

TONY VANDERVELL'S ALL-CONQUERING VANWALL RACING CARS. - PART 6

By Geoffrey O'Connell

(Continued from Part 5 in February Mag)

SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENT

"I have put together an article in respect of Chris Amon, in my opinion the best of the New Zealand Classic era racing drivers. Sadly as it is some 67 pages of A4 paper long it could not be presented as a part work in the JDC Magazine. On the other hand – and is there not often one – any member who would like to receive a copy of the same only has to email me and they will receive a copy of the same – **free!**"

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Between the Monaco Grand Prix and the next Vanwall race on the 7th of July, the driver situation took a turn for the worse. Both Brooks and Moss were unable to motor race for a month or so. Brooks unavailability was as the result of a serious accident in which he was involved during the **24 Hours of Le Mans** (22nd-23rd of June) whilst driving an 'Aston Martin DBR1/300' (straight 6, dohc, 2922cc). At about 2100 hours Brooks and fellow driver Noel

Robert Cunningham-Reid (1930-2017) were lying second to the 'Jaguar D-Type' driven by Ivor Leon John Bueb (1923-1959) and Ron Flockhart (1923-1962) and slowly but steadily catching up with them.



Aston Martin DBR1

Porsche 718 RSK



At about midnight the 'Aston Martin' gearbox commenced to disintegrate leaving the sports racing car only with 4th gear, but matters were going to get worse, much worse. At 0130 hours, on lap 140, and with Brooks at the wheel, as he was leaving the Virage du Tertre Rouge he lost control of the car, clouted the sandbank and overturned the vehicle. The 'Aston Martin' was then run into by the seventh placed 'Porsche 718 RSK' (flat 4, dohc, 1498cc) being at that time driven by Umberto Maglioli (1928-1999).

A report advised that both drivers were taken to hospital, but neither was seriously injured which does not quite concur with Brooks memory of his injuries. He recalls severe abrasions and a hole in the side of his thigh big enough for him to put his fist in it. Perhaps he had a small fist!!! Moss chose a far more undemonstrative reason for not being able to motor race for a time. He incurred a sinus infection whilst water skiing on the Mediterranean where he was based at Mandelieu la Napoule, near Cannes, France. Consequently, after the Monaco Grand Prix, 'Vanwall' had to cope with two side-lined racing drivers. Their alternatives proved to be Stuart Lewis-Evans, as after the Monaco Grand Prix 'Connaught Racing' had ceased trading, thus employing him as a racing driver was possible. The other choice was Salvadori who had parted company with 'BRM'. It is probably significant to appraise the latter's thinking about matters. Salvadori had signed up for 'BRM' early in 1957. At the Glover Trophy race at Goodwood his brakes locked-up in his debut with that marque. At the following Monaco Grand Prix, the 'BRM' experienced problems with the brakes, handling and its top speed. Salvadori was clearly rather concerned about the racing car's performance and understandably was not able to give the car his every best effort. That resulted in his failing to make the necessary qualifying time for the Monaco Grand Prix.

French Grand Prix/XLIII Grand Prix de l'ACF (the Automobile Club of France) staged at the Rouen-Les-Essarts Circuit, Orival, near Rouen, France, on the 7th of July. The race was 77 laps of the 6.5km/4-mile-long road course. Both Salvadori (VW1) and Stuart (VW4) qualified their 'Vanwall's' for the race. The start of the event was delayed due to some spectators falling off an over-the-track bridge which had partly collapsed. On lap 25 Salvadori, who had already had to pit in respect of an oil leak, retired with a broken valve spring, probably caused by his over-revving the engine. Stuart retired on lap 30 ostensibly with steering difficulties. However, it would appear that his engine's cylinder head cracked, causing the coolant water to overheat and rupture the radiator header tank, the overflowing contents of which damaged the steering mechanism. Fangio driving a 'Maserati 250F' came home first ahead of Musso driving a 'Lancia -Ferrari 801'.

