



(Above) The Chevrolet Impala of Holland's John Gilles at Firecracker with (inset) the bonnet artwork.

(Below) The aftermath of a particularly lively heat, again at the Firecracker



# WEEVIL'S WORLD



**Remember when banger drivers built their cars on their drives and operated on a shoe-string? Some are keeping the tradition alive.**

**W**e're in the pits on a wet Wednesday night at Arlington Stadium and Tim "Weevil" James has revenge on his mind. He has just been totally blitzed while facing the wrong way, and the damage to his tiny Hyundai Pony looks terminal. The passenger side of the car is stowed in, the back axle is twisted and the roof is buckled. It looks as if it has just taken part in a destruction derby rather than the first 'light contact' banger event of the evening. "We'll be out again - and I hope he will be too," says Tim, taking a break from wielding a huge sledgehammer at the back wheel to nod in the direction of Dan Weeks, the driver responsible for the monster hit.

Twenty minutes later – thanks to the assistance of Dave King (206) – the Pony's ready for action and, much to the delight of the crowd, manages a fifth place finish in the next heat before making it out again for the final!

### A costly fight

Vengeance, however, will have to wait as Weeks' damaged Nissan Sunny fails to reappear. "There will always be another meeting," he grins afterwards. His altar-boy looks – *see the graduation photo to see what we mean!* – may have won him a legion of teeny-bopper fans on the terraces, but he doesn't shy away from playing the tough guy on track. As well as Weeks, he has had fiery encounters with John Dodge and sustained bruised ribs during a long-running war with Cecil (Steve Anscombe). However, the simmering tensions between Tim and a few of the Eastbourne-based drivers exploded on track in August and ended in the pilot of the 522 machine being banned from the 'rookies' until the end of the year. Whether it kicks off again when Tim returns to action in January remains to be seen. A few days after the Arlington meeting,



**mayhem!** travels to the James family home in the picture postcard village of Ditchling, East Sussex, to learn more about the 25-year-old racer who has become something of a cult figure.

Visitors to the neat semi-detached house are left in no doubt that banger racing is the hobby of choice as the driveway has doubled as the team's headquarters since they lost access to an old barn on a nearby farm at the start of the year.

A Honda Concerto being readied for battle sits alongside a deceased Volvo 340, while the remains of a raced Volvo 740 Estate are on the back of the trailer.

At a time when access to fully equipped yards and hi-abs are commonplace, Tim and his dad, Pete, build both light and full-contact bangers here and trailer them to meetings behind their Land Rover.

### Stockpile

The other team members are Tim's grandmother, Dorothy, 76, who has only missed a handful of meetings since he started racing five years ago; his girlfriend Catherine, and mum, Serena.

"We've had four cars on the driveway before now but you can't do much work on them," says Tim. "The rest of my cars are kept in all sorts of places."

He's not kidding. The current stockpile, which at the time of our visit includes a

MK III Limo Vauxhall Omega, is spread across Sussex. Eight live in a barn, while 10 are in a relative's field and Dorothy looks after a further three.

### Cars raced

"I have an advert on the wall of Sainsburys in Haywards Heath, where I work, asking for scrap cars," explains Tim. "We get more cars than we know what to do with most of the time."

More than 130 have been so far raced – each car is numbered on the side – and Tim's certainly not fussy what he takes out on track. "If it's free it will get raced and that's how it should be," he grins.

So far, a succession of Sunnys, Bluebirds, Fiestas, Polos, Sierras, Granadas, Volkswagens, Metros and Kia Prides have passed through his hands, although he is particularly fond of the Peugeot 205. "I love them for the rookies as you really can't beat them," he explains. "The only problem is the radiator being too close to the front."

He's also campaigned some decent material – including a Rover P6, Triumph 2000, Vauxhall Victor and even an MGB GT - even if some of the examples have been on the rotten side.

Tim's racing career dates back to April 2002 when he made his debut in the National Bangers at Arlington behind the

wheel of a 2Litre Capri. "I bought the car for £40, got a copy of the rule book, bought a cage and door plates, then stuck it all together," he recalls. "We got a seventh in the first heat and just about managed to get it out for all three races."

Regular outings in both the Nationals and the 'Rookie' bangers followed – much to the surprise of Dad Pete. "Up until he was 16-years-old all we heard from the school was that he was too timid and needed bringing out of himself," he recalls. "He was like that right until he got in a car. When he said he wanted to race I thought it was totally out of character... now he's a complete hooligan!" Tim agrees. "You do get the red mist come down an awful lot," he admits. "When someone hits you it gives you the hump and you want to get them back. Once the green flag drops you don't think about nerves any more."

### Close to first title

Solid progress culminated in him qualifying for the 2005 World Final – a feat he has repeated again this season – and although it's fair to say his sideboard isn't groaning under the weight of trophies won, he has still managed to notch up victories at the likes of Wimbledon, Angmering and Smallfield.

He also came painfully close to taking the Southern Championship at Arlington this year in his enormous MK III Stretch Limo, only to be squeezed into second place in the final stages by the hard-charging Carl Overy. "I knew I was up there but just wanted the laps to disappear quicker!" Tim laughs.

Winning a title in the National Bangers would be just reward for the dedication of Tim who is now a regular feature in the formula. "It's taken us years to be ac-



(Above) Tim's favoured steed in 'rookies' - a Peugeot 205.

