

Dick Whitworth is 85 years old. His sport is orienteering: running while navigating, often in challenging wilderness areas. He's been involved since the late 1960s and even last weekend (12th October) was out in the woods completing the shortest technical course. Two weeks earlier, he completed a longer technical course on the moorland of High Pike.

Orienteering was a new sport to the UK in the 1960s, and local club Border Liners (BL) held its first competition in 1970, in Greystoke Forest. Dick was there, aged 31, and over the next few years he became a very successful competitor. For many years he and his wife Angela, both teachers, took school children to events in a minibus, giving some of them a life-long interest in the sport, and for many years he was a high-level Controller, overseeing events for many other clubs.

Dick was instrumental in building both the sport and the club over the next fifty years. He designed orienteering courses, and organised and coordinated competitions. But his key contribution was spending thousands of volunteer hours surveying forests and moorland in the great detail needed to create maps for orienteering competitions...before the aid of computers. Maps are the foundation of orienteering. It cannot exist without them.

Areas that Dick mapped from scratch include: High Pike, Swindale (near Shap), Aughtertree, Coombs Wood (near Armathwaite), Burnbanks (near Haweswater), and several Carlisle parks, including Bitts Park, Rickerby Park, and Chances Park. In 1986, Dick received a Certificate for Service to Northern Sport for his work on mapping.

While still in his thirties, Dick became the club's Treasurer. He stepped down only last year, at the age of 84.

In his sixties, Dick took on the role of map printer, which he has continued until this year, aged 85. In total we estimate Dick has printed over 10,000 maps, covering more than 200 competitions, each with many different courses to be printed.

Dick has been fundamental in creating the bedrock of orienteering in NE Cumbria, and in supporting its development over more than 50 years. As well as all his major roles, Dick continues to help out at our local competitions; happy to take on any on-the-day job that's needed. But also, and despite breaking his leg two years ago, Dick continues, at the age of 85, to be an active orienteer himself: competing on technical courses, on fells and in forests, and inspiring those younger than him to continue to run and compete into older age.