
**Descendants of
Bertram Hay Fidler**

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Descendants of Bertram Hay Fidler

First Generation

1. Bertram Hay Fidler, son of **William Ide Fidler** and **Margaret Burt**, was born on 6 Mar 1878 in Laura, Clare District, Mt Barker, South Australia, Australia, died on 27 Jun 1918 in Suez, Egypt at age 40, and was buried in Jun 1918 in Suez, Egypt (Suez War Memorial Cemetery). The cause of his death was Dysentery.

General Notes: Throughout his life Bertram featured in many newspaper articles in South Australia and New Zealand, Auckland, Wellington, Marlborough & the West Coast. The last one known at this point in time was in the Marlborough Express on the 28th November 1919, over a year after his death.

Bertram's schooling started when he was enrolled at the Mt Barker Primary School on the 9th March 1885. In December 1885 he left Mt Barker Primary School and on the 18th January 1886 started at the Wistow Public School. In December 1886 he left Wistow Public School and returned to Mt Barker Primary School, starting there on the 24th January 1887. He stayed at the Mt Barker Primary School until he finished his schooling in June 1891.

On the 30th April 1902 Bertram bought section 3718 in Macclesfield, this block is 80 acres between Flaxley, Church Hill & Birks Roads and was originally part of the Hagen Estate. The property became known as Western Flat Creek, it is directly west of Wistow & east of Echunga. In November 1905 Bertram put this block up for auction but no bids were received.

In 1907 Bertram was the secretary for the Semaphore Methodist Young Men's Guild and at the time was working for Wilkinson & Co, Port Adelaide, South Australia.

The Port Adelaide Y.M.C.A. rooms were opened to members and friends for the first time on Monday 4th July 1910 and Bertram, with the aid of a lantern, threw on the screen some instructive and interesting pictures illustrative of industrial life in New Zealand.

On the 8th February 1913 Bertram leased his Western Flat Creek section to his younger brother Archibald for 3 years.

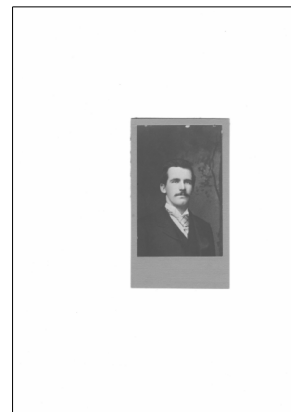
In April 1914 Bertram is noted as being a member of the Mount Barker branch of the Agricultural Bureau and was elected to a committee to study the possible establishment of a lime kiln in Mount Barker. Bertram was elected to the Mount Barker District Council in June 1914 along with Frederick James Blight. Bertram was one of the instructors for the boys training at the new gymnasium in Mount Barker which was opened in July 1914. Australian Army Service Records show that Bertram enlisted on the 6th January 1915 at Oaklands, Adelaide, South Australia. His service number was 1604, rank private, 3rd Reinforcement, 10th Battalion, 3rd Australian Infantry Brigade, 1st Australian Division. He is noted as being 5 foot 11.5 inches in height, dark hair, fair skin with light blue eyes and religion as Methodist.

Bertram wrote his Last Will & Testament on the 8th January 1915, his father (William Ide) & youngest brother (Archibald) were Executors. He left all his real estate, all farming and other implements, live and dead stock including crops to Archibald. His residuary estate was left to his father.

He embarked from Melbourne aboard the ship "HMAT Runic" (#A54) on the 19th February 1915, stopping at Aden in Arabia before transiting the Red Sea and arriving in Suez, Egypt. Here they disembarked and boarded a train for the 125 mile journey to the Abbassieh Military Camp, 5 miles from Cairo, Egypt. The First World War Embarkation Roll has his name incorrectly recorded on the original as "Bertrum, Hay".

The Mount Barker Courier & River Murray Advocate, 21st May 1915, contains a letter written by Bertram on the 11th April 1915 at the Abbassieh Military Camp Egypt. The article is titled "Our Boys in Egypt. Interesting Letter From CR. Fidler", the CR stands for councilor. In the letter Bertram describes the later part of the sea voyage, Aden, the Red Sea crossing, Suez and the train trip to Abbassieh. He notes that he climbed the Cheops Pyramid, up to that point in time 5 Australians had fallen, 4 were killed but he wrote: "that the outlook is worth all risk & exertion".

Bertram landed at ANZAC Cove Gallipoli on the 7th May 1915 and was taken on strength from the 3rd Reinforcements. Another letter published in The Mount Barker Courier & River Murray Advocate, (3rd September 1915) was written on Sunday 10th July while under shrapnel fire in the trenches, he writes about some of the other Mount Barker men serving with him, being under shrapnel fire, the beauty of the natural surroundings, the hot & dry weather, artillery duels, naval bombardments and flights of aeroplanes and hydroplanes (seaplanes). The next letter published (17th September 1915) was written to his sister Rene (Irene) on the 29th July in which he describes some of the different countries units that he had seen at ANZAC Cove. He was wounded while on active duty somewhere between the 29th & 31st July 1915, at ANZAC Cove, Gallipoli, Turkey. A bomb (hand grenade) struck his bayonet and exploded, small pieces of metal embedding in his right eye and left forehead. A few days later Irene Fidler received the following



Bertram Hay Fidler
Aged about 20 years old.

