

Norton Motorcycle Models

Norton was formed by James Landsowne.

Norton started motorcycle production in 1902.

Birmingham 1898 saw the start, making spares for the bicycle trade, and 100 years on this make has stood the test of time. The Manx Norton of 1937 became the bike to beat. Racing success led to the famous Dominator 500cc twin in 1949 which continued into the sixties with the Famous Featherbed Frame of 1952 and in 1956 the 600cc engine, which with the slimline Featherbed and a 650cc engine in 1962 gave the 650SS Dominator. Eventually taken over by the AMC group in 1953 the Birmingham factory was closed in 1962 and production was moved to the Matchless plant in Woolwich.

The 'Norton Featherbed Frame' was accepted as the best frame in production and was desired by many boy racers who fitted Triumph engines to give us the Triton which was the epitome of the 'Cafe Racer' and so it was with a sense of loss when the Commando was launched in 1967 with a new frame and Isolastic engine suspension. This awesome combination continued in production until 1977 and 'against all odds' they won the Senior TT when the Japanese were thought to be invincible.

Norton Models

Jubilee 1958-66. 249cc, ohv twin, 350lb, 75mpg, 65mph.

A well designed but underdeveloped and badly constructed unit construction twin in AMC group lightweight chassis. Most engines rattle and leak oil. The Deluxe version looks quite smart. Not to be confused with the Triumph Sliver Jubilee.

Navigator 1960-65. 349cc, ohv twin, 350lb, 65mpg, 75mph.

Enlarged and more useful Jubilee with road-holder forks and an 8" front brake. Enough performance for cruising the byways and excellent handling.

Electra 1963-65, 394cc, ohv twin, 360lb, 55mpg, 75mph.

This is a rare electric start version of the Navigator with a bit bigger capacity and indicators. Not a bad lightweight machine with elegance.

International Model 40 1946-58, 349cc, ohc single, 340lb, 65mpg, 85mp

This is a fussy camshaft model based on the Manx Racing Norton. The Featherbed models are the best but they are ludicrously expensive.

Model 50 1956-63, 348cc, ohv single, 400lb, 75mpg, 75mph.

A gentle traditional British single with nice manners, but a little down on performance. Post '59 models are the ones to buy with the famous Featherbed Frame, decent lights and good looks. Very few survive, most were built into Tritons. The engine is vice-less and the steering is excellent.

Model 7 1947-56, 497cc, ohv twin, 430lb, 80mpg, 75mph.

Early twin cylinder engine in a rigid frame which was later updated to plunger and then swinging arm. Engine does not vibrate, but is not particularly powerful and only suffers poor rocker gear wear and gearbox problems.

16H 1945-55, 490cc, sv single, 365lb, 55mpg, 65mph.

This model was most unlike a Norton slogger with less performance than a modern 125cc. They do have some charm though and generally used to be found with a sidecar fitted.

Model 18 1945-54, 490cc, ohv single, 341lb, 45mpg, 65mph.

This is very similar to the ES2 but with a rigid rear end, initially with a Girder front fork, but in 1946 taking on the telescopic version. Wheel rims were chrome with black centre and red lines. The finish remained very similar to the ES2 for its entire life. A reliable model throughout its years of production, although not the most flamboyant. There was also a plunger rear end option available.

ES2 1947-62, 490cc, ohv single, 380lb, 60mpg, 75mph.

Norton's traditional British single. Average performer until the Featherbed Frame gave it brilliant handling for 1959. It is a pleasant bike, but a lot of the later ones were converted into Tritons.

ES2 MkII & Model 50 MKII 1964-66, 348/498cc, ohv single, 400lb, 80/60mpg, 75/80mph.

These are Matchless machines with Norton badges and bear no resemblance to a 'real' ES2. Very rare now, means that despite the facts these bikes fetch an elevated price.

Dominator 88 1951-66, 497cc, ohv twin, 420lb, 60mpg, 90mph.

The first of the Featherbed Framed roadster twins using a model 7 engine. Good road holding and brakes matched with a smooth engine. The wideline frame can be uncomfortable on a long run.

Dominator 88SS 1960-66, 497cc, ohv twin, 410lb, 60mpg, 110mph.

