

Milligan and the Military

The military was arguably the most important influence in Spike's life. His family were steeped in military life. His parents met in India where his father was serving in the British Indian Army. Both of his parents came from families that had been part of the military for generations. Spike's military life began with his call up in early 1940. After training he was posted to North Africa as a gunner in the 56th Heavy Regiment Royal Artillery. From North Africa he went to Italy and was wounded at the Battle of Monte Casino. Spike was finally demobbed in Italy in after six years and 228 days in the army. (Scudamore, 1985)

The influence on Spike of his military background and personal experience was probably inescapable. It is seen across the whole spectrum of Spike's writing.

If we just take the physical output. It all began with the planned war memoir trilogy that grew into seven volumes and spawned a publishing empire in their own right.

- *Adolf My Part in His Downfall*, 13 distinct editions, audio recordings (on tape and cd), film.
- "Rommel" "Gunner Who?" 10 editions audio recordings.
- *Monty His part in my Victory*, 9 editions, audio recordings.
- *Mussolini His Part in My Downfall*, 8 editions, audio recordings.
- *Where Have All The Bullets Gone?* 6 editions
- *Goodbye Soldier*, 5 editions
- *Peace Work*, 4 editions

Amongst the various editions are hardback editions, softback editions, large print editions, U.S. editions, Ebooks and in the case of *Adolf My Part in His Downfall* two French language editions.

These seven books have also been variously repackaged and rearranged. There have been five different boxed sets.

- *Spike Milligan: Military Memoirs* (3 vol. boxed set) 1977
- *Spike Milligan: Military Memoirs* (4vol. boxed set) 1980
- *Spike Milligan: Military Memoirs* (6 vol. boxed set) 1987
- *Spike Milligan: The Entire Complete War Memoirs Collection* (7 vol. boxed set) 1992
- *Spike Milligan the Complete War memoirs Boxed Set* (7 vol. boxed set) 2012.

Two separate books of edited memoirs from the books.

- *Milligan's War*, 3 editions and
- *Gunner Milligan 954024*, which was more a promotion for Penguin.

Then there was an omnibus edition of the first three books.

- *Spike Milligan The War Memoirs*.

The military influence is also seen in many of his other books. Initially in Spike's books there is just the odd military reference although in *Puckoon* there is more than the odd reference. The book is set in Ireland in 1924 but the Milligan at one point day dreams about an experience he had as a gunner during the war in Italy. This seems like a day dream that has strangely wandered into the future, 1943. In his first book of serious poetry in 1972, *Small Dreams of a Scorpion*, there are poems written by him in Tunisia and Italy in 1943/44. The *Goon* show also allowed Spike to explore the vagaries of the military and his experience with it.