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# TV TIMES





# THE PRISONER'S SECRET REVEALED

The arrival of a helicopter caused a stir and brought a lot of people out to see what was going on. Here it is watched by "bathing belles" from the hotel garden

**T**HE beautiful village in which *The Prisoner* is held captive . . . where is it?

This question has tantalised viewers. They seem more interested in locating the spot on the map than puzzling out why *The Prisoner*, Patrick McGoohan, is in company with brainwashed people.

Well, it's a tiny village perched by the sea in Tremadoc Bay.

Its Italian bell tower, which dominates the village, is in sharp contrast to the typical North Wales scene.

It is called . . . **PORTMEIRION**. And thousands of people know where *The Prisoner* is being held.

As No. 6, McGoohan, the actor, would love to be told where he is. As McGoohan, the master-mind behind the series, he made sure no one revealed the name of the place.

But he did not count on the viewing sleuths. Shoals of letters have arrived at *TV Times*. All guessed the location correctly.

For many it was a honeymoon spot. For others Portmeirion holds happy holiday memories.

Patrick, too, has holidayed there. And it is a favourite hide-away for writers or actors learning their lines.

Mr. Trevor Williams, manager of the Portmeirion Hotel, said: "Many actors have come here. The late Charles Laughton stayed in the village when



he was playing at Stratford-on-Avon. Ingrid Bergman was a guest when on location for the film 'The Inn of the Sixth Happiness.'

"Alastair Sim and Maggie Smith are among the regular theatrical visitors, and John Osborne likes to retreat here to write."

Portmeirion, with its privacy, is a far cry from *The Prisoner's* village of all-seeing television camera spy-eyes. Those Mini-Mokes whizz about the village in the series, but in reality visitors leave their cars in the hotel car park.

The giant ballroom which captures escapees and whisks them back to No. 2 is peacefully shadowed in the globe which the statue of Atlas holds on his muscular shoulders in a peaceful square.

Portmeirion responded bravely to the noise and bustle of the television film makers.

"The helicopter caused a stir and brought the locals out to see what was going on," said Miss Mary Roberts, secretary to Mr. Clough Williams-Ellis,

by INNES GRAY



Patrick McGoohan on location. The village is a catalogue of classical architecture



This is No. 2's house. The star of *The Prisoner* looks around outside from the balcony

the 84-year-old Welsh architect who designed Portmeirion.

"Some of the local people were enlisted as extras in the crowd scenes. We were all invited to see the films at the cinema in Portmadoc. It was quite fascinating."

"There were rather mixed feelings here," said Mr. Wil-

liams-Ellis. "All those under 50 welcomed the television people and thought it was great. Those over 50 regarded them as intruders."

Portmeirion is a splendid choice as the setting for a series founded in fantasy.

It's a dream village: Mr. Williams-Ellis' dream.

Mr. Williams-Ellis is a crusader on behalf of Beautiful Britain. His entry in "Who's Who" lists the organisations which he assists to make Britain beautiful.

His obsession with the loveliness of the rural countryside led him to build Portmeirion in 1926 on land he owned.

"I wanted to prove that a beautiful site could be exploited inoffensively and that architectural good manners could be good business," he said.

"I wanted to provide a living museum, mixing my own concoctions with distinguished architectural pieces from elsewhere."

He built his ideal village around an existing mansion, now the Portmeirion Hotel. Then he continued building . . . houses, cottages, discreet shops. All built in differing styles of architecture to prove that the "buildings of the world could live in harmony."

The walls are pink or blue. Spires stab the sky . . . steeply-pitched roofs huddle together.

From Easter to October there is a demand for the 120 places that Portmeirion offers each week to holidaymakers.

They can stay in the hotel or in the cottages and houses sprinkled around the village.

Portmeirion is still incomplete after 40 years.

When the holidaymakers leave, the builders move in to expand the beauty of Mr. Williams-Ellis' ideas.

Now the filming is over . . . the excitement has evaporated. The only people left in Portmeirion are the gardener, the builders and the half-dozen families.



by Anthony Davis

**W**HAT has happened to the commercials on ITV? Why have they got so dull?

There was a time when commercials were as much a part of the viewing entertainment as programmes. That was the time when there were classic cartoons like the Murraymints ones and the "Don't forget the *TV Times*" ads featuring the hen-pecked George.

That was the time when there were jingles like the "Going Shell" of Bing Crosby that were pop songs in their own right. (Some were, in fact, played at dances; executives of National Benzole were horrified at a staff party when the band struck up for dancing with, "The Esso sign means happy motoring!")

But those days have gone. It is not just that the novelty of commercials has worn off. The thinking behind them seems tired.

There is too little imagination and invention. Too much hard selling. There is the irritating repetition of hackneyed words like newer, bigger, whiter and improved.

There is the overworked scientific formula routine. There is the insultingly incredible suggestion that a particular petrol enables one to avoid traffic jams, that chocolate bars or shoes make one walk on air, that cigars bring girls flocking and that a new piece of kitchen equipment brings a wife close to fainting with delight.

There are too many shots of inanely smiling families sitting down to meals and dribbling food down their chins.

All repetitive, tired, dull.

Let's get back to commercials that entertain. The only ads, with any degree of imagination and humour that I have seen recently are the ones featuring that sad-faced double act, Clement Freud and Henry, the bloodhound. Hurrah for them!

**I**NTO *Coronation Street* this week comes Elsie Tanner's mother-in-law. And, without waiting to see her, women fans of the programme will sigh and say, "Poor Elsie!"

Jokes about mothers-in-law must be among the oldest in the world.

A comedian friend insists that the ancient Britons would have made gags like this:

Wife: "Shall I take my

mother some flowers?"

Husband: "How about some rock plants?"

The sophisticated modern version of which, is:

Wife: "I thought of giving my mother something electric for her birthday."

Husband: "How about a chair?"

Max Miller was probably the greatest exponent of mother-in-law insults, with gags like: "My mother-in-law is coming to stay, so I've redecorated the spare room—with travel posters."

And: "I knew my mother-in-law had arrived; I saw her broomstick in the umbrella stand."

In fact, mothers-in-law are the most maligned women in the world. Some may be omnipresent, inquisitive and interfering.

But there are countless more whose unobtrusive help and advice have been invaluable to newly married couples.

And how many marriages could function without mothers-in-law ready to baby-sit at short notice and to stand in during illness?

**T**HIS Monday's D. H. Lawrence production *None of That* is concerned with bull-fighting. And though it doesn't show any, that fact alone will guarantee protests from bull-fighting's more rabid British opponents.

Certainly bull-fighting is cruel. It involves the torture and death of animals. But so does hunting, which arouses comparatively little feeling, is described as part of the British country tradition and is regarded as a fit subject for Christmas cards.

While we permit and glamorise hunting, we have no right to criticise foreigners.

**I**MET a well-known TV actor lugging a large suitcase. He told me: "It's full of clothes to be altered. I've put on weight."

I was not surprised. He had just ended a long run in a TV series. And I have a theory that men featured in such series usually put on pounds during the course of it; that most of them look much fleshier of face and figure in the last episode compared with the first.

The reason is simple. A year or more making a series, with a fat pay cheque coming in regularly, is the nearest most actors get to security.