David Eder Farm.

The David Eder Farm was the show place of the movement. Its “inmates”, a group of Jewish kids from all over Britain, ran it. There was a farm manager, “Jock” Rogers, who told us what to do, when to plant, what cows to buy etc. He was the boss. I was supposed eventually to take over from him. It was a very foolish idea and probably was never meant to happen, but this was the logic behind my taking this course in farm management.

The Eder farm was call after David Montagu Eder, a Zionist leader of the 1930’s. It was a nice large farmhouse, with a cottage, which is where I slept (see picture) down the road and separate buildings for housing the milk cows, the tractors etc., and had one or two silos.

After the course I arrived at the David Eder Farm expecting to take over the running of the farm (after all I had just studied that!). However it was not to happen. Mr.
Rogers (Jock) was still in charge, and the group at the Eder Farm ran the place quite efficiently. For me life at the Eder Farm was full, there were many cultural events, performances for outsiders, visitors from London and the provinces (I have a photograph of performing an Israeli dance with Esther Davidson for an audience from London.). I worked in the refet (cow shed), which by this time had been modernized with milking machines (known as a milking parlor), drove a tractor, made silage etc. did all the chores of a regular farmer. Sundays (or Saturdays) we would take a small amount of money from the kuppah (a vase containing money sitting on a sideboard for common use) and go out to Horsham for tea, very rarely to a pub. I was going steady at this time with Esther Davidson, from Liverpool. This was really my first serious relationship. I thought that I was in love and that we would eventually marry. Esther eventually left hachsharat noar and our relationship did not develop since her parents did not consider me “good enough”. After all what were my plans for the future? To be a member of a kibbutz? I did visit her parents with her one time, a middle class Liverpool family. I think her father had a toy business (warehouse). Esther’s older sister Irene was also on Hachshara, and it may have been too much for them to lose two daughters to the same “cause”. Esther did marry, there were problems and she remarried and ironically ended up in Glasgow. Thus the way of the world!

All our money was pooled (whatever we made), and there was a small sum set aside for general use. We lived a very pure egalitarian life style (at least I thought so). We took turns at running the kitchen, and I remember that in turn, the economit (person in charge of food and running the kitchen) was Irene, and Thilda, (not necessarily in that order). Food was reasonable, and the girls (or boys) did very well on a limited budget. Again some time in 1952 it was decided that this group would go on Aliya, and that I should stay behind as a “Madrich” (instructor) to help run the farm and I suppose educate the youngsters. I was very disappointed since I had become very close to this group. Many of them have remained my best friends although we now live continents apart. Thus I stayed behind and another group joined the David Eder Farm, mostly younger than I! However a few months later I received my calling up papers from the army, and Hechalutz decided that two others and I should now go on Aliya rather than serve in the RAF to which I was assigned. Thus Dov Kapetanchick (who had been on
Hachsharat noar, and who now (2005) has just retired from Aberdeen University), Phil Shearsky, who was to play a large part in my life later on in the sheep pens of Amiad and in the army, and is unfortunately no more and I very quickly were on the road to Paris, Marseilles and Gal Ed, Israel. I should mention that the group had gone to Gal Ed (or more correctly were sent to Gal Ed) as a first assignment with the idea that they might remain there.

Thus my road to Israel was a long one. Looking back these were among the best days of my life. They did not quite prepare me for the shock of Gal-Ed or real Kibbutz life. I enjoyed these years, particularly at the David Eder farm. I remember the long intellectual discussions with various people, and the strong friendships that developed with many members of the group. Many of these friendships were cemented in the army and our common experiences in Israel. Despite all this, the group disintegrated as a group quite quickly once we faced the realities of Israel, many returning to England to resume a “middle class” life. Others have remained are now three generations in Israel, while others like myself made it to the USA, not with the idea of staying, but somehow ended up remaining in the States.

Thus what I learned from Hachshara was a work ethic (I am still accused of being a workaholic at the age of 78), a respect for other people and their opinion, and how to interact with others of different background. This was a major plus in dealing with undergraduates and graduate students from different backgrounds and cultures and also realizing that everyone should be given the opportunity to develop.