

Why a statue for Spike Milligan?

Terence Alan Milligan entered an unsuspecting world on April 16th 1918 in India. After the return of his army family to our shores he started his career as an entertainer, like his parents before him, in the 1930s, playing a variety of instruments in dance bands before the Second World War caught up with him and he was drafted into the Royal Artillery. He was wounded in action in Italy and declared unfit for combat, but stayed to entertain the troops.

After the war Spike, as he was now called, concentrated on comedy and writing. His first book "Silly Verse for Kids" is used in schools and he went on to write 82 more books, and scripts. The famous Goon Show on radio, written during the 1950s largely in 127 Holden Road, established him as Britain's top comedy writer and performer.

In 1971 The Finchley Society was formed and Spike became a firm supporter of the Society's aims accepting the position first as President and then as Patron. His fame allowed for many successes in saving fine old Finchley buildings, College Farm (which he loved) and the repainting of Woodside Park tube station in cheerful colours. Although an Irish citizen, his old friend, Prince Charles, presented him with an honorary knighthood in recognition of his many services to the country.

After his death I had a !eureka! moment and suggested that The Finchley Society raise a statue to the great man who had done so much for us. Even though he moved away to Rye he continued to encourage us in our planning and environment endeavours. The first meeting of the Spike Milligan Statue Fund was held, appropriately, on April 1st 2004 with six of us, including two of Spike's daughters, Sile and Jane. With their enthusiastic help we wrote to a number of influential people for patronage who all responded positively, and some even hearing of the project volunteered to have their name added to the impressive list. Sile designed the notepaper and gave us our Spike logo, we selected a local sculptor, and we opened up a bank account.

Our first fundraising efforts were hampered by our lack of experience in such matters, and we gratefully accepted the help of well-meaning experts. This led to a number of financial disasters. We made quite a few mistakes before we settled on our own resources and with grants, sales, donations and quizzes the pounds in the bank gradually piled up.

One of our more exciting projects (another eureka moment) was to invite one of our patrons to a well cooked but simple meal at my dining room table, seating eight, with seats being sold for £100. Joanna Lumley was the first to brave the unknown and was charming as well as generous. It took us a year to get over this event!! Thus a year later Maureen Lipman responded and came for an afternoon lunch, and coffee in the sunshine on our garden terrace. We had made two good friends. Maureen suggested that we organise a concert and she helped enormously by asking her friend Victoria Wood to be on the programme. We had no trouble selling tickets. We have been asked to do another one!!! David Smith, our secretary, has taken upon himself the task of dealing with the

entertainment world and ,and enjoys working with these wonderfully gifted and generous people. We will be asking some of our patrons to dinner again. Watch this space.

We have so far managed with sweat and tears and dismay to raise the money for the sculptor, John Somerville. He was one of the Cub Scouts of the Tenth Finchley Scout Group when I was Akela, the leader, and he has since become a leading national and international figure. He has just survived a liver transplant and is raring to finish the work. All we need now is the money for the bronzing of Spike on his iconic bench, to be sent to the Foundry...and, in spite of an amazingly generous donation from a regular quiz-goer, another several thousand pounds I am afraid.

Through the years the six man committee has changed from time to time, but we remain as six. ...Barbara and Derek Warren, David Smith, Carol Halls and Robina and Stan Spinks. We make a great team and our regular meetings are livened by gales of laughter. Our various talents are used to the full, and we have met up with some really nice and interesting members of the entertainment industry. Our excellent website attracts donations from all over the world and is where can we sell our merchandise. We are gradually becoming more widely known through Facebook. We are still some way from the money we need, but, despite being rather elderly, we are a determined bunch.

Barbara C Warren
Chair