

## News Redesigning Triumph's Explorer

# How Triumph's Explorer

► The exclusive, inside story of how Triumph built its 'GS-beater' – and why it underwent dramatic change just a year before production started

First styling sketches show how Triumph's Tiger Explorer might have looked...

### OUT – BULBOUS TANK

► Original concept drawings were dominated by a vast, 'saddle type' 25-litre fuel tank. Although originally approved, this style was scrapped daringly late in the development process when MCN spy shots received an adverse public reaction



Phil West | Executive Editor  
phil.west@motorcyclenews.com

MCN can reveal today how Triumph's all-new Tiger Explorer – directly targeted at BMW's R1200GS – went through a major, late transformation to end up as we see it now.

We were given exclusive access to Triumph's designers and management at its Hinckley HQ in Leicestershire to get the full story of the 1200cc adventure bike's development.

And we were stunned not just by the time and resources allocated to the

new machine – it's been by far reborn Triumph's biggest motorcycle project to date – but also by how overtly the British firm has decided to take on its German rival.

The production Explorer looks so different to the prototypes MCN spy shots first revealed just over a year ago because Triumph decided to re-style the bike as a result of the reaction to those photos!

At the firm's main Factory 2, Triumph Product Manager Simon Warburton told MCN that the key aim of the new Explorer is to be "an attractive alternative to the

**In roll-ons we're thereabouts with the BMW GS but if you open the throttle we just disappear**

TRIUMPH'S SIMON Warburton

BMW R1200GS". The key ingredients to achieve that, he explained, were:

- A three-cylinder engine – "We never considered anything else"
- A single-sided shaft drive – "We know people like it"
- 1215cc capacity – "To 'future-proof' it a little bit" – by being larger than the GS's 1200cc)
- A minimum 130bhp – "We wanted a good level of performance"
- Ride-by-wire and a class-leading, high output alternator to ensure reliability and power accessories.

Largely because of those demands,

the project has been Triumph's longest so far. It began in mid-2006 – before the Tiger 800 which was launched a year earlier.

"The original plan was for the 1200 to come out first," said Warburton. "But there were a couple of delays, primarily with the styling."

Even so, the results, at least on paper (until our first test in the spring), are impressive. The all-new engine easily exceeds 130bhp, producing a claimed 138bhp with the grunt to match.

"In roll-ons we're there or thereabouts with the GS," added Warburton. "The

## Timeline: from concept to production

**1** July '06: Concept begun (note: before Tiger 800 project)



**2** Jan '07: Full project team in place and underway



**3** Sept '07: Original full-scale styling model signed off



**4** Jun '09: Frame geometry confirmed



**5** Jan '10: First 1215cc engine up and running



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# suddenly changed



## IN – SLEEKER STYLING

► Restyle of the Explorer's tank and seat (by Newcastle design consultants Xenophya, see page 20) in autumn 2010 was intended to create a lighter, less intimidating look. Tank capacity has now also been reduced to 20 litres

Production version has smaller tank, new seat, and leaner, more exciting look. Note standard main stand

**2011**

big advantage we have is that if you open the throttle we just disappear."

In fact, Triumph says the new Explorer is so potent it has electronically restricted its top speed to 130mph.

Warburton explained: "We always set our maximum speeds to be where we are 100% confident the bike is stable in the worse case scenario, ie two-up with loads of luggage, worn tyres, etc."

Triumph also reckons its new Explorer should have the GS beat when it comes to durability, reliability and economy.

"When it came to the shaft drive we asked ourselves, 'Should we do what we

**Triumph reckons the Explorer should have the GS beat when it comes to durability, reliability and economy**

PHIL WEST

do with engines – ie do it ourselves – or should we go to experts?" Warburton said. "We decided to go to experts – in this case Fuji in Japan who make the bevel box. That's one of the reasons why the Explorer is heavier than the GS. Our shaft drive is much stronger, it will NOT break."

In addition, service intervals are set at a respectable 10,000 miles. "That's not between major services," Warburton interjects. "That's between EVERY service".

And the firm claims the Explorer's fuel economy betters the GS, too.

