



1952 Triumph Thunderbird Motorcycle

Triumph

£7,400



Description

1952 Triumph 6T Thunderbird - 650cc

This 1952 Triumph 6T Thunderbird is a superb example of one of Triumph's most iconic post-war motorcycles. Powered by the legendary 650cc pre-unit parallel twin engine, this machine carries Frame No. 30706 and Engine No. 6T 018171, and is registered in the UK as 478 YUT, having previously been registered overseas.

Introduced in 1949 as a more powerful successor to the Speed Twin, the Thunderbird was created to meet growing demand-particularly from the American market-for increased performance. By enlarging the Speed Twin's engine to 649cc (71 x 82 mm), Triumph produced a motorcycle that would go on to define the brand's reputation for speed, reliability, and style throughout the 1950s.

The Thunderbird's reputation was cemented early on when three standard-production machines covered 500 miles at an average speed of 92 mph at the Montlhéry circuit near Paris, before being ridden back to the Meriden factory-an extraordinary demonstration of durability. Its cultural legacy was sealed when Marlon Brando rode a Thunderbird in the 1953 film *The Wild One*, securing its place in motorcycling history. Visually, the Thunderbird embodied simplicity and purposeful design: a round headlamp set into a nacelle, a sprung single saddle, lightweight wire-spoke wheels, twin exhausts, and Triumph's signature clean lines. The machine uses a brazed-lug rigid frame paired with a telescopic front fork and Triumph's innovative sprung hub rear suspension. Although appearing rigid, the sprung hub houses internal springs offering up to two inches of travel-an early solution for rear suspension before swingarms became standard. Drum brakes are fitted front and rear.

Built for riders who wanted both style and performance, the Triumph Thunderbird became an instant success in the U.S. and remains one of the most recognisable classics of the 1950s. Today, early examples are treasured for their iconic look, robust engineering, and deep connection to post-war British motorcycling heritage.

The motorcycle runs and rides, having last been ridden in January 2025, and has been in the current ownership for 12 years. It is supplied with a dating certificate from the VMCC, further supporting its provenance.