

Ray Miller



taking a sideways look at the past, present and future

New Dev pulls the crowds

COTTAGE HOME:
The New Dev,
originally one of three
cottages.
JK301203DEV PUB-002



THE New Dev, better known to generations of Runcornians as the Devonshire Hotel, is 140 years old this year.

Situated at the corner of Ashridge Street and Egerton Street, it changed its name from the Devonshire Hotel to the Dukesfield a relatively short time back but has now settled for its present name, the New Dev.

In recent times, it has experienced a remarkable change in fortunes. Beer at around £1 a pint has pulled in the punters and that was the case over Christmas and the New Year. Such numbers were reminiscent of the pub's golden years in the 1950s and Sixties – a time when Dukesfielders packed the pub for regular sing-songs, accompanied by talented resident pianists Florrie Peck and the late Lorraine Lyons.

It was also the place where Sunday morning footballers, after a two or three-hour stint on the Rutland Street playground in the late 1940s and

1950s, would repair for a few pints in the Sunday lunch hour.

In those days, the Devonshire as it was then called, was a popular venue for a game of Tiptit which I've mentioned elsewhere on this page.

The history of the pub itself is recorded here for us by archivist Alec Cowan, compiler of the series.

THE NEW DEV
(Formerly Devonshire Hotel and Dukesfield)

THIS public house name is usually found in London, Devon, Derbyshire and Yorkshire, reflecting the ownership of large estates by the Dukes of Devonshire. There does not appear to be any local connection.

In 1852, the Trustees of the Duke of Bridgewater sold to George Hayes the younger (shopkeeper), a plot of land, part of Coopers Field. Hayes sold in 1876 to John Wilson Lightburn, schoolmaster, a plot of land and three cottages, one of which was an inn called the 'Devonshire Hotel'. The pub ex-

panded and the two other cottages were incorporated. Lightburn sold the premises in 1892 to Emily Charlwood Barker, Richard Barker and Company, brewers, of Huyton. Greenall Whitley purchased it in 1920.

Greenalls received approval in September 1932 for improvements to the lavatory accommodation.

Licencees:

William Morgan (1864-1869), George Hayes (1870-1876), also at the Bridge Hotel between 1880 and 1883; William Roger Wass (1878-1881), also at the Wellington Inn between 1883 and 1922; George Shore (1883-1892), also at the George and Dragon in 1896; Archibald Haining (1896-1899), also at the Royal Hotel between 1900 and 1902 and the Royal Oak, Weston, between 1903 and 1910; John Lloyd (1900-1902), George A. G. McDiarmid (1903-1906), Robert Smalley Parry (1910-1916), Francis Haselden (1916-1922), also at the Fleetwood Arms between 1922 and 1923; Alfred Oakes (1922-1924), William Thomas Jones (1922-1944), Mary E. Jones (1944-1948), H. Charles Annetts (1948-1955), John J. Earlam (1955-1960), George Shaw (1960-1970), also at the Rose and Crown between 1958 and 1960; James Garvie (1970-1973), Betty Garvie (1973-1983), David Robinson (1983-7).

A table, a coin and a lot of beer!

TIPIT was one pub game which enjoyed immense popularity at the Devonshire Hotel in the late 1940s and throughout the 1950s.

I was always under the impression that tipit was played with a six-sided miniature brass ingot which spun round on the table like an old-fashioned top. The sides of this device were numbered one to six and I distinctly remember seeing a few of the pub regulars spinning the thing on the games table.

But was this a form of tipit? Not according to former Dukesfielders I spoke to this week who assured me that if such a device was used at all it was hidden in a player's hand. This view is borne out by the *Oxford Dictionary* which describes tipit 'as a game of chance in which an object hidden in a player's hand is to be detected'.

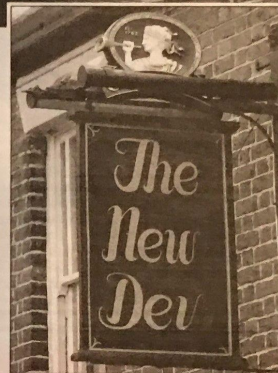
My Dukesfield friends tell me tipit was usually played by six players – two teams of three either side of the table – with one team having to guess which of the three other players was concealing the hidden object when their closed hands were placed on the table. However, they tell me they always played this game with a coin, normally a sixpence and not with the sort of device I had in mind.

A colleague trawled through the Internet for me and further investigation showed that World Tiptit Championships are still held each Autumn at the Red Lion Inn in Llanafan Fawr in Powys, Mid Wales, home to the World Amateur Tiptit Society. And they describe tipit as 'an ancient game played by teams of three and involves a farthing, a table and an awful lot of drinking!'

Incidentally, I was told by my old Dukesfield friends that tipit was also played at a number of other pubs in Runcorn and Widnes.

But what was the game I saw being played with a spinning, miniature ingot all those years ago?

One chap told me he remembers such an object being made by an ICI craftsman many years back.



OLD AND NEW: Known as the Devonshire Hotel for the best part of a century and a half, the pub is now called The New Dev.
JK301203DEV PUB -001

Enjoy top singer in your home

A TOP vocalist for the best part of half a century, and a familiar voice to all those who love the big band sound, Runcorn's Alan Watson has released his own CD.

Entitled *Songs Of Love*, it features nine tracks, including *Night and Day*, *Just the Way You Are*, *My Foolish Heart* and *Here's That Rainy Day* (versions one and two). Musical direction was by Eric Pep (keyboards).

Alan's vast repertoire ranges over great standards and classics from several decades and his fans will, I'm sure, enjoy this particular offering.

Resident singer with the Merseyside Big Band, Alan and his colleagues rehearse every Monday night at the Cherry Tree Hotel in Runcorn. The band (and Alan) are on at Maghull Town Hall the last Thursday of every month.

Radio Merseyside listeners have probably heard tracks from Alan's CD being played on the Maureen Walsh show every Sunday just recently. Maureen heard Alan singing and immediately became a big fan!

Priced £5, the CD is available from Alan at his home 97 Laburnum Grove, Runcorn (tel: 01928 566328).

Streets ahead on old names

OLD street names provide a fascinating interest for a great many of us and I can still recall doing a complete series in Widnes many years ago. As a young reporter in those days there were a number I'd never heard of before, many of them connected with the chemical industry, including Liebig Street.

Having been in either Runcorn or Widnes all my life I thought I knew most of the old street names in Runcorn but my ever-helpful contributor Percy Dunbavand has unearthed half a dozen I've never come across before. His notes came from a 'slum clearance' item published in the *Weekly News* in April 1936 when the paper reported that 76 houses were due to be demolished, including some in familiar places such as Mason Street, Stone Street and Canal Street.

The others were in Hignett's Court, Lightfoot's Court, Barnes Cottages, Grace's Square, Sankley's Court and Millstone Yard, all places I'd not come across before.

A field day for traffic wardens

WHEN the new Traffic Management Bill becomes law, as it most surely will, traffic wardens will have a field day. Anyone who edges tentatively into a cross-hatched yellow 'control box' will face an immediate £100 fine as will hapless motorists who turn right at a junction, probably unaware that a road layout they have been familiar with for years has suddenly been changed.

Transport Secretary Alistair Darling says it will 'free up' the police to concentrate on serious crimes. But the whole idea smacks of a cynical ploy to rake in money, a target easily achievable because everybody knows motorists will pay up.

In many instances overzealous, often under-employed traffic wardens will be in their element. Is this what any of us want? I don't think so. The new law will go down in history as one of the worst ever introduced in this country.

DESKTOP CALENDAR QUOTE

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