

## The Dog Walkers

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In the ten years since my work appeared on the cover of *Ecozon@* (Vol 1. No. 2 2010) my work has moved from observations of the effects of pollution on the wider environment to a more specific exploration of plastic pollution and of the growing problem of dog waste bags.

I first became aware of this phenomenon whilst walking my dogs. In parks and hedgerows, I began to see bags of discarded dog poo with ever increasing frequency, in trees, on fences or thrown indiscriminately in streams and ponds. My initial puzzlement re this turned to curiosity and I began to ask myself “why?”. Why go to the trouble of picking up and bagging your beloved pet’s faeces to then discard in this manner?

My response to this curiosity was to start to photograph these bags whenever I came upon them.

Over the intervening years I photographed hundreds of bags, across the UK, with additional images gathered in Australia, Italy, France, Finland, Sweden and Germany to produce what has become a vast international typology of ddsbs. Yet still I ask the question as to why?

In 2013 I published the book *DDSBs* (‘Discarded Dog S\*\*\* Bags’, Mynewtpress).

I am now working on the follow-up project entitled ‘The Dog Walkers’. After many years of obsessively documenting DDSBs (and by proxy their anonymous donors) I felt it was time to widen the scope of the work, to engage with the responsible dog walkers who are prepared to carry and dispose of their pet’s waste in a more appropriate manner. This decision meant I had to develop a strategy of approaching dog walkers carrying the bags, requesting if I could take their photograph.

Upon encountering a dog walker (there is a degree of serendipity to this and I often leap out of my car to talk to dog walkers I chance upon, or I visit dog walking areas to increase my chances of an encounter) I approach and explain my aims and show examples of previous images, requesting if I may take their picture. I then photograph the dog walker, with their collaboration, from the neck down, as I do not wish to focus on individual personalities, but rather to produce images that combine the person(s), lead(s), poop bag(s) and dog(s) (where the dog appears in the image is very much up to the individual personality of the dog).

Within this approach I am aiming to build up images that relate to the nature and relationship of dogs and owners, that speaks of the paraphernalia of dog walking and how

we can only undertake such selfless acts with a creature for which we have a mutual love and affection; but that also asks questions about the nature of using plastic bags to achieve the objectives of keeping areas where dogs are exercised faeces free and wondering if there isn't a better way to deal with a situation where the solution has become a far bigger, international and more long-term problem than the one it was meant to solve.



Wandsworth, UK (2016)



*Munich, Germany (2017)*



Angouleme, France (2018)



*Haweswater, UK (2017)*