demonstration car. Apparently Mr Hosegood originally ordered a 4AD, but was quite pleased with the car when delivered to him by the Singer distributor for Bristol, Allen's of Berkeley Square. Some doubt existed whether one or two carburettors were fitted, but Mr Hosegood said only one when he purchased it. The body colour was a slightly off white shade, with the interior trimmed in red, which apparently looked very nice.



The second owner was a Mr Mervyn Lippiatt, who acquired the car around 1960. Unfortunately it ended up with a broken crankshaft, as well as having suffered extensive frost damage to the cylinder block due to having been left out in the open one winter without antifreeze in the cooling system.

The last owner was the one time SOC Roadster Registrar Bob Wilkes. At the time, Bob was apparently unaware of the rarity of the car, and due to the problem of being unable to remove the engine for repair, without destroying the front bodywork, decided it was uneconomical to do so, and scrapped the car in 1966. He then sold off many of the component parts, so some of these may still be fitted to Roadsters somewhere today. According to one of the owners, the engine fitted was a type "D" from a Singer Hunter, but Hunters had type 'H' engines, and a 'D' engine would have been an SM1500 unit.

These photographs of the car are believed to be the only two existing. The first, taken in 1959 on Wareham Quay in Dorset, was kindly provided by Mrs S Hooper, whose husband was a friend of Mr Hosegood, who lived in Wareham at the time. Mr Hosegood is in the centre with Mr Hooper & his son on either side. The shape of the curve on the swept front wing and door can be clearly seen.

The second picture was provided by Mr Hosegood, and as can be seen, it shows the rear end to be conventional 4AD.

If the car had been put into production, it would have been in competition with other manufacturers' more modern models, such as the Triumph TR3, MGA, and Mk 1 Sunbeam Alpine. Would it have been successful? We will never know.



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Aunty Says: *Many thanks to Tony for putting this material together for us. But I have difficulty in believing that Singer - by this time owned by Rootes would sell a car into the public domain if the engine could not be removed. The bonnet top looks very similar to that on a 4AD - or even a Hunter - and although it is a tight squeeze, the engine can be removed from these models. Indeed, does not the report of the scrapped engine number being different from that in the Log Book, suggest it had been changed?* **Aunty.**