

# 649 CC TRIUMPH BONNEVILLE

ROAD TESTED  
by **Motor  
Cycle**

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TRIUMPH ENGINEERING CO. LTD. MERIDEN WORKS, ALLESLEY, COVENTRY

**THINK** of a superlative, double it . . . but no, don't even try. Words alone cannot amply describe the Bonneville 120, cold figures can but hint at the performance. It looks immensely powerful, sturdily and solidly built, yet set off by a glamour finish of white and lacquered gold. Given its head, it will whistle up into the treble figures, smoothly and safely. But there is also a fair helping of sweetness and humility down in the lower reaches of the rev band.

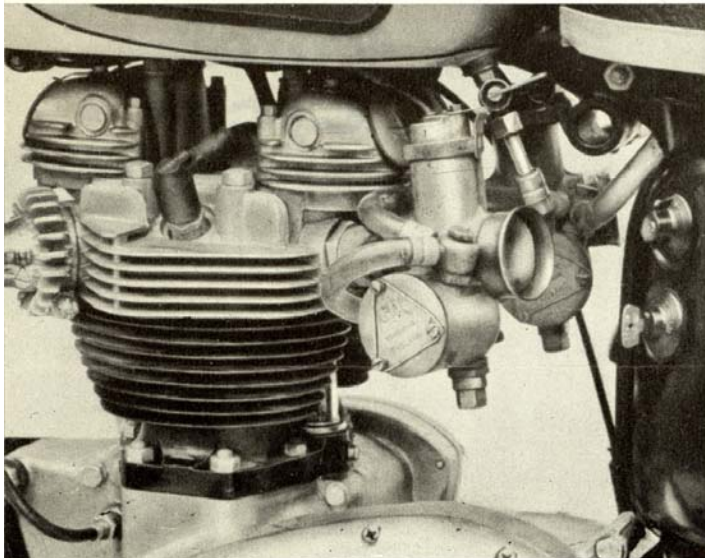
Built for the chap who travels far and fast, the Bonnie has a specification which borders on the brutal, embracing twin carburettors, 8.5 to 1 compression ratio and a power curve which climbs to 46 bhp at 6,500 rpm, then stays at that right up to the 7,000-rpm mark.

Such a model could be a real handful in city streets—lumpy, erratic, straining at the leash. But not so. How it's done is a Meriden mystery (though coil ignition and auto-advance come into it), for the Bonnie emerges as a gentlemanly, unobtrusive, tractable traffic-threader, quite amenable to being trickled along at 30 mph (or slower) in top, the grip only fractionally off the stop.

For all its urban docility, though, this is a Tarzan in city suiting—remarkably patient but with an underlying longing for freedom. Leave built-up areas behind, open the grip that little bit more and you'll note with surprise (though not alarm; the model is too well-bred to cause alarm) that the needle is much farther round the dial than you had imagined it to be.

That's mainly because the power flows in as a surging tide rather than as a noticeable kick in the pants.

