

Dick Benson obituary

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My friend Dick Benson, who has died aged 73, was a barrister and circuit judge, officially known as His Honour Judge Richard Benson.

Dick was born in Liverpool, the son of Jean (nee Yeadon) and Frank Benson. His father was a factory manager notable for a liberal and progressive attitude towards his workers, a trait that deeply influenced his son's later career. When Dick was three years old the family moved first to Sheffield and then to London, where he attended Clapham college, a Catholic boys' grammar school. In 1965 he gained a BA in politics and philosophy at [Nottingham](#) University, then chose to study for the bar while working as a hospital porter.

He qualified in 1968 and was offered a pupillage in Nottingham by Brian Appleby. After a successful and (by all accounts) entertaining career at the criminal bar, Dick was called to the bench in 1992 and served as a

circuit judge until his retirement in 2004. Over the years he became well-known for his no-nonsense judgments. In an obscenity action brought by the police for the showing of erotic moving images, he summarily dismissed the case by declaring that he had “seen worse on Channel 5”.

Before Dick settled for life in Nottingham, he and I had first met in the 1960s at [Brondebury cricket club](#) in north London, where Dick shone as an eccentric left-handed opening batsman and inspired slip fielder. Some years later, when a cricket match we had gone to watch had been rained off, we filled up the time by idly placing some small bets on the racing on Channel 4, which resulted in a modest profit.

Turned on by this promising experience, Dick – with his then wife Susan (nee Tickle), whom he had married in 1980 – threw himself into the sport. Together they owned their own mounts and Dick even competed occasionally as a winning amateur jockey. The marriage was dissolved in 1998, and at the same time Dick prudently moderated his expensive obsession with racing, although he maintained a lifelong interest in horses and riding.

Dick was funny, generous (he funded the [Jim Lees prize](#) for philosophy at Nottingham University), kind, gregarious and, while sometimes over-dogmatic, always hugely enjoyable company. He loved cricket, golf and football (he supported Fulham), and sometimes broadcast on local radio as a commentator. He also took politics seriously, and, as a member of the Conservative party, served on Nottingham city council.

In later years Dick was happily reunited with his girlfriend from university, Linda Radford (nee Duckett), an English teacher, whom he married in 2008.

He is survived by Linda, a stepson, Matthew, and a stepdaughter, Lorna