

If there's such a disease as Tridentitis, Richard Darby has a serious dose. Back in 1972 he was learning the basics at a motorcycle training scheme when his life changed: 'One of the instructors rode a Commando, then one day he turned up on a new purple and white T150 Trident. I fell in love with it straight away.

'In 1977 I ended up buying that same bike, because he was getting married. Eighteen months later he was knocking on the door, asking if he could buy it back because he was getting a divorce!' No chance of that, with young Darby head over heels with his new bike and learning about Tridents from the right people. 'I took it to Percy Tait's new bike shop to be serviced by Arthur Jakeman, who worked on the factory race bikes when they were going. They had Percy's old Formula 750 racer there and I fell in love with that, too. I decided to have one of my own one day, and that's why I built the racer.'

That racer is his Rob North replica chassis with his own tuned Trident motor. Clearly no mug as a rider, he was quick enough to claim the 750 Classic Championship at the excellent Tonfanau circuit with the bike. And when the Trans-Atlantic Challenge was revived at Cadwell Park in 1998, he loaned the bike to American teamster Cal Rayborn III, son of the great Harley-riding hero of the 70s. Rayborn, on his first visit to Britain and totally strange to Cadwell's subtle

twists and dives, won the race from some pretty hot Brits. Richard has a picture of him wheeling in pursuit of American star Dave Roper on an MV and delights in explaining that that was the very bike Agostini was riding at Mallory Park when John Cooper on a Rocket Three thrashed him in their immortal Race of the Year clash. Fiercely patriotic, these Triple owners.

Richard's racer wins, but isn't one of the highly tuned versions with lightweight crank, central plugs and the need to be buzzed hard all the time. He runs a standard crank, but the clutch is lightened to his own specification to trim four and a half pounds off its weight; it's also driven by a chain, not one of those toothed belt things. 'Easy to ride, not temperamental, you just wind it on progressively out of a corner and it's got good response and power,' he explains.

The T150 he bought in '77 is still his regular street bike, modified over the years and now wearing twin discs and lots of very neat detail work. When he was made redundant from his job as an industrial engineer last year, he hit the roads of Europe with girlfriend Bernadette and spent three months 'living the dream', as he puts it. Six thousand miles and not a problem, even with the temperature hitting 42 degrees C in Greece. 'The oil was already warm when I kicked it over in the morning,' he remembers with a gentle grin. 'The bike just thrived on it.'

