

Sexton Blake Party

December 14 1967

The Press Kit

1. The Story of Sexton Blake in 1968
2. Seventy Five Years of Blake
3. The Television Blake in picture from Rediffusion TV
4. The very first picture of Blake, 1904
5. The first new picture story of Blake in VALIANT, January 1968
6. Guest List

For further information on Sexton Blake in the printed word:
Leonard Matthews of Fleetway is here.

For further information on merchandising: Garry Thorne of
Fleetway is here.

David Hughes, head of publicity for Rediffusion TV, is a guest.

Alastair Scott Johnson, who produced the BBC Radio Blake series,
is a guest.

Shirley Long PRO

For Sixty Eight It's SEXTON BLAKE

Sexton Blake has been one of the world's most popular and famous fictional detectives for exactly 74 years and in 1968 he will be riding high in all media with a fame and a coverage he has never had, even in his successful career. Here's what's happening to Blake:-

In Fleetway's weekly VALIANT, issue dated January 13 1968, Sexton Blake returns to where he began - in the pages of a boys' paper, this time in the modern-style picture story.

Later in 1968, the Sexton Blake Annual, devoted to his new adventures, will be published by Fleetway, in picture story and text. Deans, the children's publishers, are bringing out Blake in hard cover for the young market.

For five years, Blake has been doing fine in paperback novels for the adult market, and 1968 will see a big new deal through Howard Baker Ltd., for a further series of paperbacks and a hard cover series for the adult library trade.

In the printed word it's all happening for Blake in 1968.

Two character merchandising ventures have enlisted Blake. Children who buy a brand of bubble gum can collect cards which form a Sexton Blake picture story in colour. And the Lone Star toy people are marketing a 'Sexton Blake Detection Kit'.

In television, one of the big rating successes of the season is Rediffusion's Sexton Blake series, starring Laurence Payne as Blake, with Roger Foss as Tinker the immortal office boy, and Dorothea Phillips as Mrs. Bardell, not forgetting, Pedro the Bloodhound.

B.B.C. Radio, who broadcast Blake series in the thirties, brought the character back in an up-dated sixties version with Blake played by William Franklyn, for a 17-week run on the Home Service.

The intriguing thing about Sexton Blake today is his two-level appeal. In VALIANT and SEXTON BLAKE ANNUAL, Fleetway are in what can be called the traditional channel, the Blake of his heyday in the twenties and thirties. Rediffusion TV's series follows this, with Blake in a 1928 vintage Rolls Royce, with Tinker his cockney office boy assistant, and homely Mrs. Bardell, the Baker Street housekeeper. Deans hardback series will also be set in the thirties.

The paperback Blake is a sophisticated up-dated version. He has a glamorous secretary, Paula Dane, a flat in London's Berkeley Square, travels in Jags and jets, uses the way-out scientific gimmicks of the Bond - UNCLE world. William Franklyn in the B.B.C. radio version followed this up-to-date path.

But on either level, younger generation or adult, Sexton Blake is a winner. In TV, radio, picture strip books, and character merchandising the world's most famous detective swings into his 75th year in style.

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Shirley Long PRO

Sexton Blake - 74 Years Young

It was exactly 74 years ago this week, that those bustling, challenging, young Harmsworth Brothers in their Tudor Street office published a story called 'The Missing Millionaire' in their boys' paper 'The Halfpenny Marvel Library', issue dated December 20 1893.

The hero of this gripping yarn was a new detective named Sexton Blake. The author was billed as Hal Meredeth. He was, in fact, Henry Blyth, a well-established author, playwright and journalist. Alfred Harmsworth, a dynamic talent spotter, had read a crime series by Blyth in a Sunday newspaper and sent for him to write for his new boys' weeklies. What the future Lord Northcliffe wanted was good strong material, something to off-set the "penny bloods" of that gaslight and Hansom cab era.

Three more men now come into the story of the origins of Blake. One was Somers J. Summers, the 18 year-old editor of the Halfpenny Marvel (Yes, 18! Alfred believed in youth). The other was W. H. Maas who took over the Marvel when Summers became editor of the booming 'Answers', and a little later William H. Back, who was to become one of the great pioneers of Harmsworth's boys' paper market.

These men, with Alfred Harmsworth in the active background, created the name and character of Sexton Blake and launched him on his career. The original Henry Blyth wrote only seven Blake stories, for he died in 1898. After a while, the Blake character, which was not then a weekly or regular series was switched to the 'Union Jack', and in 1904, William H. Back made him a regular weekly feature, and in 1915 started him in 'Sexton Blake Library', an early form of paper-back publishing. In Union Jack, and later, Detective Weekly, Blake ran on in triumph, generations grew up on him.

It has been calculated that there have been 3,500 original Sexton Blake stories, amounting to more than a thousand million words.

As early as 1909, there was a stage Blake, and another in the nineteen-thirties. The first Blake film was in 1914, a silent, with several more in the talkie era. The B.B.C. put him on the air in the pre-war period and there was even a gramophone record of a Blake adventure.

