

towing performance was monitored and improved upon. If military trailers could be successful, why not caravans designed to be towed by cars?

This wasn't a totally new idea - one or two enthusiasts had tried building caravans for towing behind cars as early as 1914. Frederick Alcock had built his first streamlined touring van that year. The design - with a sweeping roof and with windows all round the top of the wall panels - was described as way ahead of its time. It might have been a potential winner if it had been produced on a commercial scale, and could have hastened the coming of trailer caravanning. Although the Alcock tourer never went into production, and was in any case built only for his own use, it shows that the idea of a car-towed trailer caravan had seen the light of day.

Commercial manufacture did not start until just after World War 1, when ex-

servicemen were able to put skills learned in the armed forces to good use. Parts and surplus army stock were readily available at cheap prices. One man who spotted the potential in this situation was ex-serviceman Richard St Barbe Baker. He built his first van - a four-wheeler complete with lantern roof - after buying, on impulse, surplus stock consisting of aeroplane undercarriages, plywood and spruce.

Calling his new venture the Navarac Caravan Co., St Barbe Baker proceeded to manufacture his vans with his small team of ex-servicemen. After only twelve months, however, he dismissed the idea of manufacturing caravans as almost a total waste of time. Already his designs were being overtaken by lighter, two-wheeled vans.

Other early pioneer caravan builders included a man called Hay-Moulder, who



Dr Gordon Stables, the man whom many people believe 'invented pleasure-time caravanning' in the early part of the 20th century.

Eccles played a large rôle in the development and manufacture of motor caravans. This Eccles unit is built on a Chevrolet chassis.



'Specials' were a lucrative business, and Eccles was the first caravan manufacturer to do this work. (Where it led, others followed.) This unit was built for Persil in 1929.

The Persil unit, set up and ready for demonstrations. This was good publicity for Eccles, as well as the soap manufacturer.



Art deco styling was a feature of Fleming-Williams' Car Cruisers.

The Rally Four De Luxe cost £298 in 1937. This Car Cruiser profile was the most stylish around, although many thought the rear end was taking streamlining too far. Interestingly for the time, Car Cruiser gave a three-year warranty.



Two pictures show Car Cruiser's factory at Hayes in 1936. Several vans are nearing completion, while some are clearly still in the throes of production.



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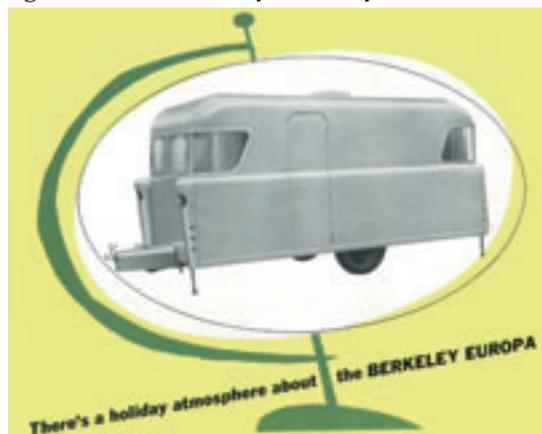
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of the UK. The 1930s and 1950s may have been the most active periods of caravan manufacture thus far, but the next fifteen years would witness the highest production figures of the industry's history.

Cheltenham caravans gathered a loyal following. Here is the 1952 Deer. The shape of the company's models changed little over the years. The exterior panelling was hardboard; aluminium was £15 extra.



Charles Panter experimented with a pressed steel tourer, the Berkeley Europa. The model had its problems, however, and production costs were high.



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Berkeley Caravette Mk. II

This sales leaflet shows the versatile Berkeley Caravette, designed for the owner of a small car or a motorcycle combination. The Caravette was demountable; the chassis could be used as a trailer. For extra space, there was a specially-designed awning tent.

The Argosy, a low-cost model from Berkeley - a distinctive van with curvy lines. The price was kept down by using 'off-cuts' from the Berkeley range.

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