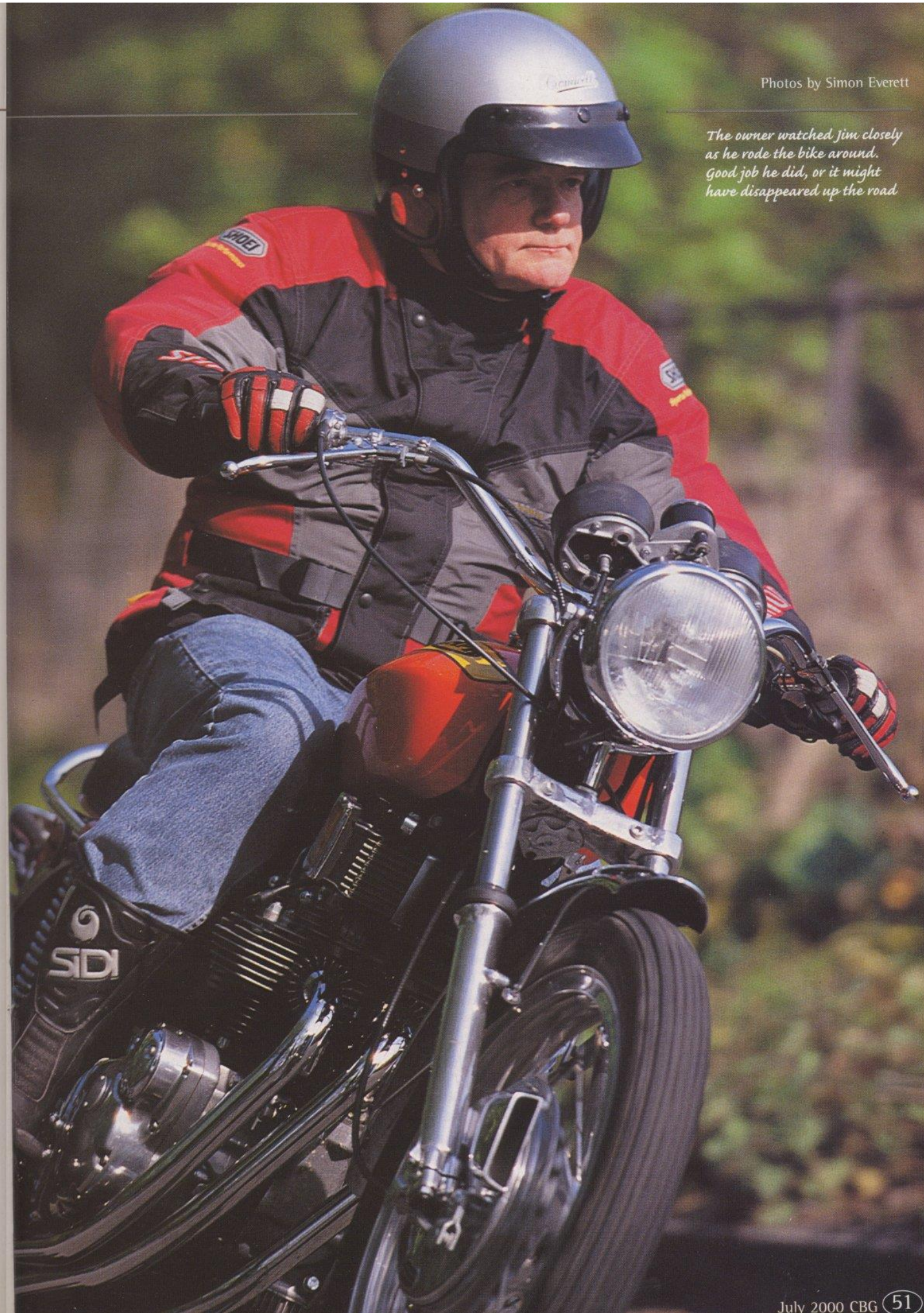


# FIREBALL X-75!

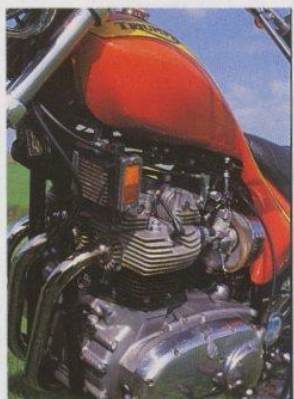
STUNNING, STUNNING, STUNNING. DERIDED BY TOO MANY BRITISH BIKE RIDERS WHEN IT WAS UNLEASHED, TRIUMPH'S STARTLING HURRICANE WAS PROBABLY THE FIRST TRUE FACTORY CUSTOM BIKE. JIM REYNOLDS RODE A TRUE ENTHUSIAST'S MACHINE

Photos by Simon Everett

*The owner watched jim closely as he rode the bike around. Good job he did, or it might have disappeared up the road*







*Down winding country lanes the bike was a pleasure to ride, but the back end did move around a little on the bumps. The solution is to corner under power and ignore the skipping about of the back end.*

So the man loves his Tridents, and a logical extension to a very select collection is one of those exquisite Craig Vetter designed Hurricanes. It's a bike that evoked strong reactions from the moment it was released, with opinions split between appreciation of the flowing lines, the lateral thinking of a factory-built custom, and righteous indignation that a noble British motorcycle should be desecrated by making it look like one of those dreadful chopper things. And the anti brigade won't be any happier today to realise that this British machine is the Yamaha Virago's uncle; there might be little mixed blood in the family line at this point, but the heritage is there to see. Mind you, none of the present generation is as handsome as Great Uncle Hurricane.

Richard's Hurricane came over from America in 1995, a late resident of Dallas, Texas and showing little evidence of loving care over its eight-and-a bit thousand miles. When it arrived, Richard's mates wanted to hear what it sounded like, but he wouldn't be tempted. 'I didn't want to start it, it was in such a state,' he remembers. Because he has the orderly mind of an industrial engineer, he waited until he knew he had time to do the job properly before the work began. That meant waiting until 1998, and in the

meantime he was mugging up on the subject.

