

EMILY ATHERTON ON THE HERALD

The monthly speaker at February's meeting of the Penrith and North Lakes U3A group was Emily Atherton, editor of the Cumberland and Westmorland Herald. She took the group through the trials and tribulations of the local press over the past few years, indicating the particular issues our own Herald has faced.

Local newspapers have been in the doldrums for several years with a few giants such as News-quest buying up the smaller businesses and thereby dominating and transforming independent, quality newspapers. A crisis was reached in 2020 when it looked as if the Herald, which had then existed for nearly 160 years and was one of the few remaining independent local papers in the whole country, was about to be consigned to closure or to a buy-out by a large concern. We heard that only two weeks were left before the paper had to cease production. Some interest, though, as well as considerable anxiety, was generated by such a prospect and a further fortnight's reprieve was granted.



Very fortunately, there was a wider interest in the continuation of such a popular and highly respected local paper and at the last minute Andrew Barr, with no experience of journalism but with a strong belief in our community newspaper, stepped forward to become its owner, thereby saving it. His knowledge of the nuclear industry seemed a strange preliminary to this new role but he has brought some exciting fresh vision to the paper. Furthermore, a new Managing Director was appointed, John Holliday, a journalist with great experience of working in the media, including for the BBC. Andrew's enthusiasm for his new venture has led to his successively buying the Keswick Reminder, of a similar vintage and type to the Herald, and even adding a digital news provider, Cumbria Crack. As a consequence such healthy partnerships provide a stronger platform for news and advertising and the addition of a digital medium offers a more modern style and dimension to the company. Much relief was felt with the rescue of a suite of cherished local news providers but this jubilation did not last long.

The next shock came with the outbreak of Covid-19's leading to the closure of all but 'necessary' shops, and the curtailing of going out for reasons other than exercise. Buying a local newspaper was possible in the larger supermarkets but the smaller 'non-food' outlets were unable to provide local papers and, consequently, sales fell drastically. A new crisis had arisen for the Herald and its sister businesses just at a time when keeping up with the local scene and its particular needs and problems was of more than passing interest. As many know, these providers of local news are a life-line to many living solitary, perhaps quite isolated, lives. Happily, the government which had curtailed our liberties also stepped up

with something of a solution. By paying for advertising space the shortfall of revenue from sales was significantly counter-balanced. A postal subscription offering was also initiated and is another growing dimension of the business. Once again, a potential crisis has been averted.

Emily Atherton invited members of the Zoom audience to ask question and a comprehensive series of issues was raised and some of the most popular new features were discussed. Members like the extra photos sent in by readers, the obituaries of popular community figures is appreciated and special edition celebrating the first 160 years of the Herald's life was much enjoyed. The talk was widely acclaimed by the numerous but very well-distanced audience and it was a great opportunity for members of our local U3A to join together in hearing more about a trio of our favourite local news providers.

Sue Tomlinson

Cumberland & Westmorland Herald

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE:
Ten years on, the positive legacy from food and mouth trials
SPECIAL FEATURE — PAGES 6&7

MARMALADE FESTIVAL FAME IS SPREADING
Page 8

161st Year — 10th Week in Quarter SATURDAY, 19th FEBRUARY, 2011 Weekly — 65p

Decision to turn back on merger "could cost council £1 million"



Police spending cuts "will leave their mark for years"

INVESTING in Cumbria will take years to restore, says spending cuts being imposed on the force, a Cumbria police authority chairman has warned.

The chairman warned that the authority had been forced to reduce spending by 20 million in 2010-11. This means will account for a large slice of the authority.

Constable Constabulary will have 1,200 police officers

even more after nearly 2000 officers, said the police authority. Cumbria's police authority chairman, Mr. Thomas, described the cuts as a "great test" for the force.

If others allowed, he said, they would be an agreed budget and the police authority would be set to rise, he said.

Mr. Thomas described the year's budget as "no-