
PAUL SEWELL – BIOGRAPHY

Paul Sewell built networks from the outset, through school and particularly sport. He failed his eleven-plus but excelled at football, playing for Hull City's youth sides and harbouring realistic hopes of a professional career until injury intervened.

The option of following his father into the fruit trade didn't appeal and, after getting back on track with his studies, Paul gained a first in his BSc Building course at Leeds.

After graduation, he worked for a national concern and then joined the unrelated family firm of F Sewell & Son (Hull) Ltd. He helped to turn it into a multi-disciplined group which delivered transformational schemes in education, health and culture for its home city and evolved to provide a complete estates service and bring into play nationally significant projects.

Paul participated in Common Purpose, he served as President of the Chamber of Commerce and he led in new business organisations including the Bondholders, Humber LEP and For Entrepreneurs Only.

He brought the Yorkshire International Business Convention (YIBC) to Hull and founded Humber Business Week in 2005.

Paul won the IoD's Lifetime Achievement Award in 2015 and was granted an Honorary Doctorate by the University of Hull in 2010. He was honoured by the Queen with an OBE for services to Business and the Community in 2011.

His commitment to developing people and his interest in talent management and leadership brought numerous awards for the company's 500 people. Sewell Group became a serial winner in the Sunday Times 100 Best Companies to Work For. Sewell on the go was named UK Forecourt Retailer of the year in 2009 and 2016.

Paul is now supporting a strong management team as they take the Group forward, whilst he also helps young entrepreneurs build their own businesses.

His memoir, "Half a Lettuce", was published in May 2020 to wide acclaim.

Ends.

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For the full, unabridged story of Paul Sewell's life and career it's well worth reading the acclaimed "Half a Lettuce". Part business book, part memoir, available in hard back and audio book, with all proceeds going to Hull Animal Welfare Trust.

For a more condensed version, read on.

Born and brought up in Cottingham, Paul built networks from the outset, forging great friendships through school and particularly sport. He failed his eleven-plus but excelled at football, playing for Hull City's youth sides and building realistic hopes of a professional career until injury intervened.

The option of following his father into the family fruit business didn't appeal and, after getting back on track with his studies, Paul secured a few A levels and went to university in Leeds, gaining a first in his BSc Building course and embarking on a career in construction.

Through bizarre coincidence he was joined on the course by Dennis Sewell, no relation, whose father ran a building firm in Hull. After graduation, Paul worked for a national concern but then came home to Hull, to F Sewell & Son (Hull) Ltd and his student pal Dennis.

Over the past 40 years, Paul has grown the traditional family business into a multi-disciplined group of companies who work regionally and are recognised nationally with numerous awards and accolades for their 500 people. As well as Hull, there are Sewell bases in Leeds, York and Huddersfield.

The small east Hull builder became a national development pioneer, delivering programmes such as the 21 schools in Hull Building Schools for the Future, the 14 health centres of NHS LIFT, and iconic City of Culture projects such as Hull New Theatre. The inclusion of investments and facilities management in the Sewell offer provides a complete estates service and brings into play nationally significant projects, such as the Yorkshire Energy Park.

From its beginnings as a stand-alone filling station in Sutton village, the retail arm of the Group, Sewell on the go, now serves over four million customers a year from 13 high quality fuel and convenience stores in Hull and the East Riding.

Ranked in the top 20 independent retailers in the country, Sewell on the go was UK Forecourt Retailer of the year in 2009 and 2016. Sewell Group featured regularly in the Sunday Times 100 Best Companies to Work For, most recently in 2020.

Such achievements are evidence of Paul's commitment to develop himself. He participated in the early Common Purpose programmes in Hull, he served as President of the Chamber of Commerce and he played pivotal roles in new business organisations including the Bondholders, Humber LEP and as co-founder of For Entrepreneurs Only.

He brought the Yorkshire International Business Convention (YIBC) to Hull and founded Humber Business Week in 2005.

Paul was recognised by the Institute of Directors for his contribution to the Yorkshire economy in 2007 and given their Lifetime Achievement Award in 2015. He was granted an Honorary Doctorate by the University of Hull in 2010 and honoured by the Queen with an OBE for services to Business and the Community in 2011.

These external activities appealed to Paul's natural eagerness to learn and to pass on his new knowledge. He built new, hugely influential networks which fed his interest in talent management and leadership and inspired him to investigate further.

His experience living and working in a city too often overlooked for investment and condemned for its social and economic challenges fuelled his acute sense of social injustice and his desire to provide and demand opportunities for all.

With a strong management team at the helm in Sewell Group Paul's stated aim now is to enjoy watching them take the business forward, support them as and when required but be sure not to block progress. He is also working with young entrepreneurs, helping them to build their own businesses and contribute to the growth of the Humber economy.

Paul still lives in the village where he was born – on a hobby farm with his wife, Sue, and many rescue animals, as she runs the Hull Animal Welfare Trust. Paul and Sue have one son, Patrick, who heads up Sewell on the go.

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