



# Triumph Metisse (1964)

*The Rickman brother's "mongrel" that revolutionised the sport of motocross*

| Model                                                     | Years        | Engine                          | Suspension                                                 | Power (bhp) | Notable Features                                 |
|-----------------------------------------------------------|--------------|---------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|--------------------------------------------------|
| Rickman Metisse MK III, Reynolds 531 tubing bronzed Frame | 1964 to 1974 | Triumph T120 with 750cc barrels | Ceriani with Rickman hub (front), Falcon with CZ hub(rear) | 46 bhp      | Nickel-plated, oil-in-frame, fibreglass bodywork |

The Triumph Metisse is a product of the innovative Rickman brothers Don and Derek, who were celebrated British motocross competitors in the late 1950s and 1960s. The brothers were pivotal figures in British motorcycle engineering and revolutionised off-road bike design and construction by building their own frames when existing ones were too heavy or lacked durability for competition.

Before the brothers started their Metisse factory and released their famous Rickman Metisse scramblers in the late 1950s - 1960s, they were involved in hybrid bikes like the TriBSA - combining the best available components from different brands. The name "Metisse," is French for "mongrel" or "mixed breed," which reflects this approach.

When they built the first Triumph Metisse scrambler in 1959, they produced the original MK1 Metisse frame. Production of Metisse frames and motorcycles continued throughout the 1960s, with notable models like the MK3 (introduced in 1962) and MK4 (introduced in 1966).

The Rickman Metisse models with Triumph engines were produced from around 1966 to 1974. The 1964 Triumph Metisse typically used the Triumph T100 engine, which is an air-cooled OHV parallel twin with a displacement of 490cc (often rounded to 500cc). The engine features a bore and stroke of 86mm x 85.5mm and a compression ratio of 9.5.

Some Metisse bikes from this era were also fitted with larger Triumph engines (like the bike on display), such as the 650cc twin, but the standard and most common engine for the 1964 model was the 490cc (500cc) Triumph T100 twin.

The Metisse's reputation was further cemented when Hollywood star and avid racer Steve McQueen chose a later version as his preferred desert racer.

### Racing history

Don Rickman finished fourth in the 1960 500cc motocross world championship riding a Metisse, while his brother Derek Rickman won the European motocross championship in the 750cc class that same year.

While Rickman Metisse Triumphs were consistently competitive and respected, they did not secure any World Motocross Championship titles. However, at the 1964 Motocross des Nations (MXoN) at Hawkstone Park in the United Kingdom, the British team, consisting of Don Rickman, Derek Rickman, and Jeff Smith, took victory with the brothers and 22 other riders lining up that year on Rickman-Metisse machines.

In Australia, motocross pioneer Ray Fisher from New South Wales won three Australian Motocross Championships in the 1960s on Matchless Metisse bikes between 1965 and 1968. Victorian Geoff Taylor was the 1966 Runner-up Australian Unlimited Champion on a Triumph Metisse at Christmas Hills in Victoria.

In 1960, here in Western Australia, Manjimup rider Bob Cutts became the first country rider to win the famous Harley Scramble, as well as the first and only rider to win this event on a Triumph.

### Restoration

Originally used in the United States as a desert racer with a 5-speed gearbox, the Triumph Metisse on display was imported from the United States to New Zealand in rough condition by Roger Middlebrook.

Roger restored the bike in 1990 and raced it for many years in New Zeland scrambles until he moved to WA in 2014. The bike sat in storage until 2023 and Robert Dillon now races it in the VMX Pre '65 class.

Photos: [Left to right] Roger Middlebrook's beautifully restored 1964 Triumph Metisse; Roger Middlebrook in action on the bike at a VMX event; and Victorian Geoff Taylor was the 1966 Runner-up Australian All Powers (Unlimited) Champion on a Triumph Metisse at Christmas Hills in Victoria.

