

Triumph Motorcycles Limited

What goes from 0-60mph in 2.7 secs and is packaged in a multi layer crate? A Triumph motor bike with a 2.3 litre engine! Apparently it goes faster with a pillion passenger too - more weight over the back wheel.

Institute branch members had the unique opportunity to visit the Triumph Motorcycle factory in Hinkley during January. Formed in 1887 by Siegfried Bettmann. He came over from Germany to the UK to start producing bicycles for export around the world. Along with his engineering partner Mauritz Schulte, they started to experiment with motorcycles in 1896.

The first model was produced in 1902, which had a 239cc single cylinder engine from Belgium. The first model with Triumphs own engine came in 1906, which was a 363 cc side valve single producing 3hp. 1906 was the year when they opened their first factory in Priory Street Coventry. However, this factory was destroyed during the blitz on Coventry in 1940. The new factory in Meriden was opened in 1942 and went back into production for the War Office.

The company was sold in 1951 to the BSA group who held control until 1973 when with the threat of closure, the workers shut the factory gates and went on strike for eighteen months. The company was then set up as a workers co-operative in 1975 by the Labour government and went back into production with the T140 Bonneville and TR7 Tigers, and produced a range of bikes over the next eight years using these engine. In 1983 with the lack of money to invest in new machinery, and develop new models, the company went into liquidation.

John Bloor acquired the intellectual rights to Triumph Motorcycles in 1984. This made him the owner of the name and gave him the manufacturing rights along with all the patents. The first factory was built on Jacknell Road Hinckley in 1987 under a shroud of secrecy, the R&D department inside, busily developing a new range of bikes using what is called the "Modular Concept". This is a system that is used to build a range of bikes, where many of the components parts can be used throughout the range to keep development and production costs down.

The company started with four engines and one chassis. The engines all used the same piston which meant they all had a 76mm bore. There was a short and long stroke version of the engines in either a three or four cylinder configuration. The engines were a 750 & 900 triple and a 1000 & 1200 four. With these four engines and one chassis, six models were produced.

The first pre-production models where finished in 1990 and launched to the world. The company went into full production in 1991 making 8 bikes a day; this has now risen to 165 day. The production target for 2004 was 30,000, of which 80% will be exported to 40 markets around the world.

The company employs over 600 people in the UK and over 1000 worldwide. Triumph is privately owned, and is part of the Bloor Holdings Group. Its annual turnover is now approaching £200 million p.a.

The company is now based at three sites. Two in Hinkley and one in Thailand. Triumph is very 'in-house' dependent, with a high percentage of components made or machined in the group. This equates to over 40% of the bike being produced in house.

The company has launched two new models in 2004 and will be launching two new models later this year.

Our thanks are extended to Peter Clarke for their hospitality and his enthusiasm about a brand synonymous with quality.

.... and finally, the packaging. Quite simply the bike is coated in vapour tek to prevent moisture affecting the metal parts, the front wheels are removed and the bike is strapped tightly to a wooden frame. A light wooden frame surrounds the bike and covered with a polyethylene sheet before a wooden top is nailed down to keep it rigid. The crates can then be placed inside a container for shipping to all four corners of the world.

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