

The Copeland Chase

by Roger Jackson WCOC



Looking eastwards from a control site on Hen Comb with Red Pike and Fleetwith Pike at the top of Buttermere just visible in the far distance

The Copeland Chase is a long distance orienteering race which has its roots in the fell running fraternity. But after a seven year break it was resurrected in 2007 by West Cumberland OC, with John Slater taking the reins. Having large tracts of open fellside and a good map of the area were crucial to a successful future for the event. It was obvious that by combining several maps together, a sufficiently large area could be created to meet the needs of the event.

After five years in the new format, five A3 maps at 1:15000 have provided the detail to produce technically challenging courses. The first event was held on the extended Whinlatter area, then Kinniside Common, next Eskdale Tarns, then Aira Skyline near Ullswater, and finally returning to its original venue, the Loweswater Fells. Mapper, Pete Nelson has been responsible for the last four maps, mastering GPS to make the job easier, less time consuming and very much more accurate.

Originally, more than twenty years ago, the event was staged by Cumberland Fell Runners with Colin Webb organising it for many years. Colin also enjoyed orienteering so it was no surprise that both clubs relished the event.

Studying the 2011 results it is clear that it still caters for both disciplines and attracts a good turnout of traditional fell runners. The event is advertised in The Fellrunner fixture list, and has always had a November window.

The format of a long distance O race doesn't appeal to everyone, but there are

certainly quite a few orienteers who like to do them. It is such a shame that the format is not better supported, with the Capricorn and the Phoenix, both north of England events, suffering from lack of entrants, and their future very much in doubt. A successful future undoubtedly depends on a strong following, either through a strong brand or a fixed venue. In the modern atmosphere of offering an



Organiser John Slater with five times winner Steve Birkinshaw.

event with bells, whistles and thrills, it is difficult to compete against things like a Rat Race! So perhaps the answer is to build a loyal clientele and take care to give them a great experience, which is what WCOC try to do.

The Copeland Chase offers three courses, 20km, 15km and 10km which attempts to cater for all abilities. Starts are staggered, but you can go whenever you are ready. SPORTident timing does the usual great job in sorting the results.

Some food and drink at the finish is a very welcome addition, with a simple prizegiving to end the event. This year's winner Steve Birkinshaw made it five wins in a row.

Organiser John Slater comments:

The 2011 event area gave some great opportunities for long legs and route choice through runnable terrain at a technical level that competitors from both orienteering and fell running backgrounds were comfortable with. It was really satisfying as a planner seeing that the options I'd given were generally realised on all three courses.

I resurrected the event as I firmly believe that orienteering has so many great facets as a sport, but that perhaps the balance of available events was shifting to accessibility and shorter durations. That's great and essential for the development of the sport in the future but the dedicated following this event has now gained demonstrates that there are still plenty of people who like their events of the long and gnarly variety with a back to basics feel!

I don't see the format changing fundamentally as it's working well and we now have five key areas to rotate around with a chance of two more to come. However, I liked the idea at this year's Blodslitet with the compact group that you could take in any order which would work with the Chase, and perhaps some other members from within the club guesting as Planners...so I can run too!

RESULTS

Long (30 starters), 19.5 km, 10 C

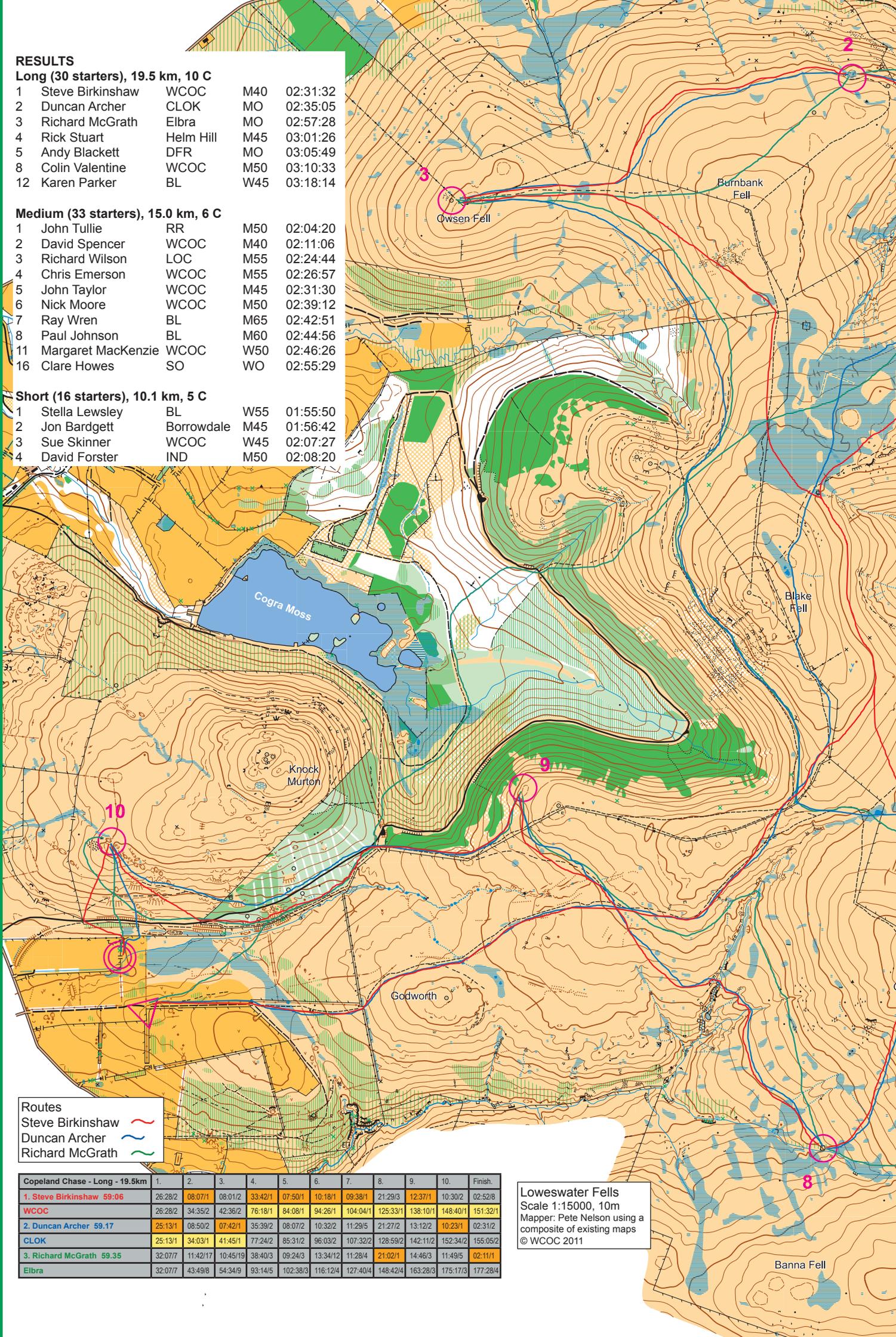
1	Steve Birkinshaw	WCOC	M40	02:31:32
2	Duncan Archer	CLOK	MO	02:35:05
3	Richard McGrath	Elbra	MO	02:57:28
4	Rick Stuart	Helm Hill	M45	03:01:26
5	Andy Blackett	DFR	MO	03:05:49
8	Colin Valentine	WCOC	M50	03:10:33
12	Karen Parker	BL	W45	03:18:14

