

# History

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## The Terrier

The Triumph Terrier Model T15 was the brain-child of Mr. Edward Turner (Born 1901) in mid-1952.



Father of the Tiger Cub.

## The Tiger Cub

Designed in the late summer of 1952 the 150cc (9 cu. in.) Triumph Terrier was originally marketed not only as a commuter and learner machine but also as the bait to land the later sale of one of Triumph's big twins to the owner of the lightweight machine. With its successor, the 200cc (12 cu. in.) Tiger Cub, over 112,000 were sold to 153 different countries between 1953 and 1969.

The Terrier was launched in November 1952 but the first examples were not sold until August 1953. The sports version of the Terrier, or 'Tiger Cub' was announced in November 1953 but again there was a delay with the first sales not being made until March 1954.

The early machines were very lightly built, as yet somewhat under-developed and therefore rather fragile, but were possessed of a remarkable performance for their small capacity. The Cub was very quick off the mark, capable in standard roadster trim of nearly seventy mph and yet gave astonishing fuel economy, well over one hundred miles per Imperial gallon being easily achievable. They were also agreeably noisy, the characteristic exhaust note and valve gear clatter being still remembered, even today!

Another factor which contributed towards their success was Style, with a capital 'S'! Although the Cub had been Edward Turner's design it was his design engineer Jack Wickes who really gave this new machine the Triumph 'look.' They bore a strong resemblance to the larger capacity and very successful twin cylinder machines from the same factory. In its early Shell Blue livery and with the very neat instrument nacelle the Cub was a handsome machine that really looked 'right'. Later came other Cub models and other colour schemes but first and always was Turner's desire give his customers something that was good to look at.

It was another of Turner's design criteria that might have sent the Cub to an early grave had it not been for high performance figures and cheap spare parts. Even from his early days at the Ariel factory his dictum had always been to make, 'The minimum amount of metal perform the maximum amount of duty'. This was all very well in principle but he very nearly went too far with the Cub which was for a long time under-engineered. If over stressed the mechanical, electrical and cycle parts were liable to break with monotonous regularity. Having far too much performance for their own good these machines, with young riders as yet inexperienced in the mysteries of proper use and maintenance of their mounts, were frequently ridden hard until

something broke. Thus was born the Cub's reputation for self-destruction! Big ends, clutches and main bearings were particularly vulnerable and overheating was a problem but over the years these and many other parts were strengthened and sorted out until, by the time they got it right, they decided to stop making it!

During its lifetime more than twenty different model designations arose although these were all variations on a theme. There were two types of cam, two compression ratios, several different gearsets, two types of ignition system, lightweight and heavyweight forks, two different frames, multiple wheel sizes and tinware. Several models were developed for particular markets – the USA, Bermuda and the French army spring to mind – but it was a very versatile little machine, generally well-liked and with a characteristic exhaust note.

Many thousands of riders cut their motorcycling teeth on a Tiger Cub, a model well remembered and still popular today. Even now a Cub can make a decent commuter machine and in trials riding it still has a justifiably valued reputation. In the fifties and early sixties it was just about unbeatable on the American short tracks and cross-country events until more modern European designs arose and the two-stroke engine finally delivered its promised power. The end came with the very last machines produced in 1969 although volume production had all but ceased the year before.

The Tiger Cub, together with its much rarer predecessor the 150cc Terrier, can often be seen at various events and they are still enjoyed by their owners and onlookers. The advent of modern oils and electronics have considerably improved reliability and this machine will continue to be appreciated for many years to come. The Tiger Cub and Terrier Register now records the survival of over six thousand bikes, frames and engines and the total is going up all the time.

Mike Estall.