

Triumph Motorcycles timeline

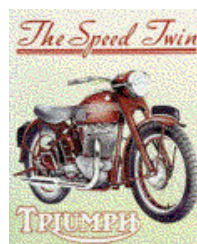
1946-1962: Recovery and Growth

[See bottom of page for links to other eras in Triumph's history.](#)

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1946

Civilian production resumes at Meriden. All-twin cylinder range announced - 350cc 3T Deluxe (designed originally for production in 1940 and loosely based on the aborted 3TW), 500cc Speed Twin (redesigned for 1946 with telescopic forks, separate magneto and dynamo), 500cc Tiger 100.



Triumph's popular Speed Twin continued production after the war.

Telescopic forks were on all models, with the spring wheel extra. Tiger 85 twin (a sports version of the 3T) and 3H single are announced but not produced. Only about a dozen shops in USA handle Triumphs in the first year after the war.

Ernie Lyons wins first Manx Grand Prix on redesigned Tiger 100 (built by Freddie Clarke and based on wartime generator engine but using Triumph's first attempt at rear suspension - a sprung hub). Turner, who was anti-racing (and away in America on a tour), was furious - but he threw Lyons winner a victory dinner anyway. Clarke resigned and joined AMC as Chief Development Engineer. A small batch of Lyons' T100 was made for sale. Bert Hopwood left after an argument with Turner over racing and stayed away 14 years. Ivor Davies joins Triumph. Total output this year was 9,477 machines, 44 per cent for export.

TT races resumed. Ducati produces its first bike, the 50cc Cucciolo. Soichiro Honda creates the Honda Technical Institute in Hamamatsu, Japan. German manufacturers allowed to build 125cc, then later 250cc machines. In April, UK motorcyclist CE Allen holds a rally in Surrey to form the Vintage Motor Cycle Club (38 enthusiasts of pre-1930 machines attended). First Vespa scooters made by Piaggio (Italy). Ossa (Spain) founded. Parilla (Italy) founded, starts making first motorcycles and enters races. There are 200,000 motorcycles registered in the USA after the war. That number would triple by 1960.

1947

Spring rear hub introduced. Edward Turner tours California, visiting film sets in Hollywood and rubbing shoulders with film stars. David Whitworth scores racing success on a T100 on the continent. 3TU prototype made, based on revised pre-war New Imperial design and originally intended at carry New Imperial badges, but proves too slow and is not produced.



The post-war 3TU prototype: poor performance but great style... note the heavily-valenced fenders, similar to an Indian Chief, and solid wheels.

Doug Hele leaves Douglas and joins Triumph.

Bert Hopwood joins [Norton](#), where he designed the Norton Dominator 500cc twin-cylinder engine this year. Soichiro Honda builds his first two-stroke engine. AMC takes over Francis-Barnett. First Lambretta scooters made (Italy). In July, a motorcycle rally and race event in Hollister California becomes a nationally-publicized 'riot'. A famous photograph of a drunken biker perched on top a Harley surrounded by dozens of empty (many broken) beer bottles gets printed in Life magazine. The photo was later proved to be staged and the 'riot' involved only a fraction of the attendees acting rowdy.

1948

TR5: 500cc 'Trophy' TR5 - Triumph's first trail bike - is introduced following success in International Six Day Test (ISDT - the bike was named after the official British racing team won the award). The engine was originally built by Triumph to power generators for the RAF in WW2: it has aluminum heads and barrels and is light, torquey and powerful. The team won the next four years' contests.

500cc Grand Prix (GP) model announced, based on T100. Alex Scobie road tests the GP. Henry Vale wins the ISDT riding a customized 5T roadster. Triumph making 12,000 bikes a year, 60 per cent of them are exported, but American sales are declining. Turner is persuaded to enter a trio of 500cc twins in the Senior TT, but they are all retired during the race, which strengthens Turner's opposition to competition racing.

Vale is hired and becomes Triumph's competition shop boss and chief engineer, until 1966, making and designing all of the company's trials and scrambles models. The military-use 500cc TRW design is finalized, based on 5T and TR5 components. It is also the world's first mass-production motorcycle to use AC electrics. From November on, all machines used an all-new, shorter-wheelbase chassis.

