



CUMMINGS' GOINGS

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



PHOTO: JACK RUSSELL

TOMMY CLOUGH

JACK RUSSELL

Jack Russell's painting of Korean War veteran Tommy Clough

The final roll call

Tommy Clough is a Korean War veteran and former prisoner of war who served as a gunner in the Battle of Imjin River. I've met this charismatic gent on many occasions. Thanks to former cricketer-turned-artist Jack Russell I now know even more about Tommy and his comrades' experiences. At a turning point in the Korean War, 700 Glosters held out against over 10,000 Chinese troops and fought a last stand on Hill 235 after being ordered to 'hold where you are.' Jack made it his mission to track down and paint as many of the surviving Glosters as he could. It was

during the sittings that many veterans shared stories that had been locked away for many years. Jack told me how his fascination with this regiment started with a chance meeting in The Prince Albert pub in Rodborough.

'His name was Henry Peglar, and he was badly wounded at the Battle of Imjin River. He used to sit in the corner of the Albert sipping away all night at his gin. I asked the landlord Richard Johnson one night why I had never seen him eat anything from the bar menu, and he said he was prisoner of war with the Chinese for two years and his stomach had shrunk so he didn't eat much.

He also said not to disturb him. One evening I plucked up the courage to ask him if he would teach me to drive because he was an official driving instructor. And he was great once you got to know him! He did well to get me through my test because I paid more attention to what he used to tell me about the battle. He never talked about the prisoner of war camps though; I've learned more about that doing the portraits.'

***The Final Roll Call* by Jack Russell MBE and Matthew A Holden is a brilliant read. All proceeds to The Soldiers of Gloucestershire Museum.**

PHOTO: MIKESMITH



Martyn White presents Mark Cummings with honorary membership of Gloucester Civic Trust

Flying the flag

This year I intend to fly the flag of Gloucestershire on my many travels. The flag is a cross of mid-blue, outlined in cream against an apple green background. The blue represents the River Severn, the green represents Stroud's Golden Valley and the cream reflects the iconic Cotswold stone. It's not hard selling Gloucestershire around

the world, and one of the many places I love enthusing about is the city of Gloucester. I was thrilled when I was made an honorary member of the Gloucester Civic Trust last year and I intend to fulfill this role with passion and pride. I have spent years explaining about the literary links to Scrooge and Long John Silver on the Gate Streets, the significance of

the Siege of Gloucester, the regeneration of the docks, the magic of the cathedral and the pain and pleasure of being a Gloucester rugby fan. This city boasts many folk who have a canny knack of celebrating our history and heritage with wit, warmth and eccentricity, and I thank you for adopting me and letting me into your mad, mischievous gang.

The tourist trap

Over the winter I decided to quit watching all reality TV Shows. Unlike others in my household, I binned *I'm a Celeb*, *Strictly*, and *Survivor*, and flounced into another room with a puff of smug satisfaction. I scoured my planner and found a series I'd recorded ages ago but hadn't got round to watching. *The Cotswold Farm Shop* is a gloriously filmed 'behind the scenes' romp telling the stories behind the magnificent Gloucester Services. I felt genuinely choked seeing all the local milk, wine, cheese, meat producers in the

surrounding area starring in the show. It's a brilliant, strategic location to promote our wonderful county and, a few years ago, I hatched a plan to maximise this M5 honey trap. I hosted my radio *Breakfast Show* there during the hectic August holiday period and snared those tourists heading to Devon and Cornwall. My simple aim was to make them consider coming to Gloucestershire next summer. I asked the children if they liked *Dr Who*, *Star Wars*, and *Harry Potter*, then eulogised about the film locations at Gloucester Cathedral and Puzzlewood.

I sold the concept of water sports in the Cotswolds, tree-top adventures in the Forest of Dean, fine dining in Cheltenham, Roman history in Cirencester, and so much more. The list of what we have to be proud of is very long, but who would have thought a service station just off junction 12 of the M5 would be right up there?

Location, location, location

After a hard day's hiking in the Lake District, I was scrambling down a mountain called Pillar when I heard my phone ping. It gave me a shock because I'd been out of phone signal for three days. It was a message from my daughter telling me she'd landed her dream job. I'll never forget that moment of parental pride and bliss, knowing your child is on their way career-wise. Her job involves helping refugees who have been granted asylum settle into a new life in our country. We still had two hours of pretty mundane scrambling down some unforgiving, gnarly rocks, but it didn't matter as I was excited at the news I'd just received. I expect this story might have triggered something for you. Take a moment to recall when you heard some profound news in an unusual location. ●

Gloucester Services

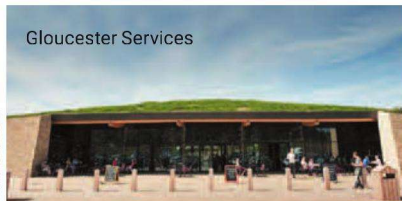


PHOTO: PEROY/DEAN