

Tony Vandervell's all-conquering Vanwall racing cars. - Part 4

By Geoffrey O'Connell (Continued from Part 3 in November magazine)

The next racing meeting for the 'Vanwall's' was the **British Grand Prix** held at Aintree Circuit on the 16th of July and raced over 90 laps of the 4.8km/3-mile-long course. As Wharton was by then available, he (VW3) and Schell (VW2) were the nominated 'Vanwall' drivers. Both entrants qualified but for the race Schell had to be push-started as did the 'Connaught Type B-Alta' (straight 4, dohc, 2470cc) driven by a Leslie Lynn Marr (1922-2021). Both 'Vanwall's' had to make a pit stop. Schell retired on lap 20 as his racing car's accelerator pedal broke off. However, Wharton's VW3 emerged from the pits with Schell at the wheel.



Ken Wharton

They came ninth with Wharton having driven 50 laps and Schell completing 22. The race winner was Moss driving a 'Mercedes-Benz W196F1' just 0.2 of a second ahead of Fangio, also at the wheel of a 'W196F1'. The critics advised that Fangio had masterminded the finish! The next three racing cars home were all 'MB W196F1's'.

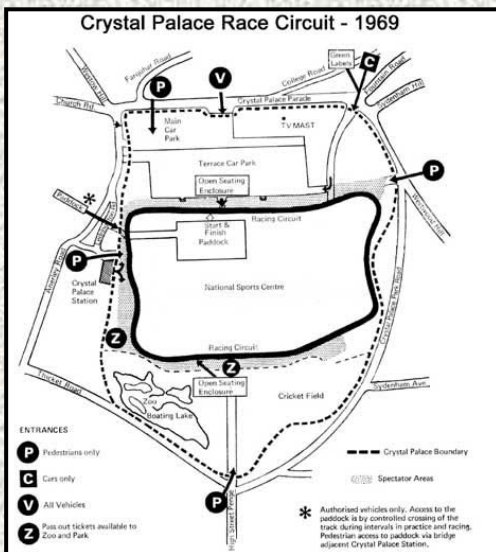
There followed the **BARC International Trophy** race meeting at the Crystal Palace Circuit on the 30th of July which was run over 15 laps of the 2.2km/1.4-mile-long track. For whatever reason Schell was the sole 'Vanwall' ('VW2') driver at that event. He qualified in third place and came second in the race, that was second to Hawthorn driving a 'Maserati 250F'.



Harry Schell

Two weeks later, on the 13th of August, and it was the turn of the **Redex Trophy** race at Snetterton Circuit raced over 25 laps

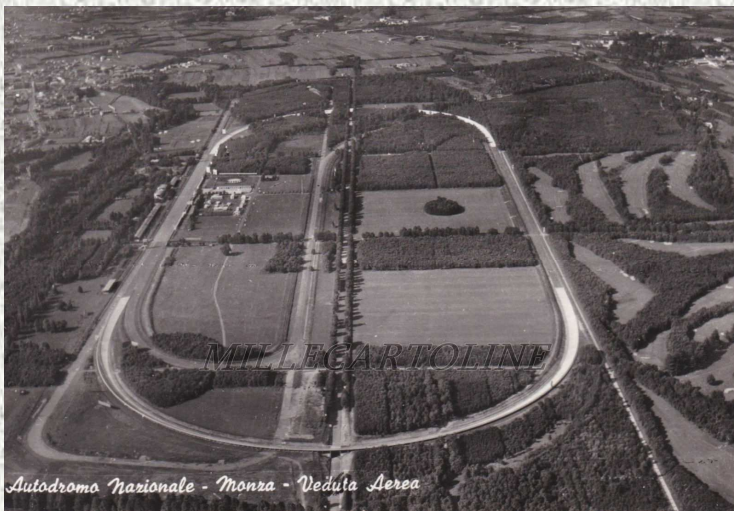
of the 4.4km/2.7-mile-long course. Both 'Vanwall' drivers, Schell (VW2) and Wharton (VW3), were competing. In the race Schell led from start to finish, fairly closely followed by Wharton.



They beat home the 'Maserati 250F' driven by Moss, Brabham's *Cooper T40-Bristol* (Bristol engine: straight 6, overhead valve, 1971cc) and Salvadori's *Maserati 250F*.

Then it was the turn of the 50 lap **Italian Grand Prix/XXVI Gran Premio d'Italia** held at the Autodromo Nazionale

di Monza on the 11th of September. The Monza circuit had been subject to a number of changes in 1954. To summarise they resulted in a 5.8km/3.6-mile track and a new high speed oval course with banked curves which could, if required, be combined thus recreating the previous 10km/6.2mile long circuit. The Lesmo Bend was made faster and the Curva Sud had been made into one fast right-handed curve. In addition, the trackside facilities had been improved. If this description baffles you, do not fret – it does me!



The event was held over the big circuit of 10km/6.2miles. Both *Vanwall's* qualified, Schell (VW2) in thirteenth place and Wharton (VW4) in seventeenth. Unfortunately, Wharton retired on the first lap with fuel injection problems and Schell went out on lap seven with suspension troubles.

