

## **Ralph Rowbotham 1935 – 2010**

It is with great sadness that we have to report the death of our friend and colleague, on Tuesday the 14th September, following a heart attack sustained whilst out cycling over the weekend.



Ralph was an integral part of Rotherham Harriers for 60 years which included a period of approximately 30 years as club secretary. Not only was Ralph club secretary but his brief was much wider. For example hours spent coaching, in particular hurdling and he was instrumental in the formative years of Olympian Chris Rawlinson.

He was behind the Rotherham Borough Sports which one year featured Sebastian Coe, the half marathon of over 2500 runners - a record for a midweek event. But perhaps his lasting legacy will be the creation of the Round Rotherham 50 mile event, held yearly for the past 28 years and scheduled this year for 16th October with over 400 due to take part from all over the UK.

He watched the development and careers of Olympians Alan Simpson, Angela Creamer and Peter Elliott take shape. In addition to all the athletics activity he played a major part in the formation of the South Yorkshire County Athletic Association (which replaced the old district format of the Northern Counties) and was President for a period. But above all, his passion was competition and as recently as this summer he was busy organising an August Open track & field meeting, attracting some 200 competitors.

Ralph was an excellent raconteur, his humour and presence will be missed on club nights at Herringthorpe. When I took over as club secretary in 2007 and the scale of the role was starting to sink in, I asked Ralph how long he had been secretary for; "over 29 years" he replied, I then asked how long he had been seeking a successor to take over as club secretary "over 28 years" came the answer.

Ralph's sad death leaves a huge hole in both Rotherham and South Yorkshire athletics, and the sport will be poorer for his passing. Ralph leaves a wife Pat, daughter Kim and son Stephen.

**Funeral arrangements: Weds 22nd Sep at 3:20pm Rotherham Crematorium Ridgeway, East Herringthorpe, Rotherham S65 3NN  
Telephone: 01709 850344 and afterwards at Pitches Sports Club Wickersley Rd Rotherham S60 3PR**

**Ralph's family have asked mourners not to send or bring flowers, they are suggesting (if people wish) donations to be collected on the day of the funeral, and subsequently passed to the 2 following charities:-  
Yorkshire Air Ambulance and the Intensive Care Unit at Rotherham hospital.**

*Article by Steve Gaines 15th Septmeber 2010***Below is the most recent article submitted bt Ralp to the Rotherham Harriers Newsletter**

Hurry Up Rowbotham, said the teacher. The reason being ,was that this was the junior school athletic team trials for the forthcoming Rotherham Schools Championships. I had never been to this event, and the reason for the "hurry up" was that I had been to the Ferham clinic for some treatment for a minor ailment. But the brisk half mile walk each way served as an adequate warm up. You have 18 feet to beat he said.

I knew what to do, as I had been practising in the school yard ,this strange hop, step and jump event. I gazed down the worn grass runway, "hurry up he said again" and propelled myself with all of my might just as Alf Tupper, The Tough of the Track, did in the comics. I landed head over heels in the new pile of sand and the teacher promptly measured it. "29 feet 2 inches" he said with disbelief. Have another go, and hurry up. Same routine flat out down the runway, finishing in a heap in the sand. Tape measure out "28 feet 2 inches", he said. That'll do he said fearful that the next attempt would be even less, "you're in the team" .

As the big day approached the instruction was that we would be walking in a crocodile from Park Street School and we were to carry our plimsolls and walk in our normal footwear, and to carry a bottle of tap water, huge heavy glass Tizer bottles of course! Our normal footwear was heavy boots and about a quarter of the team wore clogs. So on this hot day we set off , quite easy downhill for a mile, then through town, our feet getting warmer and the bottle heavier, then the climb up Wellgate to Clifton Lane cricket ground. What a sight hundreds of children there and their families and the newly cut grass nicely marked out in white, for the sports.

We were allocated a sitting area and then we could take off our boots and put on our plimsolls. What a relief for the feet in the cool air. Two minutes later after our rest, we all felt like Spring Heeled Jack, and were warmed up as well ,after our long walk.

Eventually the hop step and jump was called, and I noted some mediocre attempts. It was my turn , even though nobody called "hurry up"!

My usual style. flat out down the runway, a huge hop, a desperate stride and a final jump into the sandpit. Out came the measure, 30 feet 2 inches, Glory

I was the winner, the finest hour in my young life, the Rotherham Junior Schools Hop, step and Jump Champion for 1946.

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## Comments

- Added: 16/09/2010 16:16:21

This has come as such a shock to everyone at Rotherham Harriers. Ralph was my first contact with the club back in 1977 when I joined. He was club secretary in those days, a post he excelled at. Overall, his contribution to the club, to athletics in Rotherham and in South Yorkshire was incalculable. Even after he retired as club secretary he was still very much in evidence at the club, having then volunteered for the post of

track and field secretary, and only recently he was the organiser of our own open track and field meeting at Herringthorpe. Going way back to my early running days I was used to Ralphs frequent calls, usually late on a Friday night, which would go something like this "Ralph speaking, how do you fancy a 10,000 metres tomorrow". A dedicated track and field man, he would by trying to fill every last place in the team. Every point counted! You never said no to Ralph! Always the innovator, Ralph was simply bursting with ideas about how we should improve athletics, particularly track and field. His insight was amazing and invariably I would end up agreeing with what he had in mind. He had his own inimitable style in how he went about organising things, but that's what made him so unique. On the Wednesday before his death, Ralph was trackside at the club training night at Herringthorpe, once again discussing athletics and how he thought it needed changes. A few minutes later he was taking the steps two at a time up the banking to get back on his trusty bike and head off. Ralph, we are going to miss you so much. Thanks for all you did for Rotherham Harriers and for the sport.

By **Jim Brogan**

- Added: 19/09/2010 01:51:39

For many years Ralph Rowbotham was Rotherham Harriers, so much so that when I saw him at a YAL Meeting a couple of seasons ago I still thought of him as Rotherham Harriers even though he had stepped down some years previously. There was no "side" to Ralph, what you saw was what you got. It was always a pleasure to meet and talk with him about the sport. Ralph will be missed, not only by Rotherham Harriers but by everyone who were privileged to have met him.

By **Dr Phil Thomas**