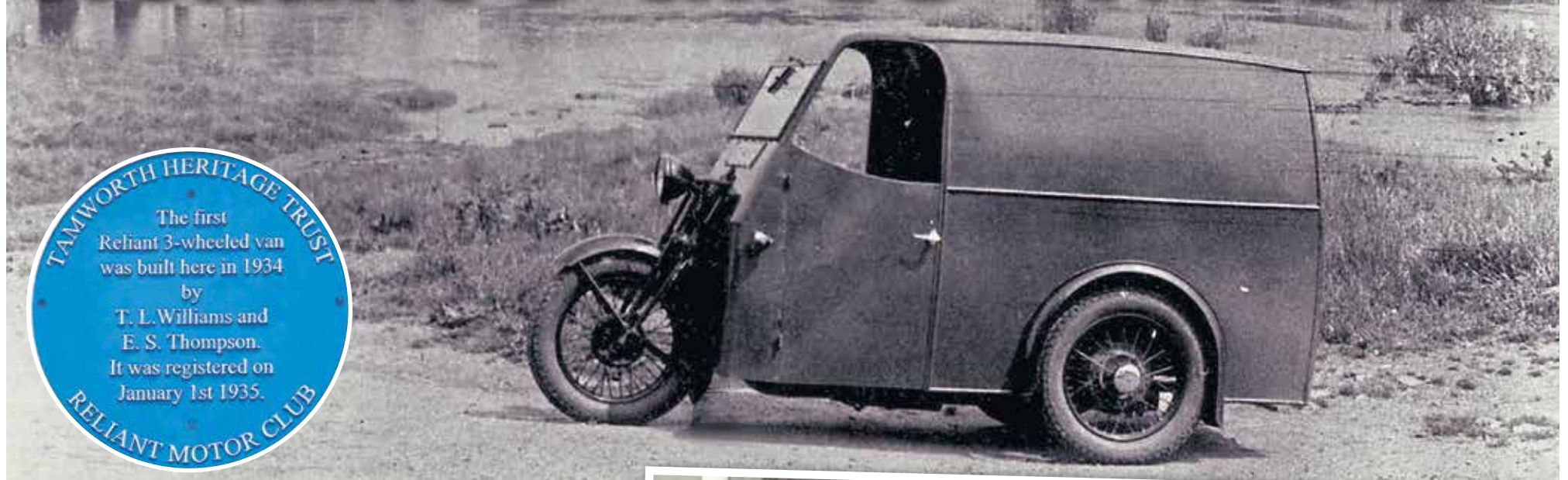


Tribute to birthplace of Reliant's three-wheeler



A Heritage Trust plaque was unveiled on Saturday, July 8, paying homage to the first Reliant three-wheeler, which was built in the garden of a Tamworth house.

'Bro-Dawel', once the home of Reliant founder Tom L Williams, will now be listed as part of the Tamworth Heritage Trail in recognition of the role it played in shaping the history of a well-loved British marque.

Arranged in collaboration with Tamworth Heritage Trust and the recently formed Reliant Motor Club, the occasion brought together surviving members of marque co-founder E S 'Thommo' Thompson's family and former board director Barrie Wills. HRH the Princess Royal, an honorary member of the Reliant Motor Club, was informed about the ceremony. She sent her best wishes for the unveiling.

The plaque was revealed by Thommo's granddaughter, Charlotte Oliver. She stepped in at the last minute in place of her mother Pat

Afford who was hospital bound during the ceremony.

Thommo helped build the first Reliant prototype, registered as a motorcycle, with former Raleigh chief designer Tom L Williams. Both colleagues left the famous Nottingham bicycle manufacturer when it decided to concentrate on two-wheelers.

In the shed and garden behind Williams' detached house, Bro-Dawel, the first Reliant three-wheeler came to life in late 1934. Upon completion, it had to be dismantled because it was four inches too wide to fit through the gap at the side of the house.

In 1935, Williams registered the Reliant Engineering Company (Tamworth) Ltd, together with his prototype. He left Bro-Dawel 15 years later, living above Reliant's company premises until his death in 1964.

The firm's halcyon days came in the 'Seventies when, buoyed by the success of the Robin, 66 three-wheelers were being manufactured and sold each day – a rate of 330 per week.



From left: Margaret Clarke (chairman of Tamworth Heritage Trust); Barrie Wills (former Reliant director and honorary president of the Reliant Motor Club); Elvis Payne (chairman and historian for the RMC); Caroline Payne (club secretary) and Mark Cropper (club treasurer).

The last Robin left Tamworth in 2009, by which time 193,471 three-wheeled Reliants had been made.

"What a tribute to Williams' persistence," said Barrie Wills, former Reliant board director who joined the firm in 1974.

"It is a real tribute to the persistent efforts of the Reliant Motor Club, its chairman and historian Elvis Payne and the enthusiastic support of the Tamworth Heritage Trust that Tamworth's second-only blue plaque should be unveiled today in honour of Reliant's founders."



The 1934 Reliant three-wheeler prototype with its creator, Tom L Williams (background left) and his daughter Pat Afford. She was in hospital at the time of the plaque's unveiling. Her daughter Charlotte Oliver dedicated the plaque instead.

