

Book review

'The Story of Sprite Caravans'



Author:

Andrew Jenkinson

In the late 1970s, management buy-outs and changes of ownership took Sprite through troubled times, culminating in its acquisition by Swift in 1994. Today, the spirit of the Sprite lives on in Swift's new designs which continue the tradition of innovative style and forward thinking.

Brimming with historical detail, and written in Andy Jenkinson's informative, straightforward style, this is an absorbing book for anyone who has ever owned or admired a Sprite. Andy knew Sam Alper personally, and in addition to sharing his own memories, he showcases a wealth of rare and fascinating images from the Sprite founder's archive. These don't just tell the story of a caravan brand - they bear witness to the dedication of its loyal workforce, and give an insight into the lifestyle and ambitions of the first generations to enjoy caravanning.

'The Story of Sprite Caravans' is a testament to the creativeness, adaptability and passion of Sam Alper, who set a course that, despite financial setbacks, many competitors could only follow. The first UK book dedicated to a single caravan brand, it is worth buying also for the treasury of wonderful old photographs and illustrations, many of which are seeing the light of day for the first time. Whether you're a classic caravan enthusiast, a historian or a Sprite owner, you'll find it an interesting and often surprising read.

'The Story of Sprite Caravans'
by **Andrew Jenkinson**

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EVEN if you're a complete newcomer to caravanning, it's likely you'll have heard of the Musketeer or the Alpine, two of Sprite's enduring and iconic brands that first became household names over half a century ago.

'The Story of Sprite Caravans' traces the development of Sprite tourers from their conception in the post-war era right up to the present day. Written by Andy Jenkinson, the UK's foremost caravan historian and a regular contributor to *Scottish Caravanner*, it is authoritative, meticulously researched and lovingly presented.

At the time of Sprite's humble beginnings in 1947, building materials were scarce and caravan manufacturers used anything and everything they could lay their hands on. Components from some surprising sources found a new lease of life in the first Sprite tourers!

Sprite's early success can be attributed largely to the pioneering spirit of one man: Sam Alper. While helping to build caravans in his brother's workshop in Stratford, Alper did some careful customer research and produced a cheap, lightweight and practical touring caravan.

Initially, buyers were sceptical about the Sprite's durability: it seems that Sprites were almost too affordable! To prove the doubters wrong, Sam Alper joined forces with a group of colleagues and tackled a series of international road trips and rallies, in conditions that would tax most drivers even today.

Alper's determination won many trophies for the Sprite, and it also brought world-wide attention. His was a 'relentless quest to spread word of the Sprite brand to all corners of the earth, and make the caravan industry a more professional organisation.'

As a true entrepreneur, Alper was never idle. Although history will remember him for his touring caravans, he also built display trailers, mobile shop units, table soccer games, golf buggies, farm trailers and yachts. He even looked into developing a flat-bottomed boat that could accommodate a specially-built Sprite Major for sailing on the Thames. What an interesting sight that would have been!

The era of caravan road rallies saw many Sprite tourers being whirled madly over rough terrain behind the most powerful rally cars of their time. Apart from making our present-day caravan tests - which we classify as 'rigorous' - look like a stroll in the park, this was a massive publicity exercise, with huge benefits in terms of favourable reviews and soaring sales figures for the battered winners.

