



Norton 500cc (1927)

A classic vintage motorcycle, prized by collectors and racers for its robust engineering and racing

Model	Years	Engine	Suspension	Power (bhp)	Notable Features
18	1922 to 1927	500cc	Webb T.T. type/"Roadholder" fork	Approx 21 hp	Single-cylinder OHV engine, 3-speed drive chain, with a top speed of 78 Mph (126 km/h)

The Norton 500cc Model 18 was first manufactured in 1922, with the prototype appearing that year and the road-going production version introduced in 1923 and was produced through to 1927.

The Norton Motorcycle Company was established in 1898 by James Lansdowne Norton in Birmingham, England, originally as a manufacturer of fittings and parts for the two-wheel trade. The company produced its first motorcycle, the Energette, in 1902, using a 143cc single-cylinder Clement engine imported from France.

By 1907, Norton motorcycles were already making a mark in racing, with a Peugeot-engined Norton winning the twin-cylinder class at the inaugural Isle of Man Tourist Trophy (TT).

The 1927 Norton 500cc Model 18 was a landmark motorcycle in Norton's history, representing their first pushrod overhead valve (OHV) engine design for road and competition use.

The Model 18 featured exposed pushrods and valve springs, a hallmark of early OHV designs. It had a distinctive flat fuel tank, with some racing and special versions fitted with extra-large tanks and TT filler caps for rapid refueling. The frame design provided good rigidity, which contributed to its handling and racing success.

It quickly gained a reputation for performance and reliability, both on the road and in off-road competition, including the newly established sport called "Scrambles" (now motocross) which was invented in 1924 when a group of "crazy Englishmen" became bored with trials.

Western Australian Aubrey Melrose competed in a variety of motorcycle races in England in 1926 and 1927, including the Isle of Man TT. On return home to Perth

Aubrey, along with Roy Charman, established the famous Harley Scramble at the Rope Works circuit at Buckland Hill in Mosman Park in June 1928.

Racing history

The Norton Model 18 was a dominant force in racing, winning the Senior TT in 1924 and 1926, and setting multiple speed records during the 1920s. Alec Bennett won the Senior Tourist Trophy (TT) averaging 61.64 mph and George Tucker won the Sidecar TT in 1924 on a 588cc version of the Norton.

Special racing versions, such as the TT Model 18, were assembled by the Norton works team for events like the Brooklands motorcycle Grands Prix and endurance record attempts. In 1923, D.R. O'Donovan, Bert Denly and Nigel Spring broke eighteen world records at Brooklands riding the Model 18, earning Norton the Maudes Trophy.

These riders were instrumental in establishing the Norton Model 18's reputation for speed and reliability in both racing and endurance events throughout the 1920s. All were British, except Alec Bennett who was a Canadian-born expatriate who established his racing career in the UK and was associated with British racing teams.

Restoration

The 1927 Norton on display has a rich history in England where it was last restored in 1980 by Ron Farthing - a well-known figure in the British classic motorcycle community.

Later the bike was bought by Frank Trento at Eurobrit Motorbikes in Victoria and from there sold to the Lawson family.

Photos: [Left to right] The late Charlie Lawson with the 1927 Norton; the Norton on show with a mannequin wearing leather pants and gaiters from that era, with the 2nd mannequin wearing Charlie's Belstaff suit and 3rd one holding his pudding basin helmet; and a Norton advertisement from the 1920s.

