

Tony Vandervell's all-conquering Vanwall racing cars. - Part 8

By Geoffrey O'Connell

(Continued from Part 7 in April Mag)



Reims-Gueux Circuit, Reims

The **French Grand Prix/XLIV Grand Prix de l'ACF** was held over 50 laps of the 8.3km/5.2 miles long road course of the Reims-Gueux Circuit, Reims, on the 6th of July. 'Vanwall Racing' had a full team of drivers with Brooks (VW5), Moss (VW10) and Stuart (VW9). Friday evening Practice was rather exciting for Trintignant who was forced to leap out of his still moving 'BRM P25' which had caught fire as he was exiting a hairpin bend. He incurred some burns to his neck. Not to be deterred Trintignant went out later that same evening and broke down again. However, he was quite able to perform on the Sunday race day, Saturday being a rest day. It turned out to be a rather busy accident and breakdown race day. On lap 5, at the Muizon Hairpin, Collins, driving a 'Ferrari D246', had the misfortune for an engine mounted air scoop to fall off its mounting and drop behind the brake pedal.



BRM P25

He had to take to an escape road where he sorted out the problem but not until he was well behind his fellow competitors. On lap 9 Musso racing a 'Ferrari D246' was second to Hawthorn at the wheel of another 'D246'. As Musso entered the right-hand Courbe Gueux/Courbe du Calvaire Corner immediately beyond the Start/Finish line he was



Ferrari D246

going too fast, causing the racing car to slide off the track. Musso lost control of the Ferrari and crashed badly. He was thrown out of the car and had to be taken to a Reims Hospital where he died a few hours later.

On lap 12 Brooks, who at that time was in second place, pulled slowly into the pits with the 'Vanwall's' gearbox beginning to seize up. He re-joined the race but on lap 16 had to retire. Interestingly enough Stuart, who had not been performing as quickly as might be hoped, was flagged in on lap 25 and Brooks took over driving that 'Vanwall'. On lap 23 Trintignant stopped his 'BRM P25' out on the Circuit with a defective fuel pump. And it goes on and on. On lap 33 Graham Hill was forced stand up in his 1958 'Lotus 16' (obliquely aligned Climax FPF engine - straight 4, dohc, 1964cc) due to boiling gearbox oil spilling into the cockpit and burning his legs. Well, it would have saved other means of depilation. Needless to advise he had to withdraw. On lap 35 Brooks had to retire Stuarts 'Vanwall' due to an engine fault which reason I favour rather than one suggestion that it was a gearbox problem. On lap 41 Behra had to retire due to a fuel pump fault in his 'BRM P25'. To complete the chapter of woes it was on lap 50, the last lap of the race, that the 'Ferrari D246' of Collins ran out of fuel just after the Thillois Hairpin. Bother! Being a chap, he pushed the racing car over the finishing line to earn a fifth place. Now having trained as a mechanical engineer, I think the distance between the Thillois Hairpin

and the Finish line is about 1.4km and allowing for the fact that the racing car would have drifted on after running out of fuel before coming to a halt I would suggest that Collins had to push the Ferrari some 1km or 1090 yards to the Finish line. I am almost certain that from the Thillois Hairpin the track was downhill. Before I forget, Hawthorn driving a 'Ferrari D246' won the race by 24½ seconds from second man home Moss in a 'Vanwall' and third von Trips also in a 'Ferrari D246'.

That was Hawthorn's first F1 victory since the 1954 Spanish Grand Prix held on the Pedralbes Circuit, Barcelona, at which he was driving a 'Ferrari 553' (straight 4, 2498cc). As it happens it would be his last F1 win. Those were the years of racing drivers behaving as a gentleman would. There is no better example of that than the race end of the French Grand Prix. As Hawthorn was speeding towards the Finish line, he realised he would lap Fangio but being a chap, he eased off and followed Fangio home. With Collins misfortune in respect of his car's lack of fuel, Fangio finished fourth. The French Grand Prix was the five-time F1 World Drivers' Champion (1951, 1954, 1955, 1956 and 1957) Fangio's last F1 race. As he returned to the pits with his 'Maserati 250F' he declared "It's over, I will stop racing". His retirement is rumoured to have been celebrated by some of his fellow competitors emptying his hotel room of all its furniture and replacing them with a road car which had to be manhandled up the side of the hotel. Oh, ho, ho!

