

LIFERS

'THE PRISONER OF PORTMEIRION'
shown on BBC TV, 24th July 2025,
in the 'OUR LIVES' 9th series.

As mentioned in this summer's Convention Report, the production company Media Atom filmed the weekend event. The finished half-hour documentary appeared on BBC TV in late July, a segment in the long-running series 'Our Lives'. Shown nearly sixty years since *The Prisoner* was first on UK TV, 'The Prisoner of Portmeirion' was just like an episode in Patrick McGoohan's cult show. Multiple clips from the series were shown, many of them cleverly intermingled with Six of One's enactments of scenes from the original episodes. With Annette Andre and Derren Nesbitt as special guests for the PortmeiriCon, the lively documentary offered a brilliant presentation of the colourful event, a combination of the picturesque North Wales resort, along with the involvement of society organisers and members, plus key moments from *The Prisoner*, all interspersed with footage of this year's event. The result was an excellent promotion of Portmeirion, Six of One and the classic 1960s TV show.



Dave Barrie, interviewed in Portmeirion; Sarah Jenkin delivering speech on the village Gloriette balcony.

The narration (by Rhian Blythe) began, attempting to explain for viewers what was appearing on their screens: 'Run by Six of One, it's a wacky weekend of dressing up, reenactments and unadulterated nostalgia.' Initially, organisers were shown in their home or work surroundings. Dave Barrie appeared first, riding a mini-railway in his garden, saying how, as a person, he liked to find out 'what's behind things', or 'how deep does that go?' He recalled originally watching the opening *Prisoner* episode with his family, after which he was 'hooked'.

Next up, librarian Sarah Jenkin, the society's archivist, recounted how what attracted her was 'the psychology and the sense of flamboyance and drama' in the episodes. Gary Murfin was then filmed, opening his garage to reveal his replica *Prisoner* sports car, reporting that he had been a member of the society organising team for four years and how he built the car himself; following in the footsteps of Number 6, with his self-constructed Lotus.



Gary Murfin and Craig Walter, being filmed for 'Our Lives'.

I think it is very exciting that Six of One is being recognized and honoured in this documentary airing on BBC 1. It feels like the producer and production crew captured an honest representation of your shared commitment, dedication, loyalty and passion. This is a rare opportunity to be seen and heard and perhaps garner an unlikely audience of curious minds. Be seeing you... Catherine McGoohan

Meurig Jones, Portmeirion's location manager, remarked how happy he was to have the annual convention taking place once again and at a later point was keen to show his collection of *Prisoner* souvenirs. Meanwhile, the narrator described Portmeirion as part folly and perfect film set. Archive interviews with Clough Williams-Ellis were shown briefly, with the added observation that 2025 marked a century since building work on the village first began.

Portmeirion admirer and musician Jools Holland was interviewed, recalling the Sixties and the era of the Beatles. He thought the resort was a 'fantastic idea', marvelling at 'the magic of Portmeirion'. He spoke of his having to watch *The Prisoner* 'over and over again,' it being 'a strange allegory.'

Dave Barrie remembered how he had received hundreds of replies in 1977, after his address was given on his regional TV channel, eventually seeing Six of One having 'more members than the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament.' Gary Murfin was drone-shot driving his Caterham Seven along the road leading to the convention venue, later recalling how he went to his first such event in 1995. Similarly, a pair of Mini Mokes were filmed on their way to the weekend celebration.

Portmeirion's Head painter Martin Couture was interviewed, commenting how he would not want to retire from his work, preferring to stay in the village. Martin also reflected how his father had taken part in the *Prisoner* filming on the beach, in 1966.



Christine Burgard and Roy Stambrow in the village; Ian French and Ant Brierley preparing for 'vote' scenes.

Organiser Craig Walter explained how he had been a society member for many years, he also being filmed, together with co-organisers and engaged couple, Roy Stambrow and Christine Burgard, setting up various rooms and moving furniture. Craig pointed out how the first, important task was to get the stage installed inside the Hercules Hall.