The Hurricane was announced in 1972, for the 1973 selling season. But with tougher emission laws hitting all 1973 machines in the vital United States market, the date of production became important. 'Some were built in 1973, but they were marked up as 1972 built,' explains Richard. Very handy for Triumph's export drive and equally useful for UK owners today, because that qualifies the bike for a no charge road fund licence. Not that this bike was involved in that minor subterfuge, Mr Customs Officer, because it was built on 13 November 1972. Honest.

Because Vetter's design was drawn around the Beesa Rocket-3 and its forward sloping cylinder block, the bikes were assembled in Meriden with powers units brought in from BSA's place down the road in Small Heath, that picturesque corner of 1970s industrial Birmingham. So the small machined face on the driveside crankcase carries the BSA stamp, with Triumph's TRX75 00943 production number next to it. It must have made sense to somebody.

The signs weren't good when Richard started the strip down, with fork yokes cracked ('Quite common on Hurricanes') and a sorry liquid struggling out of

the engine's drain plug ('Came out in lumps'). But inside the motor it was surprisingly good, with little or no wear apart from a chipped cam lobe; one new shaft needed. The gearbox was a different matter altogether, with teeth missing, so an entire new cluster went in. There's a lesson there, if you care to learn: the Trident/Rocket-3 motor will take a lot of hammer and still survive.

The rebuild reflected Richard's experience, with the timing gears and rocker shafts polished and lightened, then the engine sprocket and oil pump drive gears were given the lightening treatment. The clutch was machined and balanced to the same spec as Richard's racer, shedding four and a half pounds in the process and probably earning a Slimmers' World award as well. The cylinder head went to the very talented Fred Swift (ex race shop - we mentioned earlier that Richard got to know the right people) for gas flowing.

Dialling the cams in took a lot of hours, but it was time well spent. 'It makes a hell of a difference,' says Richard. 'The pinions are marked up for production line assembly and they can be quite a bit out.' How far out? 'The valve opening at top dead centre should be between 0.14 and 0.15 of an inch. I've known them be as little as 0.115 and you're just not getting the gas in properly then.'

The cylinder head had fins chipped, and on Vetter's design big fins were important. 'Cylinder heads are much too timid looking. Fins should be much wider, more bold,' say the explanatory notes on his design drawings in June 1969. He sketches the fins as BSA cast them, then adds his own version with the note: 'After. Gets lots of girls. Big. Tough.' This, you must remember, was done in California in the Sixties, when all red blooded males thought of womankind only in the purest context; he probably wanted to get lots of girls to recruit them for the local netball team.

Richard had the fins restored to their essential macho form by a mate in the aircraft industry, and if you can see the join then your eyesight is a lot better than my ageing version plus Dolland and Aitchison's able assistance. The original exhaust system with the bike was pretty battered and dented, but there were replacement parts as part of the package that came in from the States. For downpipes, Richard hunted around until he found Technical Tubes in Wimborne, Dorset, who got it right. They had to: 'I've been pretty pedantic in restoring this bike, but they're historic' explains Richard. 'I might have upset a few people, but I wanted to get it right.'

Noble sentiments, but how right is it on the road? The nice Mr Darby kickstarted it for me to start the afternoon's fun, explaining that it wears Boyer Bransden ignition like the rest of his three-cylinder fleet. With a little running the choke could be closed (my, what a complex set of cables and levers that device uses) and the motor ticked over at around the 1000rpm mark, the three silencers giving out the characteristic Trident zoomzoom note. Hmmm. Nice.

This offence to conservative eyes is easy and natural to sit on. The high, wide bars are an easy reach to normal length arms, the seat comfortably near the ground for a 30 inch inside leg and the glassfibre mouldings that give it such a graceful appearance only force the legs apart a little. Get under way, feet on pegs, and the knees fit into the contours of the body mouldings in a completely natural way. The noise from the three small silencers (a case under the Trades Description Act available there, if ever I've been deafened by it) rising from zoom to strident boom as the rev-counter rises rapidly to the 6000rpm level. Whoops, this motor has done just 500 bedding-in miles and I don't want to give it too much welly.

