



Camels were very useful in Sinai and Palestine. Tens of thousands were needed to get water to the soldiers, and they were also good for patrolling in the desert. Later on they were also used to transport cameliers into battle, whereupon the riders would dismount to fight. They could also carry wounded men on stretchers placed on each side of the animal. Despite their usefulness, the camels were a rough ride, making transportation of the wounded uncomfortable and painful.

The Imperial Camel Corps Brigade was formed in 1916 from British and Commonwealth troops and was attached to the Anzac Mounted Division. There were four regiments: the 1st and 3rd were Australian, the 2nd was British, and the 4th was a mix of New Zealanders and Australians. Each regiment had around 770 men, and at full strength the brigade contained almost 4,000 camels.

Camels were well suited for life in the desert; they could carry around 145 kilograms and go without water for up to five days. Horses were also used by the troops, but required water daily. Initially transported from India and then Egypt, the camels could travel from 4.8 to 9.5 kilometres per hour.

In 1917 the brigade took part in the fighting at Gaza and Beersheba in Palestine. By the following year the country's harsh terrain had made the camels less effective than horses. No longer needed, the Australian cameliers were transferred to the light horse.

Questions and activities

Read the two sources below:

“We were sorry for the camels. Although we often cursed them, when they were to be taken away from us, we found that we had become quite attached to our ugly, ungainly mounts. The Arabs would not treat them as kindly as we had done, and we reckoned they were entitled to a long spell in country that suited them better than the rough and slippery mountain tracks of Palestine.”

-Trooper Frank Reid, 3rd Battalion, Imperial Camel Corps

To My Camel

You're an ugly smellful creature;
You're a blot upon the plain;
I have seen Mohamed beat you,
And it gave me little pain.
You're spiteful and you're lazy,
You'd send a white man crazy,
But I reckon you're a daisy
When the Turks come out again.
Your head is most unsightly,
And so is your humpy back;
I hear you roaring nightly,
When you're loading for the track.
You're bow-legged and you're bandy,
But in this desert sandy
It's as well to have you handy:
You're a mighty useful hack.

You shake me something cruel
When you try to do a trot;
I've got to take my gruel,
But you make it very hot:
I've somehow got a notion
That your humpty-dumpty motion
Is worse than on the ocean,
It's a nasty way you've got.
It's a sun-scorched land, the East is.
So we need you when we trek.
My old prad a better beast is,
But he'd soon become a wreck.
You thirst a week unblinking,
And when I see you drinking,
You always get me thinking:
Lord, I wish I had your neck.
-Major Oliver Hogue, Imperial Camel Corps

A Soldier's Kiss

by Henry Chappell

Only a dying horse! pull off the gear,
And slip the needless bit from frothing jaws,
Drag it aside there, leaving the road way clear,
The battery thunders on with scarce a pause.
Prone by the shell-swept highway there it lies
With quivering limbs, as fast the life-tide fails,
Dark films are closing o'er the faithful eyes
That mutely plead for aid where none avails.
Onward the battery rolls, but one there speeds
Needlessly of comrades voice or bursting shell,
Back to the wounded friend who lonely bleeds
Beside the stony highway where he fell.

Only a dying horse! he swiftly kneels,
Lifts the limp head and hears the shivering sigh
Kisses his friend, while down his cheek there steals
Sweet pity's tear, "Goodbye old man, Goodbye".
No honours wait him, medal, badge or star,
Though scarce could war a kindlier deed unfold;
He bears within his breast, more precious far
Beyond the gift of kings, a heart of gold.