Thirteen days later, on the 24th of September, it was the turn of the **International Gold Cup** race at Oulton Park which was competed for over 54 laps of the 4.4km/2.8 miles long circuit. Wharton had been involved in a horrific multiple pile up on the first lap of the RAC Tourist Trophy at Dundrod, County Antrim, on the 17th of September whilst driving a 'Fraser Nash Le Mans Replica Mk. II' (straight 6, ohv, 1971cc). Whatever, a replacement driver had to be unearthed for 'Vanwall' to join Schell (VW2) which was how Northern Irishman Desmond Titterington (1928-2002) achieved his first F1 motor race driving 'Vanwall VW3'. Schell qualified fifth and Titterington sixth. During the race Schell had to retire on lap 16 with a universal drive joint problem but our man Titterington came home third. He was one lap behind Moss, the first driver home at the wheel of a 'Maserati 250F', and second placed Hawthorn steering a 'Lancia Ferrari D50'. The last outing of the year for the 'Vanwall Team' was 'The Bristol Motor Cycle and Light Car Club' organised racing at the 3km/1.9-mile-long Castle Combe circuit on the 1st of October. The sole 'Vanwall' entrant for the meeting was Schell. The premier event was the **I Avon Trophy' F1 Grand Prix** race in which Schell (VW2) came first in the qualifying Heat and won the 55-lap race. In the 20 lap **Evening News Trophy** Formula Libre event Schell (VW4) once again was victorious.

So 'Here Endeth the' 1955 racing season.

Quite who introduced whom to whomsoever and where is somewhat debatable. Was it Frank Costin meeting Tony Vandervell whilst consuming a few beverages prior to the 1955 Oulton Park race meeting or was it the then transport driver Derek Wootton mentioning Chapman to David Yorke in the winter of 1955/56 or In 1952 Anthony Colin Bruce Chapman (1928-1982) had commenced building his sports and trials cars in an old stable block at 7 Tottenham Lane behind the Railway Hotel, Hornsey.

The '*Lotus Engineering Co.*' works remained there until the firm moved to its Cheshunt location in June 1959. In 1955/6 Lotus were still constructing the '*Lotus Mk. 6*', the legendary '*Lotus 7*' not appearing until 1957.

Whatever, Tony invited Chapman to Acton to discuss the then '*Vanwall*'. It appears, after some equivocation, that Chapman informed Tony that he would be best served by ditching the existing '*Vanwall*' and start from scratch building a new racing car. Well, say it as you see it!

His advice was taken and to achieve the required '*new Vanwall*' Chapman, who would create the rolling chassis, requested that Francis 'Frank' Albert Costin (1920-1995) accompany him in the project to design the vehicle's bodywork. Frank was an aeronautical engineer who had worked with the de Havilland Aircraft Company and was the older brother of Michael 'Mike' Charles Costin (born 1929).

The latter linked up with David Keith Duckworth (1933-2005) to set up the '*Cosworth*' engineering company in 1958, initially operating from Shaftesbury Mews, London W8. In 1959 '*Cosworth*' moved to Friern Barnet Urban District, North London. Chapman based the '*new Vanwall*' concept on a spaceframe with redesigned suspension units and Tony insisted the finest components from all over the world were utilized in the construction of the racing car.

The engine profited from tuning input by Harry Weslake (1897-1978) and his company '*Weslake Research and Development*', aka '*Weslake and Co*'. The transmission benefited from a five-speed synchromesh gearbox built by '*Porsche*'.

The very impressive Costin body was also thought to be so by both Schell and Trintignant. The chassis numbering remained the same as in previous years, but with the suffix 56 for that year, as in *VW1/56*, *VW2/56* and etcetera.

These were brand new '*Vanwall's*' and not rehashes of the previous year's racing cars. For team drivers Schell was taken on again, Wharton was not chosen, he being replaced by Trintignant.



Cosworth Engineering: Bill Brown (Design and Development), Keith Duckworth (Engine Designer), Mike Costin (Team Cosworth), Ben Rod (Ford DFV F1 Engine).

The racing programme for the **1956** motor racing season included the:

BRDC Daily Express International Trophy race at Silverstone Circuit on the 5th of May run over 60 laps of the 4.7km/2.9-mile-long course.

Although three 'Vanwall's' were entered Trintignant 'DNA' thus only two appeared – Moss (VW2/56) and Schell (VW1/56).

Moss, who was on pole position, won the race, one lap ahead of second man home William Archibald 'Archie' Scott-Brown (1927-1958) at the wheel of a 'Connaught Type B –Alta'. Schell retired on lap 19 with a fuel pipe problem.

Eight days later and it was the turn of the 100 lap **Monaco Grand Prix/XIV Grand Prix Automobile de Monaco** at the 3.2km/2-mile-long Circuit de Monaco on the 13th of May. Both 'Vanwall' contestants qualified, Schell (VW1/56) fifth and Trintignant (VW2/56) sixth. In the race Moss won Racing a 'Maserati 250F' by 6 seconds from Collins/Fangio in a



Juan Manuel Fangio

'Lancia Ferrari D50'. Fangio did not have an entirely trouble-free race. On the second lap, whilst turning into the right-handed Sainte Devote Corner, he spun the racing car after which he turned round in a big loop only to come 'bonnet to bonnet' with Luigi Musso (1924-1958) in another 'Lancia Ferrari D50' and 'Vanwall' driving Schell. Both managed to avoid Fangio but in so doing Musso crashed into some straw bales and broke the racing car's steering whilst Schell spun and hit a trackside wall, bending the front suspension of his 'Vanwall'. Oh, dear me!

And to prove there is no justice, once Fangio completed his manoeuvres he sped on. Trintignant had to retire his 'Vanwall' on lap 13 with overheating problems. However, that was not the end of the Fangio incidents. On his 40th lap, having endured a number of mishaps, he pitted and handed over the racing car to Eugenio Castellotti (1930-1957) who had retired his car on lap 14 with a clutch problem. In his 'new' steed Castellotti came home in fourth place. Whilst Fangio was lounging in the pits one of two possibilities happened to Collins. On lap 54 either Collins decided to give Fangio the chance to win the race, or the Ferrari manager called him in so Fangio could take over. Make your choice. Whichever, Fangio reduced the about 46 seconds disparity to just 6 seconds by the race end.

Geoffrey

Continued as Part 5 in February magazine