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1982 Triumph Bonneville Buyer's Guide

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1982 T140ES / T140 TSS / T140 TSX Bonneville

Factory-Correct Restoration Guide

KEY FACTS AT A GLANCE

- **Model year covered:** 1982 only — T140ES Electro, T140 TSS (eight-valve), T140 TSX (custom), T140AV. This guide does not cover the 1981 or 1983 T140 except where differences are explicitly noted.
- **Engine:** 744 cc air-cooled OHV parallel twin; 76.0 mm x 82.0 mm bore x stroke; parallel-port head. TSS: EIGHT-VALVE Weslake-derived head, rubber-mounted, ~60 bhp (Hagerty).
- **Fuel system:** Twin Amal MkII on standard models; Bing carburetors documented on late electric-start models.
- **Ignition:** Lucas electronic ignition.
- **Electrics:** 12-volt; turn indicators standard.
- **Starting:** Electric + kick on ES and related electric-start models; kick on others — verify by variant.
- **Transmission:** 5-speed constant-mesh; LEFT-side shift. Chain primary; wet multi-plate clutch; chain final drive.
- **Frame:** Oil-bearing frame.
- **Brakes:** Front disc (twin front discs on late electric-start models); rear disc (1980 relocated position).
- **Wheels/tires:** Wire-spoked standard; TSS offered with alloy wheels (Hagerty).
- **Frame/engine serials:** 17-digit VINs appear for 1982 — documented example: SCGB75500CM031138 (Bonhams), a T140ES whose 10th character (C) encodes 1982. Earlier-format alpha-numeric serials also occur; verify the format against the bike.
- **Documented color:** Fogged bronze with gold pinstripes — recorded on a documented-original 1982 T140ES with 450 miles (Bonhams). Survivor evidence; verify the full palette in the parts book.
- **T140 TSS:** Eight-valve Weslake-derived head, rubber-mounted engine, ~60 bhp, alloy wheels optional (Hagerty) — the final performance development of the Meriden twin.
- **Production context:** The penultimate Meriden year; the range is now specials and derivatives.

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This is a single-year guide. It covers the 1982 Triumph T140ES / T140 TSS / T140 TSX Bonneville only. Other model years are discussed solely to mark differences — for a different year, use that year's IronHead guide.

1. Manufacturer history: Triumph

Triumph began as a bicycle and motorcycle maker in Coventry, England, founded by the German immigrant Siegfried Bettmann in the 1880s; the company built its first motorcycle in 1902. Through the 1920s Triumph was one of Britain's major motorcycle manufacturers, and in 1936 the arrival of designer Edward Turner changed the company's trajectory permanently: his 1937/38 Speed Twin — a 500 cc parallel twin — created the template (light, narrow, good-looking twin with real performance) that the whole British industry, and then the Japanese, would chase for the next forty years.

Bombing forced the move from Coventry to a new factory at Meriden in 1942, and in 1951 Triumph was sold to the BSA group. The 1950s and 1960s were the boom years: the 650 twins (Thunderbird, Tiger, Bonneville) sold in huge numbers, overwhelmingly to the United States — more than 65 percent of Bonneville production went to America, a figure Hagerty's marque history repeats across its model summaries. The American market's appetite for the big parallel twin is the reason the Bonneville exists in the form it does: tuned for US tastes, styled for US showrooms, and sold through legendary importers like Johnson Motors (JoMo) on the West Coast and the Triumph Corporation (TriCor) in the East.

The 1970s brought the collapse. Mismanagement, labor strife, and Japanese competition pushed BSA/Triumph to the brink; the 1973 creation of Norton Villiers Triumph (NVT) was followed by an 18-month workers' sit-in at Meriden (Hagerty), after which the factory continued as the Meriden Workers' Co-operative — owner-workers building essentially the same motorcycles with almost no development money. Production limped on until 1983, when the Meriden works closed and the rest of Triumph's motorcycle production ended with it. Businessman John Bloor bought the name and assets the same year; his new Hinckley company would eventually relaunch the Bonneville in 2001, but the Meriden-built line this guide covers died in 1983.