A week later next up was the **XXIII (23rd) Reims Grand Prix/ XXII Grand Prix de Reims**

raced over 61 laps of the 8.3km/5.2-mile-long Reims-Gueux Circuit, close by Reims, France, on the 14th of July. The 'infirm had still not returned to work' thus the 'Vanwall' drivers remained Salvadori (VW7) and Stuart (VW8). For that race a 'Streamliner' body designed by Frank Costin and built by Abbey Panels Ltd., of Coventry, was flown out to France to be fitted over the innards of 'Vanwall VW6'. Both drivers tried the 'Streamliner Vanwall' but neither felt comfortable with it so it was not raced. During the race, at 20 laps Stuart's 'Vanwall' developed an engine oil leak causing the lubricant to be thrown all over the front of the car as well as his goggles.

Sensibly Stuart eased off the throttle which reduced the problem but caused him to lose his lead despite which he finished in third place.

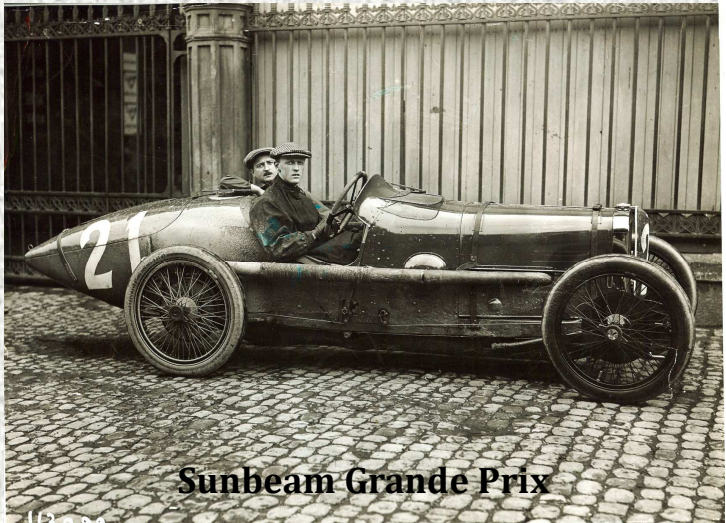


Lancia-Ferrari 801



Streamliner Vanwall

Stuart rounding it off to have three 'Vanwall's' at the Aintree fray. It was agreed that should Brooks feel unable to complete the 90 laps Moss or, if necessary, Stuart would take over his car. After qualification Moss (VW1) was on pole position, in second place was Jean Marie Behra (1921-1959) driving a 'Maserati 250F', third was Brooks (VW4), fourth Fangio at the wheel of a 'Maserati 250F' (still the straight 6-cylinder models), fifth Hawthorn aboard a 'Lancia-Ferrari 801' and sixth Stuart (VW5). By lap 23 Moss's 'Vanwall' was misfiring, so he pitted in an attempt to cure the problem whilst Brooks was finding racing rather difficult and at 26 laps, he was relieved to be called into the pits for Moss to take over his car. Brooks put in another 25 laps in Moss's 'Vanwall' but retired on lap 51, some attributing that to a malfunctioning fuel pump. Stuart came to a halt on the circuit with the 'Vanwall's' throttle linkage parted. He made a temporary repair to get back to the pits to have the work carried out properly. In departing the scene of the incident one account advised he left the racing car's bonnet beside the track and that he was disqualified for so doing. However, the result sheets record him as finishing seventh!!!! Moss completed the necessary 64 laps for he and Brooks to come first in the event. Moreover, it was the first British manufactured racing car and British drivers to win a Grand Prix since Henry O'Neal de Hane Seagrove (1896-1930) racing a 'Sunbeam Grand Prix' (straight 6, dohc, 1988cc) so did in the 1923 French Grand Prix.



