

TRIUMPH

A HISTORY OF TRIUMPH MOTORCYCLES

Triumph, one of the best recognised names in motorcycling, has a long and illustrious history. Today the marque offers a blend of design, character, sex appeal and performance that combines to create truly distinctive motorcycles.

- 1887 Siegfried Bettmann founded the Triumph Cycle Company in Coventry manufacturing bicycles.
- 1902 As technology advanced, the company moved into the production of powered cycles. By 1905 factory output had reached 500 motorcycles per year.
- 1923 After 18 years of steady growth the company added automobile production to their portfolio. By 1925 the motorcycle plant in Coventry occupied 500,000 sq ft and employed 3,000 people, with production at around 25-30,000 units per year.
- 1935 The decision was taken to separate the car and motorcycle divisions (the bicycle business having been sold off in 1932). In due course the motorcycle arm was sold and renamed Triumph Engineering Co.
- 1939–1945 During World War Two, the Government requisitioned virtually all of the machines manufactured. Despite the Coventry factory being destroyed in the 1940 Blitz of Coventry, production continued throughout the war years, firstly at a temporary site in Warwick and then at a new factory in Meriden. Civilian production began again in 1946.
- 1951 The BSA group bought Triumph, although the Triumph marque was retained and the company remained a separate concern within the group.
- 1950s & 60s The golden age of British motorcycling. Motorcycling was at the height of its popularity in Europe and the USA, with some of the world's biggest screen legends appearing on celluloid alongside their Triumph's - James Dean, Clint Eastwood, Steve McQueen and Marlon Brando all rode Triumphs - helping to cement its reputation as the iconic motorbike marque of the era.
- Throughout this period Britain dominated the world stage with many famous machines, but the best remembered of those, the Triumph Bonneville, unveiled in 1958, became the icon of the era and retains its cult status today.
- 1969 Triumph motorcycle production peaked at around 47,000 units per year.
- 1972 The slow supply of components, coupled with tooling problems, led to production delays and in a Government sponsored move, the BSA Group merged with Norton Villiers, and Norton-Villiers-Triumph (NVT) was formed.
- 1973 NVT announced that the Meriden plant was to close, provoking a workers' sit in. Production ground to a halt and in the following year virtually no motorcycles were built. In 1975, after much negotiation, the Meriden Workers Co-operative was formed and production resumed.

- 1983 Despite further support from the Government, the co-operative went into liquidation, although the intellectual property rights to the Triumph marque were bought by John Bloor - paving the way for the modern era of Triumph.
- Research and design for a new modular range of motorcycles began. The modular concept enabled the range to share common components, thereby allowing a number of different types of machine to be constructed from the same base, on one assembly line.
- 1988 Construction commenced on a new factory at a 10-acre site in Hinckley, Leicestershire. As soon as the first phase of the site was completed pre-production began and the first models were launched at the 1990 Cologne Show.
- 1991 Production of the first new model – the 4-cylinder 1200cc Trophy – began with the factory initially building 8-10 new machines per day. Additional three and four cylinder models – the Trident 750 and 900 and the Daytona 750 and 1000 – swiftly followed.
- 1994-1995 As production capacity steadily grew, Triumph set about re-establishing a network of export distributors including wholly owned subsidiaries in Germany, France and in 1994, the USA. By this time 20,000 new Triumphs had been built and, in January 1995 the Triumph Triple Connection clothing range and the accessories range were launched.
- The model range evolved throughout the early 1990s through a combination of refinements to the existing range and the introduction of new models such as the Tiger, Trident Sprint, Speed Triple and Thunderbird.
- 1996 As capacity grew, the company developed more single-minded machines that did not rely on the modular concept. The first of these, the Daytona T595 and the T509 Speed Triple, were launched at the 1996 Cologne Show. These were also Triumph's first fuel-injected machines.
- 1999 Construction of phase one of a second plant in Hinckley was completed with certain manufacturing processes transferred to 'Triumph Factory Two'. Assembly however remained at the original plant, and by the beginning of 2001 the production line was building around 150 units per day.
- 2002 In March a fire major fire struck Factory One, destroying the engine and chassis assembly lines and stores. The rebuilding took six months, during which time no motorcycles were built. Production recommenced in September 2002
- Since then Factory Two has been further extended and now houses almost all of Triumph's UK manufacturing and assembly operations. Factory One is the home of Triumph's growing parts, clothing and accessories business.
- Today Other new models have followed, including the World's largest production motorcycle, the Rocket III, the mould-breaking triple cylinder Daytona 675, and most recently, the phenomenally successful Street Triple. Sales across the range continue to grow strongly.