



CUMMINGS' GOINGS

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



Bye, Clive

When my beloved T2 Bay camper disappeared up our lane for the last time, I had slightly moist eyes. This beloved green hunk of metal (*above*) has been a part of our family for 11 years and the only vehicle I've ever become emotionally attached to. We sold him to a lovely couple who will have years of wonderful adventures and make memories like we did. Our first outing took us to a

campsite in the Forest of Dean where our two children were buffeted about in the pop-top roof during a hurricane. He transported my daughters and their mates to three proms, plus WOMAD and Cornbury music festivals, and was a really cool spare room for sleepovers. As we can't afford a home with a stunning view over Stroud, we'd often park him on Rodborough Common, have a cup of tea, gaze down on the town and come home

again. He only broke down once and I think that was my fault. On the way home from the Cornbury Music Festival, I found myself by the side of the road near Cirencester at 3am waiting to be rescued. I was required at the radio station at 4.30am to host the breakfast show which started at 6am. I made it... just.

So long old friend, thanks for the memories and hopefully more to come in Clive's younger but less good-looking brother next year!

THE APPRENTICE... YOU'RE HIRED

Six years ago, the Stroud Valleys were filled with the sound of an iconic steam factory hooter that hadn't made a peep since 1975. My whole show hinged on the hooter going off at 8am powered by a steam traction engine. That show had been produced by my programme assistant, Jon Smith. What Jon had calmly kept from me during the show was the fact that the traction engine had broken down *en route*. He quietly fixed the issue as I continued to broadcast. It arrived at 7.50am and made for an unforgettable piece of radio. This is a tiny snapshot of the man I worked with for a memorable three years. He started his career with me as an apprentice and we had the best time together and will be lifelong friends. Jon has just started his new role with the BBC... as presenter of the *Radio Gloucestershire Breakfast Show!* Enjoy him.

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PHOTO: JON SMITH



PHOTO: MARK CUMMINGS

Attwoolls... the UK's biggest independent outdoor store

Like a kid in a toy shop

It is hard to describe the thrill of walking through the doors of a camping/outdoor emporium. It's hard because many of you simply won't get it. However, a few of you will. My heart beat a little faster as we pulled in on the A38 at Whitminster and there before us was Attwoolls. This iconic family-run business is the UK's biggest independent outdoor store with tents, awnings, outdoor clothing, etc. People like me get giddy when we view, handle or possibly buy the following: inflatable sofas, a collapsible whisk, camping

chairs that fold so small you can put them in your back pocket, porta-potties, sporks (spoon and fork combined), a fold-down washing-up bowl that can also be used as a shopping basket, and of course glow-in-the-dark toilet paper. This is the place for you if you have ever experienced the following symptoms at a campsite: Awning Envy, Windbreak Jealousy and volcanic fury when trying to remove obstinate tent pegs or any form of erection dysfunction. I can promise you, there is a tool for everything.

Longest lunch in Nailsworth

I'm still coming to terms with life after radio. After 40 years in the crazy world of media, my mind is spinning at the new life I've found myself in. The whole concept of time has changed for me. Since mid-July when I hosted my final BBC *Radio Gloucestershire Breakfast Show*, I've been walking and cycling in the Brecons, enjoying camper-van jollies to Shropshire and North Devon, attended the Edinburgh Fringe Festival, spent some family time in Yorkshire, taken a short writing job in London, holidayed on the beach at the Gower, and next up I'm sailing around the Greek islands, followed by

a writing trip to Jersey. All of this has been great fun, but it's the innocuous situations that sometimes have the biggest impact.

BBC *Radio Gloucestershire Afternoon Show* presenter Chris Baxter texted me the other day and persuaded me to meet him for lunch in Nailsworth. The weather forecast looked good and I was feeling fairly fit so decided I'd cycle there... because I had the time. I set off at 10.30am and had a glorious ride which took me past Tetbury, along through Cherrington, up through the Minchinhampton Golf Course bisecting Princess Anne on one side, and Mike and Zara

on the other, along the Common, down the zig-zaggy Nailsworth 'W' and into the town.

We sat outside the clock tower for two hours downing strong coffee and demolishing our cheese-and-pickle paninis from Hobbs. After a riotous and indiscreet catch-up we went our separate ways. I chose the low road home via Avening and was back by 3pm; a simple but perfect day. Next month I'll share with you the flip side of my new life. I'll try to put into words how hard it is to wean yourself off the indescribable buzz of hosting a daily radio show. It might be a tricky one to write, but at least I've got the time. ●