



# 2018 ADVENTURE BIKES

New BMW F850GS, Honda Africa Twin and Triumph Tiger 800 tested

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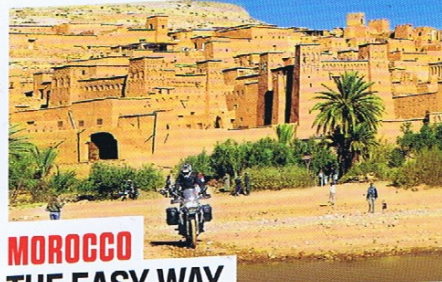


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# THE BEST OF BRITISH

This country has long been home to some of the most innovative, high-quality ideas in motorcycling. Here are some of today's biking stars

**Words** Martin Fitz-Gibbons, Simon Weir, Phil West  
**Pictures** Paul Bryant, Bauer Archive

## FORCEFIELD

Protection isn't a racket, it's a very serious business – and one of the most serious manufacturers of protective kit is Northamptonshire-based Forcefield. The firm produces a huge range of high-performance back protectors, armoured layers and upgrade insert armour, as well as base layers.

[www.forcefieldbodyarmour.com](http://www.forcefieldbodyarmour.com)

Forcefield takes the business of protection very seriously



Royal Enfield's UK technical centre

## ROYAL ENFIELD

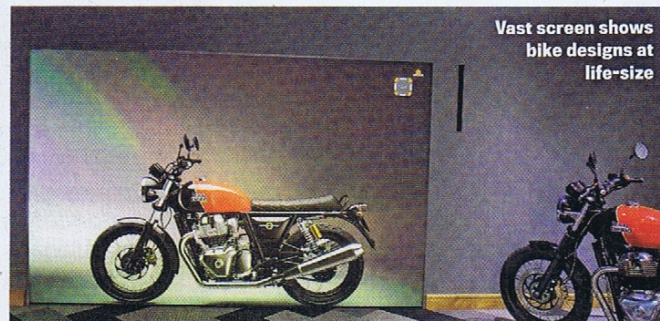
You might not yet be aware of it, but in fairly humble surroundings in the East Midlands one of the world's most advanced motorcycle development technology facilities has just come on line. Costing tens of millions of pounds, purpose-built with the latest tech ranging from state-of-the-art CAD design and 3D printers to a Pandora's box of engineering equipment – including fully equipped workshops and brand-new dynos – it's also staffed with over 120 of the best design and development brains from across the globe.

It's been specifically set up to develop a whole new family of world-leading, British-designed motorcycles and though Hinckley is just 14 miles up the road, is nothing to do with Triumph. Instead it's been set up by Indian-owned Royal Enfield.

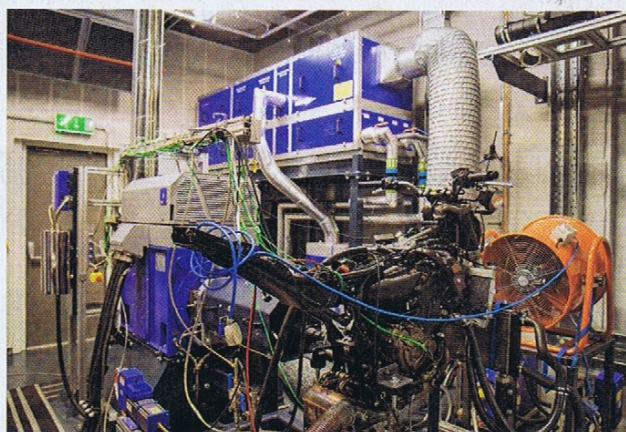
Though Enfield, to most, still conjures jokes about old-school 500cc singles produced since the 50s, the scale and ambitions of the firm deserve to be taken very seriously.

Founded as 'Enfield India' in 1956 it was initially an offshoot of Redditch's Royal Enfield, set up to produce Bullet singles for the Indian army. However, the Madras-based factory actually outlived the British company (finally dissolved in 1971) by continuing to produce





Vast screen shows bike designs at life-size



▲ The right people working with the right tools and technology create some exceptional products

◀ One of three purpose-built, state-of-the-art dyno rooms at the tech centre

1950s-style machines, primarily for the huge Indian domestic market.

Things started to evolve in 1994 when Enfield India was taken over by the Eicher Group, one of India's leading automotive groups. In 1999, a legal battle resulted in Enfield India becoming Royal Enfield. Then in 2001, the charismatic, dynamic, Siddhartha 'Sid' Lal, son of Eicher boss Vikram Lal, became CEO of Enfield with ambitious expansion plans.

The results, so far, have been greater than many realise. In 2006, global Royal Enfield sales were just 45,000. Today, thanks to the opening of two new fully modernised factories, this has grown to a massive 670,000. That's bigger than all of the current European (BMW, Ducati, KTM, Triumph etc) and American manufacturers (Harley-Davidson and Indian). Not bigger than any one of them: bigger than all of them, combined.

But it's also a figure dominated by the vast Indian domestic market (currently 97% of Royal Enfield's sales are in India), which partly explains Enfield's new global ambitions and the foundation of

this facility in the UK. "There was a strategic decision to broaden the range and to grow upwards in terms of capacity," says Simon Warburton, Royal Enfield's Head of Product Development, who formerly held a similar role with Triumph.

"But to do that we realised we needed to grow our capacity to develop bikes," he adds. "From there the decision to set up in the UK was pretty straightforward. It wasn't just for the engineering capability but

also for the historic brand connection – it made it the obvious choice."

And what a set-up it is. Conference rooms feature enormous 4K-ready screens able to display life-size bike designs. Side rooms house the very

latest Romer 3D scanners and printers. There are multi-bay workshops, dynos, modelling and machining rooms; a design and photo studio; it even bought Harris Performance for its chassis-building ability and experience.

"Pretty much everything we wanted, we got," adds Warburton. "I can't tell you how much has been invested but it's a lot – and it has seven zeros!" And the result, as you might expect, has virtually no equals. Anywhere.

"I'm pretty confident that this building is one of the best, purpose-built design facilities in the world," says Filippo Corticelli, Royal Enfield's Group Manager of Industrial Design. "It's one of only two like this in the world. The other is Yamaha in Japan. And I still think that this is better." It's definitely time to take Enfield seriously.

**"It's time to take Enfield seriously"**

