

ROAD TEST reprinted

A good little bike—despite the niggles

SHOULD the reader detect a note of gentle affection running through the following road test, I offer no apologies whatever. I *liked* the Tiger Cub, and always had done, even though I have to agree that it had its fair share of niggles—well, on earlier examples, anyway, and particularly when such early examples had been through the hands of a juvenile owner or two.

As you'll probably know, the first post-war Triumph single was the 1953 149cc Terrier, Edward Turner designed, and not so

199cc Triumph T20

terribly unlike the 147cc ohv Model XO of 1933/4. The Terrier was soon overshadowed by the 199cc Tiger Cub built from 1954 onward but still retaining that distributor sticking up through the top face of the crankcase; with wear, the distributor drive and its clamping screw tended to get sloppy and give somewhat imprecise ignition.

After the engine had been up and down a few times, too, oil-tightness was a matter of luck. Then there was the fatuous cable-operated gear indicator on the headlamp, the plain big-end bearing that wasn't always man enough for the work demanded of it, and so on. Thankfully, the Cub never adopted the full "bathtub" rear enclosure, although around 1959 there was semi-enclosure panelwork—"wash-basin", perhaps?—beneath the dual seat.

Still and all, by 1966 when the following test appeared the Cub had matured considerably, though the unit had not quite reached the end of its development. Eventually, indeed, it was to adopt a caged-roller big-end bearing, but for 1966 something else was being tried—a sintered-bronze big-end bush first tried on the works trials models. To this point, also, the Cub had used an oil pump of eccentric and con-rod type; now,

however, there was a double-slide pump on the same lines as that used on the vertical twins, affording a considerable increase in oil supply.

Adoption of the BSA Bantam frame was to be expected, perhaps, because in fact erection of the Tiger Cub had recently been transferred from Meriden to Small Heath, and since BSA were already building a bike (the 175cc Bantam) of roughly similar size, the use of a common frame (or nearly so) made a kind of economic sense.

The final Meriden Cubs came out in a variety of styles—T20SH Sports (the finest of them all!), TR20 Trials, and, for export markets, the Pastoral, and Mountain Cub trail—but Small Heath tended to look upon the machine as an unwanted intruder, and in the last season of all, 1968, it was down to a single version, the T20SC Super Cub.

One could argue, of course, that it cost almost as much to erect a Cub as it did a bigger-capacity model, but even allowing for the fact that the BSA Group were in deep financial trouble, the decision to kill off both the Cub and the Bantam was deplorable. After all, study a side elevation of the 1966 Cub, and visualise it with (let's say) a nice little overhead

BELOW: The 199cc T20 Triumph engine was in fact slotted into a BSA Bantam frame—and certainly filled it better than the original two-stroke unit.



Tiger Cub



THE factory tester dwarfs the little Triumph as he circulates for the photographer.

camshaft instead of pushrods; reduce the capacity from 199 to 125cc for taxation or insurance reasons, and you would end up with something uncannily like a Honda! RFC

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**THE
MOTOR CYCLE**

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ONE IS apt to take the Tiger Cub—the standard version rather than the sports model—for granted. “Nice little job,” we say. “Light, nippy, cheap to run; just the job.” But just how nippy, or how cheap to run? Surprisingly, it was as long ago as 1957 that *Motor Cycle* last road-tested the standard Cub. High time that was put right!

Not that the machine has been transformed over the years. Put a 1966 engine alongside the earlier one and there would be more similarities than differences. However, there have been many internal improvements, such as a heftier crankpin and more copious oil supply.

It is in frame layout that the major change is apparent. This is something very recent. The 1966 Cub has been fitted out with a BSA Bantam frame.

It's a logical development, for the Cub and Bantam are lightweights of approximately the same capacity and both are now built at the Small Heath plant. So why not keep down costs by using the same frame for both?

The customer benefits. We said in 1957 that the little Triumph offered remarkable value for money and, at £165 0s 3d, including a chromium-plated headlamp and two-tone finish of white and blue, it remains a bargain.