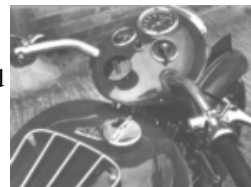
The British team wins the prestigious International Six Day Trials (ISDT) on Triumph Trophy bikes. Riders on the team included Allan Jeffries, Bob Manns, Len Bayliss, Jimmy Alves and Alex Scobie. This bike was released for production in 1949 as the TR5.

Pete Colman is appointed by JoMo to set up a US dealer network, working with sales manager Andy Anderson.

Soichiro Honda starts making motorcycles in Japan, attaching second-hand US Army generator engines to bicycle frames. They also make Honda's first motorcycle: the 98cc two-stroke Model D ("Dream"). [Royal Enfield](#) releases its first parallel-twin, a 500cc roadster. [Vincent HRD](#) releases its Series B Black Shadow and Series C Black Lightning. Norman returns to production with a new autocycle and a 197cc lightweight. [Norton](#) makes its first parallel twin prototype and later shows the complete Dominator at the Earl's Court show. Aermacchi (Italy) makes first motorcycle. Silverstone race circuit opens. First BSA Bantam produced, a 125cc two-stroke called the D1. BMW returns to motorcycle market with 250cc single R24.

1949

650cc Thunderbird 6T (designed by Turner but made into a workable machine by his drawing-board guru, Jack Wickes) was launched on Sept. 20 with three models racing 500 miles at 90mph (800km at 145kph) for a demonstration at Montlhery. Although basically a revamped, bored-out Speed Twin, 6T is designed to satisfy export (mostly American) market, offered as capable of a full 161 kmh/100 mph. Thunderbird quickly becomes favourite of police forces worldwide. Nacelle headlamp enclosure is put on all models (moving gauges from top of tank - see Thunderbird photo at right). The name came to Turner while on a US tour. He stayed at the Thunderbird Motel in South Carolina.



Top: Montlhery Thunderbirds. From left: riders Len Bayliss and Bob Manns, BBC correspondent David Martin, rider Alex Scobie, Ivor Davies. Below: Thunderbird nacelle.

25hp TR5 model Trophy produced (based on Speed Twin, designed for offroad use, but with excellent highway ability, easy starting and excellent braking). It became the mainstay of the AMC "Class C" racing until 1969. American versions combine components of the T100 and grand Prix Trophy to make a fast desert racer. Triumph Owners Motorcycle Club founded. 5/3W 500cc side-valve built for military, based on 3TWO, destroyed in Coventry blitz. Jeffries wins gold at the ISDT (winning again in 1950 and 51). The Mark II sprung hub is introduced. JoMo signs over 100 US dealers by the end of the year.

Triumph production is up to 12,000 motorcycles, 60 per cent for export.

After disputes with director Joe Craig over Norton's expensive involvement with racing, Bert Hopwood leaves Norton for BSA. [Norton](#) introduces its own parallel twin, the 500cc Model 7 Dominator, designed by Hopwood. [AJS and Matchless](#) introduce swinging-arm frames. US Federal Trade Commission charges Harley-Davidson with making illegal exclusive-deal contracts with its dealers and forcing them not to take other lines. Bert Hopwood designs 250cc engine using bevel-gear for valves, for BSA. Alfred "Rich" Child sets up a [BSA](#) network in the USA, adding dealers faster than JoMo. BSA production is at 1,000 units a week by 1950. Indian director Ralph Rogers acquires US distribution rights for AJS, Douglas, Excelsior, Matchless, Royal Enfield, Norton and Vincent for his 1,000 dealer network. He founds Indian Sales in the UK as a distributor for the bikes.

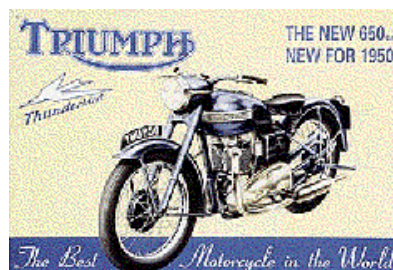
Sales of British bikes to the USA are only 4,275 machines this year, compared to 25,107 to Australia. [Scott](#) sold to Matt Holder. [Velocette](#) introduces 149cc LE, the bike that would break the company. Harley drops springer forks for improved hydraulically-dampened telescopic forks. World Championship series of Grand Prix races organized, with sidecar races included. Restrictions on size of German motorcycles lifted. Norton wins first Daytona 200 in USA. CZ and JAWA merge to form CSAZ, but still market bikes under original names. Rumi (Italy) changes from textiles to motorcycle manufacturing (ending around 1959). BSA 500cc Gold Star is launched

1950

Painted fuel tanks with pressed styling bands and badges are used due to temporary lack of lining capacity. Edward Turner opts for "low-chrome" policy, bans the use of chrome fuel tanks on future models (they weren't used again until the Bonneville Royal Wedding edition in 1981).