"We invite anyone to compare the Explorer to the GS," Warburton boldly claimed. "The reason why we've got a GS here, alongside the Explorer, is because we have made a really big effort on quality and finish, and we want you to be able to compare them side by side."

"Yes, it's heavier than the GS but we think that is fully explained by having a water-cooled triple in place of an air-cooled twin and by having a shaft drive which will last the lifetime of the bike."

**Explorer's changing face, designer's vision, the accessories, page 20 & 21**

**Five minutes with...**  
**Simon Warburton,**  
**Triumph Product Manager**



Warburton: Triple is ace card

**'Our target? To beat BMW of course!'**

"Our aim was to be a direct competitor to the R1200GS. We saw no-one else was doing it, not with off-road ability AND shaft drive."

"But we also did a lot of market research and found that what essentially people want is a touring bike. In other words: the off-road element was important but a very, very low level. So the key elements were: it had to be comfortable for two riders, had to be durable and reliable and it had to have some off-road ability."

"But we thought we could bring an advantage (over the GS) by being a three-cylinder – by having better performance and a more refined feel. Plus we're offering a different kind of character – a three-cylinder character, something that is unique, plus, of course, we could bring Triumph's traditional riding dynamics and good handling."

"We believe the Explorer ticks all the boxes for this type of bike. It's comfortable and the engine is a big part of the appeal with significantly more performance and refinement than any twin. The handling is up to our standards, we've made a big effort with quality and reliability, there's a high spec as standard and the big advantage it gives is the excellent emotion when you ride it."



GS (right) was main reference



**6** May '10: First Explorer prototype is running



**7** Sept '10: Response to spy picture prompts styling rethink



**8** Jan '11: Full scale 'Version 2' styling signed off

**9** July '11: Final suspension specification signed off

**10** Jan '12: Volume production commences

**TURN OVER: Design sketches, accessories and designer's own words...**



## The changing face of the Tiger Explorer

The biggest change through the Explorer's development was to its looks. A little over a year ago Triumph management did a U-turn on the bike's styling – even though the original styling had been signed off three years earlier. They decided it must be reworked to appear leaner, lighter and more exciting.

Product Manager Warburton told MCN: "We wouldn't be telling you this if there hadn't been that spy shot."

On September 8 last year MCN published the first spy shot of the original prototype undergoing testing.

"People saw it and assumed it was the adventure version – but it wasn't!" added Warburton.

The original, large tank dominated the bike. Consequently it looked intimidating – not at all the impression Triumph was striving to give.

"As a result, I was personally having a lot of sleepless nights around September

**I was having sleepless nights. Finally we agreed that we couldn't put the bike out like that**

TRIUMPH'S SIMON WARBURTON

2010, said Warburton. "Finally we agreed that we couldn't put the bike out like that. The tank just dominated everything but the bike rode really well.

"We then had a very difficult conversation with John Bloor. But John's very good like that. He just said, 'Are you sure?' We said, 'Yes.' So he said, 'Just do it then'. So we changed it."

Triumph approached Xenophya in October 2010 with a brief to rework the existing prototype (the original stylist, Don Cammorata, was unavailable). The Newcastle firm had 12 weeks to go from initial sketch to 3D clay model. Much of the bike was to remain unchanged, such as the engine, seat rails, etc. But the tank (for which target capacity was revised down from 25 to 20 litres), seat etc were to be all-new.

