

Cumberland & Westmorland Herald

Reprinted with kind permission

End of an era as 118- year old shopping tradition gives way to hi-tech solution

When the original founders of Penrith Co-op sat around a table in 1890 none could have foreseen how the share ledger they created would flourish over the next 118 years.

Since the latter years of the 1890s staff would conscientiously write up each members account with purchases they made, and twice a year would diligently add interest and dividends, double checking balances as they went.

A time consuming task that seemed to go on for ages and voraciously ate into the time and resources of the society.

After all, 205,000 transactions a year are not only a lot of pen and paper, but as the staff will testify, a lot of sweat and the occasional tear.

Now with some 24,000 members spread across 9 branches from Co Durham to the South West Lakes, the days of manually writing up the old bound ledger has been banished forever.

At the nerve centre of these new offices is the latest in software database technology guaranteeing that the members share ledger is not only secure, but is always accurate, and up to date.

Gone are the days of members having to wait whilst their account was updated. Now it is instant.

Calculation of the annual dividend and interest which used to take three weeks, now happens automatically overnight.

As John Tompkins the CEO says, "customers are our life blood. Our oldest member has been a share holder for 80 plus years. Shopping at any of Penrith Co-op's 9 branches and having your share account go hand in hand."

He continues "as a customer focused and driven organisation we have a responsibility to manage and control our members' funds in a professional and disciplined manner."

"The system Database Software Solutions of Stocksfield developed has been tailored to suit us and guarantees that the members' fund is professionally managed, consistently and accurately."

"In a nut shell it puts us 100% in control"

"Every year it saves us over two months of admin time which means staff no longer have to work overtime. It has also dramatically reduced the pressure when other critical tasks need to be done. Staff have the time and care to do these other things better.

Management analysis reports which took days to produce under the old pen and paper system, and were always out of date as soon as they were finished, are now produced automatically and at blistering speeds.

Apart from the staff not having to work overtime which is a big saving it also saves us over £1000 in stationery costs every year.

The staff find the software easy to use because it mirrors the old way they used to do it. It's removed all the drudgery and chore, and made everyone's job easier and more pleasant."

Other co-ops using the system include Seaton Valley at Whitley Bay and Allendale Co-op in Northumberland. For a free CD of the system email alex@dbasesolution.co.uk



Database Software Solutions—Improved Operational and Profit Performance. **GUARANTEED!**