Portmeirion's sales manager Delyth Wyre remarked how every weekend was different in the resort, but smiled and revealed how she hadn't watched *The Prisoner*. Gwynedd Roberts, head groundsman, was interviewed, speaking about his work and how the resort was affectionately called 'the Welsh Riviera.'

Roy recalled how he had met Christine at the 2012 convention, both of them having long since moved to live in Wales. Meanwhile, the narrator announced how fans had travelled from across the country and all over the world to attend the convention. With the event underway, Dave welcomed members in the hall, praising the enthusiasm. *Prisoner* actor Derren Nesbitt was separately shown arriving, lauding the resort's views, adding how the event is 'fun.'

The voicing-over ended the Friday coverage by confirming that preparations were complete and the convention had become officially open. Saturday morning began with the vocal tones of Fenella Fielding announcing, 'Good morning all, it's another beautiful day.' Society members were thrilled to be 'actually in the place where it all happened', while the Royal Oakeley Brass band was playing from the Colonnade.

Clever matching-up of shots from the series and the convention showed the faithful recreation of *Prisoner* scenes. The society's German group's Marc Christiansen commented on the 'very special' nature of the series. A member from Florida was excited how after the weekend she could 'go back and watch the show and... think - I've been there.'

Ian French was seen, alongside fellow organiser Ant Brierley, encouraging the crowd to cheer and to shout slogans. Sarah described her role in enactments as, 'surfing the wave between terror and excitement.'

The *Free For All* parade was soon in full swing, with Gary reflecting on its reasoning in the episode, 'It's about the futility of elections.' Sarah on the balcony of the Gloriette was filmed delivering her speech, also commenting 'It's not just a re-enactment, it's a connection with people,' adding how she loved the energy. Next, she was being seen on the Stone Boat, campaigning in front of an election crowd of members. Finally, Sarah was in action on the apron of the Colonnade, performing a scene of the prisoner being slapped.



Annette Andre and Derren Nesbitt attending as the PortmeiriCon weekend's special guests.

The narrator's voice returned, '... the day goes without a hitch. Now it's time for the professionals.' Loud applause and cheering hailed the presence of the guests, with clips of their *Prisoner* appearance being shown. Annette Andre commented, 'We knew it was great. We didn't know until later years how good it was.' There was much laughter in the hall as she recalled how she asked fellow *It's Your Funeral* actor Derren Nesbitt 'what it was all about' and how 'he said he had no idea.' In a separate interview Derren reiterated how he'd felt, 'I didn't know what's going on,' although he had no doubt that McGoochan was a 'good actor.'

Events moved to the recreation of the 'human' chess game, with the 'Rover' sphere firstly being inflated. Next came the chess action, interspersed with shots from *The Prisoner*. Gary affirmed how members of the public have taken part and that 'anybody can join in,' as well as enthusing, 'we've got a lot of new members.' He explained how the chess game is 'all about metaphors, we're all pawns.' Lapel microphones facilitated shouted chess moves being relayed through speakers, around the village.

Following more coverage of the varied goings-on, the narrator commented, 'Another Six of One successful convention draws to an end, time for everybody to leave.' Dave summed up how 'people keep being drawn to it' (*The Prisoner*), celebrating how this was, remarkably, the 41st convention. There was time for a final gathering of members, on the piazza steps, as they inventively shouted, 'BBC-ing you!'

Credits appeared: 'Produced and directed by Sion Thomas,' with 'thanks to Six of One, Portmeirion and Medway Council,' while the *Prisoner* theme music was reprised. The mini-documentary had been a spectacular presentation, both in coverage of the convention and, particularly, embracing the fellowship of the society and its union with Portmeirion.

The coverage attested that 'there will be conventions for many years to come.' The overall weekend organisation was shown to be the product of many individuals' dedication to the event and *The Prisoner*, with great respect being shown to Portmeirion. 'The Prisoner of Portmeirion' was a perfect tribute and testimonial to the location, the society and especially the cult TV series, bonding all three together.



Final wave from the convention attendees. 'Our Lives' available on BBC iPlayer; photos © Media Atom and BBC TV.