

FASHION TAILS FROM THE COUNTY

Classy, elegant and stylish pooches have been spotted wearing handmade neckerchiefs and bowties around Devon. Follow the scent of these fashionable, trendy dogs to The Distinguished Dog Company, Ruth Clemence writes

An enterprising woman of pet fashion is ensuring that style extends to our four-legged friends. Tracy Andrews from Tedburn St Mary, set up The Distinguished Dog Company after she and her husband (company co-founder Carl Higgins) struggled to find a suitable wedding outfit for their beloved dog. They wanted Mr Gatsby to be dressed up, but there was not much available on the market that was distinguished, sophisticated or of a high quality. The Distinguished Dog Company filled that gap and was launched in November 2015.

Dog-lover and trend-setter Tracy says: "Your dog is already really cool, but our products are something else to make them feel even better – the bee's knees." She adds: "All dogs can wear the neckerchiefs and bowties – their character pulls it off."

And with market researchers projecting between \$90 and more than \$100 billion in pet-related sales by 2019, appealing to pet owners is no laughing matter. In fact, Britons' spent more than £4.6 billion on their pets in 2015 with quality diets, beauty treatments, exercise regimes and designer outfits.

The couple got their inspiration from their Lhasa Apso, Mr Gatsby, named after the millionaire from the film The Great Gatsby. The camera loving Mr Gatsby models many of the bowties and neckerchiefs. The neckerchief and bowtie collection is all designed and made by Tracy who takes pride in the high-quality fabrics she uses. "We have just launched the new collection of bowties and neckerchiefs for the summer; the range includes Liberty print fabrics," she enthuses. The collars and leads that they stock are made by a British company, but have The Distinguished Dog Company branding. Tracy adds: "I've always been a bit of a maker and creator. I've always made and sold, and I have done craft fairs - I get it from my mum. We have personalised leather poo bag holders and plush toys currently being tested, again these are designed and made by me and we are aiming to launch them this summer."

Tracy has experience in digital marketing and she has utilised her skills for the business. Her work alongside designers has helped her to build a brand, understand websites and social media, and has given her an eye for design.

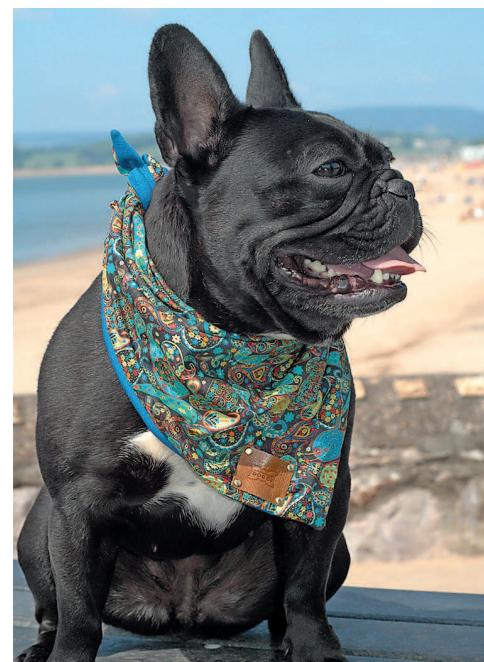
The company currently operates online, but



Mr Gatsby (Lhasa Apso) wears the Bonaroo bowtie in small



Harvey (Cockerpoo) wears the Sol bowtie in large



Coco the Frenchie wears the Bonaroo neckerchief (Liberty silk like fabric) in medium

they have been sold their products at various dog shows and events providing alternative gift ideas for dog-lovers. Previous customers can even send a photo of their sophisticated canine wearing the bowtie or neckerchief in the hope of being the 'Distinguished Dog of the Month' on the company's blog. Tracy and Carl are also looking for retailers to stock their collection of deluxe neckerchiefs and splendid bowties.

So, next time your dog is strutting its stuff in the park, lounging on the sofa or socialising at a party, make sure you pick up a bowtie or neckerchief so they feel extra special. ■ theddcompany.com

DISTINGUISHED DOG ACCESSORIES:

Bowties fit all collars up to 3cm wide - slip onto the collar through two loops made of elastic on the back. For sizing information visit the website.

Neckerchiefs come in small, medium and large. Small tends to fit pups from Chihuahua to Shih Tzu; medium fits Cockerpoos, Frenchies, Pugs and Spaniels; and large will fit Labradors. Check out the gallery on the website for style inspiration and have a look in the shop to check neck sizes.

NECKERCHIEF PRICES:

Small - £16 Medium - £18 Large - £20