

CHASE Equipment Historic Modsports & Special Saloons Silverstone 12th April 2026

SILVERSTONE GRAND DAY OUT HERALDS NEW DAWN FOR HISTORIC MODSPORTS AND SPECIAL SALOONS



The first of five events for the CHASE Equipment Historic Modsports and Special Saloons in 2026 took place at the famous British Grand Prix host venue of Silverstone on the 12th of April, using the full 3.660-mile Grand Prix layout. The event marked the first occasion that the series ran fully under the wing of the Scottish Motor Racing Club, having been invited to contest their Classic Sports and Saloon races at Cadwell Park and Croft during 2025 following its split with the HSCC. Coordinator Steve Watton retained the enthusiastic support of Waltham Services and the Black Shuck Distillery for the 2026 season, with prizes to the overall winners coming from the drink maker's range of artisan spirits.

Preview: Two machines pedalled with gusto by the charismatic Gerry Marshall headlined the entry list. Arguably the car most associated with Marshall during his time racing with Dealer Team Vauxhall, along with 'Old Nail', was the fabled Repco V8-engined Firenza Super Saloon 'Baby Bertha'. Now in the capable hands of Joe Ward, the Firenza returned to the circuit that spurred its creation after a brake failure-induced crash at Woodcote in 1974 wrote off its predecessor. The very special machine celebrated its 50th birthday during 2025 and the old girl can really stretch her legs on the Grand Prix circuit so could well show a clean pair of heels to the opposition. The beautiful Marsh Plant Aston Martin DB4 Lightweight was the second of the ebullient Marshall's former steeds on the entry list. The car was rebuilt into 'lightweight' specification in 1992 by the marque specialist Marsh Plant Racing outfit, seeing action in Aston Martin Owners Club and Heritage GT Challenge races.

Marshall scored a milestone 600th race victory aboard the metallic blue machine and raced the coupe between 1994 and 2004. The larger-than-life Marshall's son Gregor would cast his eye over the sports car and 'Baby Bertha' during the day. Current custodian Peter Baker gave the Aston Martin an airing in a sprint at Goodwood a week ahead of the Silverstone meeting and was keen to stretch the DB4's legs on the Grand Prix circuit. Steve Barnard restored his spaceframe Mk1 Escort from an eBay barn find to the smart special saloon it is today during 2024 and has been a regular in the series since its maiden appearance at Croft that same year. Barnard was unfortunately hospitalised in the buildup so a very quick substitute in Myles Castaldini would take the wheel of the car whose history before restoration remains a mystery. Castaldini is no mean pilot and usually competes in a Ford-engined Davrian in the series so could well set the pace at Silverstone. Another large capacity British sports car in the field belonged to Jon Ellison, who would be at the helm of a gruff TVR Griffith that would be in its element on the long straights of Silverstone. David Morrison's rapid MG Midget modsport will be a boon in the technical sections of the lap but may be found wanting against some of the opposition's grunt in a straight line. However, the little MG could come into its own in the wet. A pair of the Welsh-built Davrian coupes completed the entry list, with Iain McBay's Mk8 model powered a 1700cc Ford crossflow unit and David Brewis' earlier Mk7 hides a 998cc Hillman Imp motor under the engine cover.

Qualifying: The CHASE Equipment Historic Modsports and Special Saloons field qualified and raced with the Ferrari Formula Classic and Scottish Classic Sports and Saloons entries. The Grand Prix circuit would be filled by 46 machines looking to set their best lap time in blustery but dry conditions. The 20-minute session was red flagged halfway through after Paul Bowers' pretty Fiat 128 Coupe ground to a halt at the bottom end of the circuit with head gasket woes. David Morrison's MG Midget was fastest of the non-Ferraris from supersub Myles Castaldini at the stoppage by a healthy 2.525 seconds, with Joe Ward aboard 'Baby Bertha' in third of the Historic Modsports and Special Saloons. The session would restart with a shade over ten minutes to run. Castaldini quickly got acclimatised to the spaceframe Mk1 Escort's characteristics and flew to the fastest time of all after the break by more than three-and-a-half seconds and was over five seconds quicker than the next non-Ferrari. Castaldini reported that he was pleased with how the car felt. Robert Bremner's menacing TVR Tuscan thundered to the fourth fastest overall time as he headed the Scottish Classics, which put him on the front row of the non-Ferraris alongside Castaldini but the V8 machine was 5.138 seconds off the low-slung Escort. Morrison's MG Midget modsport retained second among the Historic Modsports and Special Saloons and finished third in his section of the grid but disaster struck at the end of the session when the A-series engine started making a noise, suspected to be a dropped valve. Scottish Classic front runner John Marshall put his glorious BMW M3 E30 between Morrison and Jon Ellison's powder blue TVR, which vaulted to third of the Historic Modsports and Special Saloons after the break. Ellison performed well despite struggling with its new 'dog' gearbox and struggling to reach the steering wheel, for which he fitted some carpet behind the seat after the session. Lining up alongside the impressive Mk2 VW Golf GTi of sixth-fastest Dean Clayton was the first of a pair of V8 Rovers as John Kinmond's Triplex SD1 headed son Adam's Austin Rover Fleet Vitesse next up on the fourth row, with Thomas Owen's Peugeot 205 GTi following Kinmond Jnr, with the top ten completed by the Alfa

