

Triumph Motorcycles timeline

1963-1972: The Glory Years

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

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1963

Tiger 90, high performance 350 3TA introduced, similar to T100S/S. All 650s, (including Bonnies, Tbirds, TR6, Trophy) are built with a new unit construction engine/gear box. Tina T10, 100cc scooter with automatic transmission introduced (designed by Turner). The US-only TR6SC, a pure desert racer with straight pipes, was produced: basically a single-carb T120, very fast. 650s all get new coil ignition. First year for T120 unit construction models.

The Bonnie undergoes numerous and significant upgrades to its engine, gearbox, transmission and frame (after toying with a duplex design, Triumph instead made a larger diameter downtube to combat wobble and weave). A special TT model (T120C/TT) is produced until 1967 for the USA, due to the encouragement of Bill Johnson, of Johnson Motors ("Jo-Mo"). This is a stripped-down racing model, only made until 1966 for the US market. Two US dealers on a camping trip come up with the idea for the T20M Mountain Cub, combining Tiger Cub, Sports Cub and trials Cub parts. First sold in USA in 1964, proves very successful.

[BSA](#) closes the [Ariel](#) factory at Selly Oak. The last Ariels in production, the Leader and Arrow, are manufactured at BSA's factory in Small Heath until 1965. Norton Atlas released. AMC acquires James. Norman ceases production. Norton works at Bracebridge St., Birmingham, closed. BMW (Germany) gets a new boss, Karl-Heinz Sonne, and the shareholders get their first dividend in over 20 years. Instead of shutting down the motorcycle side as threatened, Sonne decides to build a new factory for production. British Motorcyclists Federation (BMF) formed.

1964

Edward Turner retires as CE of the Automotive Division (which includes motorcycles), but retains BSA Directorship. He was apparently by this time bitter over the direction the company was taking. Bert Hopwood hoped he'd be appointed as Turner's successor, but the job went to BSA's Harry Sturgeon. BSA management now took over Triumph policy completely. Sturgeon decided to streamline the motorcycle side after an international business consultant (McKinsey) recommended treating the two companies as one.

Arthur Jakeman joins Hele's experimental team. Henry Vale is the foreman. Hopwood brings in Doug Hele for development and race chief. Hopwood and Hele are a brilliant combination, but their efforts are thwarted by Triumph's board of management. This year only eight Triumph Thruxton machines are made, basically standard production Bonneville pulled from the line and sent to Hele's department for upgrading. They produce 54bhp and many of their modifications become standard on later production bikes.

Tiger 100 loses skirt, Tiger 90 soon follows. Bert Hopwood takes over from Turner and recommends a modular design concept and advanced production techniques, but his ideas were rejected by the board of governors. Dennis McCormack retires from TriCor after 14 years as president, replaced by financial manager Earl Miller as VP and GM. The actual president is Harry Sturgeon who tours the USA with Turner in the fall. Triumph sells 6,300 bikes in the US.

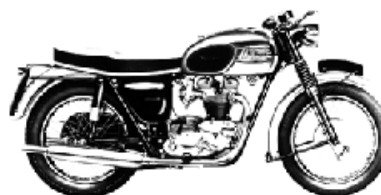
Larger scooters dropped in October, and with them went the 250cc twin engine. TRW dropped. Bonnies get 12v electrics. Sports Cub T20/S/H and Mountain Cub T20M introduced.

Briton Jeff Smith wins World Motocross Championship on 500cc BSA. Sprite (UK) starts making 246cc scramblers in Birmingham. Casal (Portugal) makes first motorcycle. German racer Helmut Fath founds URS motorcycle company.

1965

Tiger Cubs are supplied to the French Army, using T20S/H Sports Cub specially adapted. Dave Degens wins Barcelona 24-hour race on his own design/build Triton.

Prototype triple engine tested in Bonneville chassis. Sturgeon sees the triple as the group's response to



large-capacity Japanese bikes. All 650 twins got new 1965 Bonneville forks and a modified rear brake.

The Bonnie gets an extra inch travel in its front suspension. Tina underwent several minor modifications and gets renamed the T10. The Bonnie Speedmaster T120R and Highway Trophy TR6SR introduced for US market.