Thunderbird in production; the world's first "superbike," it can achieve 100 mph at a reasonable price. performance improvements come mid-way through year when carb size is increased. Turner believes 650cc is the practical limit for vertical twins. Last year for the GP model (although T100C continues its tradition). The Mark 2 sprung hub is used in bikes this year.

Turner establishes US-based Triumph Corp., in Maryland, a wholly-owned east coast distribution company created to serve eastern US markets. Denis McCormack, 48, is first president. After 1950, more Triumphs would be sold in the USA than in any other country, including Britain.



Top: 1950 Thunderbird poster.
Middle: Triumph star rider Jim Alves, centre, chats with an official (far right) during one of the ISDT events. On the left is Edward Turner and right of Alves is Henry Vale. Bottom: TRW military model.

The 500cc TRW is introduced for military use (see 1943). Basically it was a Trophy. It would never receive any form of rear suspension and was the last Triumph with a rigid frame. Almost 16,000 were made, mostly sold to Canadian and Indian armed forces. Three versions were made: Mk 1, 2 and 3.

In April, Jack Sangster and Edward Turner attend a motorcycle show in New York. US imports of Triumph bikes are up to 1,000. The Tiger gets a 'twinseat' bench seat. Bob Fearon joins Triumph as Works Director, from BSA, replacing the retiring Alf Camwell.

The British team - again riding on Trophy models - wins the 1950 ISDT in Wales, and star rider Jim Alves wins a gold medal for his success. Factory output is up to 14,306 machines, two-thirds of them for export.

Petrol rationing ends in Britain. The "second golden age" of motorcycling begins as sales climb. There are over 700,000 motorcycles and 4 million cars registered in the UK. Britain is the largest manufacturer of motorcycles in the world. They're so positive in their outlook that British bike companies decide not to hold an Earl's Court trade show this year, although many attend shows on the continent. Geoff Duke makes his racing debut at the TT riding a Norton. [Vincent](#) drops its HRD initials because of consumer confusion in the USA with Harley-Davidson. MV Augusta debuts its first motorcycle in Italy. The last Morgan "cyclecar" is listed, a four-cylinder, three-wheeler. Hell's Angels Motorcycle Club formed in Fontana, California, named after a WW1 bomber squadron stationed near Los Angeles. First motorcycle race at Thruxton, a former RAF base in Hampshire. German car manufacturer Simson makes first motorcycle. Kreidler (German) opens its factory.

Sidecar maker Watsonian produces a 996cc motorcycle but the market isn't excited, so it is soon dropped. BMW makes first post-war boxer, the R51/2.

1951

Triumph Corporation (TriCor) in Baltimore (USA) starts operating with Denis McCormack as head, Johnson as VP. They divide the US into eastern and western territories. US imports are up to 2,730, a value of 680,000 pounds.

Sangster sells Triumph to BSA for 2.5 million pounds - the same company to which he sold Ariel in 1939. He joins the BSA Group as member of the board. Turner's holdings in triumph earn him ten percent of the sale.

Race kit for Tiger 100 introduced. This year's models are restyled with new paint (painted gas tanks replace chrome on all models) and first dual seat introduced. Thunderbird slate-blue changed to brighter, metallic shade.

Siegfried Bettmann, 88, dies on Sept. 24, leaving several bequests of Coventry, including his library of nearly 2,000 books.

Harley Davidson complains about Triumph's progress in racing and marketing to the US tariff Commission, demanding a high duty (40%) on all imported motorcycles. They claim Triumph is 'dumping' its machines at artificially low prices. Among their witnesses is former Triumph pioneer dealer, Reggie Pink.

Walt Fulton wins Catalina Grand Prix on a Thunderbird and Bobby Turner breaks 132 mph on a Tbird at Bonneville.

