

SAGER OWEN MIDGLEY 1891 – 1969

married 8.8.1915

Lily Andrea Anderson 1891

Children: Sager Percy Niels Midgley 1917–, Andrew Herbert Edmund Midgley 1919–1945, Bertrum George Midgley 1920–, Thomas Latimer Midgley 1925–, Velerie Lily Midgley (O'Reagan) 1928–

Sager Owen was the eldest of the three children of Edmund Sager and Ellen Midgley. He was born at Hobsonville and educated



(Left to right) Edmund Sager Midgley (with Sager's son Percy snr on his knee) Sager's wife Lily, Sager Owen Midgely and his stepmother Mrs E S Midgley.

at the Hobsonville Primary School where he and his two brothers would be taught by my father James Miller. In fact there is a photograph of my father and his pupils at the unveiling of the first flag at the Hobsonville School about the year 1900.

It is to Sager that we the descendants of R O Clark owe the preservation of the manuscript on R O Clark I, written by his son Latimer and also the manuscript which Sager Owen wrote concerning his father's Midgley family.

Both manuscripts contain early data and photographs of England and Auckland members of the family, altogether a most valuable contribution to family history.

My personal contact with Sager was mainly limited to a short period after 1910 when he was courting Lily Andrea Anderson. He appeared to me to be a young man dedicated to the task in hand, serious in his approach to life, and building up his life for the future. He was then working on the Midgley farm. No doubt being a young lad I was more interested in his fun-loving younger brothers Percy and Bert.

I am further indebted for the following information, to Sager Percy Niels Midgley, Sager Owen's oldest son.

Sager, after leaving school worked at R O Clark's pottery at Hobsonville for two or three years and after that for Garner Bros & Parker at New Lynn for a short period. He returned home to the Hobsonville farms about 1912 as his father had reached the age of 61 years and was easing up on his workload.

Sager and his brothers ran the farms until 1914 when his brother Percy enlisted in the NZ Expeditionary Force.

In 1915 Sager married Lily Andrea Anderson, the daughter of a Norwegian marine engineer.

Born in Oslo, Lily's father, Andrew Niels Anderson, came to NZ twice and on the second trip in 1882 decided to make New Zealand his home. Lily's mother was born in Scotland. Her maiden name was Lily Mary Hayes. Her father's surname was Spriggs and he hailed from Devonshire. Lily records that her father and mother walked over the Port Hills from Lyttelton to Christchurch in 1868. Andrew Niels Anderson purchased 60 acres of land on the upper reaches of the Waitemata Harbour, not far from Riverhead at a place called Riverlea in about 1887-1888. At that time the only access to civilisation was by water on a steamer owned by Bradney and Binn who ran a regular service between Riverhead and Auckland. Their home was about one mile from the River Lea Wharf across country through scrub or by rowing boat if the tide was in.

They were self-supporting in that Andrew Niels had planted fruit trees, had a good vegetable garden and cleared enough land to support 3 or 4 cows. They also grew strawberries and made butter for sale in Auckland. Lily had two brothers both younger than herself, Andrew, born in 1893, and George, born in 1895. As there were no roads and it was three miles to the Hobsonville School the children were taught at home until they were about six years old. At the age of seven years Lily was sent to stay with friends at Birkdale and attend a school there. She passed through Standards 1 to 5. She came home when her brothers were able to walk to the Hobsonville School along a track cut through the titree scrub. At about the age of 12 she and her brother would take the strawberries on a boat down to the Riverlea Wharf when the tide was in, leave the strawberries in a cool place under the wharf at Riverlea, return home and then walk down when the steamers came in to load the strawberries and collect the mail etc. to bring home.

The children were rewarded with 1 penny for every black-bird shot with a muzzle loading shotgun. Their father taught them to shoot and in particular to hold the gun tight against the shoulder but the gun still used to kick.

Her father was a good singer and played the accordeon very well. Lily must have inherited her musical ability from him. Andrew Niels Anderson died of asthma in 1905 when Lily was 14 years old

and her brothers 12 years and 10 years.

Lily helped at home until she reached the age of 16 years when she shifted to stay with friends in Auckland and learn dress-making. After she had qualified in her trade she opened a dressmaking shop where she remained until she was married to Sager.

The newly weds settled in a new house on Lawsons Hill Block. As a matter of interest the wedding had to be delayed until the house was finished. Sager's brother Herbert Latimer then enlisted and went overseas with the 12th Reinforcement.