Romeo Giulia of Richard Werrell. Among the Historic Modsports and Special Saloons set, fourth-fastest Iain McBay's Ford-engined Davrian Mk8 qualified just outside of the first five rows, whilst Joe Ward didn't reappear in the DTV Firenza post-stoppage after only having enough fuel for ten minutes of running and 'Baby Bertha' slipped to fifth behind McBay's diminutive Davrian. Peter Baker's Marsh Plant Aston Martin finished up sixth after completing limited running with with oil surging issues that was causing the pressure to drop markedly under braking, David Brewis stopped on the out lap after spinning his Davrian Mk7 into the gravel at Vale.

Race One: The combined CHASE Equipment Historic Modsports and Special Saloons and Scottish Classic Sports and Saloons fields were split on the grid from the Ferraris and would be sent on their way twenty seconds behind the Italian machines. Rain-bearing clouds had gathered during the lunch break and began dumping their contents during the preceding race to leave a tricky track surface for the opening bout but the rain had stopped and the tarmac had begun to dry incredibly quickly. David Morrison withdrew his Midget after his earlier engine trouble so everyone behind the front row moved up one grid position, which elevated the fourth-fastest Historic Modsports and Special Saloons contender Iain McBay into the top ten. Peter Baker's lightweight Aston Martin was due to start from 16th but it was felt that the low oil pressure warnings put the engine at too much risk so the Marsh Plant machine was withdrawn. At the Union Flag start, polesitter Myles Castaldini was swamped off the grid and sat fourth at Copse behind Robert Bremner, John Kinmond and John Marshall. The Mk1 Escort was briefly passed for the lead of the Historic Modsports and Special Saloons away from the line by Jon Ellison's TVR but Castaldini drove around the outside of Copse to regain the category lead and had to do the same approaching the Maggots/Becketts complex when the Blackpool sports car bellowed alongside again. From second, Kinmond's Rover slid off at the Maggots right-hander for the first time and cut the following Becketts before reappearing in front of the Castaldini Escort in third. The lead group soon caught the tail of the slowest Ferraris within the opening lap. Castaldini was up to third behind the leading TVR and BMW by the completion of lap one, having boxed in Kinmond's Rover behind a Ferrari at The Loop. The leading Historic Modsports and Special Saloons contender breezed up to second during lap two, rushing past Marshall's BMW into the fast Abbey curve. The track was fully dry by now and the slick-tired Castaldini was rapidly homing in on the leading TVR during lap three but Bremner snapped into a spin at Village and rolled into path of an F355 Ferrari. The TVR incurred heavy damage heavy in the rear and was out, whilst the Ferrari tore off its nearside door skin. Castaldini escaped the incident and took the lead of the second wave as Marshall spun his Bastos M3 in avoidance of the melee. The Mk1 Escort spaceframe up front just needed to stroke it home after breaking clear and Castaldini worked his way up to seventh overall as he secured victory in the CHASE Equipment Historic Modsports and Special Saloons. A great opening lap from Joe Ward saw 'Baby Bertha' complete it in second place among the Specials and the Firenza retained the spot to the end as he took the flag 42.540 seconds behind the rapid Castaldini in tenth overall, which meant Ward was also the second car to finish from part two of the grid after passing John Kinmond's SD1 on lap six of the eight completed. Having lost out to Ward's Super Saloon on lap one to sit third of the Historic Modsports and Special Saloons, Jon Ellison's TVR expired at Copse with drivetrain issues on

lap five to promote class winner Iain McBay to third. David Brewis was the final Historic Modsports and Special Saloons car home in fourth despite his Davrian crunching gears due to its clutch playing up.