Fangio never became married but was apparently quite a ladies' man. One of his most renowned relationships was with Andrea 'Beban' Berruet which commenced in the late 1930s, ending in 1960. In 1938 a son was born to them - Oscar Cacho Espinoza.

The **11th RAC British Grand Prix** was held at Silverstone Circuit on the 19th of July and competitors had to drive 75 laps of the 4.7km/2.9-mile-long circuit. The 'Vanwall Racing Team' was as usual Brooks (VW5), Moss (VW10) and Stuart (VW6). Of the twenty entrants, eleven retired during the race which included Moss who retired on lap 25 with an engine problem. As new F1 regulations stated that there would be no points awarded to drivers

who shared cars, which in effect forbade competitors swapping drivers in similar cars, that was that. Driving a 'Ferrari D246' that event was a Collins 'love-in' with him winning the event by 24 seconds over Hawthorn who came second also at the wheel of a 'Ferrari D246'. Third was Salvadori driving a 'Cooper Climax T45' (straight 4, dohc, dry sump, 2207cc) and fourth was Stuart.



Mike Hawthorn
in the Ferrari 553



Cooper Climax T45

It was Collins's first F1 victory that year and his first F1 win since the 1956 French Grand Prix. which makes it all the sadder that in the German Grand Prix in two weeks and a day's time he was to lose his life.

The **Caen Grand Prix/VI Grand Prix de Caen** at the La Prairie Park Circuit, Caen, France, was 86 laps of the 3.5km/2.2-mile-long track held on the 20th of July and run-in accordance with F1 rules. No 'Vanwall's' were present but two 'Vanwall Racing Team' drivers did make the journey from Silverstone, namely Moss and Stuart. Moss driving a 'Rob Walker Racing Team' entered 'Cooper Climax T45' (straight 4, dohc, dry sump, 2207cc) won the event, a lap ahead of Joakim 'Joe' Bonnier (1930-1972) racing a 'Maserati 250F'. Stuart came fifth at the wheel of a 'British Racing Partnership' entered 'Cooper Climax T43' (straight 4, dohc, dry sump, 1475cc).

The **German Grand Prix /XX GroBer Preis von Deutschland** was staged at the Nordschleife road track, Nürburgring, and was held over 15 laps of the 22.8km/14.2-mile-long circuit on the 3rd of August. The event included F2 racing cars, but they were not eligible for World Drivers' Championship points. The 'Vanwall Racing Team' were present but with only Brooks (VW4) and Moss (VW10) racing. Stuart was unable to participate due to a shortage of engines. One had been destroyed at Silverstone in July as were other units on the test beds in preparation for this race. In the race out of the 25 qualifiers only 11 racing cars completed the event. Moss had to retire on lap 3 - but several reports state it was lap 4 - at the Schwalbenschwanz (swallowtail) left hand bend which is about 19km around the circuit and is followed by two more bends prior to the Start/Finish line. The fault was a non-functioning magneto. The most devastating accident at that race involved the fatal crash of Collins on lap 10 - although other sources state it was on the eleventh lap. Racing into the Pflanzgarten section of the track (at about 16km/9.9 miles from the Start line), evidently, he was travelling too fast which caused his 'Ferrari D246' to take a wider course than his intended line and in so doing he tangled with a trackside ditch. The Ferrari somersaulted and landed upside down. Collins was thrown out of the Ferrari and crashed headfirst into a tree. He was taken to a hospital for treatment but passed away later that afternoon. It has been reported that Louise Lauette King (born Cordier), his wife of a year and a half, was in the pits at Nürburgring and alongside his bedside when he died. Hawthorn driving a 'Ferrari D246' retired a lap later with a clutch problem. The race was won by Brooks in a 'Vanwall', second was Salvadori driving a 'Cooper Climax T45' (straight 4, dohc, 2207cc) and third was Trintignant at the wheel of a 'Cooper Climax T45' (straight 4, dohc, 1964cc) entered by the 'Rob Walker Racing Team'.

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