Sunbeam Grande Prix

Back to 1957, second home was Musso driving a 'Lancia-Ferrari 801', third Hawthorn, fourth Trintignant/Collins in another 'Lancia-Ferrari 801', fifth the ex-Vanwall driver Salvadori in a 'Cooper Climax T43' (straight 4, dohc, 1960cc) and seventh the 'Vanwall' of Stuart.

Two weeks later and it was the turn of the **German Grand Prix/XIX Großer Preis von Deutschland** at the 22.8km/14.2-mile long Nürburgring Nordschleife road course, Nurburg, West Germany. It was held on the 4th of August and raced over 22 laps.

The road course involved up to one hundred and fifty or more perilous corners, with the punishing track undulating over an irregular, uneven surface, rising and falling almost 0.3km/1,000 feet as it wound its way through the wooded forests of the Eifel Mountains. I believe it was Moss who was of the opinion that the rigid suspension of the 'Vanwall' racing car was thoroughly incorrect for the circuit. Three 'Vanwall's' were entered for that Grand Prix to be raced by Moss (VW5), Brooks (VW1) and Stuart (VW4) with all three qualifying. Whatever, that event was not about Vanwall's – it was all about 46-year-old Fangio driving a 'Maserati 250F' – still the straight 6-cylinder version. One of the prestigious British newspapers described his victory at that German Grand Prix as being the best-ever drive of his amazing motor racing career. Hawthorn came second driving a 'Lancia-Ferrari 801' and Collins third, also at the wheel of a 'Lancia-Ferrari 801'. In respect of the Vanwall men, Moss came fifth, Brooks ninth and Stuart retired on lap 10 with a gearbox problem. As a postscript Fangio was of the view that he had never driven so fast before in his motor racing career, and he believed he would not be able to repeat that performance. He was correct in that prediction as in his last year as a racing driver in 1958 he did not win any race.

Two weeks later, on the 18th of August, it was the turn of the **Pescara Grand Prix/XXV Circuito di Pescara** held at the Pescara Circuit, Italy, and raced over 18 laps of the 25.6km/15.9mile temporary road circuit. Pescara was the longest track to stage a F1 World Championship race and it was only used for that purpose on that one occasion.

The reason it was selected was that the Belgian and Dutch Grand Prix's had been cancelled at very short notice due to an argument in respect of payments and fees between the organisers of both events and the racing car constructors. There were but three constructors entered in the Pescara Grand Prix - namely 'Maserati', 'Vanwall' and the 'Cooper Car Company'. 'Scuderia Ferrari' was absent, in part due to the unfortunate accident that had occurred in the **Mille Miglia** earlier in May of that year. Moss in 'Vanwall' (VW5) won the race followed by Fangio at the wheel of a 'Maserati 250F' - once again a straight 6-cylinder version - as were all the Maserati's in that event. Third was Schell again in a 'Maserati 250F' as was fourth man home Masten Gregory. Fifth was Stuart racing 'Vanwall' (VW1). Brooks driving 'Vanwall' (VW7) had to retire on the first lap with an engine problem. Perhaps the best narrative of that event involved Brabham who was racing a 'Cooper-Climax T43' (straight 4, dohc, dry sump, 1475cc). On the last lap of the event his racing car ran out of fuel. In order to ensure the Cooper-Climax did not impede following racing cars he coasted into a conveniently situated 'stazione di rifornimento' - a fuel filling station to you and me. Now anyone who was familiar with the Italy of old would well know that obtaining fuel at any lunchtime or over the weekend was extremely unlikely, that is apart from some motorway facilities. Surprise, surprise an attendant sprang out of the kiosk and Brabham was able to obtain sufficient petrol to finish the race, admittedly in seventh and last place, nine competitors having had to retire during the event. I cannot but help wondering how Mr Brabham paid for the supply as when you go motor racing you tend not to fill your overalls with money, wallets and any other clutter.

Geoffrey

Continued as Part 7 in April magazine