

THE HEREFORDSHIRE WATER BOARD AND THE WATERWORKS MUSEUM

The first and only Chairman of the Herefordshire Water Board was Stephen R Southall, the foremost of many important people associated with the establishment and early success of Hereford's Waterworks Museum.

Shortly after his appointment as Chairman (in the early 1960's) Stephen Southall visited Broomy Hill, on a tour of all the Board's assets, during which he saw the Museum's triple expansion steam engine made by Worth Mackenzie standing forlorn and covered in cobwebs. He later wrote that the sight of the magnificent old engine 'took my breath away' and he immediately resolved that the pumping station should become a museum dedicated to drinking water. It took him 14 years to realise this vision, but it was only because Stephen Southall, with the support of other senior colleagues, took action to preserve the works and to prevent the engines from being scrapped (which is what happened in many other waterworks).

The senior officers of the Herefordshire Water Board who supported the Chairman in keeping his vision alive when they had other priorities, included:

- The Treasurer, Herbert Penhale, who became the first Treasurer and Company Secretary of the Waterworks Museum charitable trust.
- The Water Engineer/Water Manager, WH Austin. He became the Museum's first Technical Advisor and Editor of the Museum's first newsletter - 'The Journal'. His contribution was nicely summarised by Stephen Southall who said: "That there is a Waterworks Museum at Broomy Hill is in no small measure due to Mr WH Austin who during his years as Engineer to the Herefordshire Water Board supported the retention of much vintage machinery, which might otherwise have been scrapped, notably the Worth Mackenzie engines."

Right: WH Austin and Philippa Southall at the opening of Whitbourne WTW in April 1966. This was one of the major investments made during the term of the Herefordshire Water Board



Stephen Southall accepted the mantle as first Chairman of the Waterworks Museum, a role he held until he became President when Dr Noel Meeke was appointed as Chairman. He always led from the front and his vision and focus nurtured the Museum through difficult times, especially during the 1980's when the Museum's existence was maintained by no more than a handful of volunteers. The Museum quietly expanded under his leadership, which laid firm foundations for the Museum as we see it today.



Stephen Southall's wife, Philippa, stood beside him both physically and metaphorically, and often seen in dirty overalls, sharing the burden of creating and developing the Waterworks Museum. After Stephen died in 2011, Philippa readily accepted the mantle of President, a role she fulfilled to perfection until she died in 2017.

Left: Stephen & Phillipa Southall with their vintage Rolls Royce, which was often seen parked on the forecourt of the Waterworks Museum (seen here in 1975)