

Daily Express
Sexton Blake v. the man from Dartmoor

By MICHAEL CHARLESTON

EVEN Sexton Blake might have been puzzled by yesterday's Mystery of the Missing Milk at a lonely Dartmoor farmhouse called Bachelor's Hall.

Certainly 57-year-old Mr. Rex Hardinge, author of a score of novels under his own and pen names of "Capstan" and "Charles Wrexe" thought it distinctly odd.

A moment before he had made tea in the kitchen of his writing retreat near Princetown, poured in the milk and retired to his study to drink the cup of tea.

When he went back to the kitchen for a second cup, the milk was gone—every drop.

But it was no puzzle for blue-eyed, white-haired Mr. Hardinge. He is one of the last members of the original team of Sexton Blake writers. Until a couple of years ago he helped Blake through hundreds of tricky cases.

The clues

Had not the radio said a prisoner had escaped from Dartmoor? And—on closer inspection—not only had the milk disappeared, but butter, sugar, and a loaf of bread had gone too.

And a back window was swinging in the breeze.

The man who wrote books like "Blazing Colts," "Forbidden Territory," and "Murder on the Veldt" took one look at the fearsome collection of swords, Gurkha knives, and African swords decorating his walls.

Then he looked quickly away called his spaniel and walked one and a half miles into Princetown to get the police.

'No hero'

He told me: "The heroes in my stories would doubtless have done the most wonderful things but I was no hero."

Police Constable Philip Palmer and two warders found the drenched, exhausted prisoner, 32-year-old Guilio Improta, also known as Nicholas Mendoza, shivering a couple of hundred yards from Bachelor's Hall.

He had paid the price for crossing the path of a thriller writer.

He still had two-thirds of the loaf and a little butter uneaten. He made no effort to run away or resist. He thought he was at Ashburton, 14 miles away.

But in 24 hours of liberty he had gone round in circles. The jail was just two miles off—over the brow of the hill.

*F. Vernon-Lay
 is sending you
 one about
 HANK SANIAD Bell*



Blake—super detective.

SEXTON BLAKE —WITHOUT THE SEX..

HERE is an announcement to thrill and delight boys from seven to seventy:

Sexton Blake, veteran private eye, who went into semi-retirement two years ago, will ride again.

The return of Sexton Blake, in half-a-crown paperback version, is destined for February 5, next year.

Then, from offices in High Holborn, London, Mayflower Books will present "Murderer At Large" with Sexton, aided by his sturdy, faithful assistant, Tinker, stalking the murderer.

What a smile of bliss and joy crossed my old uncle's face when I gave him the news.

HE remembers Blake of the 1890s. A poor man's Sherlock Holmes. An eagle-nosed, gentlemanly figure in silk dressing gown beside crackling fire in a Baker-street flat eating buttered crumpets and solving crimes most dastardly.

He remembers Blake of the Twenties showing lively interest in damsels in diaphanous nighties.

He recalls Blake of the Thirties and Forties. More serious now. His responsible old self again. Court-ting danger for King and country rather than the ladies.

He's a bit sad about Blake of the Fifties and early Sixties. For then Blake was revamped. He was moved from Baker Street to a chromium-plated office in Berkeley Square and acquired a leggy, blonde secretary, Paula Dane.

UNCLE went off Blake a bit then. Sexton was too sexy by half.

The then publishers of Blake's daring deeds got wind of my uncle's disenchantment. Readership started slacking off. Sexton Blake, it was decided must be retired.

This was done in 1963 by leaving Blake and the provocative Paula lying on golden sands in Honolulu and idly wondering whether they should marry.

Mayflower Books are having none of it. Sexton's their boy now. NOT married to Paula, for all her winning ways, NOT retiring from deeds most daring.

THE man mainly responsible for urging Blake out of his retirement is a quietly-spoken Irishman of 38, Bill Howard Baker, one of hundreds of writers who have documented Blake's adventures.

He said: "The new Blake will be a compromise between the solid, sturdy character of Baker-street and the streamlined character of Berkeley-square.

