# Peter Britton 1930-2026

Peter Britton, a sales and marketing supremo of the old British industry through boom and bust, has died one day after his 96th birthday. A sociable figure recognisable by his handlebar moustache, he promoted Triumph internationally during 1960s peak production, and had a second stint at the Meriden factory in the difficult Co-operative era.

Returning to the UK from African colonial service Britton asked for a job at BSA in 1953, hearing that it was a flourishing cash-rich organisation. At the time, the Birmingham-based organisation comprised 30 companies in diverse branches of engineering. Taken on as a trainee, he stood at a bench repairing engines for several months, tolerating jibes at his lack of a Brummie accent. Moving to BSA sales, he covered a large patch from Northwest to Southwest England and taking in some of Wales for 10 years. Peter recalled making sure to cross paths with colleagues from Ariel and Triumph, also owned by BSA, for informal pub meetings.

In the mid-1960s, Peter was promoted to be marketing manager for all BSA's motorcycle brands, based at Meriden. He liked the friendly atmosphere in a plant with 1500 staff compared with 3500 at BSA's main base. Harry Sturgeon, MD of BSA's motorcycle division from 1964, cranked up of Meriden output to nearly 1000 units per week, keeping Peter busy. After Sturgeon's untimely death due to a brain tumour, he was not so happy with his replacement Lionel Jofeh, noting a lack of respect for the workforce that actually designed and built motorcycles. Jofeh told Peter to focus on Triumph, which was doing better than BSA with soaring US sales of its 650cc Bonneville and Trophy twins. His brief was to stimulate business in other Triumph-starved markets. Travelling far and wide, he welcomed cold beers at Australian sheep stations, enjoyed lavish hospitality with the French importer, sold 200cc Tiger Cubs to public authorities in Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) and convinced Italy's Jaguar importer to take on Triumph as the two-wheeled equivalent. In Scandinavia he relied on Buster Rheinhardt, a strong Meriden supporter from a Danish banking family, while opting to leave the German market to look after itself. All this worked: Triumph's non-US turnover rose from £1.3m to £3.4m in three years.

The collapse of BSA in 1973 and the shutdown at Meriden after the Norton Villiers Triumph group took control prompted Peter to set off on his own, becoming an agent for Steyr Daimler Puch. He returned to Meriden in early 1978 to assist the co-operative formed three years earlier to save Triumph's iconic Bonneville. As Sales Director he was the face of Triumph when TV covered the launch of the Bonneville Royal special edition, marking the 1981 wedding of the Prince of Wales to Lady Diana Spencer. Peter also put a lot of energy into Meriden's attention-grabbing display with several new models at MCN's Bike 81 show at Earls Court. But falling sales and a deepening financial crisis saw the end of Triumph at Meriden in 1983.

By then Peter had left to set a business selling Gore-Tex clothing, then a novelty thought expensive, which was eventually sold to Belstaff. In latter years, Peter lived in a bungalow at Wellesbourne, Warwickshire with one of his two daughters living next-door. He kept in touch with old industry friends, but unfortunately news of his passing in April took time to reach them.