



CUMMINGS' GOINGS

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



PHOTOS: MARK CUMMINGS

Mark's leaving do in The Legends Lounge, Kingsholm

All roads lead back to Gloucester

Five days a week for 30 years I've driven from the southern edge of the county into Gloucester. The city that took me to its heart became my second home. That daily commute is now over, and the need for the 60-mile round trip has evaporated. What hasn't evaporated is my love of the place that allowed me to host from the pulpit at the cathedral, make mischief on every street as the Mock Mayor, and scream like a madman from The Shed at Kingsholm. Luckily, that wonderful rugby club will keep me connected to the city for life.

A few days before my last show they put on a 'do' for me with coach George Skivington, captain Lewis Ludlow, commercial director Alex Brown, plus 50 friends and family packed into The Legends Lounge. I was moved beyond words by the kind gesture, and when it came to my turn to say something I tried to sum up the depth of connection GRC

has across the county. In front of my family I could mention the magical games we'd shared together over the years and the warmth I felt a couple of days after my dad died when my 'Shed' family showed me such love.

Many in the room had experienced my favourite games, including the last-minute James Hook kick against Saracens, the 64-0 thrashing of Bath, and beating Edinburgh at The Stoop to win a European Trophy. I talked about taking my kids to their first game, sleeping rough in The Shed for charity, and the joy of another 'Shed Head' spotting my Gloucester shirt when I was in Buenos Aires.

I don't want to imply that my crowd that night were heavy drinkers, but I can confirm the takings behind the bar meant Gloucester could sign five players from London Irish the following day. So, here's to a brilliant club, fantastic friends and Saturday, October 14, when we will all be back together.



Mark with Kingsholm coach George Skivington



Mark Cummings with Rod Hansen

Arresting relationships

I want to share an insider's insight into the supposed tension between journalist and interviewee. Having interviewed hundreds of politicians, health leaders, council chiefs, police and fire officers, I can confirm it can be an awkward relationship. I've had people storm out of the studio mid-interview, and many official complaints have been made; one called for me to be sacked and another demanded I come to their office for an official 'dressing down'. I declined that kind invitation. I always asked questions on behalf of my listeners, always stayed calm but always pushed for the truth. Although I had many tricky customers, I also had many guests who understood the importance of accountability. One such figure is the current chief constable of Gloucestershire,

Rod Hansen, who has had to answer some uncomfortable and penetrating questions over the years. I met him recently to thank him for his availability, honesty and clarity when we went into lockdown. Rod was a huge part of those early, scary weeks as we all, including the police, tried to understand the rules, the law and how to simply cope day to day. It was a joy to spend an hour over a cup of tea getting an insight into each other's worlds and a wonderful surprise when he presented me with a montage of cuttings from the big stories I'd covered over the years.

I'm sure you'll understand why I have deliberately not mentioned the well-known names I have clashed with. It would be discourteous and disingenuous... and I want to save that for November's column!

A ROOM WITH A LOO

Dropping off your child at university for the first time is a feeling you never, ever forget. It's a feeling deep in the pit of your stomach, an ache that you feel at this time of year even if it was years ago since you drove off in tears praying they'd settle and make 'nice' friends. If you are going through this, here is my tip to take your mind off it on the way home. Gloucestershire University provides such modern accommodation they rent out their extra capacity all year long to whoever wants to stay there. The modern-day student room is like a hotel with a guaranteed en suite. All you have to do is come up with a list of the contents of the student room we remember. Traffic cones; cheap, rusty, oily bike; lava lamp; poster of tennis girl scratching her behind; dirty sandwich toaster; Pot Noodle tower; record player; mug tree; bean bag. All of these with, of course, Che Guevara staring down at them.



Mark with his girls at Kingsholm

Trolley dash through Cirencester

Kemble Station isn't known for great drama. It's genteel, quaint and sleepy for most of the time. The other day, however, all hell broke loose when my wife, Jo, met her American friend, Michelle, off the train. Jo was about to drive them up to the Lake District for a walking and writing retreat, but there was a problem, a big problem. On

the way from London some cad had stolen Michelle's suitcase with all her clobber for a week of drinking in Grasmere... I mean writing. With a long drive ahead and last orders at 9pm, they sprang into action. They dashed into White Stuff on Castle Street for jeans, T-shirts, knickers, socks and pyjamas. Off then to the market square to Jones

Bootmaker for sturdy shoes, a whizz round to Mountain Warehouse on Cricklade street for a warm fleece, finishing up in The Body Shop for cosmetics. Cirencester Chamber of Commerce would like to thank the thief in question and are looking forward to a healthy profit for 2023. ●

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