Brisk even in the lower

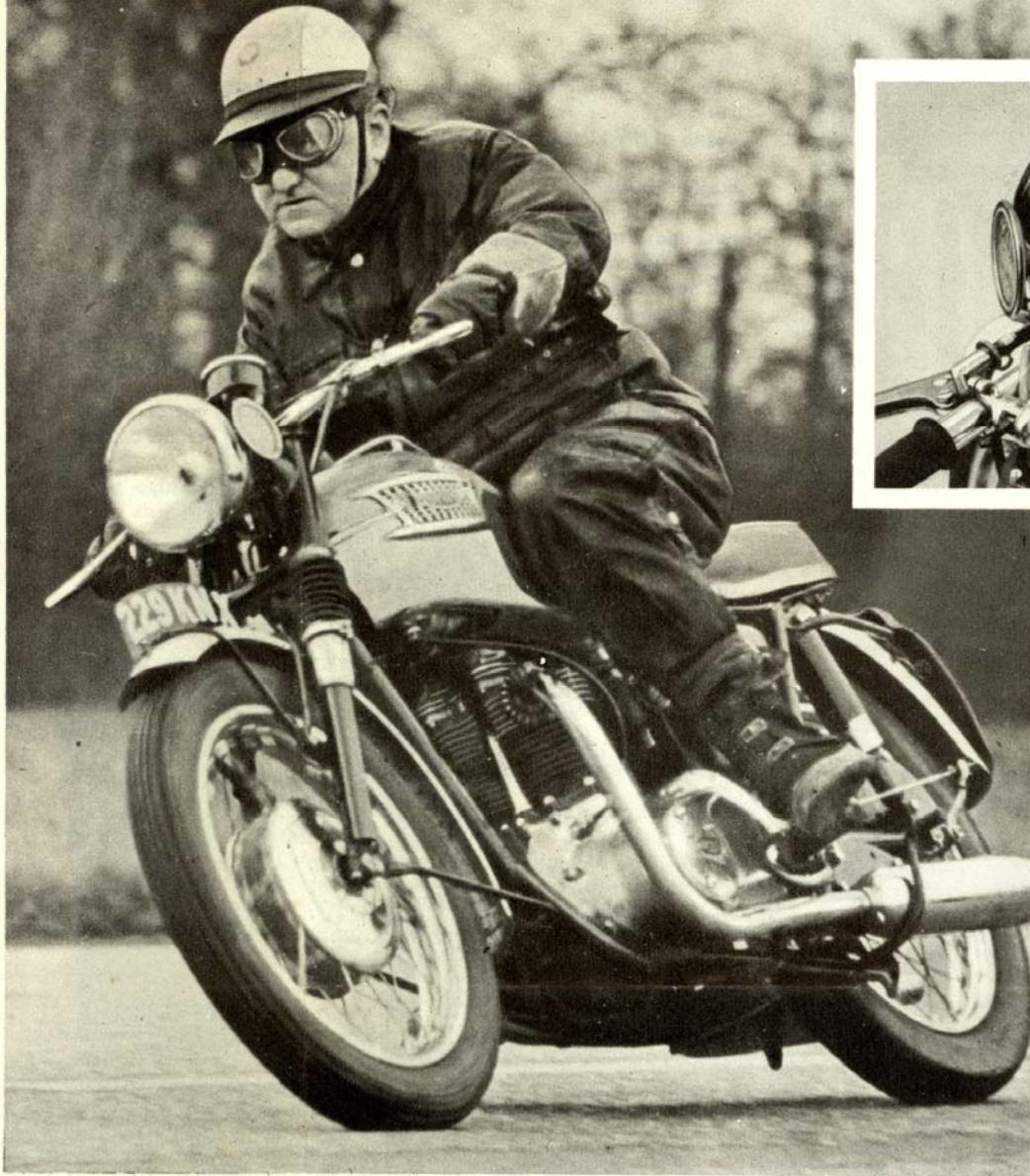


# 649 CC TRIUMPH BONNEVILLE

**ROAD  
TESTS  
OF NEW  
MODELS**

*Twin carburettors and an 8.5 to 1 compression ratio all help to give exciting performance. Note the lighting and ignition switches on the right*





Left is the revmeter, right the speedometer.

At that, there was no feeling of distress, either mechanical or personal.

In high-speed work, riding position is all-important. In this respect the Bonnie cannot be faulted. Maybe the seat is a little high for short-leg riders, but at least the model can be laid into a bend without anything grounding. The handlebar is nicely placed to allow a wind-cheating forward lean.

**Long, sweeping curves find the big Triumph at its best, for on the latest unit-construction version there is rock-steady navigation all the way—no slow-speed roll, no over-the-ton weaving.**

Suspension at front and rear is firm, yet extremely comfortable. The result is a machine which remains eminently controllable, whatever the circumstances.

No air slides are fitted to the carburettors, so for a cold-morning start there is need to flood both float chambers fully.

reaches, acceleration becomes shattering from 65 mph onward in top gear.

Use the gear box, changing from 48 mph in bottom, 66 mph in second and about 90 mph in third—and you find the sort of acceleration which, by rights, should be kept for the sprint strip.

That 14.6s figure for the standing quarter-mile was repeated time and again.

Cruising speed is difficult to pin-point. If time was not pressing there could be quiet pleasure in a 45 mph amble, the engine spinning over lazily, the exhaust note just a gentle, low-pitched drone. Yet if 65 or even 85 mph was your aim, the Bonnie would play along with amiable nonchalance.

