

## FLYING BOOTS AND EYES ON FIRE A Visitor's Guide To The Local Spirit

by Caroline McCarthy in association with  
the traders of Half Moon Lane, Herne Hill Forum,  
Southwark Council, Thames Water,  
Contemporary Art Society

15 steel drawings are installed on a trail between  
Herne Hill station and Half Moon Ln.

Inspired by local stories, anecdotes and historical  
facts, the drawings collectively celebrate the  
steely spirit and determination of a local  
community.

For further information please visit:  
[www.flyingboots.info](http://www.flyingboots.info)

#1 **THE LIGHT OF BATTLE:** In 1937, 50 determined matrons with the 'light of battle in their eyes' invaded the flower garden and piled their prams up outside the gate. Keepers were powerless! Led by Gertrude Blattman of Half Moon Lane, the mothers formed a solid phalanx and sturdily refused to budge. All they wanted was to take their children and their prams after lunch into the walled garden in Brockwell Park. But no - after 2pm babies in perambulators were banned.

• 236 Railton Rd

#2 **PARAKEET PARROT:** Established residents in these parts, nobody quite knows how these brilliant, if somewhat bolshy, birds got here. Some say they escaped a film set, others claim they were released in the Great Storm of 1987.

• 234 Railton Rd

#3 **GRAND:** *I was given a hard hat, and went up on this cherry picker, and it was like in a dream. I was hovering over my beautiful cinema even as it was being demolished and I couldn't believe it was happening to me* ~ Local resident Robert Holden at the end of a passionate 10 year attempt to save the former Cinema Grand, one of the earliest purpose-built cinemas in London, and turn it into a theatre.

• 222 Railton Rd

#4 **CYRIL:** *I saw this tiny little squirrel, his nose all covered in blood. So I put him inside my jumper, and there he stayed. I really thought he was going to die on me. We gave him some still Lucozade which worked as a treat and by 4 that afternoon Cyril - we called him Cyril - was whizzing around the place. After 7 weeks we set him free and he'd be back by 6 every night. This went on and on and then one day he didn't come back.*

Elaine Partleton (The Flower Lady)

• Herne Hill Station Foyer, Railton Rd

#5 **FALLING PINS:** *We were standing in the doorway when we heard this V-1 come in - buzz, buzz, buzz! I remember saying 'Oh Mum, my legs are cut to pieces'. That was the blast. Mum had her hair in a bun and the blast took out all of the pins. I don't think I had ever seen Mum with her hair down. We had a miraculous escape ~ Olive Pompa*

• Herne Hill Station Subway

#6 **HANDS OF A CLOCK STUCK AT HALF PAST ELEVEN:** A reference to Dylan Thomas' radio play 'Under Milkwood' written in 1954. Thomas, who once lived on Milkwood Road, set his play in Llareggub (Buggerall spelt backwards), a sleepy village in Wales untouched by time and the ravages of war.

• Above Station Exit on Milkwood Rd

#7 **OPENINGS:** *Look guys, make me Chair. Give me a team, because I am a team worker. Give me a good secretary, a treasurer and a PR person. We got the children to say what they wanted here and there - a Zip Line and an Albatross - which is still in the park* ~ Maude Estwick, Community activist, Milkwood Open Project Space

• Milkwood Rd

#8 **WHIFF:** The Effra river, which flowed under Herne Hill in Victorian times was eventually covered over in the 19th Century, its route now marked by a trail of tall 'stink pipes' to release nasty odours. Beware - if standing in the wrong place at the wrong time, it is possible to catch a whiff of the subterranean bowels of Herne Hill.

• Under the railway bridge, Half Moon Ln

#9 **THE FLOOD:** During the early morning of 7th August 2013, an 88-year-old water main on Half Moon Lane burst, flooding Herne Hill, Dulwich Road and Norwood Road to create a scene described as 'biblical' by local residents. Not the first flood to wreak havoc on local community and business here, where the people have once again galvanised and survived to tell this story.

