

OLD V NEW

TRIUMPH TIGER 900 V 955

'93-'00

TRIUMPH TIGER 900

- ✓ Strong motor
- ✗ Soggy suspension



'01-'04

TRIUMPH TIGER 955

- ✓ More powerful, higher top speed
- ✗ Still suffers some low speed running issues



Triumph Tiger 900 v

Triumph's big Tiger trailie has been around since the early '90s in 885cc then 955cc forms - but which one is the cat's whiskers?

OWNERS' PANEL

CHRIS CANNING

MIDLANDS-based printer Chris, 52, owned an 885 model new in 1999. He traded it for a 955i in 2001.

GLEN WATT

KENT systems engineer Glen, 41, originally owned an 885, followed by a used 955i in 2005.

JIM GIBSON

ESSEX-based training officer has had 885 and 955i models and runs the Tiger forum on Triumph's RAT website.

PERFORMANCE

Jim: "I got my first 885 Tiger in 1999, and the engine really stood out. It was so smooth and, when persuaded, would pull like hell, but at times you needed to drop a gear to overtake. It also handled superbly, although fork dive is a problem on all Tigers, and the 885 was the soggiest of all - though it's easily corrected with Hagon progressive springs.

"The 955i I bought in 2001 definitely goes better. The gap in low-down power has gone, it has a higher top speed, better acceleration and the engine is so much smoother too.

However it still hasn't got a great front end, but lowering the yokes down the fork legs by 22mm makes an enormous difference. I fitted Hagon springs again and that made the difference - a proper front end that gave loads of feedback."

Chris: "I bought a '99 Tiger brand new and was disappointed when the head gasket went after six weeks!

"The 955i I bought in 2001 felt transformed with its different motor and better chassis. Then a mate sent me a pic of a Tiger converted into a supermoto, so now I run Beringer six-pot calipers, smaller front wheel, wide rear rim with 180 section tyres, Remus can and Ohlins suspension."

Glen: "I found the 885 engine sounded clattery after having Japanese fours, and the 955i is definitely more powerful, especially at the top end, but I still feel the old engine had more mid-range grunt. The fuel injection seems a little hesitant and a bit too lean too, on the later motor.

"People are saying the Tiger will be great with the 1050cc motor, but I don't

know if it needs more power - in my opinion it just needs to be sharper and more responsive."

RIDING

Jim: "After 10,000 miles, the back end started to get soggy on the old 885 and, despite constant adjustment, I could not get it to match the front. So when I got a replacement Hagon unit with remote pre-load adjuster, it was a revelation.

"I fitted a gel seat, Jack Lilley screen and Givi racks to the 955i as well, plus Digi-Tool gear indicator and driving lights as the headlamps aren't brilliant.

"I've tried the Dyno Bike O2 bypass sensor and it makes the bike run smoother, particularly at tickover. It sorts the low-end snatchiness and hasn't noticeably affected the fuel consumption."

RELIABLE and good for racking up miles, the original Tiger is now good value



OLD



CLEAR dash design, but strange offset digital clock

NEW



955i gets funky white dials and more modern layout

OLD



EARLIER Tigers can suffer premature disc warping

NEW



...955 discs are bigger but can still be similarly affected with warps



MODEL GUIDE

1993

Triumph Tiger 900 launched. 885cc triple-cylinder motor with a claimed 84bhp @ 8000rpm. Insurance group 13. Colours: dark red, electric blue or black. Costs £6299.

1997

Paint options include a brighter metallic red, army green, or camouflage-type beige/grey.

1999

Major update includes new camshafts, ignition timing and Sagen fuel injection boosting power to a claimed 86bhp @ 8200rpm. Completely new chassis, with 43mm Kayaba forks and rear shock. Adjustable seat height is standard. Colours include lime green, black or yellow. List price is £7149.

2001

The 955cc triple engine is fitted to the Tiger, plus new exhaust, gearbox, injection system, reworked engine internals etc. giving a claimed 104bhp @ 9500rpm. Colour-coded factory panniers are offered as Triumph now repositions the Tiger as a grand tourer. It costs £7599.

2002

Suspension firmed up with revised internals.

2004

Cast alloy wheels, different swingarm, panniers, heated grips and centre stand now as standard. Colour changes.

EXPERT VIEW

Pete Jennings, Sales Manager, Knotts Motorcycles, Redditch

"Both Tiger models attract taller riders, and people who love touring, and the motor is capable of covering serious miles with few problems. Values on late '90s Tigers can vary greatly, as much depends on their mileage and overall condition. Look for aftermarket accessories fitted to make commuting and touring easier. Some owners leave this stuff on when part exchanging their bike, while others prefer to take it all off again."

955

the forks slightly, and spun the chain adjusters 180 degrees, as that lowers it slightly overall. I also haven't found a screen yet which doesn't buffet the rider at speed."

OWNING

Jim: "I loved the 885, but the later bike is stunning and my Garmin Streetpilot 3 GPS has transformed my touring. It is bang on for accuracy and I've been across Europe and all over Britain."

"Fun bits included stacking it on Salisbury plain – which sounds odd – when I went into a comedy puddle that swallowed the front wheel whole!"

Chris: "The Remus exhausts give the Tiger a nice growl, plus it runs smoother with them on."

"I run a sports tourer as well as my Tiger and the later 955i is my versatile bike, but I'm glad I made it into a big supermoto because it's magnified the fun elements of the bike – you can go anywhere, at any pace, on the Tiger."

Glen: "It's funny how things like the front discs problem haven't been solved on the later 955i. That said, I love both Tigers and found them both more

powerful and more fun than the BMW R1150GS. The Honda Varadero is another rival, but I found it really top heavy and very thirsty compared to the 955i, which does about 40-45mpg."