At this stage Sager started milking about a dozen cows by hand, taking the milk to Hobsonville Wharf by horse and cart. Here it was loaded on to launch owned by a Mr Monty Barnett and taken to the Takapuna Dairy Coy on the North Shore. Several other farmers also used Mr Barnett's launch service for the delivery of their milk.

In 1917, S O Midgley's father E S Midgley decided to retire to Stanley Bay leaving the complete management of the family farm to Sager. He increased the number of milking cows, installed a Kidd milking machine, driven by a petrol engine and using sand from Scotts Beach, and broken pipes from the pottery for aggregate, concreted the shed and yard. All manure for the farm was carted from the wharf to Lawson's Hill. It was a long slow trip and took two draught horses to pull one ton on the dray.

The farm was quite isolated and Lily found it difficult to get to Auckland, particularly after the arrival of the family. It meant making a very early start, harnessing a horse to a gig, driving two miles to the wharf to catch the steamer, leaving the horse in a nearby paddock and at nightfall catching the horse and driving home. Lily made this trip once per month and always fitted in a visit to see Edmund Sager and Margaret Midgley at Stanley Bay. The road was metalled from Lawson's Hill to the wharf but beyond Lawson's Hill it was a clay road and very difficult to negotiate in winter so access to Auckland by road was not possible.

About 1921-22 Sager purchased 80 acres adjoining Lawson's Hill from Baron Bernicker. Except for a row of pine trees along the western boundary it was completely unimproved. Sager Owen set about clearing and grassing the Bernicker Block, and as he broke it in he increased his herd of cows. Also about this time relatives arrived from England. They were Tom Totty, his wife who was Sager Owen's cousin and John Romsey. They were employed in milking the cows.

A further 80 acres adjoining Bernicker's and the original Lawson's Hill properties were purchased in about 1927. Again this land was completely unimproved but was completely developed in the next few years.

In 1924 Sager bought his first "standard" tourer car but it was not till 1926 that the road to Henderson was metalled. After 1926

the Sager Owen Midgley family drove to Auckland instead of traveling by steamer. In 1929 Sager Owen traded in the car for a new standard six cylinder saloon. Lily learned to drive and this made an enormous difference to their mobility.

In 1929 the Waitemata Electric Power Board distributed power to the district; what a change for the better. Electricity was installed in all the houses and the cowshed -- the end of candles, kerosene lamps and the petrol engine in the cowshed.

The Great Depression commenced in 1929. Sager suffered a severe and dangerous illness from pneumonia and pleurisy and was laid up for four months. In 1934, so severely did the Depression affect Sager that he had to sell the 80 acres of land he had purchased at Lawson's Hill in 1927. He sold the property for £12-10 per acre which was exactly the amount it had cost to bring the land into grass. Thus he lost his capital investment. He was not to recover from the slump until 1939 when the Second World War broke out.

From the time his father had left to live at Stanley Bay (1917) the original Hobsonville farm had been leased to a Mr Bill Bigs. (sic Biggs) In 1930 the lease expired and Sager purchased 60 cows and engaged Mr Bob Dunlop as a share milker. Bob was assisted with the milking by Sager Percy Niels Midgley, who as a school boy did this work both before and after school. Bob Dunlop left to go on his own farm in 1936 and Sager Percy Niels battled on with a boy to help him until 1938 when he married Grace Anderton and ran the farm until 1942 living in the old original Midgley house.

About 1936 Andrew, Sager's second son started running poultry on part of Lawson's Hill farm. After Andrew was called up for the war, this enterprise was discontinued and when Andrew was killed in Italy in 1945 all the poultry sheds were pulled down. Sager's son Bert was also called up and served in the Pacific. Over this period Sager and his son Thomas Latimer milked the Lawson's Hill farm and Grace and Sager Percy the Hobsonville farm.

When Bert returned from the war Sager Owen decided to help him settle on the Red Hill farm so he bought 110 acres adjoining the original Red Hill property in 1947. Bert married Isobel Jamieson and settled there in the same year.

Throughout the hard years of work on the farm, and rearing her family, Lily managed to keep up her music. She sang at local concerts, played the piano and violin and was organist for the local church. Invitations to sing, including several engagements at the Auckland Town Hall are ample proof of her prowess as a singer. Lily joined the Women's Institute. When Niels Percy was batching down at the original farm she came once per week to clean, wash and cook for Percy and the boy working with him. This lasted for the period 1935-38. Percy's marriage to Grace took quite a big load off her shoulders.