Those high, wide and very handsome bars are clean and uncluttered, an exercise in minimalism if you compare them with today's cluttered controls. ('To check the temperature in Downtown Hong Kong, press the Headlight Flasher [82 in the diagram on page 46], sound the horn [36 in the diagram on page 46] and move the Lights On Switch [22 in the diagram on page 46] from Position 1 to Position 4 before checking the Readout [137 in the diagram on page 46]. If you are involved in a Moving Traffic Accident during this manoeuvre, call our Legal Representatives on Freephone 0845 985604 and quote Policy No.

**THE REBUILD REFLECTED RICHARD'S EXPERIENCE, WITH THE TIMING GEARS AND ROCKER SHAFTS POLISHED AND LIGHTENED, THEN THE ENGINE SPROCKET AND OIL PUMP DRIVE GEARS WERE GIVEN THE LIGHTENING TREATMENT.**





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Sorry about that brief injection of 21st Century realism, let's go back to this motorcycle. The bars have subtle bends, unspoiled by surplus switchgear and notable only for their swooping form and minimal bitterness and bobbery. The big speedo and rev-counter are complemented by a non-standard oil pressure gauge whose needle sits around the 75psi mark, whatever the gear or road speed; so that big, tough bottom end is being fed essential liquids.

The motor is typical Trident, gentle up to 4500rpm and then it swaps from Jekyll to Hyde as the cam comes in and it takes off. The problem in this standard form is the low gearing, 60mph on the speedo equating to 5000 on the rev counter, which will give you 96mph at 8000rpm. If you can stand the breeze, revs beyond this level are entirely your responsibility... but in 1972 America's Cycle Guide tested the Hurricane and clocked 13.1 seconds for the standing quarter-mile, with a terminal speed of 101mph. Clearly not that rider's own bike, then.

*The sweep of the exhaust pipes draws the eye to the lump of an engine that is emphasised by the wide head finning exclusive to the Hurricane.*

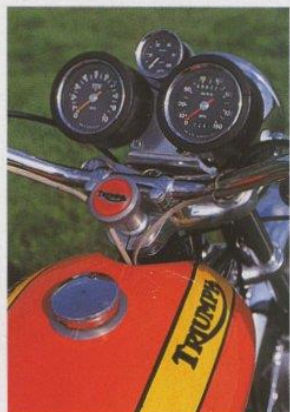
Forget the prejudice that the mildly chopper appearance may excite in your traditional view, because this motorcycle's handlebar/seat/footpeg relationship is ideal for country lanes and cruising. The wide bars give an upright riding stance and easy control from left-right flicking to laid back cruising, the seat is comfortable and the footpegs (footrests if you're utterly British in these matters) are naturally placed. What looks slightly outrageous to mature eyes is easily natural to ride. It also feels totally cool, the zoomy exhaust, smooth styling and stunning orange/yellow colour combination attracting admiring looks from grey-haired gardeners in suburban Wolverhampton. But if your life centres around dahlias and clematis, anything that actually speaks out loud must be different. And the Hurricane sure ain't no pansy.

## SPECIFICATION

Engine:	748cc pushrod three-cylinder, 67mm bore x 70mm stroke. Three Amal 27mm Concentric carburettors. Compression ratio 9.5 to 1, maximum safe revs 8,000.
Transmission:	Five-speed gearbox in unit with engine. Primary drive by triplex chain, final drive by conventional chain. Single plate dry clutch.
Cycle parts:	8-inch (203mm) twin leading shoe front brake, 7-inch (178mm) single leading shoe rear. 3.25 x 19 front tyre, 4.25 x 18 rear.
Dimensions:	Fuel tank 2.2 gallons (9.5 litres), Dry weight 444lbs (201kg), Wheelbase 60 inches (152.5cm) Seat height 31 inches (79cm)
Price in 1973:	£995



## CBG TRIUMPH HURRICANE ON TEST



*BSA stamped their logo on the crankcase when they built the motor, then Triumph stamped their number over it. It's what they call inter-factory cooperation.*

The low gearing means rapid acceleration and the narrow build allows the rider's knees to tuck in and give essential messages about direction of travel. Gun it through a long and bumpy sweeper and it gets over and sticks to its line, even if the back end moves around a trifle over the ups and downs. Feeling that slightly squirmy movement and keeping the power on is part of the fun - the Hurricane gets down and does it if you show it who's boss.

