

## **BSA Motorcycle Models**

**BSA** was for many years the largest British Motorcycle Manufacturer.

**BSA, Birmingham Small Arms**, was set up in 1861 by a group of gunsmiths who formed a Trade Association the BSA Company. They started by producing rifles, when the work dried up through lack of wars, they started to produce bicycles in 1880. 1910 saw the first complete motorbike to be built BSA. World Wars saw production expand to Motorcycles as well as Arms and in WW2 they became the main stay of the British Army supplying the BSA M20 with a side valve 500cc engine. The 'Gold Star' name will be best remembered because they were the first production racing machines. However, despite entering the 1960's boasting record profits and a formidable reputation, by the end of the decade BSA were all but finished and the production ceased in 1972/73.

Find out some of the history of the many machines which were produced, if you own any BSA model/s some of this list may be interesting to you.  
Have a look....

**C10** 1945-57, 249cc, sv single, 310lb, 75mpg, 55mph

This post-war utility bike with rigid frame, un-damped forks, minimal brakes and side-valve engine was not the most reliable bike BSA produced, although still a nice looking, easy to ride lightweight 250cc machine.

**C11/C11G** 1945-55, 249cc, ohv, 320lb, 80mpg, 60mph

Better than the C10 the motor has OHV. C11G was available as a 3 speed with rigid frame or 4 speed with plunger frame, both with a better front brake and generator electrics, again, as with the C10 it is not a bad looking bike.

**C12** 1956-58, 249cc, ohv single, 320lb, 75mpg, 67mph

Basically the same engine as the C11G but housed in a more modern chassis with reasonable suspension, using a swing-arm, better brakes and a more comfortable seat. This machine was the last pre-unit construction 250cc BSA Model.

**C15 Star** 1959-67, 249cc, ohv single, 320lb, 70mpg, 75mph

This is a 250cc unit construction engine with neat styling. In their day, most models were prone to gearbox problems when treated harshly, but this should not be a problem now-a-days with an owner who rides the bike steadily. The sports version was the SS80 with roller big-ends which was quicker but was also less reliable; again this should not be a problem now-a-days. The standard models are easy to convert to 12v electrics, which improves lighting and allows the owner to fit electronic ignition. The C15T and Scrambles are more expensive to buy. An excellent classic to buy and own as there are plenty of models around and spares are easy to come by.

**C25 Barracuda / B25 Starfire** 1966-1970, 249cc, ohv single, 330lb, 60mpg, 75mph

This being a restyled C15 to try and keep up with the times, had tougher internals and castings, but less reliable due to the high compression engine, big-end problems being the most likely. The 'B25 Starfire', introduced in 1968 is a better bet as it was more reliable and had less vibration following a mild de-tuning. These were also sold as the 'Fleetstar' for fleet users which was a de-tuned version which gives more reliability and in a modified frame.

**B25SS Gold Star** 1971-72, 249cc, ohv single, 320lb, 55mpg, 80mph

This was the last of the C15-based series with the new oil-bearing chassis and smart Street Scrambler styling for BSA's final fling. Nice bike which was let down by the leaky and out-of-date engine. Naming it the 'Gold Star 250' did not help sales or credibility. Badly assembled when new, but any that are still running should be OK.

**B31** 1945-59, 348cc, ohv single, 365lb, 80mpg, 75mph

Basic but robust engine in pre-war rigid chassis fitted with telescopic forks. 1949 plunger suspension was fitted giving slightly more control. 1954 a swinging arm frame was fitted. It suffered from leaky and noisy engines with poor starting. The early rigid or plunger frame models are the more desirable.

**B32 Gold Star** 1949-57, 348cc, ohv single, 360lb, 65mpg, 85mph

Basically a B31 with more go flashy bodywork and better brakes. The DB32 has a good duplex frame but the price is high and there are plenty to be had, although it is stated that it suffers from a 'cult status', this bike remains one of the 'bike to own'.

**Fury** 1970-72, 349cc, ohc twin, 345lb, Prototype

Announced at the last Major Motor show, this twin was state of the art alloy engineering designed by Bert Hopwood. Carrying many of the now established Japanese components, such as electric start, indicators, twin overhead cams; it is a shame that it never made the production line, as tests proved it to be a good bike.

**B40/SS90** 1960-65, 343cc, ohv single, 305lb, 80mpg, 75mph

Bored out version of the C15 with greater torque and enclosed pushrods. Sound construction and usually reliable if treated kindly. The WD version is the best to ride. Sports SS90 version is pretty rare as the market did not welcome them.

**B44 Victor(Shooting Star)** 1966-70, 441cc, ohv single, 335lb, 65mpg, 85mph

The B44 is similar to the C15 but with stronger internals and modern chassis. Basically being a stretched C15 with slightly more go and vibration. Engines can be fragile if abused. Sold initially in the USA as the Shooting Star, renamed in UK after 67 the later models had a good twin leading shoe front brake.

