



# CUMMINGS' GOINGS

with former BBC Radio Gloucestershire presenter **Mark Cummings**



Zip-wiring as the mock mayor of Barton



The mock mayor travels in style.

## Mirth, merriment and madness

I decided when I started my adventure in Gloucestershire to say yes to every opportunity presented to me, and was committed to squeezing every drop of fun and laughter out of my time here.

My year as the Mock Mayor of Barton saw me escorted around the city in a comedy sedan chair, suspended on a zip wire high above the Gate Streets, and playing tug-of-war against the real Mayor of Gloucester in front of the Shed. I walked to London dressed as Dick Whittington in flip-flops after getting blisters in the first few miles. I found myself all alone and scared beyond belief on the very top of the Severn Bridge having agreed to hosting my show from there despite my terrible fear of heights. I found myself at 6am on top of

Matson Ski Slope with Eddie the Eagle as we flung ourselves down the slope to celebrate 30 years since his escapades in Calgary.

I've got into lots of trouble over the years, including being banned from switching on the Christmas lights in Cirencester because I said something rude about Swindon the previous year. The National Trust kicked up a fuss when they wrongly thought I intended building a permanent café on the top of May Hill. I was chased out of the Moreton Show ground having proved to be the worst dog judge EVER, and nearly ended up in *The Mail on Sunday* after one of their hacks read a spoof piece I'd written in *Cotswold Life* hinting that I'd been kidnapped by Laurence Llewelyn-Bowen!



Moreton Dog Show.



Eddie the Eagle with Mark Cummings.

## Falling in love with Gloucestershire

In July I presented my last radio show, and this month I'd like to share with you some of the emotions associated with saying goodbye to my beloved *Breakfast Show* listeners. I'd been in the industry for a decade before I landed in Gloucestershire. I'd worked for nine different radio stations and I'd done my time on the freelance roundabout. I was ready to settle down, and this is when the love affair started.

Within weeks I'd been adopted by the people of Barton and Tredworth, who let me join their gang of professional scallywags who had brought back the ancient tradition of Mock Mayor.

I've been lucky to experience every eccentric, beautiful, charming element this county has to offer. I've walked to London from Gloucestershire in the footsteps of Dick Whittington, I've hosted my show from

the top of The Severn Bridge, charmed the WI at every village hall, switched on all the Christmas lights, hosted concerts at Gloucester Cathedral, Cheltenham Town Hall and Tewkesbury Abbey, judged countless dog shows, and opened many village fêtes.

I've interviewed Rosalind Buckland (Rosie from *Cider with Rosie*). After it last sounded in 1975, we got the Holloway hooter blasting across the Stroud valleys, slept rough in The Shed at Kingsholm to raise awareness of homelessness, created a pop-up café for a day on May Hill, and invented the 200-mile 'Tour de Gloucestershire' bike ride around the county from the Old Severn Bridge to Berkeley Castle.

It's been a joy to take people up May Hill for the first time. I've led night-time Severn Bore trips, and taken listeners round the streets of Gloucester, Stroud, Cheltenham, Cirencester and Tewkesbury to discover their hidden secrets. Throwing your heart and soul into this amazing county reaps huge rewards. For every ounce of love you give, the community gives ten times the love back. The last 30 years has been everything any broadcaster could hope for.

PHOTOS: MARK CUMMINGS



Teenage Mark, 1983.



Mark Cummings... slightly older.

### SAYING GOODBYE

Announcing my departure was one of the hardest things I've ever had to do in my career. Here's a précis version of what I said...

'After 40 years in radio, I've decided to leave the industry. You'll know all about the huge changes currently underway in BBC Local Radio and I decided not to apply for my job when put into a redundancy scenario but rather take this opportunity to move into a completely different life and leave the party a couple of years earlier than planned. The relationship we have, I believe, is the purest form of broadcasting that exists, because we share every element of our lives in this amazing county. Gloucestershire binds us together as we walk the same streets, attend the same events, and scream from the same terraces. We care about the same things, we learn from each other and have shared massive moments together. This unique relationship between listener and presenter, I feel, is something the BBC should invest in, should sing about from the rooftops as it's a BBC service that no one else provides.'

The BBC changes will mean more regional rather than local broadcasting whilst offering more digital content and investigative journalism.

### THE FUTURE

I was really lucky to choose to leave. Many of my colleagues didn't get to choose. I always wanted to end whilst I was really enjoying the show; we were delivering the numbers of listeners and I could end on a high. I was always going to stop in 2025 to follow my other passions of writing, travel, road trips, walking and cycling challenges, all of which I couldn't do extensively with the commitment of a radio show. Staying part of the *Cotswold Life* family will be a real joy and I look forward to sharing many adventures with you over the coming years. Finally, to my listeners, thank you for inviting me into your lives every morning, for your overwhelming response when I announced my departure, for the wit and knowledge you have shared by interacting with me and for being part of a show that made my heart sing every morning.

Follow Mark on Twitter: [@cummingsradio](https://twitter.com/cummingsradio)