"I still see my old Tiger 885 about and it's done 30K miles, so I think it's a very well-built bike. It just needs better brakes, low speed running and a few other little details to become the perfect long distance machine."

VERDICT

Jim: "Tough decision, but the 955i looks better, feels faster and you get more features as standard."

Chris: "The later 955i is better made and handles better. A winner by miles."

Glen: "Liked the grunt of the old 885, but the 955 has the edge. Good value with luggage as standard too – unlike say the Varadero."

YOU CAN BE IN MCN!

If you've owned an MV Augusta F4 750 and an F4 1000 you could be in a future edition of Old v New. Send an e-mail to michael.neeves@emap.com

Chris: "Apart from front discs warping and the gasket problem, both bikes have been reliable and clocked up big miles. I've been to Germany, France, Spain and Portugal in one trip – I rode from Barcelona to Birmingham in one day – 16 hours and over 1000 miles – with the missus on the back too!"

"When it comes to tyres, I never liked the stock Michelin T66s and found Metzeler Tourance better and as my new one has wide rims, run Bridgestone BT1010 sports bike tyres."

Glen: "I found the discs on the old Tiger used to 'pulse' a bit, so the dealer helped me get them replaced under warranty. I fitted a Givi box, centre-stand, heated grips etc to the old bike and I put on a Tune Boy – like a Power Commander – to sort the low speed running out on my later 955i. "I've got short legs, so I dropped

MORE powerful motor and revised styling mark out the later 955i model



1993-2000 TRIUMPH TIGER

COST NEW £7149
USED PRICES 1993-2000 £1600-£3500

Insurance group: 13 (of 17)
Servicing: £270 main, £120 minor

TECHNICAL SPEC:
Engine: 855cc four-stroke triple
Power: 86bhp (claimed)
Chassis: Tubular steel cradle, monoshock rear, telescopic forks
Weight: 215kg
Top speed: 130mph
MPG range: 40/160 miles

2001-04 TRIUMPH TIGER 955i

COST NEW £7599
USED PRICES 2001-2004 £3000-£6500

Insurance group: 13 (of 17)
Servicing: £270 main, £120 minor

TECHNICAL SPEC:
Engine: 955cc four-stroke triple
Power: 104bhp (claimed)
Chassis: Tubular steel perimeter, monoshock rear, telescopic forks
Weight: 215kg
Top speed: 135mph
MPG range: 45/170 miles

ONE DAY WITH...

YAMAHA TDM900 ABS



TDM900 performed well in the Northwich Thundersprint

Better stopping power, but that's about it

WHAT'S NEW?

NOT much. Yamaha's tried-and-tested TDM900 now comes with anti-lock brakes as a £500 option, but that's about it. You've still got the same 900cc lump – which replaced the 850cc unit in 2002 – and there are no design changes either. But as the old saying goes – if it ain't broke, don't fix it.

SO HOW ARE THOSE NEW BRAKES?

TO put the TDM's new ABS system to the test, we entered the bike into the Northwich Thundersprint – a nagery town centre time trial which requires low down grunt and pinpoint-accurate braking if you've any hope of victory. Off the line the rear Dunlop spins easily, which didn't give me confidence for the very tight 10mph first gear right-hander. But the ABS took care of everything and the brakes are really strong – impressive for this type of bike. You can feel the brake controls pulse as the ABS system does its stuff. As soon as a wheel begins to lock, the ABS lets the pressure off but then increases it again in a fraction of a second, keeping stopping power maximised. Thankfully, there isn't that split-second delay like you get on some ABS bikes,



ABS brakes have improved the TDM's appeal

otherwise I'd have been buried in the crowd.

Every tight corner was the same; jump on both brakes, let the ABS system sort everything out, let off and turn in. If the tyres and handling had been more inspiring I would've been challenging for a trophy. As it happened, I came fifth.

SO THE HANDLING COULD BE BETTER?

IT'S comfy and easy to ride – especially around town, but the handling is a bit vague in the corners when pushed hard. The tyres and suspension seem to speak French, but as I only got a C at GCSE I find it difficult to translate what's actually happening. The old Dunlops may last for ever but they offer little confidence or grip, especially when cold.

BUT THE MOTOR PACKS A PUNCH...

THERE'S still a decent amount of poke from the 897cc, 86bhp parallel twin, and you can just about squeeze 140mph from it on a long enough straight. It'll even wheeie in the first two gears if that takes your fancy.

There's decent low-down punch but if you push the bike you'll soon find faults. Cruise at 70-80mph in top and the revs barely nudge 5000rpm – it's effortless – but above 5000rpm and over 90mph, the lack of decent wind protection will get your arms aching, while neck muscles will have doubled.

So, the brakes are great and it's an OK bike, but why settle for OK when you can buy the firm's FZ6 Fazer – which does everything better – for £5300?



SCREEN gives little protection



IMPRESSIVE ABS system

MCN SAYS:

- ✓ Sorted ABS braking system
- ✓ Decent low-down punch
- ✓ Individual

- ✗ Painful above 90mph
- ✗ Standard tyres lack feel

YAMAHA TDM900 ABS

★★★★★
COST £6499
POWER (claimed): 86.2bhp
TORQUE (claimed): 65.5ftlb
WEIGHT: 193kg

Available: New Colours Black, black/gold, silver, blue stone, blue
New for 2005: ABS option
Insurance group 12 (of 17)
Info: 01932-358000

Engine: Liquid cooled, 897cc (92mm x 67.5mm) 10v, dohc, four-stroke parallel twin.
Chassis: Cast alloy frame. 43mm forks adj for pre-load and rebound. Fully adj rear shock. Twin 298mm front discs with four-piston calipers. 245mm rear disc with twin-piston caliper. Tyres: 120/70 x 18 (front), 160/60 x 17 (rear).