

BE SAILING YOU: THE RAFT SCENE



The Prisoner's hazardous sea shoot - nautical log recorded by Roger Langley.

In Many Happy Returns, the raft and boat section of the story makes up one of the longest scenes in the Prisoner series. Apart from some episodes with static set action, such as Once Upon a Time and Fall Out, the seafaring sequences in Returns, from casting off the raft in the Village, to No. 6 making landfall near Beachy Head on England's south coast, lasts for over eleven minutes, nearly a quarter of the episode's duration. Returns was one of the original batch of episodes, along with Arrival, Chimes, Free, Dance, Checkmate and Hammer.

As the prisoner pushes his craft away from shore with a pole, the Stone Boat is in view. The sight of the structure is ironic, reminding No. 6 that the vessel is of no use to him and that a rudimentary raft represents his only means of escape, although putting him at the mercy of the waves and the elements. The Village black cat looks on, hopefully wishing the amateur sailor good luck. The animal belonged to one of the local extras and was also used for the next episode Dance Of The Dead.

Filming of the episode's scenes at sea took place at Abersoch, about twenty miles from Portmeirion. From amateur cine footage, the location can be seen as offshore near St. Tudwal's Island, about a kilometre off the coast. The quality of the screen grabs in this article reflects the original film's age and shooting done with a domestic hand-held camera. There are close ups of Patrick McGoohan on the makeshift raft, which was attached by ropes to a seagoing boat, carrying members of the film crew.

The second unit included assistant director Ernie Morris, cameraman Robert Monks and production manager Bernie Williams. McGoohan is seen variously sitting on a crate, lying down 'unconscious', having a cigarette break, or grinning at something being said. On board the raft are some 'borrowed' shop products, reminding viewers of the long reach of the Village, such as cans of food and even Village sewing needles. The latter provided a compass, set in a jar of oil, with its penny farthing logo, created back at the studio art department by Jack Shampan's assistant, Chris Cook.