



RELIVING THE

A year ago, a field of 40 touring cars from the BTCC's finest era graced the Silverstone Classic.

Now they have their own series – and organisers think it'll grow from here. By SCOTT MITCHELL

The Super Touring Car Trophy owes its existence to the perseverance of two men eager to find a suitable home for the British Touring Car Championship's greatest cars.

Dave Jarman and Jonny Westbrook spent the best part of four years working towards a bespoke series in which classic, iconic touring cars could race in an environment befitting their pedigree. They share a serious passion for the machinery – Westbrook owns a mid-1990s Vauxhall Cavalier and Jarman the '97 Primera driven to third in the following season's Independents' title race by Matt Neal.

The series has its roots in the 2009 Silverstone Classic-supporting David Leslie Memorial Trophy, where Jarman was recruited at the last minute to try to boost low numbers. Independently, Westbrook was spurred into action after witnessing a Ford Sierra RS500 Cosworth being driven at a Pembrey club event.

"I was there with Keith Butcher's Primera," recalls Westbrook, "and I was like, 'This is crazy, why are we here? There's got to be something more, something better'.

"This was the heyday of touring car racing in the UK. I'm talking all the way back to the early '80s here, not specifically Super Tourers, and there



Club racers get to battle it out in Super Touring and Group A cars



DREAM

was just nothing for the cars to do.”

The Memorial Trophy, which featured 12 registered Super Tourers, motivated the pair further in finding a long-term home for those cars, and others. They also decided to make a concentrated effort to make room for the increasingly rare Group A and Group 2 cars.

In 2011, with Jarman convinced there was something there worth chasing, the pair worked together on accruing the necessary finances and entries for a return to the Classic.

The following year, two 40-car grids were lining up at the event under the Super Touring Car Trophy moniker. Such was their success that Jarman and Westbrook worked on creating a calendar of events for an inaugural, four-event series this year in conjunction with successful organiser, the Historic Sports Car Club.

Only eight cars – four of them Super Tourers – were classified at the opening races at Thruxton in March, but there were 13 cars at the Brands Hatch Superprix in mid-July, and entries from BTCC veterans John Cleland and Patrick Watts among the eight in the Super Touring class. Come this year’s Classic, the entries exceeded 30, and 28 cars made the races.

Though down on last year’s ‘one-off’ meeting, in the eyes of Jarman the small decline in the grid was not to the detriment of what they were working towards. “Compared with last year, momentum is picking up,” he says. “I’d have liked to have had 40 like last year, but we only lost some of the older cars.”

There is some leniency in deciding which cars are allowed – such as Peter Hallford’s Ford Mustang – but the prerequisite is that the car is an

original, “proper” car. Custom builds are a non-starter and, while that is something of a restriction on the grids, it’s an important condition of entry as far as the organising pair is concerned. “We always wish for more cars, but the quality is there,” adds Jarman. “We’ve got cars that’ve been built from spares, but we’re not going down the FIA restoration route. These cars have got an identity.”

“None of them are catered for anywhere else,” adds Westbrook. “Neither would work as a standalone, but together they work brilliantly. It really is for just factory touring cars. That’s what we look for – original stuff with history.”



“We’re looking for original cars with history that aren’t catered for elsewhere”

Jonny Westbrook

Launching the Trophy presented extra problems to the usual issues when trying to establish a new championship. Super Touring cars were designed, built and run on multi-million-pound factory budgets in their day, and are both difficult to find and expensive to maintain. Plus the majority of drivers the organisers are appealing to are often found competing on far smaller budgets at club level.

Westbrook believes this combination of factors means the series has had a difficult birth but, once those involved get to grips with the cars they are running, these early problems will subside. “Starting a new series is almost impossible these days, but we’re really starting to get a bit of recognition now,” he says. “It’s just a bit difficult for people to understand this is a proper racing car.”

“There’s been quite a high rate of attrition. Give it a year and we’ll have a lot more cars finishing races. Unfortunately we’re going through a period where we’re firing up all these trick cars and expecting them to all work perfectly, and they don’t.”

Jarman agrees: “A lot of us are club people running the cars. We don’t carry the spares they had in the day, so there are a few cars which go out over the weekend.”

The final round of this year’s Trophy takes place at Oulton Park’s Gold Cup meeting on August 24-26, where both Jarman and Westbrook are optimistic of attracting a 20-car field. “It’s looking good,” adds Westbrook, “but it’s all about getting the cars on the grid, getting people who are willing to commit, and getting a stable group of people who will do every race.”

“You can’t expect any start-up to be mega from the word go, but we’re here for the long run. I think we’ve got nothing to prove in the first year – nothing at all.”

A new home for retro racers

The headliners in the Super Touring Car Trophy are naturally the cars from the era in which the series gets its name.

There are three classes for Super Tourers: two for pre-’96 cars (depending on whether they run sequential or H-pattern gearboxes) and another for ’96-2000 models.

But the Trophy is not confined to that part of history. There is a separate class for Ford Sierra RS500s, and two each for over/under-two-litre Group A and Group 2 models.

The regulations state that the core components of the car – such as



Capri is one of the older racers

bodywork, engine, transmission and electrics – must comply with their original FIA period specification.

Aero modifications are allowed provided the kit fitted is in period, such as 1996-spec aero on a ’95 model, though such changes would elevate a Class B or C car to Class A.

An Invitational class exists for cars which do not meet the regulations, but remain “historically significant”.