**Biography**

John Darwell is a much awarded, independent British photographer whose work expresses his interest in social and industrial change, concern for the environment, and the depiction of mental health. For almost three decades, his work has been exhibited and published widely, both nationally and internationally, including exhibitions in London, the USA, Mexico, South America and the Canary Islands. It is featured in a number of important collections including the National Museum of Media/Sun Life Collection in Bradford, the Victoria & Albert Museum, London and the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. His varied projects, that explore the external and internal landscapes of the contemporary world, include a trilogy on notorious sites marked by nuclear destruction or nuclear pollution (e.g. Hiroshima, Sellafield, Chernobyl); projects that evoke changes in the industrial landscapes (Manchester and Stockport clothing industry, Port of Liverpool, Manchester Docks); projects on the impact of foot and mouth disease in North Cumbria, the experience of depression, and the work of Kurt Schwitters. John Darwell also holds a position as a lecturer at the University of Bolton and the Cumbria Institute of the Arts. See <http://www.johndarwell.com>

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**Introduction**

**John Darwell**

The following pictures, and the cover photograph, are taken from two different ongoing series that explore the changing aspects of the rivers of contemporary North England. These cold rivers shock the onlooker with moments of repulsive pollution and enigmatic beauty – enigmatic, for what exactly are the chemical or natural processes that make us look again?

John Darwell, whose gripping series on the feel of depression (“A Black Dog Came Calling,” 2008; see www.johndarwell.com) proves that he knows how to convey disorientation and disturbance, stages an intimate confrontation with the weird, uncomfortable, and sometimes lovely corrupted new landscapes we have not yet come to terms with.

In many of the pictures in these series, Darwell experiments with the nature of photographic seeing through differential focus.

On the cover: *One Hundred Yards Or So*, Weed #11

Photo 1 *One Hundred Yards Or So,* Drink cans

Photo 2 *River Eden*, Mermaid’s Mattress

Photo 3 *River Eden*, #6

Photo 4 *Rivers Caldew and Eden*, Intersection

Photo 5 *More One Hundred Yards Or So,* Weed #3

This is what John Darwell tells us about his wanderings alongside River Petterill, and his series

One Hundred Yards:

Twice a day for the past ten years, with my companion Barney the dog, I’ve walked a circular route along this small stretch of river close to my home in northern England, often in the pouring rain, frequently in the freezing pitch dark.

I calculate that, taking occasional absences into account, we’ve walked this route approximately nine thousand times.

The river is a favourite spot for the dumping and burning of stolen cars or for junkies to hang out; but is also used by dog walkers (myself included) fisherman (ditto) and as an adventure playground for the local kids. It is also a haven for wildlife of all descriptions.

It can be a forbidding and even dangerous place, especially in the depths of winter, but just occasionally it can look like this.

This is an ongoing body of work that looks to this river as a magical location that stands, often overlooked, mere yards away from a busy Motorway and large housing estate, that will eventually bring together all aspects of this location.

John Darwell

2009

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