

CUMMINGS' GOINGS

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



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The pub quiz ringer

If you read every word of this column down to the very last sentence there will be a huge reward. This delicious tease has even intrigued me, and I know what an ingenious caper I'm currently plotting.

Can I take a moment of your time to delve into the murky, competitive, backstabbing world people enter when they take part in a quiz?

It starts off as a bit of fun but very soon the competitive juices start to flow and it becomes outright war. I was in a quiz team in our local pub years ago when there just happened to be a lot of music questions in my particular field of knowledge.

My team won by a whisker, and as I walked out of the pub I heard a chorus of comments like: 'That's not fair, he's on the radio,' 'fluky DJ got lucky tonight,' 'smug, lanky fool better be careful, something nasty might happen to him.'

It felt as if my village had turned into the film set of one of the episodes of *Midsummer Murders*. The following morning, I kept my head down as I crept back in to collect my winnings while nursing my half a cider in a rather sheepish way.

On my radio show we pitched two teams against each other every day with questions all about Gloucestershire. To this day, people come up to me complaining about a question I fooled them with or disputing the accuracy of some of my geographical quizzes.

The accountants Hazlewoods have never forgiven me for tricking them into saying Edward Jenner's statue was in Berkeley. They had previously correctly said Gloucester Cathedral but were swayed by my persuasive misdirection. It's not all bad; the victors celebrate and show off with relish and often assume a healthy glow of success for months after a win.

I still remember the question I got right to win the aforementioned pub quiz, while everyone else put down *Sweet Caroline* in the Neil Diamond round, I conquered all with the correct answer, which was *Cracklin' Rosie*.

This has now given me the jitters ahead of the launch night for The Stroud Book Festival at the Sub Rooms on Wednesday, November 6. We kick off festivities with a *Cummings County Quiz* night.

I'm now envisaging all-out war and mob violence on the streets of Stroud...

DISCOVERING PARADISE (NEAR PAINSWICK)

I've had the best time recently filming some promotional videos across the Cotswolds, and by so doing I've discovered places I'd never been to before and reunited with others I hadn't seen for ages.

I wandered down into the hamlet called Paradise near Painswick for the first time, and it took my breath away. I discovered a Red Arrow stained-glass window at Little Rissington, and I had lunch in The Bell in Stow, which was The Who's John Entwistle's favourite pub.

I explored the street named Linden Lea in Down Ampney named after one of Ralph Vaughan Williams's compositions, and made friends with the Purton Hulks (pictured) by The River Severn. If you'd like to see all of my 60-second videos filmed all over the Cotswolds, they are on all my social platforms which can be accessed via my website:

markcumplingsandgoings.com



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A POETICAL POSER

And, finally, Stroud-based bestselling author Katie Fforde has created a wonderful prize aimed at lighting the spark for all of us to get scribbling. The Laurie Lee Prize for Writing is one of the highlights of The Stroud Book Festival, and to acknowledge this, I have a challenge for you.

Starting at the beginning of my main column I've interspersed words from three of Laurie Lee novels, in descending order of difficulty from the top. Can you spot them? ●

Answers: A Moment of War; As I Walked Out One Midsummer Morning; Cider with Rosie.