Changes to the Trophy include heads with splayed ports and barrels with closely-pitched fins (based on T100 cylinders). This year, Triumph offers only four models, all 500cc and up, compared to 19 models from BSA. London Police put two-way radios on motorcycles.

In December, Harley Davidson announces a 45ci knucklehead to compete with British bikes. Suzuki builds first prototype motorcycle. Nacional Motor SA (Spain) starts production of motorcycles. NSU (Germany) and Felix Wankel enter into agreement for production research and development. Ossa (Spain) builds first motorcycles. KTM founded in Austria, makes its first motorcycles.



Top: Contemporary Triumph advertising poster. Bottom: BSA logo.

1952

Tiger 100, ridden by Bernard Hargreaves, wins Clubman's TT in Isle of Man at 82.45mph (132.68kph). By the early 1950s, demand for Manx Norton engines to power Formula Three cars left many Manx Featherbed frames available. Designers start putting Triumph engines into the frames, creating 'Tritons.' John Viccars was the first noted Triton builder, putting 500cc and 650cc Triumph engines and gear boxes into Norton frames.

The US Tariff Commission decides against HD's complaint and the hearing gives Triumph added publicity. Harley is charged with restrictive trade practices instead. There are 32 British motorcycle manufacturers at this year's June show in Earls' Court.

New four-stroke single announced in November for Earl's Court show, called the Terrier. Engine is inclined forward 25 degrees. Last year for the 349cc 3T: Turner feels it takes precious resources away from development of bigger twins. Grand Prix model dropped.

Triumph produces the 7ST prototype, a 734cc side-valve twin based on the TRW, known as the 'Jumbo.' It was aimed at sidecar use, but performance was mediocre and surpassed by the Thunderbird. A swinging-arm model was built in 1957. The 149cc, unit-construction Terrier is announced.

[Norton](#) puts its parallel twin engine in a Featherbed frame to produce the Dominator 88. Suzuki makes its first engine, a 36cc two-stroke called the Power Free, designed to clip into a bicycle frame. Vespa scooter launched. made under license by [Douglas](#). Vespa sales are 150-200 a week. Douglas soon launches a sidecar for the scooter. Wilhelm Heiz sets the land speed record on a 500cc NSU at 180 mph. New Hudson closes. British scooter Swallow Gadabout ceases production. First European motocross championships for individuals held. Vespa Club of Britain formed. FIM establishes a European 500cc



1952 Thunderbird

Championship for motocross. AMC takes over Norton. R68 is BMW's first production model to reach 160 kmh (100 mph).

1953

Despite Turner's original intention to concentrate on larger engines, a 150cc ohv Terrier T15, four-speed single with a sloping engine, is introduced at 98 pounds (125 with taxes). It's the first lightweight for Triumph since 1933. Triumph directors Edward Turner, Bob Fearon (Works Director) and Alex Masters (Service Manager) ride from Land's End to John O'Groat's for a 1,000-mile Terrier demonstration and publicity stunt called the "Gaffers' Gallop." They average 36.68 mpg and get a fuel consumption of 108.6 miles per gallon!

The race kit is dropped, replaced by the T100C with kit already installed, with twin carbs this year only. The 5T gets an alternator. AC lighting and ignition tested on a Speed Twin. A folding kickstand is offered as an option for the first time. Cliff Guild, master tuner, joins TriCor.

American manufacturer, Indian, stops making its own motorcycles and instead imports [Royal Enfield](#) and other British machines. Associated Motorcycles Corp (AMC) buys Norton. They were to absorb AJS, Matchless, James and Francis-Barnett lines but collapsed in 1966. Royal Enfield makes the 692cc Meteor, the largest parallel twin on the market. Shaft-drive, four-cylinder Wooler promised, but not delivered. J. Casal (Portugal) forms Metalugica Casal. MZ (Motorradwerk Zschopau) founded in Germany. Mandatory crash helmets introduced in Britain.

1954

Tiger 110 (T110) announced - very high performance (8.5:1 pistons), sporty version of the Thunderbird (42bhp compared to the Tbird's 34). It's Triumph's fastest motorcycle to date, nicknamed the "Tiger-Bird" in the USA. Swinging arm rear suspension is used on Tigers 100 and 110 (but not the entire line). 200cc Tiger Cub T20 announced (replacing the 150cc Terrier version by 1957), "Tigerized" with a twin seat. The sprung hub, introduced in 1939, ends production (to almost everyone's relief). The 6T gets an alternator, swinging fork suspension and bigger bearings. A 6T/AC model includes AC ignition and lighting. Folding kickstands are standard with all models.