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cablegram - "Let mother know I am slightly wounded in the head. At present on board a hospital ship. Will write as soon as possible. Bert."

He reported wounded to the base hospital in ANZAC Cove on the 1st August 1915, was transferred to the 3rd Australian General Hospital in Lemos, Greece on the 3rd August, then sent onto Malta on the hospital ship "H.S. Dunluce Castle" on the 12th August 1915. On the 26th August a vision test of his right eye noted that he could see fingers at 1 metre. 6th September his eye was recorded as being cleaner but on the 2nd October it was noted to be contaminated with bright metallic foreign bodies. On the 3rd of October 1915 surgeons in Hamrun Hospital, Malta attempted to remove the metal pieces from the eye using an electro-magnet, this was unsuccessful and so they removed the right eye. Bertram embarked on the "H.S. Kanowna" for Australia via Suez on the 20th October 1915. He arrived in Australia on the 20th November and was admitted to the No.7 Australian General Hospital in Keswick, South Australia. On the 27th January 2016 Bertram was transferred to the No.2 Auxiliary Hospital.

On the 5th February 1916 Private B. H. Fidler, of Mount Barker, was appointed Recruiting Sergeant for the Mount Barker district. It was the duty of the Sergeant to interview young men who had not enlisted and endeavor to persuade them to make the "grand resolve".

Bertram was discharged from the Australian Army on the 28th April 1916 as "Permanently Unfit".

He subsequently took up work as an instructor at the Pompoota Training Farm which had been established to train returning soldiers in the skills required so that they could successfully farm the land allotments that were being granted to them.

Advertiser (Adelaide, SA : 1889 - 1931), Thursday 24 August 1916, page 9

POMPOOTA TRAINING FARM;

From "Edward Allen Ford," Port Pirie - "I was a trainee at the farm for four months. What Mr Parish, M P, said in the House about the men leaving in a body is correct - not all the men, but a big majority; and it was only Mr Fidler's influence that kept the men back. They objected to certain rules being enforced. These rules in a court of law would not be worth the paper they are written on. Regarding wages, we were promised six day a week at 5/- a day, no deductions for wet weather or sickness. All of a sudden that promise was altered. Mr McIntosh was informed by the men, and he laughed at the idea, and said he would see it rectified at once. We heard nothing more until Mr McIntosh left for his annual leave, and the day he left he wrote saying the Government could not be expected to give these privileges, as it would only be an incentive to the men malingering. Then there was trouble, over the manager fining men as he liked on trifling charges without a hearing. We had the War Council up to Pompoota to meet the men in conference. The men did not get a fair hearing. We were worse off than ever. As to charges of mismanagement of the farm, if Mr Fidler did make them he was not the only one, as I made a few charges myself when I left."

In September 1916 Bertram attempted to re-enlist into the Australian Army but was unsuccessful.

Reference, National Archives of Australia Victoria, MT1486/1 FIDLER/BERTRAM HAY

New Zealand Army Service Records show that Bertram arrived in Wellington, New Zealand on the 21st February 1917 and was staying at the Grand Hotel. He applied to join the New Zealand Expeditionary Force on the 22nd February. He was accepted as being "fit for home service" but did not actually decide to join up. It is interesting that on his New Zealand Army enlistment form he put his date of birth as 6th March 1877. He is noted as being 5 foot 10 inches in height, dark hair, fresh complexion, a hazel coloured eye and religion as Methodist.

Bertram moved to Blenheim, Marlborough in the South Island of New Zealand where he became a member of the Marlborough Patriotic Society. He was appointed as the organiser of the Land Committee of the Marlborough Patriotic Society early in July 1917 for the repatriation of Marlborough soldiers. Bertram is recognised as having introduced to New Zealand the idea of grants of land for returning soldiers after having experienced this scheme in Australia. He did not claim originality for this idea and noted that its main features had been in operation in Australia for over 18 months and was proving successful. This came to be called "The Fidler Scheme or System" in newspaper articles in Marlborough and was still being reported in 1919 over 12 months after his death.

Marlborough Express reported on the 30th August 1917 that Bertram Hay Fidler had been appointed secretary & organiser of the Marlborough Patriotic Society his salary was £250 per year.

At the monthly meeting of the Marlborough Patriotic Society on the 5th April 1918 a letter was tabled from Mr. Varney, National Secretary of the Y.M.C.A, who wrote asking the Society to liberate its secretary (Mr. B. H. Fidler) to enable him to take up a position as YMCA field secretary attached to the New Zealand Army. He remarked that the Y.M.C.A. would be pleased to regard Mr. Fidler as a representative of the Marlborough district among the soldiers at the front. Mr. Fidler said that he had assured Mr. Varney of his

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willingness to take up the appointment of field secretary. He understood that he would be given a month's notice of his despatch to the front, and that he would probably be required to go forward within the next three months. It was resolved that Mr. Fidler be granted leave of absence at the pleasure of the Town Committee, and that applications be invited for the position of secretary at a salary of £250 per annum."