Johnson imports 6,531 Triumphs into the USA, while TriCor brought in 8,807. Since 1958, Triumph had exported more than 54,400 machines, plus spare parts, to the US, for a value to the company of over 3.5 million pounds. The BSA Group purchases the controlling interest in JoMo, consolidating it with TriCor. Trouble comes when executives are told to administer both BSA and Triumph lines. Dealers of both makes are forced to carry both lines, and call it the "merger from Hell." Many dealers quit in protest.

This year, 52 Thruxton Bonnies are made in May, the most ever produced. Triumph is making 600-800 bikes a week, 80 per cent of them bound for the USA.

Improved T10 scooter replaces the Tina, but remains unpopular.

Last year for [Ariel](#) production until 1970. The UK sets a 50 mph speed limit. Honda produces its first bike to compete against the British makes, the 450cc CB450, also called the Black Hawk, with electric start and oil tight. [Velocette](#) introduces the 500cc Thruxton, their last machine. Kawasaki is the first Japanese company to open a US office. This year, 609,000 motorcycles and scooters are imported into the USA: 33,406 from the UK, 465,000 from Japan. Harley-Davidson becomes a public company.

1966

Bob Leppan's streamliner, the 'Gyronaut X1,' with two 650 Triumph engines sets new US record at 245.6mph (395.2kph) but is not recorded because FIM engine limit is 1,000cc. American Buddy Elmore wins Daytona 200 on works-prepared Tiger 100 - Triumph's first Daytona road race victory - at an average speed of 155.5 kmh (96.6 mph).

Nacelles dropped and the 6T loses its partial fairing. Final year for Twenty-One 3TA and Speed Twin 5TA models. All models got new, simpler ('eyebrow') tank badges this year. Performance mods this year boost the Bonnie's output, and changes are made to the angle of the steering head. The TR6 raced only 0.7 seconds slower than the T120 in the quarter mile, and only 4 mph less top speed.

Tiger Cub manufacturing taken over by BSA to replace their failing sales of the Bantam model. The new Bantam Cub has the Triumph engine, but a BSA frame and other parts. It lost its skirt and nacelle, but was never very popular. Only eight Thruxton Bonnies are made this year.

Managing Director Harry Sturgeon died of a brain tumour, replaced by an executive from the Sperry Gyroscope company, Lionel Jofeh. Jofeh used an outside agency, Ogle Design, to develop radical new styling for the planned 750 triples. They also created new design changes for the TR25W and BSA B25 250cc singles. They created distinct designs for the BSA Tristar (later Rocket) and Triumph Trident.

Edward Turner works on a large-displacement, four-cylinder engine design, which is never built.

Bob Dylan crashes his 500cc Triumph motorcycle, receiving facial cuts and several broken neck vertebrae.

Associated Motorcycles (AMC) collapses, but is restructured later when Manganese Bronze Holdings takes over. They put [Norton's](#) name in the forefront over AJS and Matchless. [Panther](#) motorcycles closes. Francis-Barnett and James cease production when AMC closes. AJS and Matchless soon follow, and Norton line severely pruned when all singles dropped. BSA plagued with faulty ignitions on their 650cc machines. German firm Zweirad Union (Victoria, Express and DKW) merge with Fichel and Sachs (which also owned Hercules Werke). Suzuki releases its Super Six, a popular six-speed, two-stroke twin that outsold the T20.

1967

The twin carburetor 500cc Tiger 100 Daytona (T100T) is introduced to celebrate their 1966 victory. Gary Nixon wins the Daytona 200 on a Tiger 100. Edward Turner, 66, retires from the BSA Board and Harry Sturgeon takes his place, convinced Triumph has to be in racing. John Hartle wins production TT on a Bonneville. Harry Sturgeon dies, is replaced by Lionel Jofeh. Prototype Tridents and BSA Rockets tested in California. All 650 twins get an improved oil pump. BSA takes over the production of the Triumph catalogue this year.

