



THE KENNEL CLUB  
GALLERY



4 NOVEMBER 2021 - 1 APRIL 2022



## **Acknowledgements**

The Kennel Club is immensely grateful to the estate of Shirley Baker and Nan Levy for their generosity in allowing the loan of their prized private collection to have on display for this special exhibition.

Thanks also go to:

Ciara Farrell

Luisa Foster

Marianne Walker

Mr Paul MacBeth

Mr Tom Gillmour

Mrs Luci Gosling

# Foreword

## Luci Gosling, Mary Evans Picture Library

When Shirley Baker took her camera and first roamed around Manchester Dog Show at Belle Vue in 1961, she had an instinctive hunch that this would be a world that would prove fruitful to a photographer looking to capture the quirks and humour of dogs and their owners. .

The subject of people and their dogs would be one that Shirley returned to again and again over the years as she built up a body of work that would establish her as one of Britain's finest photographers. Beyond her wonderfully characterful records of the North West dog show scene, canines crop up in many more of her pictures, in candid street scenes from Salford to the south of France.

This is the first exhibition to celebrate Shirley Baker's photographs where dogs feature, either as the support act or in many cases, as the stars of the show. Spanning several decades, her photographs warmly demonstrate that while fashions may change, the bond between pet and owner remains as strong as ever. This is an exhibition for anyone who recognises this bond and who loves good photography; and good dogs.



## **Introduction**

### **Heidi Hudson**

This exhibition was over six years in the making... we had always wanted to host an exhibition on Shirley Baker's dog photographs in The Kennel Club Art Gallery. Street photographer, documentarian and journalist – Baker had a long career – 55 years - as a freelance writer and photographer for newspapers, magazines, books and periodicals.

Shirley Baker was observant, reactive and inspired by the 20th-century documentarian greats - Robert Doisneau, Robert Frank, Garry Winogrand, Elliott Erwitt and most notably, Henri Cartier-Bresson. If there was one photographer whom she was most inspired by it may have been the French humanist photographer - Henrie Cartier-Bresson. Cartier-Bresson was known for coining the term, 'the decisive moment' -

'The decisive moment is a concept made popular by the street photographer, photojournalist, and Magnum co-founder Henri Cartier-Bresson. The decisive moment refers to capturing an event that is ephemeral and spontaneous, where the image represents the essence of the event itself.'

Baker excelled at capturing the decisive moment and honed her gift at capturing people in the moment. Baker talked in her introduction of one of her early books about how the people in her photographs aren't posing: 'they're in their situation, they're comfortable in their space and they're not offended.' (Shirley Baker)

Capturing moments/people/dogs/history in a brief moment of time – this was Shirley Baker's talent. Her breadth of work has been celebrated both during her time and after her time – mostly her early work street photography of Salford and Manchester when she captured on film the post-industrial slump and reinvention of the North. What is eye-catching to any dog lover is the natural inclusion of man's best friend in many of her street and documentarian photographs.

Baker visited the Manchester Dog Show on several occasions most notably in 1961, 1966 and 1973 capturing the people and their relationships with their dogs in candid spend time. Sometimes with a hint of humour, Baker captured the 'unusual in the usual', the essence of the environment, the fashions of the day, the breeds, the competition and comradery – much like dog shows today.

At The Kennel Club we celebrate the special relationship between people and their dogs and no doubt Shirley Baker's photographs also celebrate this special relationship.

Baker took thousands of photographs throughout her lifetime and it's possible she would have no idea today how iconic some of these images would become. We celebrate Shirley Baker – an independent woman who made a long career from her art and dedication to her craft. We also celebrate the dogs and the people in her photographs for without them we would not be able to reflect and celebrate the special relationships with our dogs today.

# **Shirley Baker**

## **1932 - 2014**

Born in Salford and brought up in Manchester, Baker studied Pure Photography at Manchester College of Technology and later took courses at London Regent Street Polytechnic, London College of Printing and the University of Derby. She worked as an industrial photographer, a freelance writer and photographer on various magazines, books and newspapers, and lectured at Salford College of Art and Manchester Polytechnic.

Her images from the late 1960s and early 1970s of the communities of Salford and Manchester were exhibited in *Here Yesterday and Gone Tomorrow* at the Salford Art Gallery in 1986 and were published as *Street photographs* (1989). She was later commissioned by The Lowry in Salford to revisit these locations and record both contrasts and continuities. These images were exhibited at the Lowry in 2000 (where she met H.M. Queen Elizabeth II) and published as *Streets and Spaces* in 2000.

Towards the end of her life, she made various photographic projects for the Documentary Photography Archive, the Royal Manchester Children's Hospital and Viewpoint Gallery and undertaken commissions for Manchester Airport and Cheshire Arts Services. Her work was regularly displayed at the Print Room of the Photographers' Gallery, London.

# Vive La France

1. Woman with a German Shepherd Dog, Le Lavandou, South of France, c. 1970.

2. Sunbathing under a Labrador Retriever, Abersoch, 1968.

3. German Shepherd Dog and tabby kitten under a bench, Le Lavandou, South of France, 1980.

4. A double exposure print of a couple in a cafe and a man on a bench with two dogs, c 1970.

5. Women and dog in St Tropez, southeastern France, c1970.

6. Two elderly women and dogs on the seafront, South of France, c1970.

7. A man holding his Toy Poodle while watching a game of boules, Le Lavandou, South of France, 1979.

8. Man and his dog outside a cafe, south of France, c 1970.



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“Despite the many wonderful pictures  
of the great and famous,  
I feel that less formal,  
quotidian images can often convey  
more of the life and spirit of the time.”

