

Introduction

It's a challenge to work on a book with two photographers who often disagree about what makes a good picture.

When one of those photographers is your husband, and the other your son, then life gets very complicated indeed. In our case, the heated discussions merely underlined our determination to do justice to this beautiful county that we are so happy to call home.

All three of us have our favourite spots, the places that tug at our heart strings.

For John, it's the majesty and grandeur of the Shropshire Hills. As the younger half of the photographic team he blithely climbs steep inclines with two stones of camera gear strapped to his back. He is often in position long before the sun comes up, capturing the new day as dawn sweeps across the magnificent views laid out beneath him.

Mike, meanwhile, likes to search out the quirky and the offbeat, delighting in the customs and traditions that are the very lifeblood of our glorious county. The Green Man at Clun, morris dancing, festivals and village cricket all figure prominently in Mike's pictures, although he retains a special affection for the rock-strewn landscape of the Stiperstones.

For myself, it's the abiding sense of belonging that prevails – of feeling at one with the generations who ploughed the fields and toiled the land, worked in the big houses and fought for King (and Queen) and country. Nothing can replace the shiver that goes down the spine when walking into a country churchyard and coming across the gravestone of a distant relative.

A Year in Shropshire has been a labour of love for all three of us. We hope that we have done the county proud.

Lynne Hayward
Shifnal, Shropshire

LUDLOW

Early morning sun highlights the walls and battlements of the castle which dates from the 11th century.

This magnificent building was once home to Edward V and Richard, Duke of York – the so-called Princes in the Tower – and also to Prince Arthur, son of Henry VII and elder brother of Henry VIII, who died here in 1502 at the tender age of 15.





Above: IRONBRIDGE. The spectacular wooded slopes of the Ironbridge Gorge rise majestically above Britain's best-known industrial monument.

Right, above: SHROPSHIRE BORDER. A narrowboat cruises the tranquil Llangollen Canal on the Shropshire border near Chirk.

Right, below: ELLESMERE. Traditional canal-ware on a boat moored on the Llangollen Canal.

Right
STOKESAY CASTLE

Sunshine and snow highlight this picturesque ensemble of 13th-century towers, a magnificent great hall and a 17th-century gatehouse – the only substantial addition made to its fabric since the late 13th century.

Following page, clockwise from top left
SHROPSHIRE TOWNS AT NIGHT

Festive lights in Wyle Cop, Shrewsbury; Castle Walk and the Cliff Railway, Bridgnorth; The Square, Shrewsbury with its classic Penfold pillar box; and the lights of Southwater, Telford, reflected in the lake.







Previous page: SHREWSBURY. Early morning light picks out the towers and spires of the county town, seen from Haughmond Hill.

Above: BURROW HILL. Bluebells line a footpath on the ramparts of this Iron Age hill fort overlooking the village of Hopesay.

Right, top: TONG. Horses graze in a field adjoining St Bartholomew's Church.

Right, bottom: SHIFNAL. The Wesley Brook trickles through woodland carpeted in flowering wild garlic.



Above
BISHOP'S CASTLE
The clock tower on the 18th century Town Hall stands proud above the streets and rooftops.

Left
HARLEY
Nestling at the foot of Wenlock Edge is one of the so-called Thankful Villages, which saw all its men return home safely from the First World War.