

David Little - Obituary (Many thanks to Nigel Harding for compiling this tribute)

David Little, who has died aged 86, spent the final 12 years of his extraordinary life as a coach, official and team manager with [Poole Athletic Club](#).

David was born in north London on St. Patrick's Day 1937. He was evacuated during World War Two and later attended Finchley Catholic High School.

National Service led David on to three years as a regular in the Royal Air Force. He came through an Iraqi Army revolution and brief active service in Cyprus to find himself teaching gymnastics to airmen.

Swimming had been David's first sport, but he chose athletics, gymnastics and outdoor activities as his Physical Education specialties when accepted for Loughborough Teacher Training College, where he also studied biology.

Additionally, David achieved his first athletics coaching qualification at that time. He was inspired by fellow students with whom he shared a hall of residence: Robbie Brightwell, Adrian Metcalfe and John Cooper became three of Great Britain's silver-medal 4x400m relay quartet at the 1964 Tokyo Olympics.

David taught at Stonyhurst College in Lancashire, before returning to London to teach at Canon Palmer Catholic School, a state school at Nine Kings, near Ilford. He had discovered Rugby during his service in Iraq and played at a high club level first with Waterloo, then Saracens.

After a career in education, when most people would be contemplating retirement, David decided on more of the same - but on the other side of the globe!

He spent 14 years teaching and coaching athletics in Kiribati, a central Pacific archipelago astride the Equator in the earliest time zone of each day. The republic competed at its first Olympic Games in 2004. David completed qualification as a Level 5 Chief Coach two years later. He also became Secretary of Kiribati Athletics Association, one of the national committees affiliated to World Athletics, attending major championships with their national delegation.

Increasing disability forced David to return to United Kingdom in 2011. Although David visited the islands twice more, the loss sustained by Kiribati became Dorset's gain. An old man on crutches seemed an improbable athletics coach, but David had a lifetime of experience and used it well. He proved an astute and enthusiastic coach for Poole Athletic Club's juniors.

David also officiated, primarily as a track judge, though he was qualified across disciplines. He was also a keen supporter of parkrun, volunteering on 387 occasions for either 5km or junior 2km, mainly as timekeeper at either Poole Park or Upton House.

David chaired Dorset County Athletics Association for several years. Additionally, he managed Team Dorset's under-13s and under-15s, a composite squad drawn from several of the county's clubs, as they gained promotion to Southern Premier Division.

Although he was 'old school', beneath his gruff exterior, David was a man of deep humanity and Catholic faith.