"Tinker will be a smoother version of his old guttersnipe self. And Paula, the fateful Paula, won't figure half as much in Blake's life."

Scottish writer and Blake fan, E. S. Turner, summed up Blake like this:

"Nail him down in a crate and throw him off the bridge at Westminster and while you are still dusting your hands and saying, 'That's that, you'll feel his automatic in your back.'"

Blake, out of retirement, is just that.

SHEILA DUNCAN

Rebirth of a good sleuth

SEXTON BLAKE, the famous detective who started life more than 70 years ago in the pages of the magazine The Marvel, was "retired" in 1963 to the deep regret of many readers round the world. Now the indomitable sleuth springs to life again in a new series of books published in Britain and edited by W. Howard Baker, who wrote a number of the later Sexton Blake stories himself.

Interviewed by Gordon Snell in the BBC World Service programme "Here and Now," Mr Baker made it clear that Blake—unlike some of the distinctly "grey" moral characters of later fictional detectives—would stick to the standards and values he has always stood for. But the adventures and problems in which he was involved would be very much of today.

In addition to his very large following in Britain and the English-speaking countries of the Commonwealth, Sexton Blake has many admirers in India, South-East Asia, West and East Africa and South America, judging by sales of the books. The languages into which the stories have been translated include Hindi, Urdu, Tamil and Malay.

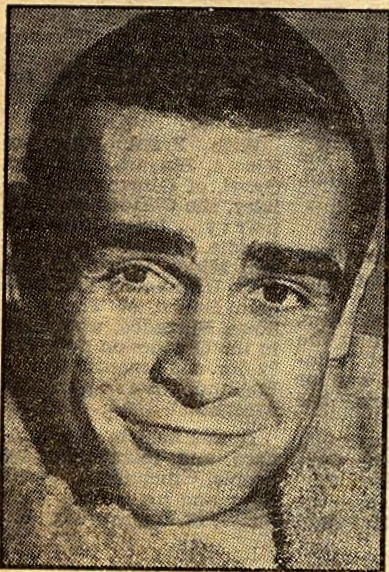
Since originally Blake was described as being around 40 years old, by literal calculation he would now be a venerable 112, but age has done nothing to impair his resource and resilience.

Move over 007, it's Blake!

James Bond can look to his morals . . . the great Sexton Blake is back in business. Villains are about to be unmasked; cads will get their comeuppance.

But maidens in distress will be fully protected.

Blake, who has been operating as a



SEAN CONNERY—The film Bond

gentleman detective since 1893, is making a comeback.

Mayflower Books in London are launching him on a series of paperback adventures.

Blake fans all over the world are shouting local equivalents of: "He's the greatest."

In Sydney this week one of them, Mr. Vic Colby, 48, a PMG engineer, added: "This is wonderful news."

Credible

Mr. Colby believes he has the world's largest collection of Sexton Blake stories — 4000.

He is an accepted authority on Blakeiana and points out that at least 200 authors over the years have written more than 200 million words about the detective.

He believes Blake will endure long after Bond has been forgotten.

He sees Blake's main strength in his credibility, that he doesn't rely on sex and violence and that he can be read by all the family.

"He is," Mr. Colby said, "a kindly man who relentlessly pursues criminals in the name of justice."



BLAKE
in 1893



BLAKE
1965 style

"He has the true spirit of adventure."

Modernising of Sexton Blake in the '50s caused uproar among the detective's fans.

But Mr. Colby believes that the new Blake will be shifted back into Baker Street and be more of his old traditional self.

Imagine, if you can, James Bond telling Dr. No: "Your cunningly erected edifice of fraud has now collapsed and you stand a good chance of being involved fatally in its ruins."

Worse still, imagine the woman-chasing Mr. Bond reflecting: ". . . If I could succeed in winning the affections of Lillie Ray I should account myself the luckiest of earthly mortals. Bah! I'll not trouble the office any more today . . ."

But that's our lantern-jawed bachelor boy, Sexton. It's the villains he's after.