The Fleetway periodicals sold throughout the British Commonwealth and Empire, taking Blake, Tinker and Pedro with them. His stories have been syndicated to the U.S. and Canada, Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Finland, Holland, Spain, Italy, France. Sexton Blake was, and still is, international.

A long list of writers took on where Henry Blyth had to leave off. In the great days of the twenties and thirties, when Blake was being issued from Fleetway House, a dozen fine practitioners of crime fiction told his stories and dipped into his famous casebooks. One of the most prolific was George Hamilton Teed. Although the character of Blake was fixed and firm, each of the writers brought a particular talent and power of invention to the tales: Anthony Skene, Robert Murray, Gwyn Evans, Rex Hardinge, Anthony Parsons, John G. Brandon, Gilbert Chester, E. S. Brooks, Lewis Jackson kept Blake going as freshly as ever. Donald Stuart was one of their number and he is still writing Blake, he did the present B.B.C. radio version. In his early days, John Creasey, was a Blake man, too.

When the picture story technique took hold of boys' papers, Sexton Blake translated happily into it, and continued until some five years ago. Then, Howard Baker, his Editor and writer in Fleetway, took him off into paperback novel publishing in the up-dated swinging sixties style, with glamorous Paula Dane instead of the homely cockney Tinker.

And now, he is back to Fleetway in VALIANT, and still solving cases in all other media.

Sexton Blake, Detective, is the youngest 75 year-old in publishing.

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The first published
portrait of Sexton
Blake (from "UNION
JACK", May 4, 1894).

VALIANT COVER

SEXTON BLAKE ★ SEXTON BLAKE ★ SEXTON BLAKE

VALIANT

EVERY MONDAY

Australia 10 cents ; New Zealand 10 cents ; South Africa 10 cents ; Rhodesia 1/- ;
East Africa 1.00 cents ; West Africa 1/- ; Malta 9d. ; Canada 15 cents ; Malaysia 40
cents ; Danmark Kr. 1.50 ; Deutschland Dm. .55 ; Espana Pes. 10.0 ; Nederland Fl. .65 ;
Norge Kr. 1.25 ; Portugal Esc. 5.0 ; Suomi Fm. .60 ; Sverige Kr. .75 ; Italia L. 120.

13th JANUARY, 1968

7^d

THE HOUSE OF A THOUSAND PERILS!



This thrill-packed
picture-story featuring
ace TV detective
SEXTON BLAKE
and his young
assistant, **TINKER**
-STARTS INSIDE

THIS SPINE-CHILLING NEW ADVENTURE STARTS TODAY!



SEXTON BLAKE

and the *HOUSE of a THOUSAND PERILS*



OUR STORY STARTS IN THE LAKE DISTRICT WHERE, ON A STEEP, ROCKY FACE, TWO FIGURES SLOWLY DESCENDED WITH SURE FOOTHOLDS AND STEELY FINGER GRIPS...



THEY WERE SEXTON BLAKE, THE WORLD-FAMOUS DETECTIVE, AND HIS YOUNG COCKNEY ASSISTANT, TINKER!



PHEW, I'M ENJOYING THIS, TINKER—IT'S A LONG TIME SINCE WE'VE BEEN ABLE TO GET AWAY FOR A HOLIDAY!

YEAH, GUV'NOR! AN' IT'LL BE ANOTHER WEEK BEFORE WE HAVE TO RESUME DETECTING, SO TO SPEAK!

SUDDENLY A LOW, URGENT VOICE BEHIND THEM MADE THEM SPIN ROUND...



I'M SORRY TO HEAR THAT, GENTLEMEN—AND I ONLY HOPE THAT I CAN MAKE YOU CHANGE YOUR MINDS!

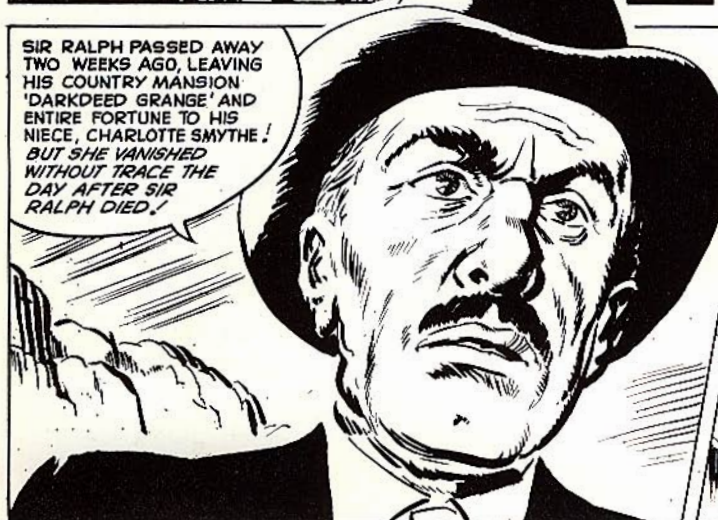
WHO THE...?