Marlon Brando rode a 1950 Thunderbird 6T in the 1954 movie, 'The Wild One' about a motorcycle rally in Hollister, California - although based on a real rally, the events in the movie were fictitious. However, this movie came to symbolize bikers for many in the untutored public.

Triumph is now a major force in racing in the USA. Turner makes his first visit to Japan.

The Wild One is released, starring Marlon Brando riding a 1950 Triumph Thunderbird 6T. It is the first Hollywood film where a motorcycle's tank badge is clearly displayed.

Flashing indicator lights become mandatory on cars in the UK. Suzuki makes its first motorcycle, a 90cc four-stroke called the Colleda. Serious streamlining becomes the standard on the race circuit. [Vincent](#) Series D released. A sales slump hits UK motorcycle companies this year. Felix Wankel (Germany) begins work on new four-stroke engine design. Sidecar races return to Isle of Man TT for the first time since 1926. Yamaha makes its first motorcycle.

1955

Johnny Allen clocks 193mph (310kph) on Bonneville Salt Flats, in a 650cc Triumph powered streamliner. Amal Monobloc carbs introduced. Ford adopts Thunderbird name for new sports car after legal agreement with Triumph. GM registers name "Bonneville" for a car (and would challenge Triumph over the use of the name in 1992). All models now use swing-arm frame. Centre stands are strengthened. Spark plugs changed to Lodge instead of KLG. Amal Monobloc carb first fitted to Speed Twin.

The TR6 Trophy is produced: 650cc, built to suite AMA desert racing regulations. This is the first true "American" Triumph model. The first models were T110 Sports engines in a TR5 chassis. The top speed was 105 mph. More than a beefed-up 6T, the engine had several performance modifications. The TR5 with its swing-arm frame marks the birth of the modern enduro machine.

The T100/R is announced for the US market, Triumph's first production racer since the GP model. In October, JoMo ceases retail sales to concentrate on distribution.

Bert Hopwood leaves [BSA](#) for Associated Motorcycles (Norton). [Douglas](#) introduces its last model, the 350cc Dragonfly. Nippon Gakki founds Yamaha to make motorcycles using WW2 aircraft machinery. The first bike was a 125cc two-stroke single called the YA-1 or Red Dragonfly. [Royal Enfield](#) licenses a subsidiary company in India to make its Bullet model. [Vincent](#) closes in December. European bikes dominate the racing circuits. Twenty-eight scooter makes are sold in Britain this year. There are more than 80 motorcycle manufacturers in Japan this year, but most are driven out of business

or amalgamated within a decade. German Horex introduces its first motorcycle, the advanced Imperator 400cc twin. Suzuki starts production of its first bike, a 125cc two-stroke. [Norton](#) finally drops its side-valve models. Norton rocked by six-month labour strike, causing severe financial loss. BMW produces full swinging-arm suspension for its models.

1956

After a boardroom struggle over power and control, Jack Sangster becomes Chairman of BSA Group, removes Sir Bernard Docker as chair. He appoints Turner his chief executive of the automobile division, which also makes Triumph, BSA and Ariel motorcycles. Johnny Allen achieves 214.4mph (345kph) at Bonneville. However Federation Internationale Motorcycliste (FIM) cites a technicality (based on the timing gear) and refuses to recognize his world record. Triumph takes legal action, but gets nowhere. Terrier dropped, but the Cub gets offroad, competition and sports models. Rubber-mounted fuel tanks brought in. The entire line gets full swing-arm suspension. The light alloy "Ton Ten's Delta" cylinder casting is introduced to combat overheating in iron cylinders. Last year for the 150cc Terrier. In late year, the Thunderbird is offered in a new Aztec Red colour. A racing model, TR5/R is added.



Triumph's Meriden factory was the Mecca for motorcyclists in the 1950s-60s.