For the restorer, that history explains the parts landscape: enormous US sales mean used parts and pattern parts are plentiful for the popular years; the co-operative years (1975-1983) mean running changes, mixed fittings, and documentation gaps that demand verification against the factory parts books rather than memory.

2. Model history: the Bonneville

The Bonneville began in 1959 as the T120: a 650 cc pre-unit parallel twin, essentially a twin-carburettor Tiger 110, named for the land-speed records Johnny Allen set on the Bonneville Salt Flats in 1956 aboard a Triumph-powered streamliner. It was an instant hit in America, and for the next two decades the Bonneville was Triumph's flagship — the bike the company was known by.

Three mechanical generations matter for the restorer. The **pre-unit T120** (1959-1962) has a separate gearbox. The **unit 650** (1963-1972, covered by factory workshop manual 99-0883/0889 for 1963-1970) combines engine and gearbox in one crankcase casting — the engine most people picture when they hear "Bonneville." The **750 T140** (1973-1983) is a bored-and-developed descendant of the oil-in-frame 650, covered by the T140 factory repair manual. Within those generations, the year-to-year changes — carburetors, brakes, frames, electrics, shift side, paint — are exactly what this guide series isolates, one year at a time.

Two production facts anchor every guide in this series. First, Hagerty's marque history records that by the time the last 649 cc T120 was sold in 1972, production had reached **250,000 units** — the Bonneville was a mass-market machine, not an exotic. Second, the same source puts total T140 production at roughly **60,000 units** across 1973-1983. And more than 65 percent of all Bonneville production was sold in the United States, which is why US-specification details (US-only paint names, US-market fittings, the T120R designation for the US road model) dominate the restoration record.

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Designation	Years	What changed that matters
T120 Bonneville	1959-1962	650 cc pre-unit twin. Named for the 1956 Bonneville Salt Flats land-speed records.
T120 Bonneville (unit)	1963-1970	Unit construction (engine and gearbox in one casting) from 1963. 12-volt electrics from 1964. Amal Concentric carbs and 8-inch twin-leading-shoe front brake from 1968.
T120R/T120V (oil-in-frame)	1971-1972	Oil carried in the frame instead of a separate tank. 54 bhp @ 6,750 rpm. Five-speed option for 1972. Last of the 649 cc line: ~250,000 T120s built in total (Hagerty).
T140V Bonneville	1973-1978	750 twin (724 cc at launch, 744 cc shortly after). Five-speed, right-side shift to 1975, left-side shift and rear disc from 1976.
T140J Silver Jubilee	1977	Limited edition: 1,000 UK + 1,000 US machines (Bonhams).
T140E / T140D	1979-1980	E for emissions: parallel-port head, Amal MkII carbs, Lucas Rita electronic ignition. D Special: factory custom by Tom Higham.
T140ES Electro	1980-1983	Electric start alongside the kick starter.
T140LE Royal Wedding	1981	Limited edition for the Charles and Diana wedding; published build totals conflict (see Section 10).
T140AV	1981-1983	Anti-vibration rubber-mounted police/touring model.
T140 TSS / TSX	1982-1983	Eight-valve Weslake-derived head on the TSS (~60 bhp per Hagerty).
End of line	1983	Meriden closes. ~60,000 T140s built in total (Hagerty).

3. What makes the 1982 T140ES / T140 TSS / T140 TSX Bonneville unique

The 1982 range is the penultimate Meriden year — the standard bikes continue alongside the T140ES Electro, the eight-valve T140 TSS, the custom-styled T140 TSX, and the T140AV. The engineering story of the year is the TSS: the eight-valve Weslake-derived head on a rubber-mounted engine making about 60 bhp (Hagerty) — the final performance development of the Meriden parallel twin, and the bike the co-operative built to prove the old twin still had life in it.

1982-only details:

- **T140 TSS: eight valves.** The Weslake-derived eight-valve head,

rubber-mounted engine, ~60 bhp, alloy wheels optional (Hagerty). The TSS's head, engine mounts, and induction are unique — verify a claimed TSS by the head and mounts, not by badges. This is the rarest and most faked late variant.

