



CUMMINGS' GOINGS

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



Tewkesbury Abbey will host Mark in October

PHOTOGETTY

Back on the road again

I love nothing more than sitting in front of a group of people and eulogising about our part of the world. This September I start a fresh adventure doing exactly that, sharing secrets and stories from my new book *Glorious Gloucestershire*. This will take me to pubs, abbeys, village halls and many iconic Cotswold venues. The road trip starts in September. I'll be manning my

stall on the Gate Streets on Gloucester Day and appearing at Blackfriars Priory at the Gloucester History Festival. October takes me to The Pillar Room in the Town Hall for the Cheltenham Literature Festival, Tewkesbury Abbey with the Cotswold Male Voice Choir and a fun evening is planned at Eastcombe Village Hall. In November I can't wait for a big *Cummings County Quiz* night at the

Sub Rooms in Stroud to kick off The Stroud Book Festival. Finally, in December it's the WI Christmas Concert in Cheltenham, a quiz night at the wonderful Gloucester Old Spot pub near Uckington and a Christmas Concert the Princess Hall at Cheltenham Ladies College. Hope to see you at one of these brilliant locations, all the details on my website: markcumplingsandgoings.com

At Stroud Brewery I was told I could have as much as I liked of my favourite beers



PHOTO:GETTY

Use it or you'll lose it

It still really hurts. Every time I hear the mention of the award-winning Three Choirs Vineyard near Newent I silently weep. Five years ago, we were given vouchers to tour the vineyard, wine tasting and a meal. We simply forgot to use them and this unforgivable behaviour is something I deeply regret. The only way I can move on from this calamity is to make sure it never happens again. In the last few weeks we have gone

on a voucher spree as the clock ticks down to the dreaded expiry date. Thanks to the generosity of our two daughters we have been on a binge around the Stroud Valleys. We started necking as much wine as possible at the Woodchester Vineyard with a guided tour up the valley slopes and a fascinating lesson in the wine-making process. Next stop was Stroud Brewery where I sat in the brewing room in front of huge jugs of my favourite

beer and was told I could have as much as I liked. A charming man called Arthur gave an entertaining presentation on the brewing process while I necked as much Budding, OPA and Tom Long beer as I wanted. Finally, to soak all this up we used our last voucher for afternoon tea at The Painswick Hotel where I fell into a food stupor with cream and jam scones, sandwiches, a chocolate brownie and melt-in-the-mouth Scotch eggs!

Snuffing out trouble at Westonbirt

I made some new friends this summer at the Forest Live music gigs. I spent two dreamy evenings at Westonbirt Arboretum in the company of Gregory Porter and Van Morrison and while waiting for these legends to come on stage, I struck up a rapport with the onsite ambulance staff. I squeezed onto their table to find a sturdy place for my pulled pork burger and shimmering pint of Craft IPA and we got chatting. They told me about the type of issues they usually have to deal with at the bigger more infamous festivals, abuse of narcotics (usually ketamine) provides them with the majority of their work. We then collectively gazed over the crowd assembling on the grass and mused on what sort of action they would be called upon to deal with that evening. In front of us we spotted numerous swish wicker picnic baskets which housed some very fancy china plates and even had leather straps in the

lid to hold in cutlery. What will they think of next? We spotted those little carts with fairy lights attached for cool parents to wheel their barely born children around in. You know the ones – the poor little kids forced to wear huge ear defenders wishing to God they were in bed at home fast asleep. My new buddies kept a list of their duties that night and later kindly shared the list with me. Two elderly gentlemen needed help loosening their red trousers after over-ordering at the Venison Burger/Cheesy Fries Van, a middle-aged woman from Painswick fainted when she spilt some Châteaufort-du-Pape on her new white jumper (ironically bought from White Stuff in Cirencester) and the big drama of the night when a 91-year-old former Sergeant Major from Burford did suffer an actual overdose – police later found his snuff box abandoned by *The Gruffalo* sculpture deep in the woods.

HALF A SUMMER

Out of the 59 summers I've had, this has been one of the most surreal but also one of the most magical.

Last month I wrote about my eye operation, as I write I'm still rocking the eye patch. The restrictions it has brought have also simplified an often hectic season. I can't cycle or go to the gym but I can walk the country lanes and enjoy a different perspective of where I live. I can't fly anywhere but I can avoid the hassle of airports and enjoy the simple pleasures of my garden. As we've been based at home I've gone to local summer events for the first time in years and caught up with old friends.

There ends the smug lesson. If you think my cup is annoyingly always half-full just remember everything is half for me at the moment. ●