It was a great blow to her when Andrew was killed in action

so very close to the end of the war. Val left for Australia, met John O'Reagan and was married and then Tom was married and took over Lawson's Hill.

It was time to retire. Lily and Sager shifted to their new house at 74 St Leonards Rd, Mt Eden in 1956. After moving to Auckland Lily kept up her singing mostly for the Choral Society over a period of 10 years. The farm was divided up amongst their sons as follows:

| | | |
|----------------|-------------------------|-----------|
| Sager Percy | Niels Hobsonville Block | 167 acres |
| Bertram George | Red Hill | 165 acres |
| Thomas Latimer | Lawson's Hill | 167 acres |

Thus Sager had continued the policy of his father in providing the opportunity for all of his three surviving sons to own their own farms.

Sager and Lily took a well-earned world tour on retiring.

Sager Owen Midgley passed away in 1969 proud in the contribution he and Lily had made to their family and country.

He had lived a life in strict conformity with the thoughts he had expressed when writing his father's epitaph.

References:

Notes compiled by Lily's son Sager Percy Niels Midgley after an interview with Lily.

PERCY LYONEL MIDGLEY 1892 - 1915

(not married)

killed in action "Daisy Patch" Gallipoli, May 8 1915

Percy Lyonel was the second son of Edmund Sager Midgley and Ellen Midgley nee Clark. He was educated at the Hobsonville Primary School, then worked on his father's farms with his brothers. At about the age of 60 his father went into semi-retirement, and handed over the farms to his three boys. Then came the First World War; in 1915 Percy Lyonel enlisted with the main body of the Expeditionary Force. He was to serve in the 3rd Auckland Regiment, "Lady Ranfurly's Own", which was to be the first NZ Regiment ashore at Gallipoli. There are numerous photographs and references to Percy Lyonel in his father's manuscript "The Midgley Family". In one letter written to his brother H L Midgley prior to his leaving New Zealand, he refers to the period prior to embarking on his troopship and also says "Give the skirt a squeeze for me. Love to all at home." I think this is a reference to HL's girlfriend, who was a relative of Mrs



*Percy Lionel Midgley,
missing in action Gallipoli
8.5.1918*



Sargeant Herbert Latimer Midgley, killed in action, France 7.11.1918.

J O Gardner.

Percy went missing on May 8 1915 at Gallipoli. In a letter to his father re 12/174 Percy Lyonel Midgley deceased, the War Graves Commission states:

"Your late son went missing on the 8th May 1915, that being the day on which the terrible fighting on the Daisy Patch took place. The N.Z. division did everything possible to capture the enemies' position, but the firing opposed to them was so severe they were compelled to retire and leave their dead and wounded on the field of battle. The line occupied by the New Zealanders was taken over by the Imperial Forces and the N.Z. division returned to the Anzac area without again engaging the enemy at the Daisy Patch. For this reason the graves of many hundreds of New Zealanders who fell that day have not been traced and consequently arrangements have been made for the erection of a large memorial for the missing in the Twelve Tree Copse Cemetery on which your son's name will be inscribed."

Thus was the end of a gentleman and a brave soldier giving his life for his country.

As a boy of 10 to 14 years I knew Percy and conceived a great respect for him and remember how much he was missed by his family, relatives and friends.

HERBERT LATIMER MIDGLEY M.M. 1894 - 1918

not married

killed in action "Somme", France, November 7, 1918

Herbert Latimer was born at Hobsonville and educated at the Hobsonville Primary School. He was known to all relatives and friends as "Bert". After leaving school he worked with his older brothers on his father's farms at Hobsonville, Lawson's Hill and Red Hill.

Over the Christmas period 1913 Bert joined Peter R Gardner, Latimer Clark, Lyonel Clark, myself and some others when we explored the Kaipara Harbour on the launch "Daimler". Our headquarters were a camp at Mataia Point on Uncle Jack's and Peter's properties at Glorit. Bert was a very good fisherman, entered into all the fun and work that was going with zest and altogether was an excellent companion.

It was here that he met and courted Gladys Johnstone, Uncle Jack's sister-in-law. How far the romance progressed I do not know, but it was sadly halted by the outbreak of the 1914-18 war.

In his father's manuscript there are quite a few photographs of Bert. One is a photograph of the Hobsonville hockey team with Bert as captain and Tom Clark senior as a member of the team. Others are of Bert in uniform. Bert joined the Legion of Frontiersmen