- **T140 TSX: the custom.** The custom-styled derivative of the late

range — verify TSX identity by its specific trim and numbers against marque records. (Limited verified detail was found in the sources checked; do not invent TSX specification — verify part by part.)

- **T140ES: fogged bronze.** Bonhams documents an original 1982 T140ES

(450 miles) in fogged bronze with gold pinstripes — genuine survivor evidence of a 1982 colorway.

- **17-digit VINs.** The documented 1982 T140ES carries the 17-character

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VIN SCGB75500CM031138 (Bonhams), with the 10th character (C) encoding the 1982 model year. Earlier-format alpha-numeric serials also occur on 1982 bikes — read the VIN format first, then decode accordingly.

- **Twin front discs on late electric-start models** (documented on the

1983 T140ES; verify 1982 fitment by variant and build point).

- **Bing carburetors** documented on late electric-start models.

1982 buyer cautions:

- **TSS-identity fraud.** The eight-valve head is the value — and the

thing most often faked by dressing a standard bike. Verify the head (eight valves, Weslake derivation), the rubber mounts, and the numbers/documentation as a set.

- **TSX: verify, don't assume.** Limited verified TSX detail was found

for this guide — treat every TSX claim as requiring part-by-part verification against marque records.

- **VIN-format awareness.** A 1982 can carry either the 17-digit VIN or

the earlier alpha-numeric format. Decode according to the format present; do not force one format's rules onto the other.

4. Decoding your 1982 Bonneville

Two formats occur on 1982 bikes. **17-digit VIN:** documented example **SCGB75500CM031138** (Bonhams, T140ES) — the 10th character (C) encodes the 1982 model year. **Earlier alpha-numeric format** (month letter + model-year code + sequential, DA-code family per Lowbrow Customs) also occurs. Read the format first, then decode: do not apply alpha-numeric code tables to a 17-digit VIN or vice versa. Engine number: left crankcase below the barrel. Frame number: steering head. On the Bonhams-documented bike, frame and engine numbers matched (T140ES-prefix, JEA-family for 1983 — see the 1983 guide). For claimed TSS/TSX machines, the numbers must be consistent with that variant's production.

5. Engine — technical restoration data

The table below is the 1982 T140ES / T140 TSS / T140 TSX Bonneville's technical core. Every figure is sourced; where no verified factory figure was found in the sources checked, the table says so explicitly rather than printing a plausible number. Use the factory workshop manual for your exact model as the final authority.

Specification	Detail
Engine	744 cc air-cooled OHV parallel twin; parallel-port head. TSS: EIGHT-VALVE Weslake-derived head, rubber-mounted, ~60 bhp (Hagerty)
Bore x stroke	76.0 mm x 82.0 mm
Compression ratio	Not printed: no verified 1982 factory figure found in the sources checked — use the manual.
Carburetion	Twin Amal MkII (standard); Bing on late electric-start models
Ignition	Lucas electronic ignition
Power	TSS: ~60 bhp (Hagerty). Standard models: no separately verified 1982 factory figure found
Gearbox	5-speed constant-mesh; LEFT-side shift

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Specification	Detail
Clutch / primary	Wet multi-plate clutch; chain primary drive
Final drive	Chain
Frame	Oil-bearing frame
Front suspension	Telescopic fork
Rear suspension	Twin shock absorbers
Front brake	Disc (twin discs on late electric-start models — verify by variant)
Rear brake	Disc (1980 relocated position)
Wheels	Wire-spoked standard; TSS: alloy wheels optional (Hagerty)
Electrics	12-volt; turn indicators standard
Starting	Electric + kick (ES and related); kick (others) — verify by variant
Fuel capacity	Not printed: verify against the factory parts book for the year.

6. Transmission, clutch and primary drive

The 1982 runs a 5-speed constant-mesh; LEFT-side shift. Wet multi-plate clutch; chain primary drive. Final drive is by Chain. Rebuild practice is standard unit-twin work: inspect gear dogs and slots for rounding, replace bearings and seals as a set, check clutch-plate flatness and basket notching, and set the primary-chain tension and clutch adjustment to the factory manual before judging gearbox behavior.

