

FROM MANY HAPPY RETURNS

Bernie Williams recalled the seaborne shoot as a daunting operation. The boat which had been hired (*seen again in Checkmate as the MS Polotska*) was the MS Breda, a useful size vessel, but somewhat small for towing a large and heavy wooden raft (*see last picture*). Its owner was Harold Beer, husband of Marjorie, one of the local 'extras' and he was paid ten pounds for providing his boat. The crew had to venture a fair way out, in order to avoid the coastline coming into shot.

Scarily, the raft began dragging the boat down at the back, causing it to start taking in water. The engine began to strain, before packing up and catching fire (*mirroring the smoke seen billowing from a cabin in the Returns episode*). Williams took the decision that he had to cut the raft loose, but having done so, realised that the structure had no lights and could create a hazard to shipping if it floated out into the Irish Sea. Equally challenging was the fact that on board MS Breda the crew were by now suffering from sea sickness, as the water was so choppy.

Eventually, the skipper managed to douse the fire, restart the engine and get the crew back to shore, by which time it was dark. Once on dry land, Williams called the coastguards and Royal Air Force planes were sent out at dawn (*again mirroring action at the end of the episode*) to look for the drifting raft, although it was never found. The production manager reflected that the shoot was the most terrifying undertaking of his life. Despite the harrowing experiences, Williams regarded Many Happy Returns as one of his favourite shows and thought it was a great story.

Conversely, McGoohan never reported any problems in interviews, probably preferring to remain professional and wanting to present The Prisoner as a top quality production. The original director of Returns, Michael Truman, had helmed more than ten episodes of McGoohan's earlier series, Danger Man and was therefore familiar with several members of the cast of The Prisoner. However, the new production was clearly not a continuation of the previous series and this led to Truman being unable to continue with the earlier format. McGoohan was unhappy with his work and fired him, taking on the direction of Returns himself, credited as Joseph Serf (*used again for A Change of Mind*).