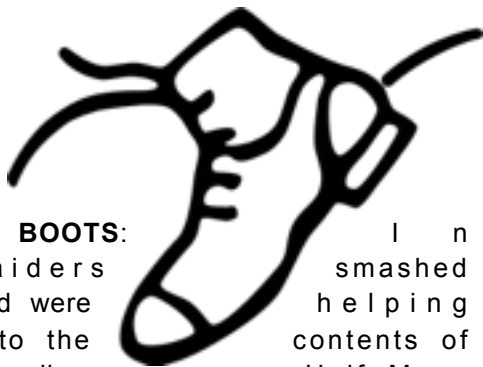
• 134 Herne Hill

#10 **WELCOME TO DULWICH:** *I remember a significant event that took place in Half Moon Lane about 10 years ago. The Dulwich Community Council put up a large notice just outside what is now Oliver Burn, saying 'WELCOME TO DULWICH'. You can imagine the outrage! The Herne Hill Society, of which I am a member, organised a demonstration which reached the local papers, and we also lobbied the local Southwark councillors, and I am pleased to say, got the offending notice taken down* ~ Sheila Northover

• 1 Half Moon Ln

#11 **BONO'S BAD HAIRCUT:** In 2015, we all gathered in band t-shirts outside the Half Moon Pub in the rain one morning, (the pub was then closed and boarded up), to mark 'Wear Your Old Band T-Shirt To Work Day'. It was a protest against the pub being closed, and in support of its amazing music history (U2 played there 3 times in 1980!) ~ Peter Blair, Save The Halfmoon Pub Campaign

• Half Moon Pub (inside)



#12 **FLYING BOOTS:** In 1932, raiders smashed a window and were helping themselves to the contents of Champion Jewellers on Half Moon Lane when a flower pot was hurled in their direction by a tenant of a flat opposite. The startled raiders found themselves in the next moment the target for a bombardment of boots, shoes and other missiles from neighbouring windows, and jumping into their car they drove away.

• Gable wall, 12 Half Moon Ln

#13 **SOME MOTHERS DO AVE 'EM:** The BBC's hapless and beret-toting Frank Spencer (aka Michael Crawford) spent his early years on Half Moon Lane, where his stepfather was a grocer. He fondly remembers daily visits as a boy in the 1950s to the local Velodrome to watch world champions like Reg Harris race there. Indeed Frank made his own Velodrome debut for Sports Relief many years later - on roller skates - tagging a lift from Bradley Wiggins, no less.

• 16 Half Moon Ln

#14 **WHEN HITLER STOLE PINK RABBIT:** *My Parents made us feel it was an adventure. When we were in Paris we had this grotty, tiny flat and were looking out over Paris and I said to my father, 'Isn't it wonderful being a refugee!'* ~ Judith Kerr, author of *When Hitler Stole Pink Rabbit*. In 2013, Britain's first bilingual state school in English and German, the Judith Kerr Primary School on Half Moon Lane, was named after her.

• 13 Half Moon Ln

#15 **TREE CELEBRATION:** Some still remember the great elm tree on Half Moon Lane which lived beyond 400 years. With a hollow trunk measuring 6 to 11 metres in diameter, it was said to afford sitting room for twelve people. Its latter years saw its trunk wrapped in chains in a desperate bid to hold it together, until sadly one day not too long ago it had to go. Take heart, for every tree lost, a local volunteer is out there planting a new one.

• Gable wall, 24 Half Moon Ln

### Caroline McCarthy would like to thank:

The traders and local people of Half Moon Lane, Railton Rd, Milkwood Rd, and Herne Hill, in particular those from the commissioning and steering group:

Diana Burn (Oliver Burn Estate Agents), Barrie Westwell (The Illusioneer), Maggie Saunders, Tricia Keracher-Summerfield (HHF), George Hornby (HHF), Charlotte Ashworth (HHF), Kate Hinton (PR)

Contemporary Art Society: Ailve McCormack, Megan O'Shea, Fabienne Nicholas. Marcus Crofton.

Barry Goillau, Benson Sedgwick Engineering, steel fabrication and solutions.

Dulwich Estate, National Rail, Southeastern Rail, Southwark Council, Thames Water.

Those who contributed and inspired:

Gertrude Blattman, Robert Holden, Elaine Parleton (The Flower Lady), Olive Pompa, Dylan Thomas, Maude Estwick, George Hornby, Sheila Northover, Bono, Peter Blair, Frank Spencer (Michael Crawford), Judith Kerr.

Herne Hill Society: Colin Wight, Lawrence Marsh.

Thank you to all tenants, businesses and landlords at each location who kindly agreed to host a drawing along the trail.