7. Frame, suspension, wheels and brakes

Frame: Oil-bearing frame. Front suspension: Telescopic fork. Rear: Twin shock absorbers. Brakes: Disc (twin discs on late electric-start models — verify by variant) front, Disc (1980 relocated position) rear. Wheels: Wire-spoked standard; TSS: alloy wheels optional (Hagerty). Wheel and brake originality is checked as a set — hub, brake plate or caliper, and fork fitment must all agree with the year's specification in Section 3.

8. Electrics, ignition and instruments

Ignition: Lucas electronic ignition. Carburetion: Twin Amal MkII (standard); Bing on late electric-start models. Electrics: 12-volt; turn indicators standard. Starting: Electric + kick (ES and related); kick (others) — verify by variant. Fit a new wiring harness — original insulation is finished — rebuild or replace the switches, fit the correct battery, and test the charging system under load. Set timing to the factory manual before attempting any carburetion tuning.

9. Paint, trim and finishes

Documented: fogged bronze with gold pinstripes, recorded on a documented-original 1982 T140ES with 450 miles (Bonhams) — survivor evidence of a 1982 colorway. Verify the complete 1982 palette against the factory parts book and period brochures before paint.

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10. Production and rarity

No published model-year split found. The 17-digit VIN format appears for 1982 (documented: SCGB75500CM031138, Bonhams). Total T140 production 1973-1983: ~60,000 (Hagerty).

11. Corrosion and wear areas to inspect

Check every one of these before committing to the restoration — they are the places 1982 Bonnevilles hide their expensive surprises.

- **TSS head:** the eight-valve head is irreplaceable — inspect with extreme care before purchase.
- **Rubber mounts (TSS/AV):** check mount condition; perished mounts change handling and stress the frame.
- **Frame interior:** oil-bearing frame — flush and verify clean.
- **Bing carbs:** check slides, diaphragms, bodies.
- **Tank interior:** borescope before paint.
- **Top-end wear:** check valve guides (Hagerty's 50-mph smoke test).

12. Restoration sequence

Work in an order that never forces you to undo finished work. The sequence below is the standard professional order for a unit-twin Triumph; the notes flag where the 1982 T140ES / T140 TSS / T140 TSX Bonneville needs special attention.

1. **Document everything first.** Photograph the complete bike from all sides,

then every assembly before you touch a fastener. Record the frame and engine numbers (see Section 4) and check them against the year ranges before spending money — a mis-described year is the most expensive restoration mistake.

2. **Assess, don't strip.** Inventory what's original, what's period-correct,

what's wrong-year, and what's missing. On a 1982, pay particular attention to verifying the exact variant (ES / TSS / TSX / AV) and reading the VIN format before any other work.

3. **Engine and gearbox out; frame inspection.** Check the frame for crash

damage, cracks at the steering head and swingarm pivot, and previous repairs. Oil-in-frame: flush and verify internally. TSS/AV: verify the rubber-mount frame fittings.

4. **Engine rebuild.** Split only as far as needed. Measure everything:

bore, crank journals, cam bushings, valve guides. Rebores on these barrels are routine, but match pistons to the measured clearance, not to the catalogue's optimism. Replace the sludge-trap plug's staking on the crank — a loose sludge trap destroys cranks.

5. **Gearbox and clutch.** Inspect dogs and slots for rounding, replace

bearings and seals as a set, check clutch-plate flatness and basket notching.

6. **Cycle parts.** Rebuild forks with new seals and correct oil; rebuild

shocks or replace with correct-pattern units. Wheel rebuilds: new spokes and nipples, rims trued — chrome rims that are pitted will not take a lasting polish.

7. **Brakes.** Discs: full hydraulic rebuilds. Verify single vs twin front discs by variant. Rebuild hydraulics completely on disc models:

seals, hoses (replace, don't reuse), master-cylinder bore inspection.

8. **Electrics.** New wiring harness (the original insulation is done),

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