If anything, the borrowed frame enhances rather than detracts from the proportions of the machine. The frame is a shade larger than the original, though an all-welded instead of brazed-lug construction ensures that the weight is about the same; the wheelbase is longer by an inch or more and the wheels have gone up to 18in diameter.

So the Cub is a bit higher off the ground than before. That's not necessarily a bad thing, for one can still stand astride with feet flat on the

ground and waggle the bike from side to side.

There is a full-size riding position, which affords a comfortable stance bringing the ball-end handlebar levers within easy finger reach.

The gear pedal is well tucked away towards the engine, but that is something to which a rider soon becomes accustomed. In fact, the only slight criticism of the riding position is that the tank is too low in relation to the seat for the cushion-type knee grips to be effective.

On a longish ride, the hard-rubber top edges of the knee grips make their presence felt. Plain, stick-on grips might be better.

When on the move, steering and roadholding are excellent, and there's a beautiful feeling of balance about the new Cub. Light and with a low centre of gravity, it can be banked over, eased up, tweaked off in a new direction and generally thrown around with absolute confidence.

Such manoeuvrability makes a ride thoroughly enjoyable, whether the little Triumph is being dodged about the city streets or put through its paces in twisty lanes.



reassuring firmness—and neutral can be found very readily.

The carburettor has no air slide (neither had the 1957 version) nor is one necessary. Starting is just a matter of flooding the float chamber lightly then opening the twistgrip about an eighth of a turn.

Usually the engine fires at the second or third kick. Watch your shin, though; at the bottom of its swing, the crank comes rather close to the rear of the footrest.

Power output is steady-all-the-way, rather than coming in with a bang, and that is part of the Cub's charm. Clutch action is as light as could be wished for and the transmission take-up is as smooth as silk.

A second-gear start is possible without overmuch need to slip the clutch and the same applies to a bottom-gear start on MIRA's 1-in-4 test hill.

Naturally, the gear box has to be employed to advantage if full use is to be made of the model's general nip-piness, but once the derestriction signs are passed there is little need to change down for bends or hills.

The engine is as tireless as any Triumph and will make no bones of holding an indicated 60 mph (true speed, 56 mph) for miles on end, with a little left in reserve for emergencies.

Rocker-gear rattle is evident, though not blatant and, at about 50 mph in top gear, there is a trace of roughness. The period soon passes as the needle climbs upward.

Maybe the most remarkable thing about the machine is its fuel economy. Circulating the track at steady speeds of 30 and 40 mph, almost identical figures around 120 mpg were recorded—something very unusual in road-test experience.

Even at a steady 50 mph with the test tank in place, the Cub just ran on and on and on. How about that, then—96 mpg?

Response to the throttle is immediate and gratifying. Moreover, the once-characteristic Cub crackle has gone and the mute in the silencer tail pipe hushes the note down to a soft chuffing.

This is the quietest, best-mannered Cub that ever was and it refuses to call attention to itself even when accelerated hard.

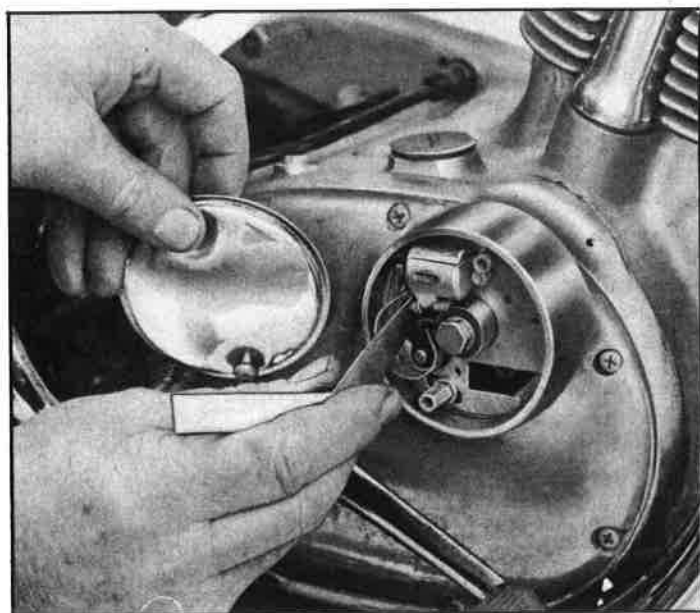
First thing in the morning, or whenever the machine has been standing for a few hours, the clutch becomes rather sticky.

