

*Chancellor:*

Paul Kennedy is not only a distinguished historian of foreign policy, empire, and global power, but the founder of a world-leading programme in Grand Strategy at Yale University that has shaped the field of International Security Studies.

Professor Kennedy's scholarship – ranging from British sea power and military engineering to the history of the United Nations – has shown how empirical research, historicist imagination, and ambitious analysis can illuminate our past, our present, and our future.

He became one of the world's best-known historians with the publication, in 1987, of his *Rise and Fall of the Great Powers*, magisterially surveying 500 years of history and raising profound questions about the longevity of superpowers. From Japan and China to the Soviet Union and the United States, his research has been translated, debated, and contemplated as a provocation on the economic sustainability of spiralling military commitments doomed by imperial overstretch.

For generations of security experts, world leaders, and diplomats, his work as an educator at Yale, as a public intellectual, and as an advisor has shaped our twenty-first century. You, Chancellor, are one of Professor Kennedy's readers who pursued their own research in History inspired by his work.

Beyond these achievements, we recognise Paul Kennedy today as an alumnus and a life-long champion of our region and of the power of education to inspire the extraordinary.

In his distinguished career, Professor Kennedy emphasises the loving support of his family, especially Cynthia and the late Cath, and his sons, Jim, John, and the late Matthew. In his early years growing up in North Tyneside, his own parents and relatives shared pride in his 'peculiar' choice to study rather than enter the shipyards. Paul thrived academically with a place at St Cuthbert's Grammar School, and he became the first in his family (the only one of 32 cousins) to graduate with a degree, reading History at King's College, now our sibling institution Newcastle University but then part of Durham.

At his original graduation ceremony, his parents sat watching proudly. His father, John, was a boilermaker at Wallsend Engineering, in the third generation of a large Irish-Catholic family emigrated to North-East England. His mother Margaret was a daughter of the pit villages of County Durham, from Stanley, Dipton, and Burnopfield. Her brother, Paul's Uncle Leo, was a collier whose muscled neck struggled into a formal collar and tie to attend his 'peculiar' nephew's graduation ceremony.

A voyage fitted out in the North East, with a ten-year-old sent to the quay to grab any fish falling off the loaded lorries, continued into the halls of the United Nations, to the classrooms of Yale, and onto bookshelves around the world.

Today, the Wallsend Slipway is gone, but Paul Kennedy has come full circle to be honoured where he launched his career.

Professor Kennedy's advice to the latest generation of Durham graduates is "to follow your own star and navigate your own route" – an apt maritime metaphor as we honour not just a famous historian of sea power but a working-class lad proudly forged on the banks of the Tyne.

*Chancellor, I present Paul Kennedy to receive the degree of Doctor of Letters, honoris causa.*