

Basler Fasnacht at the Swiss centre

Autor(en): **[s.n.]**

Objektyp: **Article**

Zeitschrift: **The Swiss observer : the journal of the Federation of Swiss Societies in the UK**

Band (Jahr): - **(1969)**

Heft 1564

PDF erstellt am: **12.07.2024**

Persistenter Link: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-689212>

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BASLER FASNACHT AT THE SWISS CENTRE

The ghosts of Leicester Square must have had a strange time for the last year and more. Such unusual people turn up at the Swiss Centre, sometime in new Swiss beach wear (remember the Swiss Cover Girl Competition), sometime in Edwardian attire (when Sherlock Holmes and his party breakfasted there before setting out for the Reichenbach Falls). And recently, the ghost fraternity was profoundly disturbed by the queerest creatures yet — masked figures with drums and fifes, imported direct from Basle. How did this come about?



The drums and fifes in the West End.

“PHOTOGRAPHY” the British monthly photo magazine with most colour pages sent three staff photographers to last year’s Basle Carnival. They were enthralled by the unusual spectacular event and took some 2,000 photos. The best of these appear in a ten-page feature of the current issue of the magazine.

The photos were all taken by R. Gee, J. Saunders and H. M. Ricketts.



Who would have thought that the masked figure on the right was Mr. Keller, U.K. Manager, Swissair, Basle Tourist Office President at the microphone.

At the same time, hundreds of photos — in colour and black and white — are on show at the Swiss Centre, all of them made by KODAK LTD. from the original negatives and colour transparencies. And a fine collection they are.

As if that were not enough to make the British visitor to the Centre familiar with the Carnival in Basle, the Centre Management also exhibited genuine costumes and provided special Carnival food. Some of the specialities served in the Centre Restaurants included a delicious brown flour soup, pork and veal dishes and *Fasnachtschüechli* — the writer never tasted better ones in Basle!

To mark the opening of the exhibition, a *Fasnacht z’Vieri* was given to invited guests. Nothing was missing, down to the shouting and leg-pulling by the masked figures, the music by the drums and fifes — only a non-Basler could possibly call it “noise”. The President of the Basle Tourist Office, Mr. A. Kienberger, and the Manager Mr. P. Gutzwiller, accompanied the group. It



The Swiss Ambassador and Madame R. Keller next to the Pearly Queen.

was not surprising that the latter was in costume, would he have had the courage to show himself in mufti, seeing that he had played such a part in the cancellation of the British Week in Basle a few months ago? Anyway, there he was resplendent as a “Waggis”; in good company, incidentally, for the indefatigable Manager of the Swiss National Tourist Office in London, Mr. A. Kunz, wore a fine outfit in red and white felt — a slightly under-the-weather *Bundeswaibel* — the *Waibel*, not Mr. Kunz, for his publicity mind was as alert as ever, and arrangements went smoothly as usual. Amongst the guests were the



The Pearly Queen and her Consort outside the Swiss Centre.



Pearly Queen and Consort of Hampstead in their beautiful traditional costumes covered in mother-of-pearl buttons. They were the elegant figures — but then a Basle Carnival costume *must* be grotesque.

One of the guests was Lord Arran. He is seen on the picture below just getting up. The Basle Tourist Office Manager is washing his hands and Mr. A. Kunz has a towel in his hands — thus his Lordship was spared the ordeal of shaking unwashed Swiss hands!



To the Swiss Centre Management goes the palm not only for the excellent food, but also for the efficient way their staff dealt with pounds and pounds of confetti which were showered over the visitors. By the time the restaurants opened for their usual evening business, all was well under control. But the tunes of the fifes and the rousing accompaniment of the drums lingered on in Leicester Square and in heart and mind of many a grateful "Heimwehbasler" — the writer included.

MM

(Photographs by courtesy of Swiss National Tourist Office.)

REGRETTED DEPARTURE FROM G.B.

It is sad that we have to report the departure for Yugoslavia of Mr. and Mrs. E. Burgaezzi. Ernst Burgaezzi has been appointed General Manager of Swissair in Yugoslavia, and we congratulate him on this new and important position.

Ernst Burgaezzi, citizen of Sevelen, attended the primary and secondary schools at Buchs, St. Gall. Subsequently, he served an apprenticeship with Danzas and Co.

Already as a young boy, he was well known in Eastern Switzerland as a keen sportsman, and one of his greatest achievements was the championship in the Alpine Combination (ski-ing). He then took part in the downhill races with David Zogg — then world champion — and Benni Fuhrer known by some of our readers from the famous film "Die Weisse Hölle am Piz Palü". During this period, the football club of Buchs (with Ernst's participation) had one of its most glorious times, for the whole season passed without losing one single match in the League Cup.

In 1935, Ernst Burgaezzi was transferred to Antwerp where he worked for two years for "Natural le Coultre". From Belgium, he moved straight to Belgrade to work for a Yugoslav transport company "Kosunaj Ltd".

The beginning was hard for him in that strange country where he had to learn an unusual language and to write in cyrillics. But only one year later, he was appointed Managing Director of another transport company "Transdanubius Ltd.", Belgrade. His career came to an abrupt end in 1941 when Hitler's Army invaded Yugoslavia. Some people may remember the brutal bombardment of Belgrade early one morning, without previous warning or declaration of war when, with one single stroke, some 25,000 citizens of Belgrade were killed. E.B. then moved to Zagreb where he temporarily helped the Swiss Consulate and Swiss Red Cross for whom he made some of the most daring trips to Switzerland to get medicine and vital vaccine for the Yugoslav population. On one of these trips, he lost his car in Graz during heavy bombardment, but nevertheless continued his journey to Switzerland to take back the badly needed supplies worth more than 1,300 Swiss francs. He received a special distinction from the U.S. Government in Washington for services rendered to American pilots captured in Yugoslavia.

In 1946, he married in Zagreb, but soon the young couple had to return to Switzerland due to the political situation in Yugoslavia. Their only daughter was born there. In 1948 Ernst Burgaezzi joined Swissair in Zurich and was transferred to London in 1949. He not only had a strong hand in the tremendous build-up of Swissair in the U.K., but he also took an active part in the life of the Swiss Colony where he was a member of the City Swiss Club, Nouvelle Société Helvétique, Swiss Mercantile Society, Swiss Rifle Association and "Schweizerbund" of which he was Vice-President for a time.

We shall miss the Burgaezzis very much, but we hope that their love of travel will bring them to London frequently. We wish Ernst Burgaezzi every success in his new position to which he will doubtless give the same devotion and personal care as he did in London. Mrs. Burgaezzi will be returning to her native country. May she find as much satisfying outlet for her marked artistic talents as she did in this country.

Ruza and Ernst — the best of luck to you both!

MM