Unless the kick-starter pedal is operated with the clutch lever pulled back, bottom-gear engagement is apt to be crunchy.

At the best of times, the change from neutral to bottom is poor, but that is typical Triumph and nothing to worry about.

At least, the cogs slip home with

ABOVE: There is a determined look on Bob Currie's face as he puts the Triumph Tiger Cub through its paces back in 1966.



RIGHT: Checking the points shows just how accessible the contact-breaker is.

SPECIFICATION

ENGINE: Capacity and type: 199cc (63 × 64mm) overhead-valve single. Bearings: Ball drive-side and plain timing-side mains; plain big-end. Lubrication: Dry sump; capacity 4 pints.

Compression ratio: 7 to 1.

Carburettor: Amal Monobloc 375/44 $\frac{2}{3}$ in choke. No air slide. Mesh air filter. Claimed Output: 10 bhp at 6,000 rpm.

TRANSMISSION: Primary: $\frac{3}{8}$ × 0.225 in. chain in oilbath case. Secondary: $\frac{1}{2}$ × 0.205 in chain. Clutch: Multi-plate.

Gear Ratios: 20.82, 14.34, 9.23 and 6.98 to 1.

Engine rpm at 30 mph in top gear: 3,000

ELECTRICAL EQUIPMENT: Ignition: Battery and coil with emergency start circuit.

Charging: Lucas 60-watt alternator to six-volt, ten-amp-hour battery through rectifier. Headlamp: Lucas $\frac{5}{2}$ -in-diameter with 30 24-watt main bulb.

FUEL CAPACITY: 3 gallons.

TYRES: Dunlop Lightweight studded, 3.00 × 18 in front and rear.

BRAKES: $\frac{5}{2}$ in-diameter front and rear.

SUSPENSION: Telescopic front fork with hydraulic damping. Pivoted rear fork controlled by Girling spring-damper units.

BOTTOM



SECOND



THIRD



TOP



Bottom, second and third-gear figures represent maximum power revs. 6,000.

DIMENSIONS: Wheelbase, 51in; ground clearance, $\frac{5}{2}$ in; seat height, 30in. All unladen.

WEIGHT: 228lb including half a gallon of petrol.

PRICE: £165 0s 3d including British purchase tax.

EXTRAS: Prop stand: £1 8s 9d; pillion footrests: £1.7s 6d.

ROAD TAX: £4 a year.

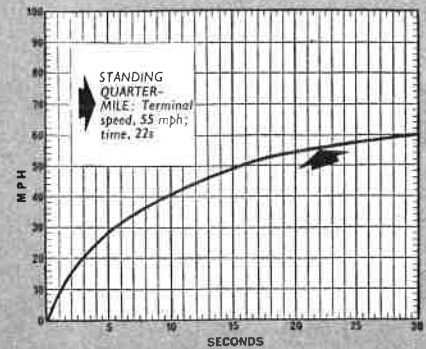
MAKERS: Triumph Engineering Co, Ltd, Meriden Works, Allesley, Coventry.

PERFORMANCE

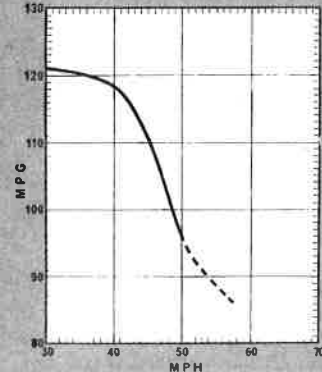
(Obtained at the Motor Industry Research Association's proving ground, Lindley, Leicestershire).