TR6 Trophy added to line - initially dubbed "Trophy-Bird" in the USA. The 650cc is built to suit AMA desert racing regulations. This is the first true "American" Triumph model. The first models were T110 Sports engines in a TR5 chassis. The top speed was 105 mph. More than a beefed-up 6T, the engine had several performance modifications. It became the most popular Triumph model until the Bonneville arrived. A rare TR5R model was a competition bike that incorporated the best parts of the TR5, TR6 and T100 models.

There are approximately 300 Triumph dealers in the USA.

[BSA](#) forms Automotive Division with Turner as chief executive (comprises BSA, Ariel, Triumph, Daimler Co. and Carbodies - makers of London taxicabs). Harley introduces its Sportster model. Last year for the Clubman TT race. [Sunbeam](#) ceases production. Petrol rationing returns to Western Europe during Suez war with Egypt. German aircraft manufacturers introduce the Tourist, a scooter built until 1959. Motosacoche (Switzerland) ceases motorcycle production. Suez Crisis, followed by petrol rationing, spurs motorcycle sales in UK and Europe. BSA board ousts director Sir Bernard Docker and replaces him with Jack Sangster.

1957

Unit construction 350cc 'Twenty One' 3TA (21 cubic inches, the first all-unit motorcycle made by Triumph, designed by Turner/Wickes) introduced for 21st Anniversary of Triumph Engineering Co. Ltd. Has first "bathtub" rear enclosure, which proves a sales failure in US. Many US dealers remove enclosures to sell bikes. Putting this enclosure on other models is Triumph's and Turner's first major mistake, and hurts sales in the US where riders prefer a "naked" bike.

Triumph celebrates its 21st birthday with a grand dinner at the Hotel Leofric in Coventry, near the site of their first factory on Priory St.

Tiger 110 offered in optional two-tone paint colours. Edward Turner builds prototype scooter. New 'garden gate,' 'grille,' 'mouth organ' or 'harmonica' tank badge introduced (similar to design now on 1996 Thunderbird). Triumph was the first major British firm to go to unit construction. Amal Monobloc carbs replace SU carbs on the 6T. Speed Twin gets a colour change to "Gold Bronze."

TWN Motorcycles is bought by Grundig and closed. Golden Jubilee for TT race. First World Championship motocross race held. France's Rene Gillet closes. Leopoldo Tartarini starts Italijet (Italy), making children's motorcycles. FIM's 500cc European motocross championships are elevated to World Championship. FIM grants 250cc motocross European Championship status.

1958

Tiger Cub is built with a swinging-arm frame. Speed Twin dropped in old form after two successful decades, but remodeled version remains in production until 1966 (the new form is actually a 500cc version of the Twenty One). 3TA arrives in the USA.

Mike Hailwood and Dan Shorey win the 500-mile endurance race at Thruxton on a T110. "Slick Shift" gearbox introduced for 500 and 650 models, offers semi-automatic transmission, but motorcyclists dislike it and many were retrofitted with traditional shifters. The 5T and TR5 are dropped in August, although a twin carb TR5/AD (D for Delta head) is introduced in USA. At a press conference in October, the Tigress scooter is unveiled in 175cc two-stroke (Bantam engine) and 250cc OHV four-stroke twin-cylinder engines (also sold as the BSA Sunbeam: the Triumph scooters were blue, BSA's were green).

Derek and Don Rickman create their first Metisse model, using a Triumph T100 engine, in a BSA Goldstar frame and gearbox, with Norton forks. Triumph test rider Percy Tait hit 128 mph on a prototype Bonneville at the Motorcycle Industry Research Association test track. The Bonnie is the show stopper at the 1958 Earl's Court Motorcycle Show. Edward Turner, however, thought the Bonnie was a bad design and told Frank Baker, Triumph's experimental department manager, "This, my boy, will lead us straight into the bankruptcy courts."

A Tiger Cub wins the Scottish Six Day Trials, the toughest of them all. The T20/J Junior Cub is introduced in USA. Bill Martin, California Triumph dealer, sets a new AMA two-way record for 200cc machines on a Cub of 139.82 mph over the measured mile. A one-way speed of 141.31 mph is recorded.

Buddy Holly and the Crickets buy Triumph motorcycles: a 6T and a TR6A trophy.