Race Two: Further April showers fell between the two races and meant that the circuit remained damp for the start. Just three survivors from the CHASE Equipment Historic Modsports and Special Saloons came to the line after David Brewis pulled his Davrian Mk7, feeling its clutch issue had caused one graunch of the gears too many. Race One victor Myles Castaldini and Joe Ward shared the front row for the second wave of series on the grid. Ward had opted to start 'Baby Bertha' on slick tyres, which could've proved to be a shrewd decision should no further rain fall but another dark cloud loomed on the horizon. The V8 Firenza was slow off the line as Castaldini leapt into an early lead but the Escort was under pressure straight away from the barking Bastos M3 of John Marshall, who would lead at the end of lap one after powering ahead on the Hangar Straight. As in the opener, the leading Specials and Classics were with the tail-end Ferraris by the end of the first tour. Having stayed close to Marshall after getting overtaken, Castaldini drove around the outside of the BMW at Luffield for the second time to take the lead. Moments later, Joe Ward pitted 'Baby Bertha' after a couple of moments on the greasy surface persuaded its driver not to risk the famous car anymore. Spots of rain began to fall again as the 20-minute encounter entered its second half but stopped again soon after, which didn't faze Castaldini as the Escort moved away to win the battle of the Historic Modsports and Special Saloons versus the Scottish Classic Sports and Saloons by 11.329 seconds. Marshall's stunning BMW kept Castaldini in sight for a while but it briefly looked like being caught by John Kinmond's Triplex Rover SD1 before the M3 pulled clear again to the tune of 5.147 seconds, as the top three from the second half of the grid were beaten by just one Ferrari that had started 20 seconds earlier. Dean Clayton was also not far adrift of the trio in his invitational Mk2 Golf that revelled in the tricky conditions, finishing sixth overall. Only one other contender remained in the Historic Modsports and Special Saloons upon the demise of 'Baby Bertha' and Iain McBay enjoyed a race long dice with the Mk1 Escort RS2000 from the Scottish Classics of Alasdair Coates, who had moved from the flat-plane V8 MGB GT of last year to the tidy Ford saloon, but the Davrian unfortunately came back on the end of a tow rope after its Ford engine cut out during the last lap. The Davrian had ran out of fuel in one of its dual tanks and the engine didn't fire when McBay switched to the second pump. Typically, the motor fired when the starter button was pressed in the paddock...

CHASE Equipment Spring Trophy: Decided by the aggregate race times from the two outings, Myles Castaldini held a near 43-second advantage over nearest challenger Joe Ward going into the second encounter and his triumph was as good as sealed when the V8 Firenza pitted at the end of lap two. The Escort duly finished first of the CHASE Equipment Historic Modsports and Special Saloons to make the trophy its own, presented by series coordinator Steve Watton. Having experienced Cosworth BDG power, Castaldini now wants to fit one of the units to his Davrian!

The CHASE Equipment Historic Modsports and Special Saloons series travels north to the Scottish Motor Racing Club's home circuit of Knockhill in Fife for their second weekend of

competition across the weekend of the 16th and 17th of May, featuring at the undulating circuit's 'Champions of Scottish Car Racing' promotion.

Baby Bertha 50th Anniversary Mini-Feature

'Baby Bertha' was built by Bill Blydenstein's Dealer Team Vauxhall outfit in 1975 to supersede the extensively damaged Vauxhall Ventora 'Big Bertha', which donated its running gear for the new creation. The Gerry Johnstone-led team unveiled the 5-litre Repco-engined Vauxhall Firenza V8 to take on the Tricentrol Super Saloons championship. Entrusted to the inimitable character of Gerry Marshall, the coupe soon began to dominate after making its debut in May of 1975. Marshall was crowned the Tricentrol Super Saloon champion two years on the trot in 1975 and 1976, the combination also won over 30 races overall and was officially beaten into second place just once in three seasons of competition. With the demise of the Super Saloon championship, the storied Firenza was sold on and passed through the hands of Paul Haywood-Halfpenny, Phil Barak and Marshall himself once its 'works' career was over before being purchased by current owner Joe Ward around forty years ago. Restored to its former glory in DTV colours, the engine bay houses a 5.7-litre Chevrolet V8 in place of its Australian Repco forebear and the machine has been a regular entry in revival races ever since 2011. Indeed, the combination won the second CHASE Equipment Historic Modsports and Special Saloons race overall at Snetterton in 2024. Car owner Ward was beset with shoulder problems last year, so the Chevrolet-powered Vauxhall wasn't as active for its 50th anniversary celebrations but it's fantastic to still be able to see the iconic machine out on the racetrack.



'Baby Bertha' at rest in the pit garages between races

Pictures



The Marsh Plant Aston Martin DB4 Lightweight of Peter Baker was one of two entries once pedalled with verve by the great Gerry Marshall, who scored his 600th race win in her.



The famous DTV Vauxhall Firenza V8 'Baby Bertha' will be forever remembered for her dominance of Supersaloon racing in the hands of Gerry Marshall. Now in the care of Joe Ward, she leads a pack of cars into Copse during Race One.



Myles Castaldini took pole position and a dominant Race One victory substituting for car owner Steve Barnard in the spaceframe Ford Escort Mk1.



Myles Castaldini was also a comfortable winner second time out, the following Joe Ward was the only likely threat for the aggregate CHASE Equipment Spring Trophy but the Firenza pitted after two laps and secured Castaldini's triumph.



The muscular TVR Griffith of Jon Ellison was a Race One casualty with drivetrain woes.



At the other end of the scale, the diminutive 998cc Davrian Mk7 of David Brewis leads the later Mk8 model of Iain McBay through Cope.



Double race winner Myles Castaldini receives the CHASE Equipment Spring Trophy from Historic Modsports and Special Saloons series coordinator Steve Watton.



To the victor goes the spoils as Myles Castaldini poses with the CHASE Equipment Spring Trophy and the drinks from the Black Shuck Distillery awarded for each race win.