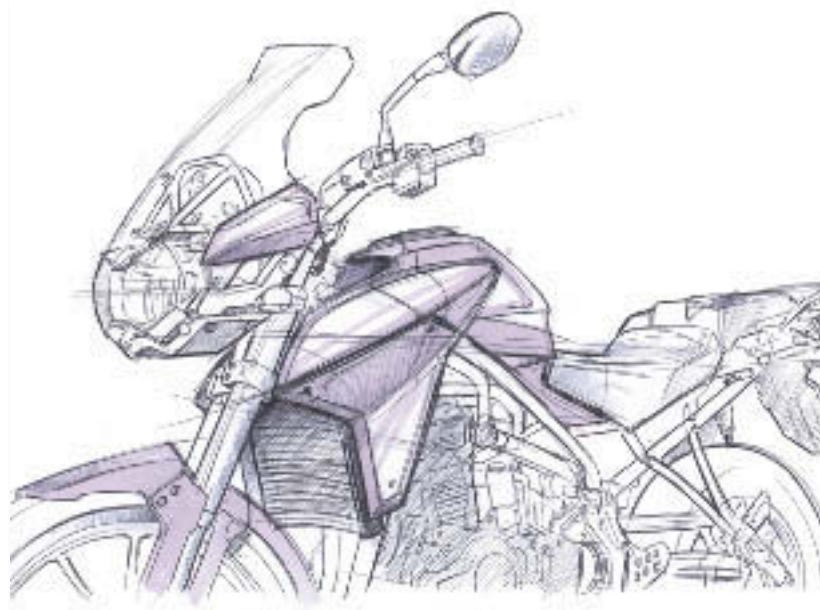
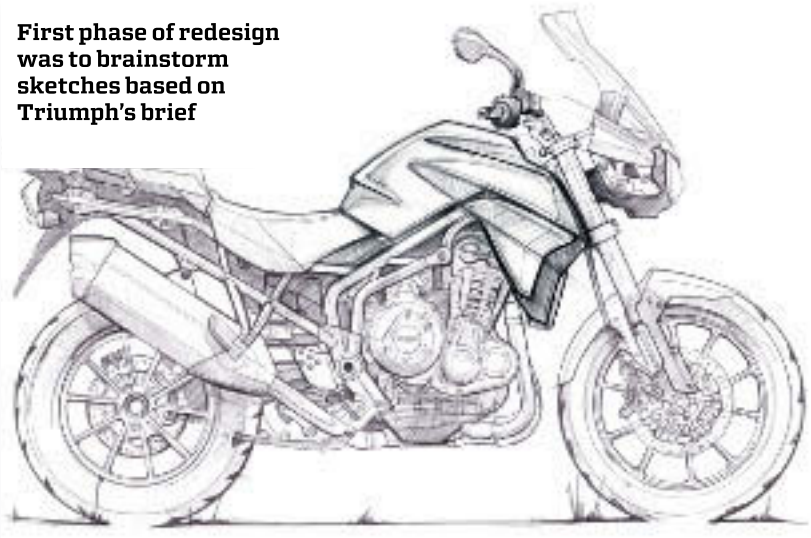
"It put about five months on the project," Warburton told MCN. "We were originally targeting to begin production in August 2011. But this sort of thing happens all the time. With the Thunderbird we went from five-speed to six-speed gearbox, from 1500 to 1600cc and so on. In every process you try to build in a bit of fat to cope with that."

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Ten months before production was due to start a new tank, fairing and seat are created

First phase of redesign was to brainstorm sketches based on Triumph's brief



## Mark Wells: the man behind the redesign

"We were trying to make something that was less intimidating to ride and reflect the performance and abilities in the image of the bike.

"Other elements of the brief were to have a family resemblance with the Tiger 800 and to be bold and exciting, too.

"First we started preliminary sketches – I like to think it's like trying to get an SLR camera into focus – then, eventually, we work in clay. Clay is a real artisan material as opposed to Computer Aided Design. A motorcycle is a very personal thing – we're all

**A motorcycle is a very personal thing. You hug a motorcycle. You don't hug a toaster**

DESIGNER MARK WELLS

motorcyclists. You hug a motorcycle. You don't hug a toaster.

"We wanted to create this feeling of movement all the way through the bike with this dynamic edge, almost like the leading edge of an aircraft wing.

"We worked flat out through Christmas – my wife wasn't happy, but needs must.

"It was a bit of lifetime's ambition to do this. Ten years ago we were young graduates dreaming of doing this sort of thing and yesterday I took my dad to the NEC to show him this. So yes, it was like a dream come true."



