

Margaret Thomas

b 1939 in Clapham, London

Dad was a coke loader at Fulham Gas Workers. No holidays but went with parents aged 11.

In 1956 went to Butlins, Clacton with her friend but she first went to a holiday camp when she was 13 with her older brother and his wife. They were very nice to her and wanted to give her a holiday but she hated it as she was very self-conscious and hated all of the social things involved. In 2007 her husband died and in 2008-09 she took her grandchildren to Butlin Bognor and the kids loved it and she has lovely memories of being with the children. She has also been to Warners and other camps with her over 60s group.

When she was 17, she went on a week's holiday with her friend to get away from her parents and to meet boys. Her first taste of freedom. Remember getting on the coach to get there and a huge dance hall. It was all young people. She remembers there were no locks on the chalet doors so they would use furniture to barricade the door. Just a sink in the room, very basic.

They would get "dolled up" and go to the dances and wait to be asked. She loved jiving and has stories of dancing and clothes she wore. Recalls a very handsome man called Jeff asking her to dance and she had her first grown-up kiss. There was another nice man who she met too. Jeff gave her a photo of himself when she left - she was flattered but thinks he gave photos to everyone. He wanted to do more than just kiss but she said no "I don't do that". There were competitions but she didn't enter any. She never liked being organised by others - a free spirit.

She married a man who was a strong trade unionist who was black listed so not much money. They would go camping in Wales and to youth hostels. Joined a mountaineering club based in St Johns Wood. They bought a little van and went on holiday to Czechoslovakia. A socialist holiday meeting lots of people. She still goes to camps now occasionally, mainly for the people she goes with an "a bit of comfort" in your old age.