Triumph and BSA under Jofeh set up an expensive, common research laboratory at Umberslade Hall (becoming known as "Slumberglade Hall," "Marmalade Hall" and "Mecca" because they "mecca balls up of everything"). The employees are predominantly engineers, many fresh from university, few (if any) are initially from the motorcycle industry. The cost to run the think tank, with its 300-member staff, was about 1.5 million pounds a year. A massive computer system worthy of NASA is installed.

This year 28,700 Triumphs are sold in the USA, mostly Bonneville, but about 30 per cent were Trophies (TR6). This was the peak year for Triumph exports to the USA, selling 24,700 machines for 7.5 million pounds. Triumph releases T100R Daytona Super Sports, first twin-carb 500cc machine since the pre-unit T5RAD. Also releases T120/R road model.

The UK speed limit is increased to 70 mph. This year, breathalyzer tests are introduced in the UK. Honda withdraws from GP racing. Ariel cease production. Matchless ceases production. Royal Enfield sells off machines and stock. Bridgestone sales hit slump under new US anti-pollution laws. NVT hires Dr. Stephan Bauer from Rolls Royce to design their new Commando model with isoclastic frame. Italian Bianchi closes. Parilla (Italy) closes motorcycle production. Bianchi (Italy) ceases motorcycle production.

1968

Late summer announcement of a three-cylinder 750cc Trident T150; 58bhp, 125mph (201kph), designed by Hopwood, Hele and Wickes. It was the first, modern, multi-cylinder production motorcycle. It had a four-speed gearbox. It was nicknamed "Tiger 100-and-a-half." The Trident/BSA Rocket-3 was the first cooperative venture by BSA and Triumph since the companies were amalgamated in 1951.



The modest TR25W single.

This year Triumph began the switch from British standard to UNF threads, causing a lot of confusion and additional costs. TR25W Trophy introduced: it's really a mediocre BSA B25 Starfire machine with Triumph badges. Bonnie gets twin-leading shoe front brake.

Last year for the TT model (?). Changes are made to the Bonnie's swingarm pivot. Donald Brown, vice president of BSA Inc. (New Jersey) meets with then-Illinois designer Craig Vetter to discuss a re-design of the BSA triple that would suit American desires for a chopper-cum-cafe racer. Lucas manufactures a contact-breaker set for the Bonnie with individually adjustable points, improving the timing. Gary Nixon takes the AMA number one plate for Triumph.

[BSA](#) launches its four-speed Bantam. A shipment of 4,000 BSAs land in the USA but prove damaged by salt water en route, and are returned to the factory. BSA USA is charged with the cost. Fastback 750cc Norton twin launched. Royal Enfield closes. Honda introduces four-cylinder CB750. A black and chrome BSA A50 Royal Star is made, to be acquired in 1998 by this author. Fantic (Italy) sets up production factory. Bridgestone ceases motorcycle production with its last model, the 90cc Sports.

1969

Malcolm Uphill, riding a Bonneville, wins the Production TT in Isle of Man with a race average of 99.99 mph (160.9kph) per lap with first ever over 100mph (160kph) lap by production motorcycle 100.37mph (161.52kph). The Bonneville remained the sports twin of the decade. Cub dropped. T150 in production.



A beautiful example of a classic Triumph Bonneville

Twin electric horns introduced for Bonnie. Meriden making 900 bikes a week, but production quality varies wildly. Production peaks at around 46,800 units this year. US magazine Cycle World becomes first to test new Trident.

Jofeh incorporates US distributors TriCor, Johnson Motors, BSA-Western and BSA Inc. into one company, BSACI (Birmingham Small Arms Company Incorporated), with Peter Thornton as new president, with HQ in Verona, New Jersey. Thornton was an advertising executive with a large ad agency who had been a consultant for Triumph earlier. Thornton announced three BSACI subsidiaries: Triumph Motorcycles Inc., BSA Motorcycles Inc, and Top Gear (an accessory distributor). TriCor had not shown a financial loss since 1950. Triumph however, cannot keep up with demand from US market. They are making 900 bikes a week now, but quality varies wildly. As a result, Triumph's warranty costs have risen dramatically over the past decade.

The British Army stops using its TRWs and replaces them with 500cc ohv based on the T100s. Percy Tait finishes sixth in the Hutchinson 100 on a factory-prepared triple.