Shirley Baker



## Coming and Going

9. Labradors and a donkey at Adlington Pony Show, Cheshire, 1982.



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# Mancunian Dog Shows

10. Owner and dog, Cavalier King Charles Spaniel, Manchester Dog Show, 1966.
11. Two Cavalier King Charles Spaniels meeting, Manchester Dog Show, 1966.
12. Woman in a headscarf holding a Miniature Pinscher c 1960.
13. A woman and her Cairn Terrier sitting in front of a marquee at a dog show, c 1960.
14. Dog Show, Platt Fields Park, Manchester, 1970.
15. Small dog, an Italian Greyhound, stretching its legs on its owner's lap, Manchester Dog show 1973.
16. Knitting and the Great Dane, Manchester Dog Show, 1966.
17. Crossed legs at a Manchester Dog Show, 1966.
18. Pointer begin judged Manchester Dog Show, 1967.



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19. Woman with her Dalmatian, Manchester Dog Show, 1966.
20. White Standard Poodle and owner at the Manchester Dog Show, 1966.
21. Judging of Pekingese in progress at a dog show at Platts Fields Park, Manchester, 1970.
22. Owners with their Golden Retrievers, Manchester Dog Show 1961.
23. A woman holding Pomeranians, Manchester Dog Show, 1973.
24. Bloodhounds and their owners, Manchester Dog Show, 1966.
25. Chihuahuas, Manchester Dog Show, 1966.



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“I have always been interested in the trivia of everyday life.  
However, I admit I have also had an eye out  
of the unusual in the usual.”

Shirley Baker

# Mancunian Streets



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- 26. Two little puppies by a backyard gate, Salford, 1964.
- 27. A mother, her daughter and pet dog on a Salford street corner, 1971.
- 28. German Shepherd Dog and small girl outside a supermarket, c 1970.
- 29. Woman reading with her Jack Russell Terrier at her feet, c 1960.
- 30. An elderly lady and her small pet dog in the marketplace, Stockport, 1979.



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# Cameras and personal effects

## Shirley Baker



© Estate of Shirley Baker



© Estate of Shirley Baker

31. Original Leather lens case with velvet lining that belonged to Shirley Baker, c 1960.

32. Photographer Shirley Baker taking a picture with her Rolleiflex camera. Shirley Baker can be seen using her lens case in this photograph. Photo by Dennis Btsh.

33. Portrait by Dennis Btsh of the photographer, Shirley Baker kneeling down to take a picture with her Rolleiflex camera.

34. The Rolleiflex camera and case that belonged to Shirley Baker, c 1960.

35. Kodak developing tanks for use in the darkroom

These developing tanks belonged to Shirley Baker and would have been used by her to mix the chemicals needed in the process of developing photographs in the darkroom.

36. Books from the archive of Shirley Baker.

37. Vintage Leica that belonged to Shirley Baker, c 1960.



© Estate of Shirley Baker



© Estate of Shirley Baker

38. Vintage Zeiss Ikon Box Camera from the 1930s.

This early miniature camera belonged to Shirley Baker.

It still has the original instructions with it.

39. Photograph of Shirley Baker receiving her Masters in Critical History and Theory of Photography at Derby University in 1995.

40. Books from the archive of Shirley Baker.

These books belonged to Shirley Baker and demonstrate her interest in the work of other photographers and artists.

41. At the opening of the Lowry Centre in Salford, 2000 with HM The Queen.

Shirley Baker's work was displayed with works by L S Lowry to celebrate the opening of the Lowry Centre.



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## **DOG DAYS in MANCHESTER**

a photographic essay  
by SHIRLEY BAKER



© Estate of Shirley Baker

42. Photography Magazine from February 1962.

This magazine features a photographic essay by Shirley Baker entitled, "Dog Days in Manchester"



43. A letter to Shirley Baker from Jack Schofield, Editor of Photo Technique dated 10th June 1975.
- The letter outlines the Editor's response to Shirley Baker's photographs of animals and specifically mentions the Great Dane with crossed legs at Manchester Dog Show 1966.
- [exhibit no. 17]
- Shirley had a long and supportive working relationship with this photographic magazine.
44. Alec Baker, Shirley Baker's father, with their family pet dog - a black poodle named 'Sooty' c 1940
45. A photograph by Shirley Baker of the family dog, a black poodle named 'Ruff' c 1950



© Estate of Shirley Baker



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## Print sales from the Shirley Baker Estate



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Original lifetime silver gelatine prints of Shirley Baker's images are available for sale.

[www.shirleybakerphotography.com](http://www.shirleybakerphotography.com)

## MARY EVANS PICTURE LIBRARY

The Kennel Club is immensely grateful to Mary Evans Picture Library for their generosity in assisting with loans and promotion with this exhibition.

For more information about licensing Shirley Baker images please visit [www.maryevans.com](http://www.maryevans.com)



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