

CONGRATULATIONS TO PAUL WELCH FOR 40 YEARS OF CONTINUOUS SERVICE!

Celebrations were held in Hastings on Thursday 2 September 2010 to congratulate Paul Welch on his 40 years of excellent service as a gardener/supervisor to Hastings Borough Council.

The early part of the day was a busy balancing act of trying to organise the depot and take delivery of the food. Fortunately Shaun Godfrey did an admirable job of ensuring Paul was kept away and didn't return to Alexandra Park until 12:05.

All Paul's work colleagues attended the presentation together with Sam Russell, Richard Suter & Nick Philips from Hastings Borough Council, Martin Prior (former tractor driver), Roy Ling (former parks superintendent), Dennis Mitchell (former union representative) & former contract manager Sean Towey. Paul's wife Sue and son Alan also attended - a further surprise.

Despite previous fears that he might have guessed something was afoot, when the presentation was 'sprung' on Paul he was genuinely surprised and it came as a complete shock to him.

Firstly Paul's wife, Sue, was presented with a bouquet as a thank you from all at QSL for her support. After a few words by Steve McKeown, Quadron's Area Manager, to describe the magnitude of Paul's 40 years of continuous service to the group of 40 or so gathered in the mess room, the presentation of a die cast model tractor was made. The room rang with applause and Paul was clearly moved. Marshall Haley (Contract Manager) offered some kind words to describe his opinion of Paul as both a man and a supervisor.

As a final surprise Marshall led Paul outside to an old Massey Ferguson tractor that had been quietly parked next to the current Massey tractor.



Above, Contract Administrator Sarah presents Paul's wife Sue with a bouquet, and below, Area Manager Steve McKeown presents Paul with a model tractor.



Below, colleagues gather to congratulate Paul. Left to right, Barry Pescott, Paul Adams, Gordon Butchers, Dennis Yeo, Duncan McAndrew, Scott Woods, Guy Loader (HBC ranger), Contract Manager Marshall Haley, & Vic Mowbray.



This tractor was the same model Paul had driven for the corporation. Paul leapt onto the tractor and drove once around the yard just like the eager newly-qualified 17 year old had done 37 years before.

As a footnote to the occasion real life intruded, whilst the last of the sandwiches were being polished off the fire alarm went off. True to form and character Paul went straight back to work after the presentation, of course in the tractor.

Highlights of Paul's Career

- Paul joined Hastings Borough Council as a boy gardener at the age of 15 in September 1970, following his ambition to become a tractor driver.
- His Dad and two brothers all had the same initials and all worked for the Council in the seventies so they were referred to as PA Welch 1, 2, 3 or 4.
- He reported to work for the first time in the very depot (Alexandra Park) where he is still based today.
- His first day was spent removing weeds from the bowling green and the flower beds in Alexandra Park.
- He was paid weekly in cash in a little brown envelope earning £5 15s for a 40 hour week.
- Paul learnt to drive during his lunch hours paying 90p a lesson and in 1972, after 23 lessons, realised his dream of driving a tractor.
- In his 40 years Paul has worked in many roles including Alexandra Park gardener, tractor driver, general lorry driver alongside tree gang, tree team, nursery worker at Blackman Avenue, playgrounds & playground construction, tractor driver with the mowing team, team leader and promoted to supervisor in 1990.

Right, group shot with the Hastings team, including Client Officers and former colleagues, with Paul and his son Alan in the centre.



Above, Steve McKeown (left) with Marshall, Paul and the two Masseys.



Below, Paul cutting his cake and driving the old Massey.



FACTFILE.....When Paul started work:

- Jimi Hendrix, Jim Morrison, Janis Joplin, Cass Elliott & Paul Kossof were all still alive;
- Pounds, shillings & pence were the currency;
- It was one year after the first moon landing;
- Elvis Presley's "The Wonder of You" was No. 1
- Edward Heath was Prime Minister.

