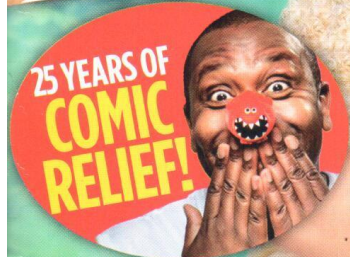


TV Times

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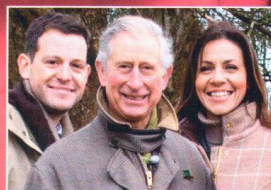


Spring
Fever!

Countryfile

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Toast of the country!

Countryfile presenters **Matt Baker** and **Julia Bradbury** talk about their very special guest editor for the show's 25th anniversary – **Prince Charles**, who also reveals why he's so excited about becoming a grandfather...

NEW COUNTRYFILE: A ROYAL APPOINTMENT

Sunday BBC1

Countryfile bosses wanted to celebrate the 25th birthday of the BBC1 rural magazine in a very special way. So they went right to the top in their search for a guest editor – Prince Charles!

The Prince, who teamed up with presenters Julia Bradbury, Matt Baker, John Craven and Adam Henson, is a big fan of the show.

In a recent speech, he asked: 'Is it not quite revealing that *Countryfile* has become so tremendously popular? Ever since it moved to its primetime slot on a Sunday night, it has become one of the BBC's most successful programmes. There is evidently a thirst for the countryside and for the culture it represents.'

Parts of *Countryfile: A Royal Appointment* were filmed at Highgrove, the Prince's organic farm in Gloucestershire.

Here, Matt and Julia tell *TVTimes* what it's like working with royalty.

Was it a big surprise to hear Prince Charles would be guest editor?

Matt: Absolutely. There were rumours that something pretty special might be going on and then we heard that



By royal command: Matt Baker, John Craven, Julia Bradbury and Adam Henson meet HRH the editor

Prince Charles would be filming with us. He's got a good, firm farmer's handshake, and what a lovely man he is!

Julia: It's a real honour. Prince Charles is passionate about countryside issues, so it's very fitting for him to be involved. **Matt:** He follows a lot of stories that are close to his heart. It's a typical *Countryfile* episode, with lots of different individual films.

What filming did you do with him?

Julia: I interview the Prince.

Matt: Well, to start with I visited a healthy eating project he's connected to at Carshalton Boys Sports College in south London. The idea is that if you have good food in your stomach you concentrate much better. Since the project started, exam pass marks have shot up. They keep chickens and have an allotment on site.

What else did you get up to?

Matt: I did some hedge laying with him at Highgrove. Camilla, HRH the

Duchess of Cornwall, was also there because she was judging how well everyone was doing with their hedges. Like Charles, she's an incredible fan of the show. She brought along one of the two dogs she's adopted from Battersea Dogs Home, a lovely little Jack Russell. We didn't

stand on ceremony and the whole atmosphere was incredibly relaxed. We all just sat around on straw bales, chatting away and eating hot soup.

What did you talk about?

Matt: My family has an organic farm in Durham, so we have a very similar ethos of farming. I chatted to him about all sorts of stuff. I'm actually going to buy some sheep from him!

Julia: I didn't know that! I'm sure Matt's got a good deal.

Matt: We haven't settled on a price yet.

Now we've got to know each other, hopefully we can sort out a nice deal!

Julia: I bet the negotiations will be fun, because I'm sure the Prince is a very good businessman and Matt always likes a bargain.

So, Matt, are you still closely involved with the farm?

Matt: Yes, it's a family farm and I get back for the bigger jobs like shearing and also help out with lambing. I get

back as much as I can. I have a young family and it's important for me to get them up to the farm so they experience a similar upbringing to mine.

Spring has finally arrived – is it your favourite time of year?

Julia: Yes, I absolutely adore spring. I find the harsh winter incredibly hard, which must be because of my Greek background. There's an inner me that was built for sunshine!

Matt: Yes, it's a wonderful time of year and it's lovely having more daylight. I like the freshness of spring and seeing all the new life. We've got a lot of ancient woodland on the farm, so you can suddenly see the colours changing and you start hearing birds singing.

Why is *Countryfile* so popular?

Matt: It's become a bit of a phenomenon since it moved to a Sunday primetime slot. I think that for people living in cities it's their window into the countryside.

Julia: The show has lasted for 25 years because it deals with issues that are relevant to the whole country. A lot of celebrities have told me it's their guilty pleasure on a Sunday night, but what's guilty about it? You should be proud to be a fan!

DAVID HOLLINGSWORTH

Countryfile: A Royal Appointment is previewed on pages 42-43



'Countryfile's terrific!'

On the show, Prince Charles talks about how he enjoys watching it – and becoming a granddad at 64

Why did you guest edit *Countryfile*?

Because it's a terrific programme! My wife also enjoys it enormously. It has a jolly good weather forecast, too.

When did you first fall in love with the countryside?

I've just always loved it. I think it's

probably because I've found myself happiest there, whether I'm in Scotland at Balmoral, or in Norfolk at Sandringham. And walking is a terribly important thing for me – rather like some people need a cigarette, I need a walk.

'We need to think what kind of world we're handing on to our successors, particularly grandchildren'



Changing seasons: The grandfather clock is ticking for Kate, William and Prince Charles

What are your hopes and fears for the future of the countryside?

We need to think what kind of world we're handing on to our successors, particularly grandchildren. So if you think of it in those terms it should make us reflect a little on the way we do things, so we don't ruin it for them. That's why it's so important to work in harmony with nature – it's a great deal more powerful than us.



Cheers! Bubbly Matt and Julia add another landmark to their files

Photographed for TV Times by Dan Goldsmith

Why did you adopt organic farming methods?

Because I felt that using so many chemicals and artificial fertilisers is unsustainable in the long run. I also wanted to find a way of improving soil conditions naturally. The cunning part is to blend the best of the ancient with the best of the modern.

Is it true that the thought of becoming a grandfather later this year makes you feel old?

Of course it does to a certain extent because you can't believe that suddenly this is beginning to happen in your life. It's a lovely thought and I look forward enormously to that relationship with a grandchild.

Countryfile: A brief history

1988 *Countryfile* is first broadcast on 24 July, replacing *The Farming Programme*. Some farmers aren't too happy about the new upstart!

1989 After 17 years on *Newsround*, John Craven joins as the new host.

1998 The show celebrates its 500th edition, with John still at the helm.

2001 Ben Fogle joins as a new presenter, while Cotswold farmer Adam Henson also becomes a regular part of the team.

2009 The series is moved to a new primetime Sunday evening slot. Matt Baker and Julia Bradbury lead the presenting team.

2011 Clare Balding temporarily replaces Julia while she's away on maternity leave.