Pictures (from top to bottom): Throwback to the '80s with the A-Team van; a ramp rollover at Arlington; early season at Angmering; racing a National and Rookie at the same meeting; loyal Gran Dorothy hitches a ride.

“I wouldn’t mind a Stock Car - either a 1300 or a 2Litre”

cepted in the big stuff,” he admits. “You earn your place by not being afraid to have a crash and dish it out if you can. You have to stand your ground.”

This is enough to make Tim’s mum Serena, who has just arrived in the kitchen, wince. “I don’t like to see him race,” she admits. “It’s bad enough when you see the cars coming back smashed to smithereens without seeing it happen.”

### Close to first title

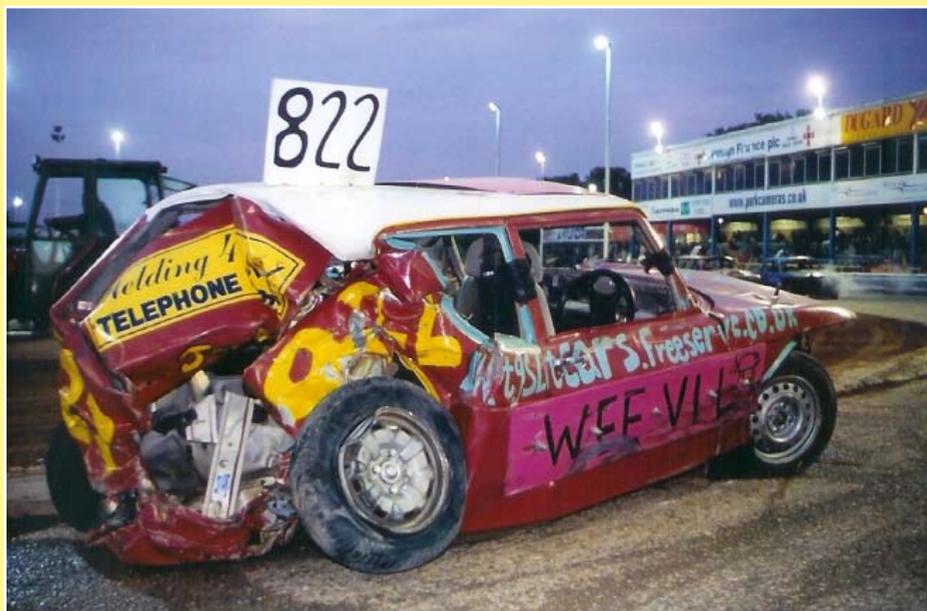
As with most banger teams, time is spent on the cars virtually every day. “We normally strip out a car on Thursday - the day after Arlington - at which stage we’ve normally got the next one half-built,” explains Tim. “The old car is then thrown away on the Saturday, with the new one finished by the Tuesday.”

And when there’s no building work to be done, talk will still invariably revolve around the sport.

“You always know when they’ve had a bad night because you stay awake for the next hour listening to them moan,” laughs Serena. “I ignore it now and just keep washing their greasy, dirty clothes.”



So what about the future? Does Tim fancy trying his hand at any other formulas? “I wouldn’t mind a Stock Car – either a 1300 or a 2Litre, whatever works out the cheapest to do,” he says. “We’ll see what happens. Maybe one day.”



(Top) Feeling brave going out in an MGB GT at Arlington; Taking a tumble in a Vauxhall Victor; and Tim’s shortened Saab after ending up on the wrong end of a heavy wrecking spree.



(Above) So close! Celebrating second place in the 2007 Southern Championship.

### Tim James in brief - things you might not know

Credit for the nickname ‘Weevil’ goes to Tim’s dad, Pete. “I was going through the dictionary looking up different pests and saw: Weevil - a destructive pest,” he recalls. “It just seemed to fit the bill.”

*He is really into his slot cars (effectively Scalextric) - both collecting and selling them - and has hundreds decorating his bedroom wall and the lounge.*

Every one of Tim’s cars has a dog painted somewhere on the bodywork. This is in memory of his late Grandfather who was a builder and always drew a dog when he was rendering chimney breasts. “My dad died in 1989 so knows nothing about Tim’s racing so that’s for him,” says Pete. “We’ve even had them walking up the side of the car!”

*Tim turned down his dad’s offer of having a Ministock when he was 12-years-old before going out and buying a banger in his late teens.*

Wrote ‘Mr Invisible’ on the car after a meeting in which he came second in a heat but race control insisted he wasn’t even out on the track!

*While insisting he is not superstitious, Tim admits to wearing a red T-Shirt for most of his meetings - even though his mum insists it’s now falling to pieces.*

Tim can’t see very well out of his right eye - while his dad’s vision is poor out of his left eye. “I don’t think it affects my racing but it’s a good excuse if I don’t do very well though,” he laughs.

*All his cars were a mixture of colours before he finally settled on red and yellow a couple of years ago.*

Tim has a degree in business and administration

*His Gran, Dorothy, has been to the best part of 200 meetings - and has to be prevented from trying to lift the tyres off the back of the trailer in her eagerness to help the cause.*

The part of the car in which ‘Bangerphotos.com’ is painted always seems to emerge unscathed in meetings - so Tim now has it around the passenger side wheelarch...and so far it seems to be working!