



FOUR SEASONS in Suffolk

Photographer Mark Staples turns his lens on a year in the county



Spring

Mark Staples came to Suffolk in 1994 as a newly qualified teacher of Modern Foreign Languages at Bury St Edmunds County Upper School. Nearly 20 years on, Mark, pictured above, still lives in Bury St Edmunds, where he balances his love of teaching with photographing the Suffolk landscape in his spare time. He describes himself as a self-taught, amateur hobby-photographer. He has learnt a lot from reading books, from the web and from simply looking at other people's photographs with a critical eye to see. As Mark contributes images on a regular basis to Suffolk magazine, we decided to find out how his hobby began, and where and what he particularly likes to photograph in our county.

Suffolk March 2013



Autumn

SPRING: Daffodils in Chelsworth. This photo epitomises both spring and Suffolk for me. **AUTUMN: Bridge Cottage, Flatford.** I was lucky with the way these wispy clouds open out into a fan to fill the sky and help create a sense of perspective in the photo.

Q What inspired you to take up photography?

My interest in photography began back in 2005, when Australian friends visiting Suffolk took some impressive photos using a simple digital compact. Inspired by these images, I decided to pursue this newly discovered interest by purchasing a digital compact. Following positive feedback from friends, family and colleagues, it was not long before I bought my first entry level digital SLR, which was soon to be superseded by bigger and better cameras! I owe a lot to Suffolk magazine, since it is here that I had my first image published. Since then, I've been lucky enough to have photos published on postcards, in calendars, in books, in national and regional magazines, in tourist brochures and guides both here and abroad, and in April 2010, I had my first book published, *Portrait of Suffolk*. My photography is a complete hobby and helps me maintain a work-life balance.

Q What makes Suffolk special when it comes to taking photographs?

I particularly enjoy photographing monuments, landmarks and landscapes where architecture is a prominent feature. The challenge is to find that interesting point of view or composition. Suffolk has

a wealth of such photogenic subjects, including the half-timbered twisted buildings in the medieval wool town of Lavenham, the historic abbey ruins in the beautiful abbey gardens in Bury St Edmunds, the quirky House in the Clouds in Thorpeness and Woodbridge Tide Mill, clad in its traditional white boarding, to name but a few.

I tend to favour bold, vivid colours and these have become a trademark of my work. I think it is true to say that we are not short of colourful scenes in Suffolk. The vibrant beach huts of Southwold, the heather of Dunwich Heath in full bloom and the brightly-coloured boats on the Suffolk waterways all make for attractive shots with a full palette of colours.

Q Which is your favourite season for capturing the county in all its glory?

Many photographers favour the winter months, due to the dramatic light resulting from the low position of the sun in the sky, and it is true that there are some stunning photos out there taken in such conditions. However, I consider myself to be more of a 'postcard-photographer' and as such, my favourite season is summer. I tend to capture the bright and cheery, rather than the

SUMMER: **Southwold Pier.**

This is what photographers would call a 'decisive moment shot'! As I positioned my camera to frame the inverted z-shape created by the pier and the sea foam, into the shot walked this little girl.

WINTER: **Rainbow on Aldeburgh Beach.**

With the heavens about to open during a walk on Aldeburgh beach, I found myself running to get close enough to frame these boats and make the most of this burst of sunlight.

MY FAVOURITE SHOT: **Ipswich Waterfront at night.**

This area has undergone such a transformation since my arrival in Suffolk nearly 20 years ago. From the Victorian wet docks has emerged a contemporary waterfront of bars, restaurants and residential buildings.



My favourite shot





Summer

dramatic and moody. I love vibrant, blue skies and given that I like taking postcard-type architectural shots, my subjects tend to be well lit in this season.

Q Do you have a favourite part of the county for taking pictures and what is it that particularly inspires you?

I love taking pictures along the Suffolk coast. Many of Suffolk's coastal resorts have a proud fishing tradition and are reminiscent of the 'Great British' coast of yesteryear. Aldeburgh is perhaps my favourite seaside town and there is always a boat or two to photograph resting on the shelved shingle, whilst the fishermen

sell the fruits of their early morning catch from wooden huts along the beach. Having said this, we have many picture-postcard towns and villages in Suffolk such as Kersey, Cavendish and Somerleyton, where you are always guaranteed a beautiful shot thanks to the quaint cottages in a variety of colours.



Winter

Suffolk March 2013

Q What makes this photograph your favourite of all time?

It is difficult to choose a favourite Suffolk photograph of all time, as this changes according to my mood! Ipswich Waterfront at night is definitely in my Top 5. I tend to be drawn to reflections because of the symmetry they create, and such photos always attract positive comments from the viewer. The best time for taking night photos is just after dusk in the 'blue hour', as the sky is a more satisfying colour. [SM](#)

■ See www.markstaples.co.uk for more of Mark's photographs. His book Portrait of Suffolk is available in most local bookshops or online.