This is a tuned 88 with twin carbs and siamese exhausts. Good combination of power, economy and reliability. 80mph cruising is possible without too much vibration.

Model 77 1956-59, 596cc, ohv twin, 410lb, 65mpg, 95mph.

600cc engine in the model 7 swinging arm frame which produced a very interesting combination. Engines were quite robust as they were not highly tuned.

Dominator 99 1956-60, 596cc, ohv twin, 420lb, 55mpg, 100mph.

Is a stretched 88 with a little more speed and also vibration? The Wideline frame made sure that you could get the maximum use of it's performance.

Dominator 99SS 1961-62, 596cc, ohv twin, 425lb, 55mpg, 115mph.

This is a tuned 600 with twin carbs, high compression pistons, big valves and radical valve timing. It also suffers excessive vibration at high speeds. Slimline frame gives excellent handling and comfort.

Dominator 650 1960-63, 646cc, ohv twin, 420lb, 50mpg, 110mph.

Again, this is another enlargement on the 600 engine with a single carb. It lacks top end power but lots of torque lower down the range and excellent gear change action, with the handling of the slimline featherbed frame.

Dominator 650SS 1961-69, 646cc, ohv twin, 420lb, 50mpg, 110mph.

Another stretched 99 with good performance and greater vibration. It still uses the slimline featherbed frame, still a very nice bike but over-rated.

International Model 30 1946-58, 500cc ohc single, 360lb, 60mpg, 95mph.

Sports single with overhead cam which gave it similar performance to the 88 but required more effort to achieve it. Very good looks and a touch of class justify the incredible prices which are being asked.

Model 19 1955-57, 596cc, ohv single, 385lb, 60mpg, 70mph.

This is a monster 600cc single for the sidecar with little to commend it except rarity. Suffix 'S' stands for 'sprung' and suffix 'R' stands for 'rigid'.

Big 4 1947-54, 596cc, sv single, 400lb, 50mpg, 65mph.

Pre-war relic intended to pull a sidecar with loads over long distances at a slow speed. Over-priced because of the Norton name, and spares are very rare and hard to get hold of.

Atlas 750 1963-68. 745cc, ohv twin, 420lb, 50mpg, 110mph.

This was a stretched 650 with excessive vibration which spoilt the model. Huge amounts of torque makes for a very relaxing cruiser.

N15 1964-68, 745cc, ohv twin, 420lb, 45mpg, 110mph.

This was an Atlas engine in a Matchless frame and given off-road styling for a trail bike. Mainly these were sold in the USA.

P10 1965, 800cc, ohc twin, prototype.

This was an experimental model that never made it into production. This was to replace the aging Atlas. While the engine failed, the frame was forerunner for the successful Commando.

Wulf 1980, 500cc, 2-stroke twin, prototype.

Another prototype which incorporated a Stepped Piston 500cc 2-stroke engine in a well tested frame.

P11/P11A/Ranger 750 1965-69, 745cc, ohv twin, 400lb, 45mpg, 110mph.

This is a US Desert racer with the Atlas engine in the Matchless G85CS scrambler frame making the best of the bike, a very rare and a very fine street scrambler.

Commando Mk 1/2 1969-71, 750cc, ohv twin, 400lb, 50mpg, 120mph.

Tuned Atlas engine was fitted into a frame with Isolastic mountings. It was a novel idea to overcome the vibration which had been used by cars for many years.

Commando Mk3 1972-73, 745cc, ohv twin, 400lb, 50mpg, 120mph.

1972 model had new crank bearings and cases but didn't work until upgraded with superblend bearings in 1973.

Commando 850 1973-77, 829cc, ohv twin, 425lb, 40/50mpg, 115/120mph.

The Interstate had a larger tank and higher gearing. The last models were given an electric start and had the gearchange on the left hand side.

JPS 1974-75, 829cc, ohv twin, 450lb, 40mpg, 125mph.

This is a John Player Special version, following on from the success of the 'Slippery Sam' bike and other racing models.

Classic 1988-89, 588cc, twin rotary, 498lb, 40mpg, 130mph.

This is the first civilian rotary Norton. With it's neat traditional style and unique engine giving very good performance. Check that it really is a 'Classic' and not a re-styled reupholstered 'Police Interpol 2'