

CUMMINGS' GOINGS

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



PHOTOGETTY

KEEP ON TRUCKING

While filming a series of promos for my book I found myself in a layby on the A417 feeling as if I'd just driven onto a Hollywood movie set. I must have passed this place 10,000 times but I'd never explored what is known locally as 'Granny's Pumps'.

Just past the Highwayman Pub heading north there is a huge pull-in for lorries with roadside snack vans and a toilet block. Back in the day an old woman used to have two petrol pumps and serve fuel, hence Granny's Pumps.

It was quite a thrill to see it for myself and as I sat in the car two thoughts flashed through my brain. Why am I so excited about a truck stop and how on earth is this new chapter in my life going to conclude?

NEAR-THE-KNUCKLE HUMOUR

There are some performers who have a happy knack of saying things that are slightly outrageous and always managing to get away with it. It's a real skill possessed by Ant and Dec, Michael Barrymore in his prime and the late great Bruce Forsyth. It can be their way of taking the mickey out of a member of the public or simply sneaking in a good old-fashioned *double entendre*. There is one such celebrity among us here in the Cotswolds and she gets away with murder. If you see poet Pam Ayres at one of her gigs I promise you'll love every minute of her poetry, anecdotes and near-the-knuckle humour. Her recent TV series on the Cotswolds saw her flirting and teasing her way through hours of loving and warm telly that melted my heart with a shared affection for this area. This month Pam releases a collection of poems from the 1970s to 2020s and it will be my job to sit alongside her at the Literature Festival to tease out some of the highlights of her amazing career as well as hearing some of her favourite poems and sharing our joint love of the Cotswolds. I secretly hope she flirts a bit and drops a couple of *risqué* humdingers. To find out if she gets away with it put Wednesday, October 9, in your diary.

I've spent the past 12 months turning the pages of a huge, exciting new chapter in my life which continues into the autumn with the exciting prospect of appearing at many book festivals.

I've loved being an audience member and interviewer at these events but I'm now thrilled and slightly nervous about being on the other side.

Having cut my teeth at The Gloucester History Festival in September, I now have the honour of talking about my book *Glorious Gloucestershire* at the world's longest-running literature festival, The Cheltenham Literature Festival in the Pillar Room at 5pm on Tuesday, October 8.

This year, the festival celebrates 75 years and there is lovely symmetry with the first chapter of my book, which explores the county's incredible literary heritage. The chapter is called Book Lovers' Tour of Gloucestershire and it includes our links with

Dickens, Shakespeare, Tolkien, Lewis Carroll and JK Rowling, the characters of Scrooge, Peter Pan – plus many more surprising literary connections.

This year's festival will also explore some of the most famous works of literature published since 1949, examining how societal and technological advances have evolved and changed, and asking what discoveries have been made – and what the next 75 years might look like.

A number of literary anniversaries are celebrated as part of 75th year's programme, including George Orwell's 1984 and Nancy Mitford's *Love in a Cold Climate*.

Helping celebrate the 75th birthday will be stars such as Judi Dench, Bob Mortimer, Richard Osman, Jacqueline Wilson, Ian Rankin and Michael Palin. Come and join the party and I'd love to see you on Tuesday 8. ●

To read more about Mark's adventures visit: markcummingssandgoings.com