

OBITUARY: Richard Baker

From the *Sunday Express*, November 18th, 2018.

Richard Baker, the broadcaster who introduced the BBC's first TV news bulletin in July 1954 died yesterday at John Radcliffe Hospital, Oxford, aged 93.



July 5th 1954



In 1982

He went on to become one of the BBC's most familiar newsreaders before branching out into presenting "*Last Night of the Proms*" and the panel game "*Face the Music*".

Mr Baker was born in Willesden, North West London. BBC director-general, Tony Hall, led the tributes which poured in yesterday. He said, "He was at the forefront of the creation of the modern news presenter. He was a calm and assured presence who became the face of the news for millions. Later he became a great advocate for classical music, presenting many much-loved programmes. But more than that, he was quite simply a lively and charming man. Our sympathies are with his many friends and family."

Veteran BBC journalist, John Simpson, said that Mr Baker was "one of the finest newsreaders of modern times – highly intelligent, thoughtful, gentle, yet tough in defence of his principles."

Mr Baker secured a place at Kilburn Grammar School in London NW6 and went on to study history and modern languages at Peterhouse College, Cambridge.

During the Second World War, he served on a minesweeper with the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve and was attached to supply convoys to Russia.

He returned to education after the war and joined the BBC in 1950 as a radio presenter.

Mr Baker also voiced the children's TV series "*Mary, Mungo and Midge*", made three guest appearances on "*Monty Python's Flying Circus*", and also presented various programmes on Radio 2 and Radio 4. In 1977, he and other presenters performed the "*South Pacific*" film hit "There is *Nothing Like a Dame*" on the Morecambe and Wise Christmas Special.

Inadvertently becoming a personality in his own right, Mr Baker told of how he was recognised while out shopping – and sent knitted jumpers by fans.

ITV newsreader, Alastair Stewart tweeted: "A giant. Not a journalist.", but that was not the style of his day. Alastair Burnet, Sir Robin Day, Sandy Gall et al came along and changed all that. "Richard 'Dickie' Baker was also a master of the arts, especially music, about which he wrote beautifully. A true gentleman."

Mr Baker's passion for music was given to him by his father, an amateur singer who encouraged his son to take up the piano.

Mr Baker married childhood friend Margaret in 1961.

In his last years, spent at a retirement home in Oxford, Mr Baker would cut interesting headlines from the daily newspapers and read them to fellow residents every evening at 6 pm.

This was published in Newsletter 161, February 2019