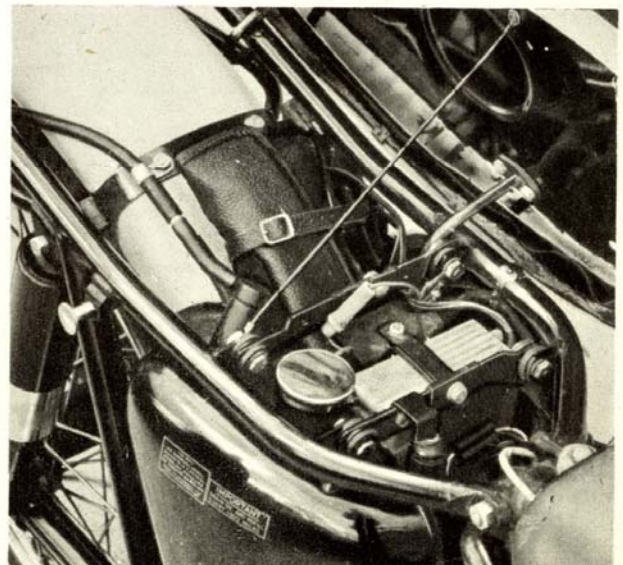
Naturally enough, it is only

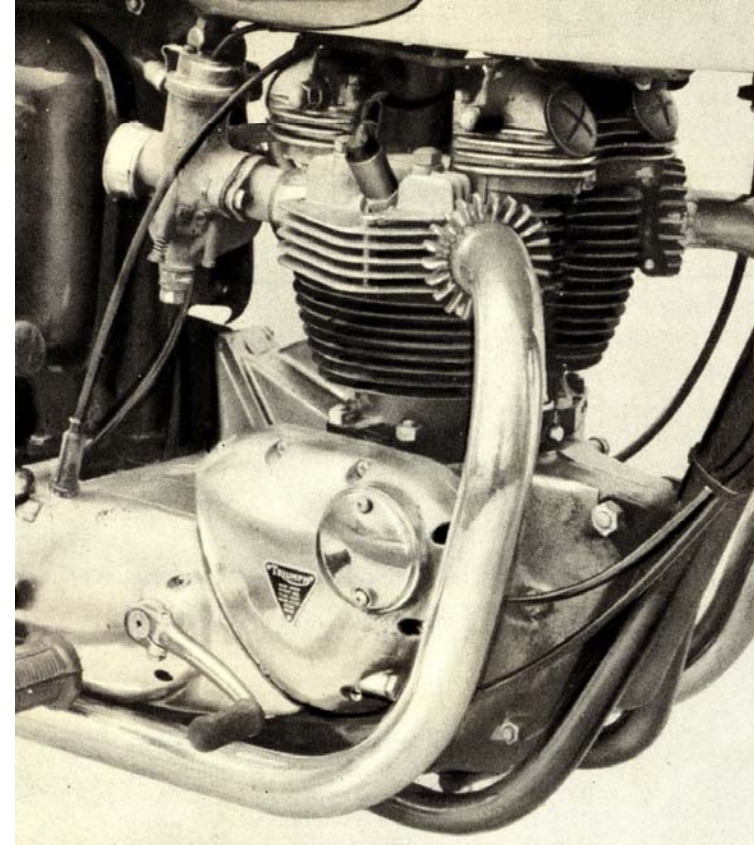
on a motorway that the machine can break out its true colours. Less congested, far more scenic than M1, the M5 road was chosen for a mid-week run.

Heading westward into a blustery wind, 100 mph was shown on the clock with the rider sitting up and feet on the normal rests. However, an electronic check showed that the speedometer was wildly optimistic, and the true speed was more like 90 mph. Still pretty good, though.

**For the return run, the pillion rests were brought into use. Chin on the tank, it was possible to hold an indicated 120 mph for a full 15 miles. All highly flattering—but 7,000 said the revmeter, and that is equivalent to a true reading of 108 mph.**

*Battery, tool roll, tyre pump and oil-tank filler cap are located under the dual-seat which is hinged along the left side*





The engine department produces a beefy 46 bhp at 6,500 to 7,000 rpm, but in traffic it is a thorough gentleman

## SPECIFICATION

**ENGINE:** Triumph 649 cc (71x82mm) overhead-valve twin. Plain big-end bearings; crankshaft supported in two ball bearings. Light-alloy cylinder head; compression ratio 8.5 to 1. Dry-sump lubrication; oil-tank capacity, 5 pints.

**CARBURETTORS:** Two Amal Monoblocs, 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ -in-diameter chokes. **IGNITION and LIGHTING:** Lucas RM19 alternator, charging six-volt, 12-amp-hour battery through rectifier; coil ignition with auto-advance. Quickly detachable (multi-pin and socket connection) Tin-diameter headlamp with 30/24-watt main bulb.

**TRANSMISSION:** Triumph four-speed gear box in unit with engine. Ratios: bottom, 11.81 to 1; second, 8.17 to 1; third, 5.76 to 1; top, 4.84 to 1. Primary drive by  $\frac{1}{2}$ in duplex chain in oil-bath case; final drive by  $\frac{1}{2}$ x $\frac{1}{2}$ in chain with guard over top run. Engine rpm at 30 mph in top gear, 1,940.

