

Tony Vandervell's all-conquering Vanwall racing cars. - Part 5

By Geoffrey O'Connell (Continued from Part 4 in December 2020 Mag)

'Belgian Grand Prix/
XVIII Grote Prijs Van
Belgie' was held at the Spa
-Francorchamps Circuit
on the 3rd of June and was
36 laps of the 14.1km/8.8-
mile-long course. The
'Vanwall' drivers were
Schell (VW1/56) and
Trintignant (VW2/56).
Collins won his first Grand



Prix driving a 'Lancia Ferrari D50', followed by Paul Frere (1917-2008) in another 'Lancia Ferrari D50'. Third was a Maserati 250F, initially driven by Cesare Perdisa (1932-19998) which Moss took over when his 'Maserati 250F' lost a wheel on lap 10. Schell came fourth, and Trintignant retired on lap 11 with a fuel system failure.

French Grand Prix/Grand Prix de l'ACF (Automobile Club de France) held on the 1st of July at the 8.3km/5.2-mile-long Reims-Gueux Circuit, Reims City (in north-east France). The most unusual occurrence at that race meeting was the entry of a 'Bugatti Type 251', one of two manufactured. It was of a space frame construction with the straight 8, dohc, 2486cc.



(I have seen 2430cc) engine mounted transversely behind the driver. It was to be driven by Trintignant who had been allowed to do so by the 'Vanwall Racing Team' for that event.

During the race it was retired on lap 18 with the throttle stuck open. 'Vanwall' entered three drivers, namely Schell (VW1/56), Hawthorn (VW2/56) and one Chapman (VW3/56) who it may be recalled was the person responsible for the 'new Vanwall' at the outset of 1956. Unluckily, Chapman and Hawthorn had a 'coming together' at the Virage Thillois sharp right-hand corner in the second practice period. The damage to both racing cars was considerable. Fortunately, the team mechanics were able to patch together one raceable car which was allocated to Hawthorn, leaving Chapman as a non-starter. In the race Schell had to retire on lap 5 due to his over-revving the engine whilst 'stirring the gearing about'.

Fortunately for him, after 10 laps Hawthorn, exhausted by his exertions in achieving a second place driving a 'Jaguar D-Type' (straight 6, dohc, 3442cc) in the 12 Hours of



Jaguar D-Type

Reims event the day before, was flagged into the pits where Schell took over his 'Vanwall'. During the race Schell set a new record for the course but on lap 38 he had to pit in order to attempt to cure a fuel feed problem. As the trouble could not be cured, he re-joined the race but at slower speed than theretofore. He and Hawthorn finished in tenth place. Collins in his 'Lancia Ferrari D50' won the race, his second successive victory, by 1.3 seconds from Castellotti also driving a 'Lancia Ferrari D50'.

9th RAC British Grand Prix which was 101 laps of the 4.7km/2.9-mile-long Silverstone Circuit held on the 14th of July. For that race 'Vanwall's' entered three cars, one to be driven by Schell (VW2/56), another by Trintignant (VW4/56) and the third (VW1/56) by the Argentinian Gonzalez. It was suggested the Gonzalez was persuaded back to that race by Tony, probably for a very handsome remuneration! Despite the latter's travel from Argentina to the British Isles, his 'Vanwall' broke down on the starting line caused by a universal joint breaking of in one of the half shafts. Trintignant retired on lap 74 with a fuel system fault as did Schell on lap 87.

After the race Tony announced that the 'Vanwall's' would not race again until the fuel fault was resolved. It turned out that the fuel starvation was caused by small accumulations of fuel tank sealant breaking away and blocking the ultra-fine filters required by the Bosch fuel injection system. It's when you know what the problem is and how to solve it! First home was the *Lancia-Ferrari D50* of Fangio by one lap. Second was another *Lancia-Ferrari D50* initially driven by Alfonso Cabeza de Vaca y Leighton, 11th Marquess of Portago, best known as Alfonso de Portago (1928-1957).

He drove the Lancia for 70 laps and Collins (whose *Lancia-Ferrari D50* had broken down with oil pressure problems on lap 64) raced the last 30 laps in de Portago's racing car.