I KNOW YOU—YOU'RE LOMAX WEBB, SIR RALPH HARLEY'S LAWYER! WHAT BRINGS YOU OUT HERE LOOKING FOR US?

BAD NEWS, I'M AFRAID, MR. BLAKE...

SIR RALPH PASSED AWAY TWO WEEKS AGO, LEAVING HIS COUNTRY MANSION 'DARKDEED GRANGE' AND ENTIRE FORTUNE TO HIS NIECE, CHARLOTTE SMYTHE! BUT SHE VANISHED WITHOUT TRACE THE DAY AFTER SIR RALPH DIED!



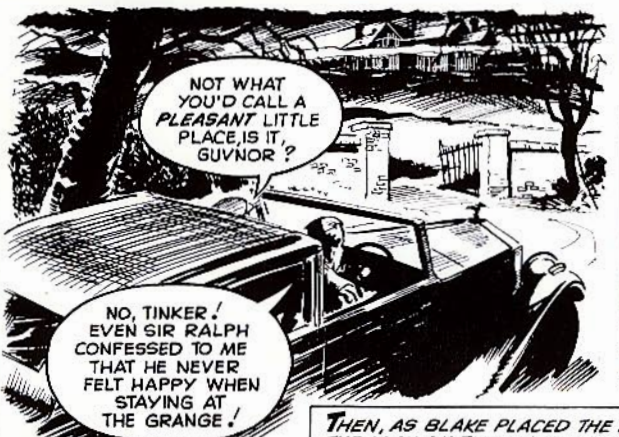
FEAR FLASHED ACROSS LOMAX WEBB'S GAUNT FACE...



LOCAL PEOPLE BELIEVE THAT DARKDEED GRANGE IS HAUNTED—AND SOME SAY THEY HAVE SEEN CHARLOTTE'S FACE AT THE WINDOWS, CALLING FOR HELP!



AFTER RETURNING TO THEIR HOTEL TO PACK, SEXTON BLAKE AND TINKER, TOGETHER WITH THEIR FAITHFUL BLOODHOUND, PEDRO, WERE SOON SPEEDING TOWARDS DARKDEED GRANGE, WHICH WAS SITUATED IN THE DEEP COUNTRYSIDE OF DORSET. FINALLY, AS NIGHT BEGAN TO CAST ITS LONG SHADOWS, THEY APPROACHED THE SINISTER BUILDING, PERCHED ON A HILLTOP SHROUDED IN AN EERIE CLOAK OF MIST...



WHAT DEADLY DANGERS LIE AHEAD FOR THE ACE DETECTIVE? SEE NEXT MONDAY'S NERVE-TINGLING CONTINUATION!

SEXTON BLAKE PARTY December 14 1967

GUESTS:

Mr. Alastair Scott Johnson	- Producer of the BBC Radio Series.
Mr. Donald Stuart	- Blake writer - scripted BBC Series.
Mr. David Hughes	- Head of Publicity, Rediffusion TV.
Mr. Lewis Rudd	- Rediffusion TV.
Mr. J. Matthews	- Dean & Son, Publishers.
Mr. Bill Howard Baker	- Blake editor and writer: paperback and hard-cover publishing.
Mr. Brian Doyle	- Historian of boys' fiction.
Mr. W. O. G. Lofts	- Historian of boys' fiction.
Miss Angela Croft	- Toy Trader
Mr. Edward Simmons	- Games & Toys
Mr. T. V. Thomas	- British Toys
Mr. Charles Down	- Smith's Trade News
Mr. Peter Williams	- Retail Newsagent
Mr. George Adamson	- National Newsagent
Mr. Don Billett	- Advertiser's Weekly
Mr. Ken Viney	- World's Press News
Mr. Dennis Ward	- Retail Newsagent
Mr. Rod Allen	- Television Mail
Mr. John London	- Evening News
Mr. David Wainwright	- Evening News
Mr. Roger Berthoud	- Evening Standard
Mr. James Pettigrew	- Sunday Mirror
Mr. William Hickey	- Daily Express
Mr. Barry Norman	- Daily Mail
Mr. Mike Ewing	- Daily Mirror
Mr. John Edwards	- Daily Sketch
Mr. Henry Fielding	- Sun

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Mr. R. Phillips	- Assistant Managing Director
Mr. Leonard Matthews	- Editorial Director, Juvenile Publications
Mr. Gordon Davies	- Director
Mr. Francis King	- Director
Mr. Jack Le Grand	- Editor of VALIANT
Mr. Eric Parker	- Blake artist and illustrator
Mr. Robert Bex	- Advertisement Manager, Juvenile Publications
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Mr. Peter Mason	- Manager of the Legal Department
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Mr. Cyril Myerscough	- Copywriter (Publicity Dept.)