On the 23rd April 1918 Bertram left Wellington, New Zealand on board H.M.N.Z.T. No I02 "Willochra" (His Majesty's New Zealand Troopship) for Suez, Egypt as "Y.M.C.A. (NZ) Secretary". He was classed as a civilian attached to the NZEF, not an actual member of the NZEF. He arrived in Suez on the 31st May 1918, disembarked, "Marched in from O'Seas Australian Camp and Posted to Strength". He was admitted to the Government Hospital Suez with diarrhoea on the 11th June 1918. He was discharged to duty on the 18th June but then re-admitted with dysentery and placed on the Dangerously Ill List on the same day. He died of Dysentery in the Government Hospital, Suez, Egypt on the 27th June 1918. In July 1918 the YMCA National Executive convinced the NZEF to attest all overseas YMCA secretaries and they became members of the NZEF, receiving army service numbers.

Obituaries for Bertram have so far been found in the:

The Marlborough Express (New Zealand), 1st & 2nd July 1918,
Mount Barker Courier & River Murray Advocate, 5th July 1918,
Evening Post (Wellington New Zealand), 8th July 1918,
Auckland Star (New Zealand), 10th July 1918.

The Marlborough Express on 11th March 1919, has an article titled "REPATRIATION". At the bottom of this article it states "Discussion on the land-settlement question developed into an earnest plea for the Government acquisition of small holdings of rich agricultural land. In this connection the communal system of settlement, now in vogue in Australia and introduced by the late Mr. B. H. Fidler in his repatriation scheme for the Marlborough Patriotic Association, was favourably regarded."

The Marlborough Express on 25th August 1919, has an article titled "THE WAIRAU ELECTION". Mr. B.J. Cooke states "He gave special prominence to the rights of the returned soldiers, which, he intimated, he was prepared to champion up to the hilt; and in this connection he greatly praised what he called the Fidler scheme of placing the ex-soldiers on the land."

The Marlborough Express on 9th September 1919, has an article titled "GENERAL ELECTION". Mr. B.J. Cooke states "He was going to push for all it is worth the Fidler system of soldier settlement - named after the returned soldier who held for a time the position secretary to the Marlborough Patriotic Society."

The Marlborough Express on the 28th November 1919, has an article titled "MR. COOKE AT GROVETOWN". REPATRIATION". This article mentions the "Fidler system" of settling returned soldiers.

War Graves Commission Records:

Casualty Details

Name: FIDLER
Initials: B H
Nationality: United Kingdom
Rank: Civilian
Regiment: Young Men's Christian Association
Date of Death: 27/06/1918
Casualty Type: Commonwealth War Dead
Grave/Memorial Reference: B. 7.
Cemetery: SUEZ WAR MEMORIAL CEMETERY

The Nationality on the website for service personnel refers to the branch of the armed forces they were serving in at the time of death. In this case it refers to the United Kingdom Auxiliary Organization known as the Young Men's Christian Association and does not refer to the nationality of the casualty. The War Graves Commission at my (Gordon W Fidler) request added a note to his record regarding his service and injury at Gallipoli.

In the book "New Zealand's Great War" which covers the involvement of New Zealand in WW1 there is a chapter on the YMCA starting on page 354. On page 356 it states "No New Zealand YMCA workers were killed in action, one YMCA representative died of sickness (this was Bertram) one was accidentally killed in camp and two others were seriously wounded."

Bertram was posthumously issued with the 1914-15 Star, British War Medal 1914-20, Victory Medal and the ANZAC Commemorative Medallion by the Australian Army.

The Australian War Memorial in Canberra had no record of Bertram. In 2010 after years of trying I (Gordon W Fidler) managed to have his name added to the War Memorials Commemorative Roll. His name was not added

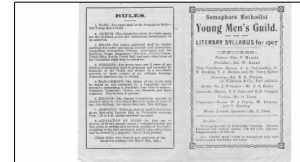
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to the Honor Roll as he did not die while a member of the Australian Armed Services. In 2012 I also had a photo of Bertram added to the Memorials National Collection along with a brief description.

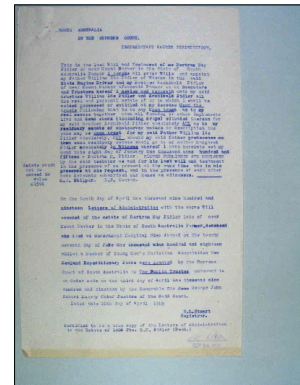
In 2013 I send his details to the New Zealand Nation Army Museum who added his photo & description to their "Tears Over Greenstone" Memorial.

Noted events in his life were:

- Semaphore Methodist Young Men's Guild: Secretary - Mr B. H. Fidler, 1907. C/o Wilkinson & Co, Port Adelaide



- Death Certificate: B. H. Fidler Death Certificate, 10 Apr 1919.



- B. H. Fidler: Photo of headstone, 15 Jul 2011, Suez War Memorial Cemetery, Suez, Egypt. Photo taken by Gordon W. Fidler.



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