The first parking meters in the UK are put up in Grosvenor Square, London [Ariel](#) Leader released, 250cc two-stroke designed by Val Page. AMC introduces unit construction for [AJS and Matchless](#) four-stroke singles. These are also the first 250cc machines to carry that brand name since 1939. Last year for the Square Four ('Squariel'). [Royal Enfield](#) introduces its Crusader Air Flow model, a 250cc machine with full fibreglass fairing and windshield. In November, [Norton](#) announces their first 250cc machines, designed by managing director Bert Hopwood, never very successful sellers. An Isle of Man scooter rally draws 200 entries. Germany's Horex closes. Honda Supercub introduced: sells 720 million worldwide by 1973. Isle of Man scooter rally draws 200 entries. First Soviet motorcycles show in the west at the World Fair in Brussels. Victoria, Express and DKW (Germany) merge to form Zweirad Union AG. Peugeot (France) drops motorcycle production and concentrates on bicycles and mopeds. Francisco Bultó leaves Montessa (Spain) to found his own company, Bultaco.

1959

The introduction of the 46bhp 650cc T120 Bonneville twin - although the model isn't even featured in the company's own catalogue! It is basically a Tiger 110 twin (42bhp) fitted with splayed inlet ports, single-piece camshaft and twin Amal carbs but no air filters. The Bonneville was destined to become one of the greatest motorcycles of all time. Its name commemorated the world record run and the model was an immediate and long lasting success. However, despite American pressure to release a twin-carb 650, the first model, with its nacelle and heavy mudguards is not popular in America. Tricor wanted a sportier look. A special twin-carb trophy - TR7A - is also released this year.



The 5TA (with bathtub enclosure) joins the 3TA. 175cc and 250cc Tigress Scooters also in production, unpopular in USA. Although designed by Turner, they were actually made by BSA. Top: Tigress Scooter. Bottom: Bonneville

The T100 is discontinued in June but replaced by other models. New model Speed Twin on the market. Bill Martin sets new AMA two-way record in a Tiger Cub-powered streamliner (139.82 mph). He also achieves a one-way speed of 149.135 mph. Turner designs Daimler SP250 sports car (2.5l, V-8 engine) and Majestic Major (4.5l). All 560 and 650 models get a new crankshaft.

Honda enters the TT race, the first Japanese manufacturer to do so. Honda also enters US market this year, and sells 250cc Dream in Holland and the UK. Dave Degens forms Dresda Autos to manufacture and market Tritons (Triumph engines in a Norton Featherbed frame). More than 250,000 scooters are registered in the UK. English motorcycling was at its peak this year, with 331,806 motorcycles, mopeds and scooters selling. The [Ariel](#) Square Four, which started in production in 1931, is gone. Denmark's Nimbus closes. Friedl Munch founds Munch Motorcycles in Germany. BSA is Triumph's biggest US competitor, with 250 outlets in the west compared to Triumph's 150. BSA 250cc twin scooters are a sales flop. Peak year for British motorcycles: more two-wheelers registered than before, export sales at their peak. Honda enters the TT race.

1960

T120 revamped with twin-cradle frame and forks, separate headlamp, new seat; offers 110mph (177kph) performance. A new Bonneville sells for 285 pounds. Thunderbird fitted with bathtub enclosure (until 1962). TR6SC Trophy introduced, and dominated most of the major American classic competitions, including the Jack Pine Enduro, Catalina Grand Prix and the Big Bear Run (the latter for four years in a row). This year Johnson imports about 3,000 Triumphs (12 models) into the USA.

T100A, sports version of 5TA, without the bathtub enclosure, introduced to replace Tiger 100. Bonnie redesigned to TR6 specs, nacelle removed.

Edward Turner tours Honda, Suzuki and Yamaha plants in Japan and is shaken by the scale of their production: Japanese companies produce more than 500,000 motorcycles a year, compared to 140,000 British (Honda alone turns out 1,000 lightweight motorcycles a day - at a time when no British company could make that many in a week!). US brochures include TR7/A Bonneville Road Sports and TR7/B Bonneville Scrambler (later became the T120C from 1961-65) this year only. Bad experiences with outside electrical components and AC generators earn manufacturer Lucas the name, "Prince of Darkness" with Triumph riders.

Trophy discontinued in September, but reappears in February 1961 as TR6B Trophy-Bird Scrambler (or TR6S/S), a single-carb version of the T120. By this time there are 470,000 scooters on British roads.

Triumph shows a Speed Twin with an electric starter at Earl's Court, but production is limited to British police bikes.