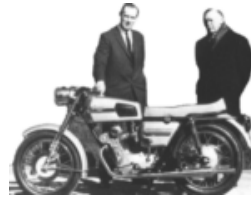
Independent designer Rob North designs flex-free frame for triple engine, and BSA/Triumph orders eight frames from him in November, in time for Daytona.

Craig Vetter's prototype triple design is completed. Triumph adopts scalloped tank stripes for Bonnies, based on design that originated in the early 1960s with a Detroit automobile painter named "Gurley."

This year, Honda sells over 30,000 CB750s in US alone, with total sales of 1 million. Kawasaki releases its H1, a 500cc triple. Yamaha pulls out of racing, leaving only Kawasaki as the only Japanese manufacturer still involved. Suzuki works on a two-stroke GT750. 32,721 British motorcycles imported into USA, mostly Triumphs. Harley-Davidson and Aermacchi bought by American Machine and Foundry group (AMF). NSU (Germany) taken over by Audi and motorcycle production ended. After years of slumping sales, BMW (Germany) releases a line of new, modern motorcycle designs, which see a monumental increase in sales. Simplex (Holland) taken over by Gazelle and closed.

1970

Malcolm Uphill repeats his win in Production TT, but this time riding a Trident, known as "Slippery Sam." BSA and Triumph using many parts in common. "Beauty kit" offered to turn Trident into "traditional" Triumph styling.



Edward Turner, right, with his last design, the Triumph Bandit, a 350cc twin

Slippery Same Trident built for TT races. takes fourth place in its first year.

Tridents take the top three qualifying speeds at Daytona with a highest speed of 165.44 mph. Tridents win the second and third place in the race.

This was the year of the last major press and trade launch for the company, held in November. Included in the lineup was a 350cc twin with dual carbs and five speeds, designed by Edward Turner (retired), his last project, but revamped by Bert Hopwood and Doug Hele. It was to be sold as the Triumph Bandit (and BSA Fury with cosmetic changes), with 34 bhp capable of 110 mph. Financial problems forced the model to be cancelled before it was produced despite announcements in company brochures. However, several pre-production prototypes were made and are still in existence.

This year Triumph and BSA held a massive promotional joint launch of their new line; 16 bikes in total. Despite the huge festive event, delays prevented the production of newer models, so the factory cranked out T100s and Bonnies at a faster rate to meet consumer demands. This led to a shortage of parts, which were all used too soon, and a three-month standstill until new models could be tooled. But poor design by Umberslade Hall caused production to halt again while design mistakes were fixed. Meanwhile, BSA's new computer system continued to order parts until belatedly told to stop. BSA Group's overdraft reaches 22 million.

Bonnie camshafts treated by nitriding hardening process, get improved ventilation. Cycle World showcases Vetter's new design in its September issue as "the next BSA Three."

TriCor in the US builds 204 750cc Bonnies (T120RT) for the AMA's new 750 racing series. This lead to Triumph UK increasing its engines to 724cc in 1973.

Yamaha releases its 650cc twin Bonnie clone, the XS-1, aimed at Bonneville market with two extra hp and lower cost. BSA releases a 49cc three-wheeled scooter, as the [Ariel 3](#), an unsuccessful and unstable model that helped break the company. Ironically, Ariel's first machine was also a tricycle. Suzuki is first Japanese firm to field a motocross team. Public noise complaints severely limit races at Thruxton. Bombardier (Canada) forms Can-Am motorcycle division, working with BSA motocross champion Jeff Smith to develop a new line. After more than 500,000 made, the last BSA Bantam - now a 175cc model called the D14/4 - rolled off the line.

1971

The first project from Umberslade Hall that goes into production is a new, tall (31 inches) frame design, with the oil reservoir in its top tube which is fitted to all BSA and Triumph 650 twins (the frame was actually designed for Umberslade by outsider Rob North, on contract). Stephen Mettam, 29, was in charge of the group's five-man styling team. But Umberslade Hall, with 300 employees by 1970, is downsized after the company posts a 2.5 million pound deficit by mid-year. The need to reduce the new design's excess height causes severe production delays for the new bikes. Financial problems also forced Triumph out of racing.

