

SAFFRON WALDEN HISTORICAL JOURNAL

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Carnival v Festival

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'TO-NIGHT' CAMERA LOOKS AT SKIFFLERS & EGGHEADS

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Six Hours Work For Five-Min. T.V. 'Spot'

"ABOUT FIVE MINUTES TELEVISION FILM TIME," ESTIMATED B.B.C. DIRECTOR, DON HOWARTH, WHEN QUESTIONED BY A "WEEKLY NEWS" REPORTER ABOUT THE RESULTS OF A "TO-NIGHT" TELEVISION FILM TEAM'S VISIT



'About five minutes television film time', estimated BBC Director, Don Howarth, when questioned by a *Weekly News* reporter about the results of a To-Night television film team's visit to Saffron Walden on Sunday. Intrigued by the reported 'split' between the Festival ('Eggheads') and Carnival ('Skiffle') committees, the organisers of the popular and often controversial BBC programme, sent investigator Fyfe Robertson to obtain the views of supporters of both sides and the views of the ordinary man and woman in the street. First to be interviewed was Tom Underwood. He claimed that 90 per cent of the people in the town supported the idea of a Carnival. 'The majority are against a Festival because it doesn't appeal to them,' he said. A lot of people objected to spending ratepayers' money on something which did not appeal to the majority of those who had paid the rates.'

Next to be interviewed was the carnival chairman, Councillor Birchall. He said the Carnival organisers could not reconcile themselves with the Festival programme. 'We are trying to cater for the majority', he explained. Of a population of almost 8,000, approximately 5-600 people were interested in a Festival type of programme. There was evidence, he said, of the support of the town for the Carnival by the fact that trades and business people had contributed over £600 in money and prizes, and the local Chamber of Trade had organised a shopping week to coincide with Carnival week. Two other passers-by, Mr F.W. Dyer and Mr A.W. Bass said they thought the idea of a Carnival was a good one. 'But this is a Conservative town, and I suppose people will want a Festival', added Mr Bass. In the afternoon the location shifted from the Market Square to Myddleton Place, where Councillor Wilson was interviewed. 'We of the Festival are offering music, singing, drama, opera, history, art – in fact something for everyone', he said. In reply to a question of 'why not run Carnival and Festival together?' Councillor Wilson retorted: 'We wanted to have a united effort, but the Carnival people broke away from us. They thought we were high brow but they will learn in time. We have intended to have a Festival week with a Carnival Saturday.'

For their last location the television team went to Fitch's Cafe, at London Road, to seek the opinions of the younger generation. There, Fyfe Robertson mingled with youngsters packed into a room in which an almost brand-new 'jute box' was supplying the most modern types of music. He selected four girls and one boy – Shirley Seaman and her sister Beryl from Littlebury, June Hunt and Doreen Power of Saffron Walden, and Barry Auger from Littlebury. All were in favour of the Carnival. 'Nothing very much ever happens in the town', said Beryl. She said she did not know much about musical concerts because she did not go to them. Barry said he did not like opera but confessed that he did not know much about it. Doreen confessed that she, too, did not know much about opera. She knew about rock 'n' roll, however, and enjoyed it. She thought she might enjoy one or two events in the programme offered by the Festival... 'The old folk run this town, that's what's wrong with it,' she added. The Festival programme is planned for Whit-Week and the Carnival programme for the week ending June 28th.'

NOTE: The image and text are ©Saffron Walden Weekly News 14 March 1958.

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