

## RETIRING • COUPLE PREPARE TO HAND OVER THE REINS OF THEIR POPULAR VILLAGE STORE



● Sheila and Frank Cowley are retiring from The Cheese Shop this weekend  
Photo by Gareth Jones Code SVISGJ260204?



● New owner Deborah Sheedy with Lorna Fortune

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## Match edam in heaven

TAKING over from Frank and Sheila is new owner Debbie Sheedy.

The mother-of-three is looking forward to taking the helm of the popular shop and building on its reputation.

Debbie has lived in Southport with husband and former Everton star Kevin for 22 years.

She said: "I knew what a good reputation The Cheese Centre has and when I heard it was for sale I thought it would be a great business.

"I don't intend to change anything yet, I want to keep it as it is."

While Kevin will not be serving behind the counter, Debbie will be joined by close friend Lorna Fortune, who has a background in the retail sector.

She added: "I want everyone to know that while Sheila and Frank won't be here, The Cheese Centre is still open. I'm very much looking forward to running such a great business and meeting all the customers."

# Toasting the cheese shop

**THE owners of The Cheese Centre in Birkdale – once voted best in Britain – are set to hang up their aprons.**

Frank and Sheila Cowley retire this weekend after running the shop for 16 years.

The couple have been a fixture in Birkdale village for decades, owning a newsagents for 25 years before taking the reigns of The Cheese Centre.

Sheila said: "We wanted something a little easier and thought it would be fun to work here. It's actually

**By JULIA NASON**

harder - but a lot more enjoyable."

But the hard work paid off and in 1996 the business was named Best Cheese Shop in Britain by Dairy Crest Retail and gained the runner-up position the following year.

With more than 100 different cheeses available, the accolade was hardly a surprise to regulars.

Among the more unusual cheese to choose from is the Cornish Yorg, which is wrapped in nettle leaves, the

Norwegian Gjetost goats cheese, and the unfortunately named Stinking Bishop.

But it is the Lancashire Cheese for which the shop is renown.

The shop sells, on average, a staggering 200lb per week of the Lancashire cheese alone, with customers flocking hundreds of miles to buy it.

"Lancashire cheese is usually crumbly but this is creamy and you can't get it anywhere else apart from Lancashire," said Sheila.

"People come from all over the country for it. We have

one gentleman who travels from Jersey about three times a year to buy it, getting around 30lb at a time."

But it is not just the heeses for which the shop has earned its reputation.

The sticky toffee pudding flies off the shelf along with the many unusual pates.

It is also the only shop in Southport which sells coffee beans and boasts the rare Jamaica Blue beans.

Frank added: "We try to stock things people want and what you can't get in the supermarkets. Of course we

aim to please and take pride in adding the personal touch. We know most of the customers and they come in for a chat which is really nice."

Although walking away from the business is going to be heartbreaking for the couple, they relish the prospect of spending more time with their two young grandchildren, gardening and taking more holidays.

Sheila added: "I'm really going to miss working here, especially seeing the customers. We've met some really wonderful people."

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