

◆ Triumph T140E vs Yamaha XS650D

Tony is Britain's leading XS expert, whose Halco Tuning business (01722 714700) is based on the back of experience gleaned from working at off-road specialists Wasp. He rates the 1977 as a good year for the twin and the test bike is a minter. Alan looks worried.

The first difference you notice between the bikes is the Yam revs quicker. A small flywheel helps the motor spin freely.

There are no pushrods, just a simple overhead camshaft driven by a single row chain running from the centre of the crankshaft. The cam chain is kept taut by an idler gear behind the cylinder.

Four full circle crank wheels form part of the pressed up crankshaft assembly and the centre shaft and wheels are splined to prevent movement. Con rods turn on needle roller bearings.

Straight cut gears link the crank and gearbox mainshaft and power is transmitted through a five metal and six cork lined friction plate wet clutch. Six springs hold the plates in position.

Two sets of points on the top left cylinder run directly off the camshaft and trigger the secondary coils. An auto advance mechanism sits on the other side.

It's a con, Rod

THIS NON European model has shorter con rods than contemporary European machines (150mm compared to 140mm). They're even shorter than the earlier XS-2 model's 156mm rods. The Euro model also has a larger diameter big end eye than this outside Europe bike.

But our machine has a taller piston, so the swept volume, bore and stroke are the same. Our test bike is also lower geared

than Euro models with one more tooth — 34 in all — on its rear wheel sprocket. Both gearbox sprockets have 17 teeth.

The theory behind these changes reflects US buyers' demands for a quick accelerating bike producing power low down the rev range.

European bikes also stop better. Twin front discs, although smaller in diameter by 20mm, are still better than the test bike's single disc. Despite a single moving piston caliper, our model has the square brake pads which are more effective than early round units. The test machine also comes with beefier 35mm forks, an improvement on the '76 model's 34mm units.

There aren't many weak points on the Yam, although gear changes can go after 15 years. Owners who don't spot swarf on the magnetic sump bolt may not realise that the dogs on fifth gear have been knocked off, losing drive in third. The sump filter splits in the flat area of gauze and at £17, they're not too cheap. Seat bases rot out and carb diaphragms on the 38mm Mikuni CV units fitted are Yamaha's idea of a joke — £101 to you, sir.

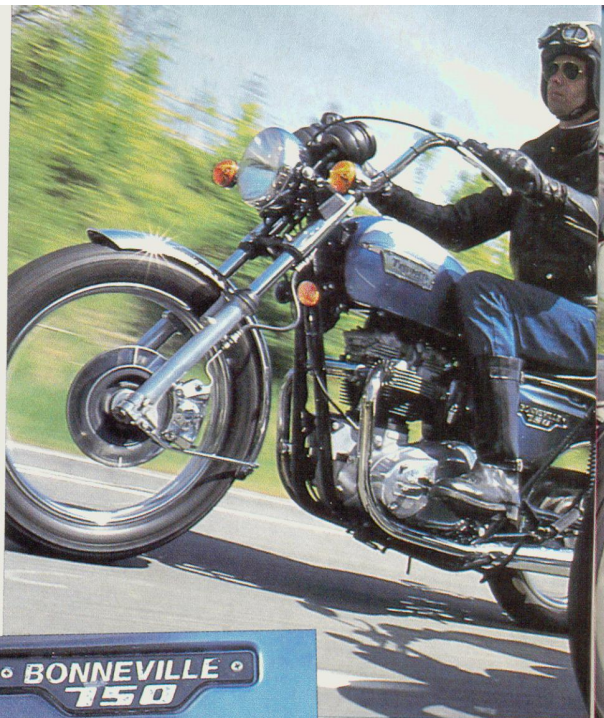
Halco can supply replacement seats with glassfibre bases for £78 and exchange diaphragms for £44 each.

Nutshell

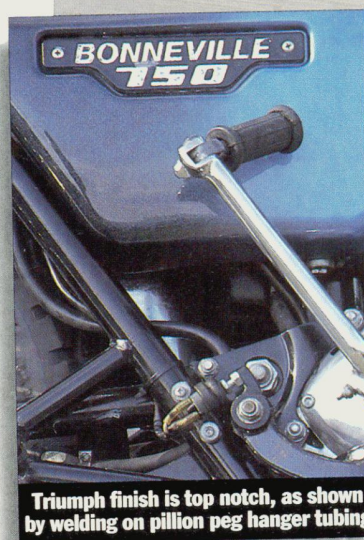
TRACING ALL the changes over the years could fill a book, mainly because of the Euro and non Euro variants. But here they are in a nutshell: The XS-1 didn't come to Britain although the XS-2 did. Both machines have completely different frames to the XS650s. Triumph tester Percy Tait had a hand in chassis development, although his involvement may well have been exaggerated over the years. The result was a stiffer frame, longer swinging arm and beveled up forks. Gusseting round the headstock and swingarm pivot helps when the going gets twisty.

The States got a TX650 in 1973 in gorgeous metallic flake blue, followed by a not so gorgeous cinnamon brown TX650A in 1974. These are the first of the new breed, but Britain missed out again. We jumped straight from the XS-2 made from '72 to '73, to the XS 650B of 1975, leaving Yamaha 650 fans starved in '74.

There were another 22 models — count them and weep — including custom variants with cobweb spoked wheels, before Yamaha pulled the plug in 1983.



Cheesy riders Hawker and Seeley head out on the highway. Each machine will appeal to chrome polishing experts



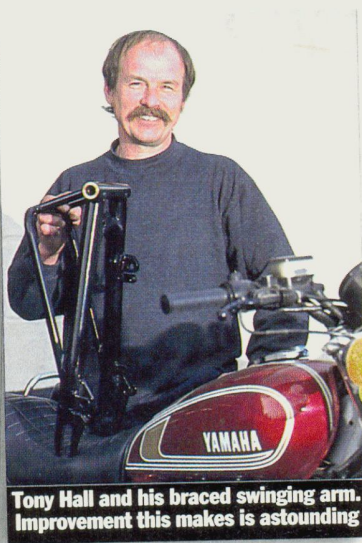
Triumph finish is top notch, as shown by welding on pillion peg hanger tubing

Triumph tribulations

IT WOULD take a foolish man to suggest the 750cc twin is the best of the breed, but there's enough Meriden pedigree in even the latest Bonnies to excite the purist.

Sean and I take a trip to Reg Allen (0181 567 1974) in Hanwell, London, where proprietor Bill Crosby has borrowed a perfect example of a late export Bonnie from customer David Exley. The bike is unrestored and utterly immaculate. I flash a smug grin at Sean, confident that I have found the machine that will see the honour of Triumph intact. Bring on your Yam, Hawker.

Side by side on the dual carriageway there is little to separate the T140 and the XS650, but the Bonnie has to be spinning for the power to kick in. Little happens below 5000rpm, a legacy of the touring profile exhaust cam fitted to the 750s.



Tony Hall and his braced swinging arm. Improvement this makes is astounding