

TRIUMPH

Siegfried Bettmann founded the Triumph Cycle Company in 1887 and promptly acquired premises in Coventry in which he began manufacturing bicycles. As technology advanced the company moved into the production of powered cycles in 1902. By 1905 the factory output had reached 500 motorcycles per year, with the machines being designed, manufactured and built at the Coventry site.

For the next 18 years Triumph enjoyed steady growth and in 1923 the company added automobile production to their portfolio. By 1925 the motorcycle plant in Coventry occupied 500,000-sq. ft. and employed 3000 people; with production at around 25-30,000 units per year.



The motorcycle industry remained fairly stable throughout the early 1930s, and in 1935 the decision was taken to separate the car and motorcycle divisions (the bicycle business had been sold off in 1932). In due course the motorcycle arm was sold and renamed Triumph Engineering Co.

During the Second World War, the Government requisitioned virtually all of the machines manufactured and, despite the Coventry factory being destroyed in the 1942 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 and with supply lines open again Triumph set about re-establishing a dealer network in America. In 1951 the BSA group bought Triumph, although the Triumph marque was retained and the company remained a separate concern within the group.

Production and sales had grown steadily since the war and by 1965 the Meriden plant was producing around 800 units per week, with 80% of these destined for the USA. Production peaked in 1969 at around 46,800 units per year. In 1968 the first triple - the Triumph Trident - was produced (prior to this the company had concentrated on the manufacture of singles and twins).

By the early 70's the slow supply of parts, coupled with tooling problems led to production delays and in 1972, in a



Government sponsored move, the BSA Group merged with Norton Villiers and Norton-Villiers-Triumph (NVT) was formed. In 1973 NVT announced that the Meriden plant was to close - which provoked a workers' sit in. As a result production ground to a halt and in the following year, 1974, virtually no motorcycles were built. In 1975, after much negotiation, the Meriden Workers Co-operative was formed and, with capital provided by way of a grant from the British government, production of 750cc Bonneville and Tigers resumed at the plant. The co-operative subsequently bought the rights to the Triumph marque from NVT and production gradually crept up to 350 units per week. Despite further support from the government the co-operative went into liquidation in 1983.

REBUILDING THE MARQUE

The intellectual property rights to the Triumph marque were subsequently bought by John Bloor. Thus began the current era of Hinckley built Triumphs.

The new company needed a strong and stable platform from which a range of competitive motorcycles could be developed, thus the concept of the modular range was born. This concept enabled the range to share common components, thus allowing a number of different types of machine to be constructed from the same base which, crucially, could all be built on one assembly line at the same time.

Design of the new range commenced in 1984 and by 1988 the company was ready to begin building a new factory (the old plant at Meriden had been demolished in the early 80s). A



10-acre site was purchased in Hinckley, Leicestershire, England and construction commenced. As soon as the first phase of the site was complete, pre-production began and the first models were launched at the Cologne show of 1990. Production of the first new model - the 4-cylinder 1200cc Trophy - began in early 1991, with the factory initially building 8 - 10 new machines per day.

As production capacity steadily grew, Triumph set about re-establishing a network of export distributors. Two subsidiary companies had been established to prior to production commencing; Triumph Deutschland GmbH and Triumph France SA and over the next couple of years the network expanded to encompass most of the World's major motorcycle markets, culminating in 1994 with the creation of Triumph Motorcycles America Ltd.

By this time 20,000 new Triumphs had been built and in January 1995 the Triple Connection clothing range and the accessories range of products were launched to provide the Triumph customer with an all-round package of Triumph apparel and equipment.

The model range evolved throughout the early nineties through a combination of refinements to the existing range together with the introduction of new models such as the Tiger, Trident Sprint, Speed Triple and Thunderbird.

By 1995 production stood at around 12,000 units a year and as both retail sales and production capacity grew the company was able to develop 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. Since then the range has diversified further with the introduction of the Sprint RS and ST, the Tiger and more recently with the launch of the TT600 and Hinckley's first twin, the Bonneville. Other models, such as the



Daytona T595, Speed Triple, Tiger and Thunderbird have also undergone significant redevelopment in the intervening years.

Production has steadily increased each year and in anticipation of achieving the maximum capacity capable at the original factory, planning permission for a new factory was sought in the mid-'90s. The construction of Phase One of 'Triumph 2' was completed in the autumn of 1999 and the transfer of certain manufacturing processes to the new plant ensued. Assembly however remained at the original plant – now referred to as Factory 1 – and by the beginning of 2001 the production line was building around 150 units per day – the maximum that could be achieved from this facility.

Planned production for 2002 was approximately 37,000 motorcycles, however this was halted in March 2002 by a fire that struck Factory 1. The fire, which took five hours to bring under control, destroyed the chassis assembly line and stores area and coated much of the rest of the site in a layer of soot. The assembly and stores area were promptly demolished in preparation for rebuilding whilst a huge clean-up operation of the rest of the plant, which included two engine machining lines, the engine assembly line and the paint shop enabled the factory to be swiftly operational again.

Triumph Factory 2, together with the buildings housing the design, development, spares, clothing, accessories and bike storage functions were unaffected by the fire and continued to operate as normal.

The rebuilding of Factory 1 took five months, during which time no motorcycles were built. During this time, Triumph took the opportunity to relocate various manufacturing processes within Factory 2. Not only did this help to minimise the amount of production time lost but it also allowed Triumph to review the most efficient layout for each process. Production recommenced in September 2002 and the plant is now back to producing around 150 units per day.



Triumph now has at its disposal one of the most modern motorcycle manufacturing facilities in the world. This, together with our diverse model range and proactive model development programme, places Triumph firmly at the forefront of motorcycling.