

Model	Years	Engine	Suspension	Power (bhp)	Notable Features
FB Falcon 67	1948 to 1966	197cc	Girder forks (front), and swinging arm (rear)	~12 hp	Premium lightweight bike, with a Villiers 8E, 2-stroke engine and 3-speed gearbox (4-speed optional post-1954)

Francis & Barnett Limited's 200cc motorcycles of the 1950s were all part of the Francis-Barnett Falcon series. The company was founded in 1919 by Gordon Inglesby Francis and Arthur Barnett in Coventry, England.

They specialised in manufacturing lightweight affordable motorcycles, often using Villiers two-stroke engines, and became well known for their innovative frame designs and practical commuter bikes. In 1947, Francis & Barnett was taken over by Associated Motor Cycles (AMC), which later merged the brand with James Motorcycles in 1957.

The Francis-Barnett Falcon 67 model manufactured in 1954 was powered by a 197cc Villiers 8E two-stroke engine producing around 12 horsepower. This model used a swinging arm rear suspension, a feature introduced in 1951 that set it apart from many competitors still using plunger or rigid frames.

The frame and overall build were robust, contributing to a relatively heavy weight for a lightweight class, but this also enhanced durability. The Francis-Barnett Falcon models were produced over an 18-year period, from 1948 until production ceased in 1966.

Racing history

The Francis-Barnett 200cc Falcon models were not primarily designed as racing motorcycles, but they were used in off-road events such as scrambles and trials.

The Falcon 64 was a scrambler and the Falcon 60 and 62s were designed as trials bikes, with Francis-Barnett winning manufacturer's awards in the ISDT (International Six Day Trial) in the 175/197 classes in the mid-1950s.

John Rock from Subiaco won the 1955 Australian 250cc Championship at the Rope Works circuit in Mosman Park (WA) on the 200cc Falcon model and finished 8th in the overall National Championship, which was combined with the Harley Scramble that year.

After his famous ride, "Rocky" said he knew the course was very rough and that proved to be the case with half of the field not finishing. With a smile on his face, he said he took it easy and rode around the bumps and holes and somehow finished in front. "Nothing broke and nothing fell off," he said.

Restoration

When Motorcycling WA Hall of Famer John Rock died in 2012, aged 81, the FB Falcon 67 model on display was passed onto his daughter Kathy. It's the same brand and size, but not the actual same bike that John rode to victory at the Rope Works in 1955.

That bike John sold immediately after the event, along with all of his possessions, to race in the UK where he was billed as "the reigning Australian 250 Motocross Champion".

In 1956, when the British boycotted the Czechoslovakian I.S.D.T (International Six Day Trial), John formed the first Australian Enduro Team to compete in the event and he finished with a bronze medal.

On return to Australia in 1958, he bought a new Francis-Barnett (1954 FB Falcon model) - the one he rode to victory in the 1965 Australian Trials Championship. In his honour, the John Rock Memorial trophy is awarded annually at the national titles. This bike has Norton forks, a modified steering head with adjustments to the frame to allow more ground clearance and a tighter turning circle.

Photos: [Left to right] An advertisement for Francis-Barnett in the 1950's; the Australian Team at the 1957 I.S.D.T. in Czechoslovakia including Tim Gibbes, John Rock and Les Fisher; and at that three-day event "Rocky" rode with a mudguard perched on his shoulder to avoid being disqualified because the event's strict regulations required motorcycles to remain complete and carry all original parts throughout the competition. .

