

John Watterson tracks down a local that once passengered for one of the leading German sidocar aces

A quietly spoken Lancastrian who has lived in the Isle of Man for more than 40 years raced in the Continental Circus with one of the leading German sidocar drivers of the 1960s. Geoff Hughes partnered former TT winner Heinz Luthringshauser in the heyday of the European sidocar scene alongside



Geoff Hughes in the 1960s. 'I had no regrets, they were the best years of my life,' he said

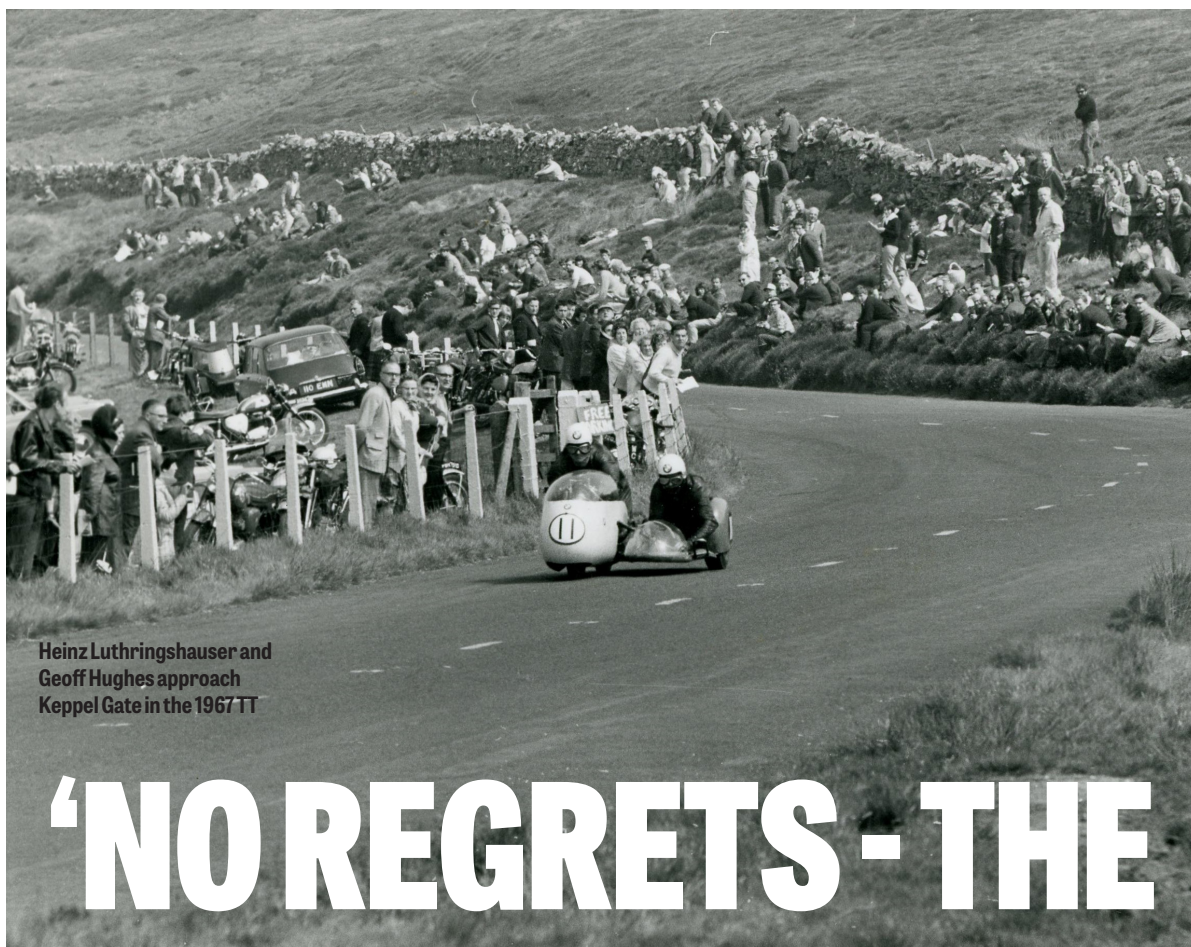
all-time greats such as Sigg Schauzu, Klaus Enders, Georg Auerbacher and Helmut Fath.

'I raced at all the great courses alongside most of the top names in the sport. I had a great life in road racing, and I'm still here to tell the story,' said the Crosby resident who turned 79 last month.

Originally from Bury, Geoff first visited the island with a group of friends in 1957.

He recalls the first 100mph lap of the Mountain Course by Bob McIntyre, but he was more interested in the likes of Sammy Miller and Tarquino Provini in the 125cc and 250cc classes on the Clypse Course.

'We were staying in a guest house on Palace Road, close to the former Falcon Cliff Hotel, and the Governor's Bridge, Bedstead area was only a short



Heinz Luthringshauser and Geoff Hughes approach Keppel Gate in the 1967 TT

'NO REGRETS - THE

walk away.'

Geoff wasn't riding a bike at the time, but his maiden visit to the island inspired him to buy a BSA Bantam, which he saved up for by caddying on a local golf course and delivering newspapers.

'The Bantam would do

53mph flat out. If it went long enough at top speed, the motor would seize. So I'd stop, let it cool down and restart it again.'

He next rebuilt a rigid-framed Triumph 5T, and then onto a Velocette Viper.

'That bike handled real-

ly well, but I made the mistake of buying a 7R AJ'S to start racing. It proved too heavy for me to start and I ended up on an overhead cam 125 Ducati single.

'The Jap bikes were coming out so everything was changing very quickly,' he continued.

'I packed in solos altogether and decided to go into sidecars.'

He went to the TT with a driver from Bolton by the surname of Haddock. The bike was poor and broke down every practice, so they didn't even qualify.

Later that season he jumped in with Pete Kieley of Wakefield on a Triumph-engined Norton. They raced at Croft then the Southern 100, finishing second to Charlie Freeman and Billie Nelson in the 1964 event.

At the Oulton Park International, he and Kieley were vying for the lead when they thumped the bank on the left-hand side

at Island Bend.

'My body took the full force and Kieley jumped off as we careered across the grass towards Esso Hairpin with me on top of the bike,' explained Geoff, who broke his back in the incident.

'I only found that out after suffering a few days of intense pain and eventually going to hospital.'

Over the winter he upped sticks and towed a caravan to the Sheffield area where he lived on a farm near a guy he had met at the TT.

Recovered from the crash, he teamed up with another sidocar driver Roger Ford. They got on well, achieving some good results on a Triumph twin, including a win and a couple of fifths in Belgium.

They raced at the TT in 1965 and 1966, finishing 23rd and 12th respectively.

'I enjoyed racing on the Continent and at a street circuit in Mouscron, Bel-



LUTHRINGSHAUSER DIED IN 1997

<< Heinz Luthringshauser was German Sidocar Champion in 1970 and runner-up to Klaus Enders in the 1972 World Sidocar Championship. He won the 1974 Sidocar TT with Herman Hahn. He created the Motorrad Museum Heinz Luthringshauser in a former church at Otterbach, near Kaiserslautern (pictured left). Heinz died in September 1997 at the age of 66.