**B33** 1947-59, 499cc, ohv single, 420lb, 70mpg, 80mph

This is a bored out B31, with more torque for using the sidecar outfit. Later models had a swinging arm, and there is also TLS front drum conversion. This is the 1950's classic workhorse, which it will run for ever.

**M33** 1947-57, 499cc, ohv single, 370lb, 70mpg, 70mph

This is a B33 engine inserted into a M21 bicycle, intended to pep up performance for sidecar use. Not good on power or steering.

**B34/DB34/DBD34 Gold Star** 1950-62, 499cc, ohv single, 410lb, 55mpg, 110mph

These bikes have become legendary, expensive and somewhat over-rated. These are fun on the open road, but exceptionally awkward in traffic and temperamental. These are considered to be 'overpriced' due to the vast over-reputation which masks their charm from many new riders. This was a racing road bike and has extremely good looks.

**B50SS Gold Star** 1971-72, 499cc, ohv single, 340lb, 60mpg, 85mph

This was the last of the C15 stretches. It was a radical design change from the traditional British style, but in the fullness of time looks very nice. Built as a street scramble to meet the US market demands, the engine was over-stressed when pushed to the limit. Conversion to electronic ignition transforms it's behaviour to one of GB's best ever singles. Starting requires the knack and vibration was still a problem at speed over 60 mph. There was also a B50T Victor model.

**M20** 1945-55, 496cc, sv single, 425lb, 55mpg, 65mph

The antiquated side valve engine, which was designed to meet the demands of the army and was sold off to the public after the war. Not fast and the brakes are adequate, but this is a very rugged machine. These were stretched to 591cc in 1946 as the M21 until 1963, which raised the fuel consumption.

**A7 Star Twin, Shooting Star** 1946-61, 497cc, ohv twin, 420lb, 55mpg, 90mph

These are a splendid, tough twin machine with smooth power up to 75mph. From 1954 with duplex frame, swinging-arm and better brakes gave good steering which was let down by poor lights. The A7SS Shooting Star is the tuned version sporty (A7SS), which had an alloy head, improved suspension and full width hubs.

**A50 Royal Star** 1962-70, 499cc, ohv twin, 420lbs, 60mpg, 90mph

These were a unit construction replacement for the A7 that has little vibration and lacks in performance. These are a good looking bike which is reliable because it's hard to 'thrash' them, if not sluggish machine. Became the Royal Star in 1965 after a brief sporting flurry as the A50C 'Cyclone' and A50CC 'Cyclone Clubman', and then as the 'Wasp' which was mainly for the USA

**A10 Golden Flash, Road Rocket, Super Rocket** 1951-63, 646cc, ohv twin, 440lb, 55mpg, 105mph

A bored and stroked version of the A7, the A10 was sold as the Golden Flash with flash style. The Road Rocket had a bit more go and as the Super Rocket slightly better.

**A10 Rocket Gold Star** 1962-64 646cc (70x84mm) OHV twin 51hp, 120mph, 45mpg, 390lbs

The Rocket Gold Star was a super-sports version and these can fetch up to 3 times as much. The A10 is a fine motorcycle and the only worry is the braking on the later ones which goes off quickly. Later swinging arm, duplex frame versions are better. The tuned up A10 motor dumped into Gold Star chassis resulted in a collector's piece. At high revs it has excess vibration and becomes unreliable if kept up length of time. There are some stock A10's in Goldie chassis with upgraded electrics that have all of the pose, style and none of the inherent hassles. Stock Rocket Gold Star's are too expensive but the fake stuff can be bought cheaply.

**A65 Lightning, Spitfire, Thunderbolt** 1962-73, 654cc, ohv twin, 425lb, 55mpg, 120mph

These were a unit-construction replacement for the A10. The A65 has a reputation for vibration and oil leak, but this is not justified. The Spitfire has stunning looks and excessive vibration from the engine. Late post 1971 bikes have an oil bearing frame which provides fine steering, although the seat height suffered with this design. The very late 1972 bikes are very good indeed and the Thunderbolt with a single carb gave a good compromise between power, reliability and economy.

**A70 Lightning** 1971, 751cc, ohv twin, 425lb, 50mpg, 120mph

This was a US only model, a special for racing in the states. Very rare and has been imitated, so beware, an obscure model which has a tendency towards high vibration.

**A75R Rocket 3** 1968-72, 740cc, ohv triple, 520lb, 35mpg, 125mph

Arguably the first 'Superbike', the Rocket 3 was quite a sensation when launched with its snappy acceleration, good styling, high top speed for its day able, to cruise at 90 to 100mph with excellent steering. The bikes are becoming sought after and can be expensive to run. These are rarer than the equivalent Triumphs Tridents as BSA stopped production in 1972.