Italian Grand Prix/XXVII Gran Premio d'Italia raced over 50 laps of the 10km/6.2-mile long Autodromo Nazionale di Monza, Monza, on the 2nd of September. The Italian Taruffi, who that year drove a '*Maserati 250F*', was included in the '*Vanwall Racing Team*' (VW1/56) for that race, joining Schell (VW2/56) and Trintignant (VW4/56).

Taruffi retired on lap 12 with a gearbox oil leak, Trintignant on lap 13 with a broken front end coil spring mounting and Schell on lap 32 with a transmission problem. Fangio retired his '*Lancia-Ferrari D50*' on lap 19 with a broken steering arm which was repaired with a similar component from de Portago's '*Lancia-Ferrari D50*' which had expired on lap 6 with a tyre problem. That which Fangio required was a '*Lancia-Ferrari D50*' to race in order to win his third consecutive F1 World Drivers' Championship. Fortunately for him there was a '*motor racing God*'. On lap 35 Collins pitted to have his tyres checked. He was only 15 laps away from possibly becoming the first British F1 World Drivers' Champion if he continued to hold second place. Despite that Collins, in an outstanding act of sportsmanship, offered his racing car to Fangio who could not but seize the opportunity open to him.

He finished 5.7 seconds behind Moss, who won the race in his '*Maserati 250F*', thus Fangio achieved his F1 World Drivers' Championship for that year. There ended the 1956 season for the '*Vanwall Racing Team*'.

For the **1957** motor racing season driving personnel changes were made. Schell and Trintignant were replaced by Charles Anthony 'Tony' Standish Brooks (1932-2022) and Moss, reputedly amongst the best racing drivers of that time and both British. The

'*Vanwall*' racing cars were improved with larger brakes, the rear transverse leaf spring arrangement was replaced by coil spring suspension as well as an improvement to the de Dion tube set up. The '*Vanwall Racing Team*' at that time employed some 18 mechanics who were reportedly all kept extremely active. The season for '*Vanwall Racing*' commenced with the:



Maserati 250F



Connaught Type B-Alta

Syracuse Grand Prix/VII Gran Premio di Siracusa at the Syracuse Circuit, Sicily, Italy, on the 7th of April. The race was 80 laps of the 5.6km/3.5-mile course raced over public roads. The Syracuse Circuit hosted races between 1951 and 1967 (apart from 1962) for the F1 and F2 non-championship classes. The event was won by Collins driving a *'Lancia-Ferrari D50'*. Moss (VW1) came third, but Brooks (VW3) had to retire on lap 34 with a water coolant leak.



Lancia-Ferrari 801

On the UK Easter Monday (the 22nd of April) it was the turn of the **V Glover Trophy** race run to F1 rules over 32 laps of the 3.9km/2.4-mile Goodwood Circuit. There are reports indicating that the race was of 42 laps but dividing the race's total distance by the length of one lap gives 32 laps!!!!

Stuart Lewis-Evans ((1930-1958) won the event driving a *'Connaught Type B-Alta'* with Brooks sixth in a *'Vanwall'* (VW7) and Moss retiring his *'Vanwall'* (VW3) with a throttle linkage problem.

On the 19th of May it was the turn of the F1 **Monaco Grand Prix/XV Grand Prix Automobile de Monaco** on the Circuit de Monaco held over 105-laps of the 3.1km/2.4-mile street course. At the commencement of the race Moss driving *'Vanwall'* (VW3) led Fangio at the wheel of a *'Maserati 250F'* into the Sainte Devote right-hand corner. On lap four matters livened up somewhat. Firstly, Moss went off at the Chicane du Port. Attempting to avoid that event Collins driving a *'Lancia-Ferrari 801'* (V8, dohc, 2486cc) ran into a wall thereabouts.

Fangio avoided those dramas whilst Brooks racing *'Vanwall'* (VW7) stamped on his brakes only for the rear of his racing car to be run into by Hawthorn's *'Lancia-Ferrari 801'* who joined the escalating *'will not race again today'* brigade. Fortunately for Brooks he managed to race on.

Fangio finished first followed by Brooks, who was in front of Masten Gregory (1932-1985) driving a *'Maserati 250F'* with Stuart driving a *'Connaught Type B-Alta'* coming in fourth. Never boring!

Geoffrey

Continued as Part 6 in March magazine