



CUMMINGS' GOINGS

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



Mark Cummings with the team on his last day at work at BBC Radio Gloucestershire

The glorious gang of four

It is very rare in the crazy, unpredictable, fun world of radio for things to pan out as you hoped they would. So, it came as a huge surprise to me when my final two weeks on air sounded the way I had planned. I lined up a stellar list of co-hosts who share my love of the area and who have become great friends over the years including Phil Vickery, Eddie 'the Eagle' Edwards, Mike d'Abo and Jack Russell.

I would never have wanted to face Phil on a rugby pitch but a hug from the big man is one of life's joys. His love of the county is based on food, farming and rugby – look

out for the opening of his new venture at The Merryfellow in Charlton Kings.

I first met Eddie 25 years ago and over a long lunch he told me about the plans for a Hollywood movie of his life. As the years rolled on it appeared to be a distant dream, and then to huge acclaim it happened.

It was playing in a charity cricket match at Coln St Aldwyns that introduced Mike d'Abo to the Cotswolds and he has enjoyed 35 years loving life here. He explained the story behind his hits *Handbags and Gladraggs* and *Build Me Up Buttercup* and even remembered his goddaughter's birthday during the Cummings

County Quiz. He had help from her father sitting opposite him. We treated Jack Russell to breakfast and he soaked his Weetabix for exactly 15 minutes before consuming them. He then reduced me to tears giving me one of his prints of the Slad Valley.

My last show was a surreal rollercoaster of joy, sadness, nerves and overwhelming love from listeners. My final words were: 'I'll see you in the Shed,' followed by a group hug with my amazing colleagues and a party lasting long into the night. Time now to write a book about all the wonderful things I have learnt about Gloucestershire. Watch this space.

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PUB CRAWL TIME

I often used to enjoy a pint in the Basket Maker pub in Quedgeley. It was later known as The Weavers Arms and now The Haywain. I never really thought too much about the name until I was told about a Mr Cale who was a local basket weaver and suddenly the penny dropped.

It would be churlish not to visit some other favourite hostelrys with classic tales behind them. I've always been intrigued and slightly amused when I see the sign for The Cock Inn at the start of the steep hill going out of Blakeney. In the old days before motor vehicles, a cock was a big horse that could be hired to give extra pulling power on the hill. At busy times travellers waiting for the cock would buy refreshments from the house.

The Mariners Arms in Berkeley is so called because boats used to sail up the Berkeley Pill and the mariners would walk to the pub. I would love to believe the theory about one of Gloucester's best rugby pubs but I am not sure it is true. The Pelican, so it is claimed was constructed out of timbers from Sir Francis Drake's ship *The Golden Hind* which was originally called *The Pelican*. The Glasshouse at May Hill is so named because of the Flemish glassmakers who settled there in the reign of Elizabeth 1.

Others with more obvious links include The Adam and Eve at Paradise, The Severn Bore at Minsterworth, The Anchor Inn of Epney, The Cheese Rollers at Shurdington, The Thames Head Inn near Kemble and strike a light, I nearly forgot my local for 30 years – England's Glory on the London Road in Gloucester.



Holy Grail found in Bibury

During lockdown one of the things that kept me sane was cycling. It's a 50-mile round trip from my place to Bibury and in the first few weeks of restrictions I would drop down from Aldsworth and be met by a ghost village opening up in front of me. As the weeks passed by, more and more people flooded in and it felt quite uncomfortable. My daughter Kate used to join me on shorter rides and I would often talk about my Bibury outings.

It became a 'thing' – one day we'll make it to the Holy Grail and back. This summer we achieved our dad/daughter adventure. Stage 1 was our place to Down Ampney and a coffee at their brilliant community shop. Stage 2 was Bibury via Quenington and lunch with the rest of the family. Stage 3 was Bibury to South Cerney and refreshments at The Old George Inn before stage 4 which was home and a beer in the local.

Ticket to hide

When I buy a raffle ticket the most I expect to win is a vintage bottle of Advocaat, a packet of shortbread, some 'smellies' bought in Woolworths in the 1970s, or if my luck is in, a tin of Turkish delight. Imagine my surprise when I answered my

door and a mother and her son offered me the chance of winning a day shooting pheasants, some exclusive ski clothing or a collection of classic blended malt whiskies. The tickets were an eye-watering £25 quid a pop and I don't like whisky, don't

ski and would never shoot a pheasant. The lad was raising funds to spend his 'gap' summer doing good deeds in Africa. It was a three-month trip with two weeks' volunteering and the rest doing stuff most kids would never get to experience.

My advice for wealthy parents wanting the rest of us to fund your kid's travels: Don't arrive in a car worth more than my house, ditch the lad's Hugo Boss sweatshirt and for goodness sake change his name to Gary... don't introduce me to bl**dy Hector!!!