**FUEL CAPACITY:** 4 gallons.

**TYRES:** Dunlop or Avon (Avon on test machine): 3.25x18in ribbed front, 3.50x18in studded rear.

**BRAKES:** 8in-diameter front, 7in-diameter rear with floating shoes.

**SUSPENSION:** Triumph hydraulically damped telescopic front fork. Pivoted rear fork controlled by Girling dampers adjustable for load.

**DIMENSIONS:** Wheelbase 55in unladen. Ground clearance 5in unladen. Seat height 31 $\frac{1}{2}$ in unladen.

**WEIGHT:** 399 lb, including approximately 1 $\frac{1}{2}$  gallons of fuel.

**MAKERS:** Triumph Engineering Co, Ltd, Allesley, Coventry.

## PERFORMANCE DATA

(Obtained at MIRA Proving Ground, Lindley, near Nuneaton.)

**MEAN MAXIMUM SPEEDS:** Bottom, \*53 mph; second, \*70 mph; third, 96 mph; top, 110 mph. \*Valve float occurring.

**HIGHEST ONE-WAY SPEED:** 112 mph (conditions; damp track, light tail wind. Rider wearing one-piece leathers).

MEAN ACCELERATION:	10-30 mph	20-40 mph	30-50 mph
Bottom	2 sec	1.8 sec	2.4 sec
Second	3.2 sec	3 sec	2.6 sec
Third	—	4.4 sec	4.4 sec
Top	—	5.6 sec	5.4 sec

Mean speed at end of quarter-mile from rest: 94 mph.

Mean time to cover standing quarter-mile: 14.6 sec.

**PETROL CONSUMPTION:** At 30 mph, 100 mpg; at 40 mph, 88 mpg; at 50 mph, 78 mpg; at 60 mph, 66 mpg; at 70 mph, 54 mpg.

**BRAKING:** From 30 mph to rest, 30ft 6in (surface, dry asphalt).

**TURNING CIRCLE:** 15ft 10in.

**MINIMUM NON-SNATCH SPEED:** 18 mph in top gear.

**WEIGHT PER CC:** 0.61 lb.

Then, too, the high compression ratio calls for a really beefy swing of the kick-starter pedal, but that is a knack which is easily acquired.

Excellent indeed is the lightness and gradual take-up of the clutch operation, provided by the new scissors-pattern thrust-rod mechanism. And there is unexpected lightness in the twistgrip movement; though the grip operates two throttle slides simultaneously, the effort required is no more than on a conventional single-carb model.

With the engine cold, gear engagement was entirely noiseless, though on this particular model it became somewhat clasy when working temperature was reached, unless care was taken to change up slowly and deliberately, and to accompany downward changes by a slight blip of the throttle.

## VALVE GEAR

Again, a warm engine brought an increase in audibility of the valve gear, though no more than is acceptable for a super-sports machine.

Pleasantly subdued at moderate speeds, the exhaust note became flatter and more noticeable under hard acceleration, but it was not objectionable.

Good by normal standards, the electrics were a little disappointing in view of the Bonneville's high potential. Too, the placing of the lighting switch (on the left mid-riff panel, below the dual-seat nose) was decidedly inconvenient, making it difficult to change from pilot

to main beam when on the move, and precluding the giving of a warning flash from the headlamp when overtaking.

Just about adequate—but no more—for town work, the electric horn proved useless at higher speeds.

**Not new, but a highly creditable feature for all that, is the pedal extension fitted to the Triumph centre stand. The Bonnie is admittedly bulky, yet it could be parked without the slightest effort.**

**A prop stand is also provided and this, too, was very simple to operate.**

Braking is well in keeping with the general nature of the performance. The smooth and gentle retardation provided by the front brake, in particular, contributed greatly to the pleasure of using the machine in the manner for which it was intended.

After several hundred miles of heavy towing there was no sign of oil leakage from the engine, but one silencer bolt had been lost, allowing some gas leakage at the joint between silencer and exhaust pipe on that side.

A few criticisms, then—but they pale into insignificance when set against the overall picture of a machine which must be not far short of the ultimate in super-sports luxury.

Made to be ridden hard, it was ridden hard; and the amount of enjoyment it provided is something which can never be listed in a mere performance summary.

The centre stand is very easy to operate—this is helped by a pedal extension on the left. Pillion foot-rests were fitted after pictures were taken