Medium (33 starters), 15.0 km, 6 C

1	John Tullie	RR	M50	02:04:20
2	David Spencer	WCOC	M40	02:11:06
3	Richard Wilson	LOC	M55	02:24:44
4	Chris Emerson	WCOC	M55	02:26:57
5	John Taylor	WCOC	M45	02:31:30
6	Nick Moore	WCOC	M50	02:39:12
7	Ray Wren	BL	M65	02:42:51
8	Paul Johnson	BL	M60	02:44:56
11	Margaret MacKenzie	WCOC	W50	02:46:26
16	Clare Howes	SO	WO	02:55:29

Short (16 starters), 10.1 km, 5 C

1	Stella Lewsley	BL	W55	01:55:50
2	Jon Bardgett	Borrowdale	M45	01:56:42
3	Sue Skinner	WCOC	W45	02:07:27
4	David Forster	IND	M50	02:08:20

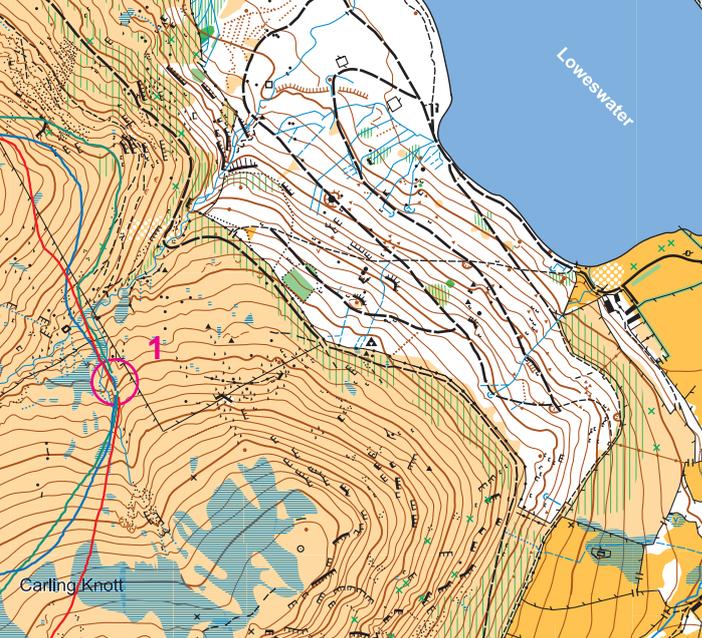


Routes

- Steve Birkinshaw —
- Duncan Archer —
- Richard McGrath —

Copeland Chase - Long - 19.5km		1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.	10.	Finish.
1. Steve Birkinshaw	59:06	26:28/2	08:07/1	08:01/2	33:42/1	07:50/1	10:18/1	09:38/1	21:29/3	12:37/1	10:30/2	02:52/8
WCOC		26:28/2	34:35/2	42:36/2	76:18/1	84:08/1	94:26/1	104:04/1	125:33/1	138:10/1	148:40/1	151:32/1
2. Duncan Archer	59:17	25:13/1	08:50/2	07:42/1	35:39/2	08:07/2	10:32/2	11:29/5	21:27/2	13:12/2	10:23/1	02:31/2
CLOK		25:13/1	34:03/1	41:45/1	77:24/2	85:31/2	96:03/2	107:32/2	128:59/2	142:11/2	152:34/2	155:05/2
3. Richard McGrath	59:35	32:07/7	11:42/17	10:45/19	38:40/3	09:24/3	13:34/12	11:28/4	21:02/1	14:46/3	11:49/5	02:11/1
Elbra		32:07/7	43:49/8	54:34/9	93:14/5	102:38/3	116:12/4	127:40/4	148:42/4	163:28/3	175:17/3	177:28/4

Loweswater Fells
 Scale 1:15000, 10m
 Mapper: Pete Nelson using a
 composite of existing maps
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