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Memories of the East Cliff Court, John and Sadie Hyman



For several generations, Bournemouth was the fashionable place for British Jews to go on holiday. The town had several specialist Jewish hotels, differing from each other not only in their levels of comfort but also in how strictly they observed religious custom.

One of them was the East Cliff Court, which is today the Hallmark Hotel Bournemouth East Cliff. A website set up by a grandson of its founder has been collecting people's memories of their trips there. Edward Hayman was born in the hotel, which was established by his grandmother Annie Morris in 1931. "It was founded by my mother's mother. Apart from when it was requisitioned during the war, we lived there until my mother sold it in about 1960".

An advertisement in the Jewish Chronicle of November 6, 1931, told of

the hotel's "spacious and beautiful dining hall, electric elevator, garages, handsome ballroom" as well as "a direct and limitless supply of seawater hot and cold to all bathrooms".

Edward's mother Sadie handled much of the hotel's administration, taking more of a role later and eventually becoming proprietor. His father, John Hayman, was not involved in day-to-day management but had his own antiques and jewellery business, King & Hayman. John and Sadie had their first son, Ronald Hayman, in 1932. He is known today as a playwright, director, and critic, who has written books about such theatrical figures as Arnold Wesker, Harold Pinter, Samuel Beckett, and John Gielgud.

Edward was born in the hotel in 1936 and remembers his nanny, Clara May Lawrence, becoming effectively a member of the family. Bournemouth's kosher hotels – including the Green Park, the Normandy, the Majestic, and the Ambassador were the first Jewish hotels in England.

If you wanted to be kosher, to have the dietary restrictions and wanted to be on holiday, you needed to go to a Jewish place. The great thing about what Jews came for on holiday was



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just to be kosher and stay in a nice hotel as well. While the Green Park Hotel was the height of luxury for Jewish visitors – and was the subject of a documentary film in 2015 – Edward discovered that people had equally fond memories of the East Cliff Court. People seemed to prefer the more relaxed atmosphere of the East Cliff Court compared to the Green Park, which was terribly kosher and orthodox.

There was a continuum of hotels, some of which were more orthodox than others, but the East Cliff was at the bottom end as far as orthodoxy was concerned. To be recognized as kosher, a Jewish hotel had to have a rabbi supervising the kitchens, but Annie was unwilling to have one around. This policy cost the hotel the custom of some more orthodox holiday-makers, but might have gained some visitors as well.

The hotel was requisitioned during World War Two and was not returned to the family until 1946, by which time it needed comprehensive refurbishment. Bournemouth was considered a fashionable resort for English Jewry up to the point when people started going abroad. The hotel held regular dances in its ballroom, with two male dance hosts (sometimes called gigolos). Sadie, who was fond of ballroom dancing, took a keen interest in the dances, and encouraged guests to attend, making sure refreshments were served around the ballroom before they reached guests who were reading or playing cards upstairs. While the surroundings might have seemed perfect for a growing family, it wasn't the ideal place to raise children.

Edward went to Oxford in 1958 before doing a catering course. He stopped practicing Judaism in his 20s. He thought he might take over the hotel but was glad he didn't, admitting he was totally unsuited to that kind of life.

The website "Memories of East Cliff Court, Bournemouth", was founded to collect memories of the hotel from 1931-60. Many former residents have shared their stories and photographs. John Kasmir told how his older sister's wedding celebration took place at the hotel on September 3, 1939 – the day Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain declared that Britain was at war with Germany. Hilary Myers, who lived in Bournemouth, told how she often visited friends or family in the Jewish hotels. She was once invited to spend an evening with Ronnie Hayward, but they were both so shy that they never discovered their common love of theatre. Anthony Winston of New Jersey remembers visiting the hotel with his family – including his brother Robert, now the eminent scientist, Lord Winston. The site is a tribute to my mother. The website can be found at 'eastcliffcourtmemories.wordpress.com'.

Other material can be found on Wikipedia at [Ronald Hayman](#)