

Celebrating of a Life Well Lived



Eng. A. A. McCorkindale 1923 - 2018

The IEK Council and the entire engineering fraternity in Kenya join family and friends to celebrate the life of one of the eminent members of IEK; Eng A.A. McCorkindale who transitioned on 2nd, January, 2018 and his body cremated on 5th January, 2018.

A. A. “Archie” McCorkindale was born in Scotland in the year 1923. He was the first civil engineer to emerge in both East and Central Africa in the 20th century. After graduating in Civil Engineering from the University of Glasgow in 1944, McCorkindale worked for two years with the Ministry of Aircraft Production in the UK on aircraft design. He then joined a civil engineering contractor in the UK and came with them to East Africa in 1948.

There, he joined Sir Alexander Gibb & Partners (Africa) as an assistant water engineer in 1950, working on the Dar es Salaam water supply. In 1951, he worked on a feasibility study for the new Nairobi airport at Embakasi. The airport was constructed from 1954 to 1957 and is the current Jomo Kenyatta International Airport (JKIA).

He worked on airport, water supply, road and other civil engineering projects in East Africa and Mauritius between 1953 and 1962, when he was appointed Chief Engineer of Sir Alexander Gibb & Partners. In 1964, he became Resident Partner of the firm and was responsible for its work in East Africa, what was then Rhodesia and Mauritius.

Between 1964 and 1977, McCorkindale expanded the firm's operations to cover projects in Oman, North Yemen, Somalia, Malawi, Sudan and Botswana. The projects handled by the firm during this time included the design and construction of over 2000 km of roads in Kenya as well as roads in Tanzania, Uganda and Yemen, among other countries. The firm was also responsible for water and supply projects in Kenya, Malawi, Mauritius, Botswana, Tanzania and Somalia, as well as structural, harbour and irrigation projects. During this time, the firm's complement of staff in Africa increased from 35 in 1964 to 300 in 1977, including 170 engineers. The number of resident partners also increased from one to five. In 1978, he became the Senior Partner of the firm in Africa, Cyprus, Zimbabwe, Mauritius and Botswana. The firm retained 200 engineers at its peak of operations.

McCorkindale played a major role in civil engineering in Kenya and throughout East Africa until his retirement in 1988. In the same year, Queen Elizabeth II honoured McCorkindale by making him an Officer of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire (OBE) for his lifelong engineering service in East Africa. This made him the foremost engineer in East Africa.

He was appointed as the first Chairman of the Association of Consulting Engineers of Kenya in 1968 and Chairman of the Institution of Engineers of Kenya (IEK) from 1983 to 1985. From 1969 to 1989, McCorkindale was the representative in East Africa, Somalia and Mauritius of the UK Institution of Civil Engineers. In the year 1979, he was appointed as chairman of the journal committee of the IEK. He has been editing the Kenya Engineer magazine since then and publishing it since 1988. The magazine is published on a bi-monthly basis, partly financed by McCorkindale's own resources.

McCorkindale, who in his earlier days was a tennis player and keen golfer, not only remains as a legend in the history of engineering in East Africa, but continues to drive engineering to higher levels in Kenya by assisting engineering students from the University of Nairobi, JKUAT and Moi University in several ways, including publishing their students' magazines.

His works will live long after his transition.

May his soul rest in external peace.