The new Bonnie is called the T120R (R for road). It also incorporates other design changes aside from the oil-bearing frame, including new hubs, twin leading shoe brakes, paper air filters, new headlight, rubber-mounted tachometer and speedometer. But the engine remains the same.

Tridents win Production TT (Ray Pickrell) and Formula 750 (Tony Jefferies) races in Isle of Man. The two firms had been linked commercially for some time, but decided on a major revamp, because of the emergence of Japanese motorcycle companies. T120 gets oil-in-frame chassis and unpopular visual redesign. Singles dropped at end of 1971. Trident "Slippery Sam" wins consecutive production TT races five years running: 1971-75. Bert Hopwood recommends making a production version of the racing triple - 84 bhp at 8,250 rpm - but his suggestion is ignored.

Triumph and BSA plan for a major revamp with new machines to be launched at a lavish press review this year. Singles are dropped at the end of the year. Trident gets new forks and hubs. Eric Turner resigns as chair, but remains on in an advisory capacity. He is replaced by Brian Eustace as CEO. McCormack resigns from TriCor.

BSA Group loses 8.5 million pounds, 3 million at BSA alone, and this is the last year for most of BSA's motorcycle production. In response to the losses, the Board commissions more management consultants to study the problem. Eric Turner resigns, and Lord Shawcross takes over as Chair, with support from Dept. of Trade and Industry. Lionel Jofeh retires as Chief Executive, replaced by Brian Eustace another outsider. Company sold to Manganese Bronze Holdings, which also owns Norton, AJS, Matchless, Francis-Barnett, James-Velocette and Villiers. New company, Norton Villiers Triumph (NVT) managed by Dennis Poore. Velocette goes into liquidation. SWM (Italy) founded. US motorcycle market has grown from 50,000 in the mid-1950s to 2.1 million in 1971.

1972

BSA Group loss reduced to 3.3 million pounds. The company decides to reduce its workforce from 3,000 employees (1,750 at Meriden alone) to 1,000 by consolidating production.

Ray Pickrell wins both Production TT and Formula 750 races in the Isle of Man. An estimated 250,000 Bonnies built. TR6 becomes TR6R Tiger 650 for road and TR6C Trophy 650 for trail (replacing the Tiger 100 offroad). The Trophy Trail would later become named the TR5 Adventurer. It was really a 'Tribsa' - made of BSA B50 Victor frame with a T100 engine.

Trident (now the T150V) and 650s go to five-speed gearboxes but brittle metal results in broken gear teeth on many bikes. T120RV gets optional 5-speed gearbox (standard on the T150). Umberlade Hall closed in January.

Craig Vetter's triple is put into production in June, a BSA engine with his American styling, but as BSA was in its death throes, the tank badges were changed to Triumph and it was called the X75 Hurricane. Vetter was paid \$12,000 dollars for his work, but had a difficult time collecting it and it took several months. 1,183 engines were put aside for X75 production but nobody is sure the total number of machines finally produced.

Bert Hopwood draws up plans for a new range of SOHC modular designs based on a new 200cc single which could be "doubled up" to make up to a 1,000cc five-cylinder engine. Hopwood draws up plans for a Thunderbird III, an 830cc triple with 67 bhp at 8,300 rpm and an electric start.

BSA launches its own triple, the Rocket 3. It is similar to the Trident, but has a sloping motor and a different frame. Both bikes use the same forks and hubs. [Norton](#) launched its Commando Interstate with 65bhp. Kawasaki releases its H2, an upgraded 750cc triple. NVT acquires a licence from NSU to make Wankel-rotary engined-bikes. Originally intended as BSA machines, they get changed to Norton for its P41 project. URS (Germany) closes. Carabela (Mexico) starts making 125 and 200cc motocross machines. Can-Am (Canada) creates first prototype motorcycles.

[Top of page](#)



[Early years](#)
 [Classic years](#)
 [Recovery, growth](#)
 [Glory years](#)
 [Fight to survive](#)
 [Triumph resurgent](#)
 [Models, sources](#)
 [Tbird review](#)
 [Links](#)
 [My home page](#)
[Other British motorcycle manufacturers](#)
[Sprint ST review](#)

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