

William Ramsbotham

Summer seemed to have arrived for the first weekend in June. Will's friends were not at all surprised when he headed off to his beloved Snowdonia. He made first for the sea cliffs of Anglesea where he climbed "Dream of White Horses". This is a daunting route which only the bravest and best can attempt. It starts from a sea-level ledge, which can only be reached by a very long abseil down vertical cliffs.

Next day Will headed south-east for the Cader Idris mountain race, which he won in record time. Then more rock climbing. Will had just completed a route of extreme difficulty, and was abseiling, when his belay gave way, resulting in a fatal fall.

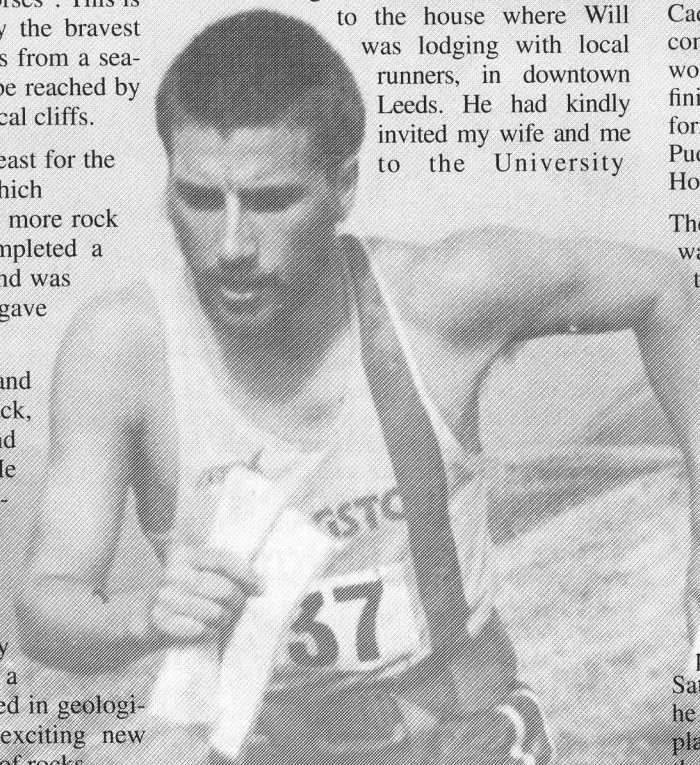
Will was a dedicated and determined athlete on the track, the road, cross-country, and especially in the hills. He loved team events, especially relays, and endurance events, like two-man mountain marathons, and was a member of several record breaking mountain relay teams. Will was also a distinguished scholar, engaged in geological research involving an exciting new laser technique to the dating of rocks.

Will will be remembered however, for his outstanding personal qualities, rather than for particular talents with which he was so richly endowed. He had about him a serenity, an openness, and a lack of material need and ambition, which shone like a beacon through our materialist times. Because of these qualities Will tended to be the centre of attention, whether at the school in Katmandu where he taught English for a time, or at University. Not surprisingly he was elected captain of cross-country both at Edinburgh University and at Leeds, where he worked as a post graduate. Nevertheless Will was anything but attention seeking. He delighted in being alone for weeks on end, living simply, in harmony with his environment, in wild places like Rhum, or the Pala Dolamites. Sometimes, when on solitary mapping projects, he would write to his friends, and try to capture, in simple watercolour, or graphic prose, the magic of a mountain storm, or of sunset over the Hebridean coastline.

It is not surprising that Will's very wide group of friends in Shrewsbury, Edinburgh, Leeds, and further afield; in athletics and orienteering, and in other walks of life, are finding it hard to come to terms with the fact that he is gone. We all have our cherished memories. One friend told me that her children had enthused

that Will always made a point of seeking them, directly after a cross-country race, or relay leg, to thank them for their support. Another recalled that, whether in a winter bivouac, a tent, or a mountain hut, Will was always first up, waking his friends cheerfully, with a cup of tea, eager to be off to enjoy the challenges of the day.

I shall long remember a recent visit to the house where Will was lodging with local runners, in downtown Leeds. He had kindly invited my wife and me to the University



Athletics Club dinner dance, for which he was responsible. Time was getting on when we got back from a 4-stage hill-race relay. Tea had to be brewed for the increasing number of friends who inevitably drop by when Will is in, and a jumble of papers, running kit and so on, was pushed aside for folk to sit down. Will had to clear floor space in his "study" for my wife and me to sleep, and he brought bedding, which I suspect was his own.

Meanwhile Will was also searching frantically for clothes suitable to wear to the dinner. Shoes seemed to be a particular problem, till Will discovered a pair of light tan calf-length boots. They were dirty but he set about them with boot polish. This was the wrong colour and left dark streaks. Will was unconcerned. The meal was fine. Will's speech was warm, and the dancing wildly enthusiastic. No-one seemed to notice what Will was wearing, but all could feel, and respond to his happy presence.

To say that we shall miss Will is a drastic understatement, but we are grateful to have known him, and for all that he was and stood for: and that he achieved in his 26 vibrant years.

Our thoughts and sympathy go out to his parents Hew and Juliet, and to his partner, Yvette Hague, Britain's top orienteer.

Martin Hyman 10:6:93

William Ramsbotham died in a climbing accident in North Wales on Sunday 6th June; for many it will have been the saddest day of their lives because Will had many friends. Though serene and relaxed by nature he lived in overdrive and as a result his boundless enthusiasm coupled with unstinting generosity touched many people and areas of activity. He was an excellent fellrunner, though to my knowledge only ever winning two races, at Alwinton and Cader Idris - both in record times; he competed regularly at the highest level and would often be found in the top ten finishers. He also revelled in relay events forming the backbone of many powerful Pudsey and Bramley teams at the Ian Hodgson, FRA or Calderdale.

The flair which he brought to competition was also reflected in his dedication to the more mundane, but essential, business of organising teams and trips to events for the various clubs of which he was a member. Leeds University Cross Country Club flourished under his captaincy and he was always proud to have once formed part of the elite Doss AC beer drinking team which won the premier event at the Isle of Man.

Fell running is distinctive in being a hard competitive sport untainted by prima donnism. Will was part of this tradition and on long Saturday/Sunday runs or mid week training he was always happy to modify his pace or plans to suit the ability of those less able than himself. Beginners would always be encouraged out and then also made to feel comfortable. Though thoughtful towards others he was not averse to applying subtle pressure to bring the best out in people and this perhaps reflected his time spent as a teacher in Katmandu and his family's background in education. By training Will was a geologist and at the time of his death had almost completed a PhD. I heard what it was about once explained, shouted in fact, over the hubbub of a party; it certainly sounded impressive to me but more importantly it was highly regarded by the knowledgeable in his department and elsewhere in the geological community. It is still hoped that a couple of papers can be salvaged from the working notes. The Earth Sciences Faculty admired Will not only for his academic mind but also for his commitment towards the tuition of undergraduates and his friendly open personality make him sorely missed.

There is little comfort to be drawn from the sudden death of a close and brilliant friend except the clearly revealed perspective, perhaps not available during his life, or even immediately after his death, of a wonderful person who never hesitated to help others and who carried his ability as the slightest thing completely unburdened by pride or self-consciousness. Our thoughts are continually with his partner Yvette and his mother and father, Hew and Juliet.

- Rupert Kempley