[BSA](#) Group makes record profit of nearly 3.5 million pounds in its centenary year. Eric (no relation to Edward) Turner joins board as chief executive and deputy chair. BSA starts to become a factor in decision-making at Triumph around this time. Indian firm splits, sells Matchless motorcycles until it ceased trading. Kawasaki builds its first complete bike, a 125cc two-stroke. They also bought Japan's oldest motorcycle manufacturer, Meguro (founded 1924), which had been producing copies of British bikes. Suzuki team enters TT race. Honda enters TT races with 125cc and 250cc teams and places in top 10 with both. Fewer than 60,000 motorcycles sold in the USA. AMC posts a profit of 219,000 pds. Suzuki enters a team in the TT races. Harley-Davidson and Italian firm Aermacchi form a new company to make and sell the Italian company's smaller scramblers and street bikes.

1961

Bert Hopwood Bert Hopwood resigns from AMC, accepts Turner's offer to work for Triumph as Director and General Manager because Turner is under pressure to retire. Hopwood conceives three-cylinder bike (engineer Doug Hele completes drawings). Jack Sangster, 65, retires, hands over Chair to Eric Turner.



Bert Hopwood examines a bike on the 500cc assembly line in the Meriden plant.

T110 in its last year. TR6 Trophy introduced as its replacement, essentially a Bonnie with a single carb. The Bonnie gets modifications to the angle of its steering head (and again in 1966).

Work starts on Hopwood's three-cylinder engine design.

In the early 1960s, demand for Tritons revived, with Dave Degens' Dresda Tritons proving excellent machines, and winning many races. Steve McQueen rides a TR6 in movie "The Great Escape." All models get a modified head angle and floating brake shoe. The TR6SC "Desert Sled" Trophy Special is made for the US market until 1966.

Honda wins most of the 125cc and 250cc class events at the TT race and also wins its first Grand Prix. The Standard-Triumph Group (Standard purchased the independent Triumph car company in 1945) is taken over by Leyland. Daimler sold to Jaguar (Edward Turner's V-8 becomes part of Jag Mark II). This is the centenary year for [BSA](#). BSA acquires Churchill Machine Tool Co., making it the largest machine tool operation in the UK. Norman sells motorcycle business to the Raleigh Brothers. AMC faces a deficit of 350,000 pds this year. Yamaha and Suzuki introduce motorcycles to Europe. Suzuki enters 250cc TT race and places well, wins World Championship race in 50cc class. Argentine GP is first championship race held outside Europe. Terrot (France) closes. First Russian-made motorcycles on sale in Great Britain. Kawasaki launches a full range of bikes from 50 to 500cc.

1962

Doug Hele joins Triumph from Norton and takes over the experimental department. Hele redesigns the Triumph frames for better stability and torsional stiffness.

Bill Johnson (not the US dealer) sets a new World Record at 224.57mph (361.40kph) with 650cc streamliner (this time recognized by FIM). Final year for pre-unit Bonnie. TR6 S/S (Street Scrambler) replaces TR6, T100/A becomes sportier T100S/S. The Thunderbird loses its "Slickshift" transmission and gets comprehensive redesign including unit construction.

Bill Johnson, owner of Johnson Motors, Pasadena, one of the first U.S. Triumph dealers, dies of a heart attack. Partner and financial manager Wilbur Ceder takes over.

All 650 twins after October are now produced as unit-construction. Two-stroke Tina scooter in production, with automatic transmission.

BSA Group hires consultants McKinsey & Company to study BSA and Triumph in order to streamline operations and product lines. The report also studied the US market. It recommends integration of the

two companies. Eric Turner decided their sales projections weren't high enough, so he ignored them and from then on had his accountants make the projections, rather than dealers or distributors.

[Royal Enfield](#) upgrades its twin to the 736cc Interceptor. [Excelsior](#) stops production. Honda is selling more bikes in the USA than the rest of the motorcycle industry combined. AMC closes the Norton works in Birmingham in July, merges [Norton](#) with [Matchless](#). All Nortons to be built in the Matchless plant in London. Belgian company FN (founded 1899) closes its doors. Bridgestone (Japan) starts making motorcycles: two-stroke 90 and 175cc machines. FIM grants 250cc European motocross event World Championship status. The last BSA Gold Star is made.

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