



BSA B31 350cc (1950s)

Britain's Postwar Workhorse: A popular choice for the road and off-road competition

Model	Years	Engine	Suspension	Power (bhp)	Notable Features
B31	1947 to 1960	348cc	Hydraulic telescopic fork (front) and swinging arm / plunger / rigid (rear) system.	22 hp	OHV single-cylinder, air-cooled, four-stroke engine with 4-speed manual, chain drive transmission.

After WWII, the Birmingham Small Arms Company (BSA) produced the BSA B31 with a 350cc engine - a classic British motorcycle from 1947.

It is often associated with the 500cc variant – the BSA B33. Both models share many design elements and were part of BSA's post-war B-series singles, intended as robust, reliable motorcycles for everyday use. The B31 was its smaller sibling.

The two models are frequently discussed together due to their mechanical similarities. The BSA B31 (350cc) is recognised as a robust, reliable, and practical single-cylinder four-stroke motorcycle in the post-war era. But the B33 featured a stronger, larger 500cc engine to better handle sidecars and heavier loads, making it a popular choice for both solo and two-up riding, plus off-road racing.

Racing history

While the B33 was not as performance-oriented as the BSA Gold Star, it was still a popular and competitive choice for Australian riders, especially before the widespread availability of purpose-built motocross machines.

Four-times Australian motocross champion Dave Basham, from South Australia, began his racing career by building a rigid frame BSA B33 for scrambles and trials.

As he gained experience, he began to enjoy success in some of the major meetings such as the prestigious Laurie Boulter memorial Scramble, which he won 7 times, with the first of those wins coming on the 350cc BSA B33.

Restoration history

Western Australian Raymond Wann purchased the BSA B31 350cc engine (featured in this bike on display) from motorcycle dealer Mick Hutton for £10 (around \$20) in 1957.

The engine was planned as a spare motor for Ray's 1954 500cc BSA Gold Star, but eventually it found its way into a frame of its own, which originally housed a BSA B33 500cc engine.

The new BSA hybrid was now ready to go racing with with both Ray and his son (Ray junior) competing to this day in various scrambles in Western Australia.

Ray contested the Harley Scramble at the Rope Works circuit in Mosman Park in the late 1950s and 1960s. In its first incarnation, Ray (Junior) last raced this restored bike at the AJS Motor Cycle Club's Herne Hill motocross event in 1970.

Between 1970 and 2006 the bike rested in the back of the family shed, when Ray (senior) decided to purchase an A7 frame for it and give it a second chance at life using the many spare parts he had hoarded during this period.

By 2007 it was ready for racing again, making its maiden voyage in 2008 at a Vintage Motocross Club of WA meeting in Narrogin (*see picture below*).

Ray (senior) started riding motorcycles in 1946 at the age of 14, mainly racing scrambles and speedway, then Vintage Motocross through to 2010. Following his death in 2018, the bike is now owned by Ray's daughter Michelle James (nee Wann).

Photos: [left to right] Ray Wann, racing his restored BSA at the Narrogin VMX event in 2008; South Australian motocross legend Dave Basham began his racing career in 1958 on a BSA 350cc B33 bike; and a 1954 BSA B33 motorcycle advertisement.

