

Gordon Pirie Finial

Gordon Pirie, a Coulsdon resident and member of the South London Harriers in Coulsdon was one of Britain's greatest sports stars of the mid-20th Century. He attended Purley Boys Grammar School in Old Coulsdon where he played in the cricket team. In his athletics career, he held 5 World Records at 3,000 and 5,000 metres and won 5000m, including a Silver Medal at the 1956 Melbourne Olympics coming second to Vladimir Kuts the Soviet runner, who beat him. He could be regularly seen practicing on Farthing Downs and Happy Valley and when he wasn't there, he would be at Tooting Bec practicing on level ground.

In the Gold medal 4X 100 metre Relay, one of the other athletes was Purley resident Ralph Dunkley. Gordon Pirie was also an impressive cross-country runner, three times winning the tough, nine-mile English National title.

Gordon Pirie was such a big name that he was voted as BBC Sports Personality of the Year in 1955. He also got his own entry in the *Guinness Book of Records*, which reckoned that this hard-training runner, who would cover miles up and down the hills of Happy Valley, managed to cover 216,000 miles in 40 year period.

He also helped design running shoes with Adi Dassler the founder of Adidas and wrote training guidelines for other athletes.

More information can be found on Wikipedia https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gordon_Pirie and the book **Running Fast and Injury Free** By Gordon Pirie by (*Edited by John S Gilbody*) © 1996-2002 Dr John S Gilbody



The Olympic silver medal at the 1956 Melbourne Games