Well, your Department Supervisor for the afternoon, if that's all right by you.

The gearbox on this bike is quirky, with a consistent missed change up from second to third emerging. Rider error? I tried variations from slow and deliberate hook up of the lever to clutchless flick and most of them worked, but a clutched change up produced a missed gear almost every time. Then I learned to back off for a brief moment and the third gear I thought had taken the afternoon off selected itself. Strange.

Later, Richard Darby confirmed a similar experience and suggested that the selector was over-riding to a false neutral, then slipping back to the right notch in the plate. It's high on the list for attention, as you'd expect from such a particular guy.

There comes a time in every ride when you have to

stop. The Hurricane wears the BSA/Triumph Group's unloved conical front hub, known to all who've experienced its remarkable inefficiency as the comical hub. Not at all comical if you're facing an emergency, but years on mature machinery teaches you to look well ahead and back off early before braking with room to spare. On comical hubs, apply a factor of 1.5 to 1 and you'll be all right. By the standards of 1972, these really were pretty bad. Correction, they were really bloody awful.

The daft thing is that the solution is simple. Richard quotes TR30C member Dave Clarke, who's simply lengthened the operating levers by  $\frac{9}{16}$ " of an inch and transformed the thing. I've talked to a Trident owner from the same town who's followed Dave's guidance and suddenly found that he can stop, too. Why oh why did the BSA/Triumph Group, with all those highly qualified chaps at Umberslade Hall, not do the same thing? Dave Clarke works as a saw-doctor in a timber factory, and if he can solve the inadequacy, why not the manufacturer?

But enough about inadequate brakes, because you learn to accommodate that shortcoming in your riding. This is a motorcycle that goes well, sounds wonderful, handles in an easy spot-on fashion and looks utterly gob-smacking gorgeous. I was torn between looking at its subtle lines and just riding the thing down winding country roads with complete ease. A gem of a bike.

But Richard's not planning to keep it. 'I've ridden it, learned a lot from it, but I haven't fallen in love with it like the other two,' he explains. He's currently negotiating the lease on workshop premises in Wolverhampton's Chapel Ash district to start his own service and restoration business, where his experience of triples will feature large. Raising capital for a new business venture is the current priority and the Hurricane will be appearing in CBG's Small Ads sometime soon. Watch these spaces, as they almost say.

Craig Vetter was a designer with a studio in Illinois, where he'd penned and produced some original designs based on standard bikes. Most notable in the earlier work was his conversion of the 500 two-stroke twin Suzuki, which caught the eye of BSA's American head man, Don Brown. So when the Rocket-3 was launched, with a heavy American reaction against its strongly British styling, Brown talked to Vetter about an alternative. In the sort of negotiation that suggests the businessman got the better end of the deal, Vetter agreed to design and build an American styled prototype for expenses only. If it was accepted by the company, he'd get proper payment for his time.

Vetter collected a Rocket-3 from BSA's headquarters in New Jersey and rode it home. There he stripped off the fuel tank and stock exhaust system, to realise that the big, three cylinder engine was too handsome to hide away. He sweated through days and nights to shape up a one-piece tank and seat unit, an exhaust system that had three pipes and silencers swooping proudly up the off-side of the bike and forks two inches longer to give a laid-back look without sacrificing fine control. The headlamp was mounted on a Y-shaped chromed bracket (popularly known as 'the catapult'), the bars were wide, high and uncluttered, the cylinder head wore extended fins that weren't obviously part Plexiglass but

really were, and the rear of the slim seat was surrounded by a tapered chrome tube that turned up the back end to make it easily accessible to the pillion passenger.

A lot of consideration had obviously been given to the graphics, which were basically what you see in the pictures of Richard's bike. Except that the Vetter original was definitely a BSA. It was finished in September 1969 and freighted to England in October. Five months later Vetter got his promised money, \$12,000 of it. In 1972 production began at Meriden, by which time Triumph were using disc brakes. They stuck firmly to the American specification and put the conical hub brake in. Ah well.