Wells worked through Christmas last year to finish the restyle

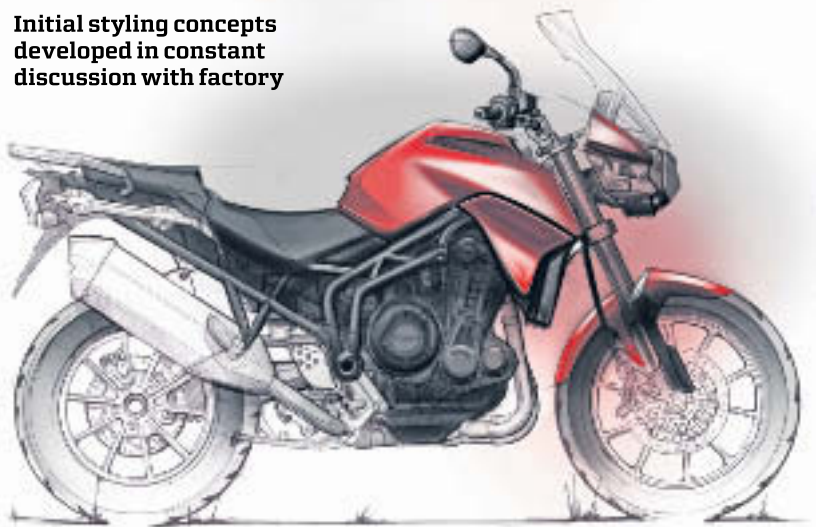


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Initial styling concepts developed in constant discussion with factory



This was the final 2D proposal put forward and agreed by Triumph



# But surely it can't match the BM for accessories?



Triumph's Accessories Manager Richard Rawlins: 'Premium feel'

A final key element in the new Tiger Explorer's proposition, especially in the context of being a credible rival for BMW's R1200GS, is its range of accessories.

Richard Rawlins, Triumph's Accessories Manager, explained to MCN the scale of the challenge.

"Obviously with this bike we wanted to create a very premium feel and we came into this off the Tiger 800 which has proved very successful with its accessories," he said.

Three items stand out in the range they've come up with. First an Arrow



Optional luggage features a quick-release top case system



Off-road pegs are available for hardcore dirt riders

silencer that's E-approved for both emissions AND noise yet also cuts weight by 2.3kg and boosts power by 3bhp.

Second, a range of different seats (the standard Explorer's seat is non-adjustable), comprising: Comfort (where an air mesh fabric is used instead of conventional gel pads); Low (30mm lower than standard); High (35mm higher than standard) and, perhaps most impressively an electrically heated rider and pillion option.

"The heated seats are not just a first



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Four different seats, including a heated version, are available

for us," Rawlins told MCN. "It makes the Explorer the first adventure bike to be so equipped."

Finally, there's a large range of luggage options, with the hard luggage system coming with the 'Triumph Dynamic Mounting System' whereby the panniers are not rigidly fitted to the machine as is the norm. Instead they have some controlled lateral movement which aids stability and handling. Said Rawlins: "We wanted to ensure we didn't compromise what we've built our reputation on – class-leading handling."

# So why the different logos?

Different to many leading manufacturers, such as Ducati and BMW, Triumph has made the decision to have not just one Triumph logo, or badge, but to use a variety of different ones on its bikes. That's why the Daytona 675 has a different Triumph logo on its tank to the Bonneville... and even the new Adventurer.

But there's meaning in this seemingly scattergun approach, as Product Manager Simon Warburton told MCN:

"Yes, we have started to use different logos on the bikes but there's

only one corporate logo. We found that as our range developed and enlarged we were struggling to use just one logo on all the bikes – especially on our sports bikes.

"So we came to the conclusion that the logo on the tank should be what suits that bike."

In other words, if it's a retro-style bike, for example the Bonneville, a retro-style logo is used. If it's more modern or sporty, such as with the Tiger Explorer or 675 Daytona, different, more suitable logos are used. However, Triumph still has



Warburton: 'There has been no dilution of the Triumph brand'

one, overriding corporate logo, which identifies the company and is used on correspondence and also on the bikes. "The rule is: if it's cast in or on the



The new Explorer has its own designated Triumph badge

instruments we use the corporate logo," Warburton continued. "But on a fuel tank it's different – we make it look the best it can be."

"Some people suggest that is diluting the brand. No. We say a brand is much more than just a logo. The corporate logo will stay, the bike badging will change."



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