HIGHEST ONE-WAY SPEED: 65 mph (14½-stone rider wearing light riding gear; light side wind).

ACCELERATION



FUEL CONSUMPTION



BRAKING: From 30 mph to rest on dry asphalt, 33 ft.

TURNING CIRCLE: 12ft 6in.

MINIMUM NON-SNATCH

SPEED: 20 mph in top gear.

WEIGHT PER CC: 1.15 lb.

When kept in correct adjustment, the front brake is a smooth and effective stopper and it was used for the tiger's share of any smart pulling-up to be done. Reason was that the rear brake on the test machine was somewhat fierce and could lock the wheel if the pedal was tramped on anything but gingerly.

The change from a streamlined fork-top nacelle to a separate headlamp mounted in brackets is something many owners appreciate; beam adjustment is now a matter of tilting the lamp up or down.

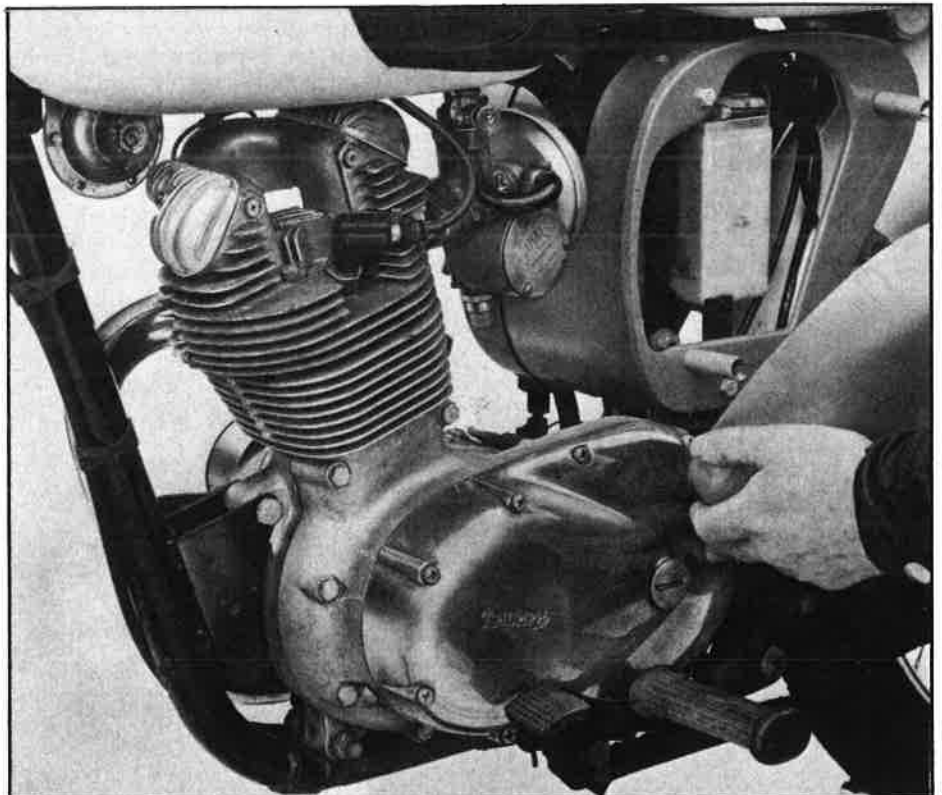
It's a fine, bright beam, too; plenty powerful enough for a two-hundred.

Add to the list of the Cub's virtues a usefully loud horn and (an extra) a really hefty prop stand. Rather less appreciated was the tool-box lid.

Held by two screws, it is easy to detach—but getting it back again is no job for the impatient.

Tiger Cub (*Felix Tigris Meridenus*): a playful little animal with real bite, capable of travelling for miles on minimum sustenance.

You can't help liking it. It even looks willing and friendly—and looks in this case, don't lie.



NEAR-SIDE of the Triumph showing the clean lines of the engine with the side panel removed to give access to the battery.