



Popular Labour Man Fondly Remembered

THE first chairman of Thamesdown Council, Bill Winton, has died in Princess Margaret Hospital. Mr Winton, 76, who was Swindon's equivalent of mayor in 1973, had been ill for several weeks but had been expected to return soon to his home in Midwinter Gardens, Stratton. But early on Thursday morning, his wife, Betty, 73, was told that her husband's condition had deteriorated dramatically. By the time she and other members of the family reached the hospital, Mr Winton had died. Bill Winton, a staunch Labour supporter all his life, entered politics via Stratton parish council. One of his earliest political battles was for street lighting in Stratton, a cause he successfully steered through to fruition. It was not long before he won a seat on Highworth District Council and also became a school governor. When Highworth and Swindon councils were amalgamated into Thamesdown, Mr Winton really made his mark in politics, being elected the new council's first chairman. In this position, he performed the duties of a traditional mayor. The following year, the role of mayor was introduced and Bill became deputy mayor. One of his Labour councillor contemporaries and a former Thamesdown mayor, Percy Jefferies, said: "Bill had strong views, just like the rest of us, but he was very popular. His policies were always constructive and I'm proud to have been his friend. "He always had great support from his wife and that's essential in public life. Without it, you'll never get anywhere." Bill and Betty celebrated their golden wedding anniversary two years ago. The mayor and mayoress of Swindon, Councillor Brian Ford (Con, Wroughton and Chiseldon) and his wife Stella were among the 70 guests at the celebration party in the Coleview Community Centre. Bill was born in a village near Andover. He and Betty met at a village dance. At the time of the golden wedding anniversary, Bill said: "My wife was my first love and I was hers." He added: "The mayor said some kind things about my time as chairman, even though we would have been on opposite sides of the political fence if I were still a member of the council." By trade, Bill was an aircraft builder and maintenance specialist, working for Vickers, which was the reason for his transfer to the Swindon area from the Andover region. Besides his wife, Bill leaves two sons, Ian and Neil, seven grandchildren and two great-grandchildren. The funeral will be on Thursday at Kingsdown Crematorium. Several former Swindon mayors and many councillors are expected to attend.

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