

Yom Tov On Sea – A High Holy Day Story from Ruth Adams



A few words about what was normal at Yom Tov in times gone by.

When I was a very young child in the mid 1960s our family, along with other local Gants Hill families, used to spend some of September and in-between-Yom tov times in Cliftonville which is a beachside town near Margate, Kent. Many people did this.

We used to go to shul while we were there but would be able to play on the beach in the afternoons. Of course being England, and before global warming, we wore wellington boots, our new for Yom tov winter coats, (ideally last year's if we could fit into them) scarves and often gloves as it was always cold. My parents huddled behind windbreaks in deckchairs or sat on the sand on damp towels. I remember someone's Dad would usually organise a children's sandcastle competition which was fun.

There was an unusual tidal swimming pool in the sea, which is still there. It was square with three walls in the sea, and the fourth side was beach but sadly it was usually far too cold to do any more than paddle, still it could be useful when the tide went out. It usually seemed to be out.

We always stayed at Mrs Schwartzman's guest house in Cliftonville. Each morning, tea and rich tea biscuits (we didn't have these at home) would be brought up to every room. I also seem to remember afternoon tea and pretty much constant food, imagine a less elaborate but wholesome Jewish cruise. I don't remember going to any restaurants.

I think we stopped going when I was around 5, thinking back it was probably when I started school.

A few years ago I went back to the area and managed to find out that the guest house had been made into flats.