



CUMMINGS' GOINGS

with broadcaster, author and man-about-Gloucestershire **Mark Cummings**



PHOTOS: MARK CUMMINGS

Mark Cummings with Eddie 'The Eagle' Edwards

The slippery slope of a long lunch

The three key ingredients for my perfect midday treat include decent grub, a spectacular view and outrageous company. The Black Horse at Amberley has the best view of any pub in the Cotswolds (in my opinion). Amberley is nestled between Minchinhampton and Rodborough Common looking down on Woodchester, across to Selsley Common and in the far distance you can just see the trees on May Hill waving back at you. The food prices are very reasonable. I gobbled up some succulent pulled-pork tortillas for a tenner and for a couple of quid more my companion

tucked into a big plate of Hunter's Chicken. With two of the three key elements sorted, all I needed was some riveting, gossipy, nostalgic conversation. Enter Eddie 'The Eagle' Edwards who I've known for nearly 30 years and who has only just stopped spinning after a cracking run on *Dancing on Ice*. Eddie was a last-minute replacement and he quickly impressed the professional skaters with his natural talent and reached the quarter finals. I'd love to tell you all the gossip about Holly Willoughby, the behaviour of some of the other contestants and the 'smoke and mirrors' behind the making of a live TV show.

However, Eddie now owes me lunch and if I spill the secrets I won't get a return date. The profile provided by shows like this and the 2016 smash movie *Eddie the Eagle* keeps his diary full of adventures. Many streaming platforms are vying for a documentary of his life story which is something he can mull over while speaking on the many cruise ships that he frequents throughout the year.

The two-hour lunch ended with one last zinger from my well-travelled buddy, as I pointed his house out to him from the beer garden he confessed he'd never been to this pub before and had got lost on the way.



Swinhay House

Sleuthing like Sherlock

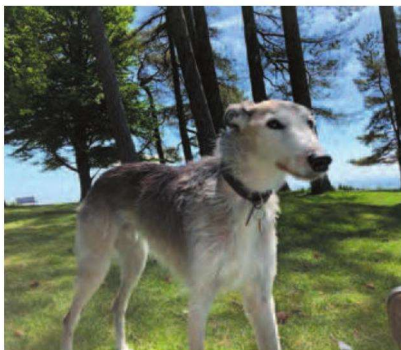
I love to be surprised and delighted by an unexpected vista. Let me explain. As you travel around the Cotswolds, occasionally there is a magic moment when you see something from a new angle for the first time.

It could be a stunning view, a slither of the River Severn, a famous landmark, a folly or simply a building. It's the latter I'd like to explore. The first time I caught sight of the magnificent Flaxley Abbey I was competing in a bike race so only had a fleeting image.

I saw Toddington Manor for the first time on a walk up Dumbleton Hill and I couldn't believe how similar it is to the Palace of Westminster. The first sight of Sezincote takes your breath away as you realise how this magnificent house inspired the building of Brighton Pavilion. My most recent discovery

happened whilst walking in the hills above Wotton-under-Edge when I spied the space age Swinhay House. This property was built by Renishaw owner Sir David McMurtry and was used in the filming of BBC's *Sherlock* (the final episode of the third series) as the home of nemesis Charles Augustus Magnussen.

This eco-creation has a fully enclosed winter garden, swimming pool, sauna and bowling alley and fits surprisingly snugly into the vale. When you get close up it disappears behind cleverly positioned high hedgerows as if it's vanished into thin air. Not to be deterred I managed to obtain a low-level image for my *Cotswold Life* readers. For the ultra-curious, a quick Google search will provide you with the full staggering view of this mysterious Cotswold property.



Tyler the lurcher

For the love of dogs

I came downstairs one morning and found Tyler, my 14-year-old lurcher, collapsed on the floor unable to move. We rushed to the vets to find out he'd had a spinal stroke and his back legs had gone. The vet wanted to give it 12 hours but recommended booking an appointment to have him put to sleep the next day. Tyler's hearing can't have been that bad as during the next day he managed to get some movement back, enough to go for a short walk. Our lovely vet Iain agreed that he

wasn't quite ready to go quite yet and told us to enjoy him for the next few days and maybe even a couple of weeks at a pinch. We decided he couldn't be left alone for this short period so created a life where one of us would sleep downstairs with him and during the day one of us would stay with him in the house. That was 130 days ago, yes 130 days... four whole months... 65 nights each sleeping on a sofa bed. The little tinker is having a wonderful time – good job we love him. ●

STILL HANGING AROUND

I'm a deeply flawed human being with many vices, most of which I'm not allowed to share with you. However, one huge failing of mine I'm comfortable to admit to is procrastination. Last summer I received a signed Gloucester Rugby shirt as a special leaving gift from the club that I will treasure forever.

The only issue is I still haven't put it up. It has been propped up in my study ready for the tricky task of hanging it halfway up the stairs. It is so huge this seems the perfect blank canvas to show it off to its full glory.

I'm hoping that by confessing in print I will now have shamed myself into getting it done. I feel a weight has lifted off my shoulders because I've been meaning to write this piece since last July.



Gloucester Rugby shirt