

Manual for Gathering Ticks

The following poem is reproduced from the book “A Thing So Delicate: The Hidden Voices of Scotland’s Mass Concrete Viaducts” by kind permission of the poet and author, Moira McPartlin.

For more information about the book and details of how to purchase a copy please follow one of the following links:-

<https://moiramcpartlin.com/2026/07/11/a-thing-so-delicate-the-hidden-voices-of-scotlands-mass-concrete-viaducts/>

<https://moiramcpartlin.com/>

Manual for Gathering Ticks

First tuck trousers
into stout wool socks.
Hap-up in gaiters and jacket,
even in heatwave.

Follow good paths for as long
as possible, then strike out
from safety. Skirt bogs,
tiptoe sphagnum moss,

whack long grass with poles,
skip heather trip-roots,
push through head-high bracken
where they lie in wait.

Grab the photo prize -
waterfall, summit
bridge, unique Instagram
experience.
Don't forget to post.

Retreat to roadside, brush
beasties from outer garments.
Passers-by may gawp. Let them.

Home safe. Strip clothes, bag,
seal and stand
under a scalding shower.
Lather vigorously.

Forget how they love water.
They'll seek soft spots -
belly button, breasts,
burrow then latch-on.

Tweezer-pluck suckling
ticks. Squish between prongs,
tissue-wipe, watching
your blood blot.
Count.

Spend the week checking
your skin for stowaways,
for tell-tale Bullseye rings
of Lyme disease.

Once clear of all passengers,
repeat.

Moira McPartlin