QUESTIONS FOR STUDENTS

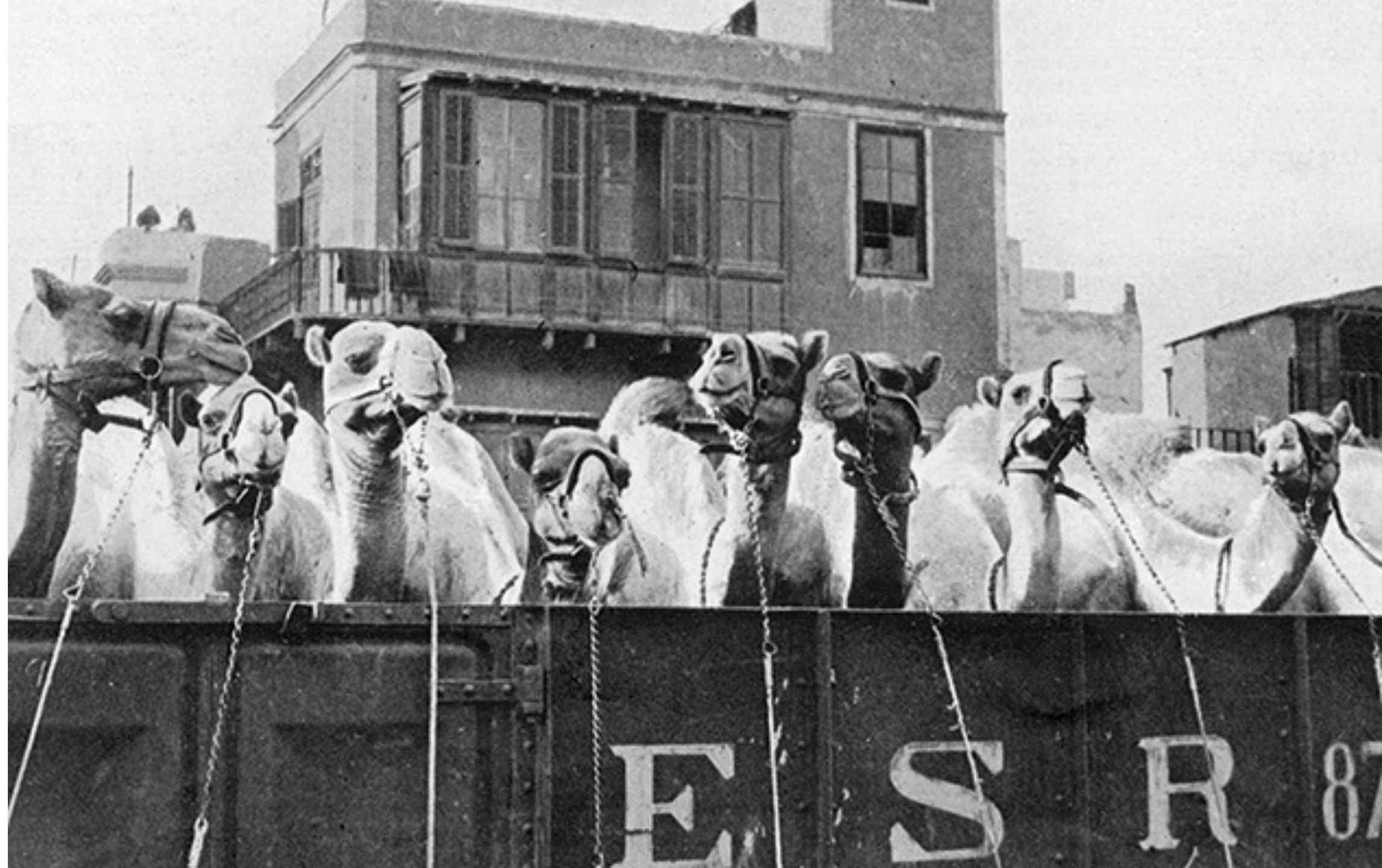
What do you think Major Hogue and Trooper Reid thought about working with camels?

How were camels useful during the First World War?

Do you think the relationships between Australian soldiers and their horses were different to their relationships with their camels?

Why or why not?





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AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

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AUSTRALIAN
WAR MEMORIAL

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Studio portrait of 1537 Trooper (Tpr) Clive Arthur, 3rd Australian Battalion, Imperial Camel Corps, of Lismore, NSW. Tpr Arthur, an ironmonger's assistant prior to enlistment on 20 July 1915, embarked with 2nd Light Horse Regiment on HMAT Suffolk on 30 November 1915 from Sydney. He died of wounds he received in Egypt on 24 November 1917, aged 20 years.



Preparing to mount
The Advance through Palestine and the Battle of Megiddo: Australian members of the Imperial Camel Corps near Jaffa in Palestine prepare to mount. Their camels are kneeling in a row, their heads pulled by their bridles towards the mounting riders.



**Men of an
ANZAC
Battalion of
the
Imperial
Camel
Corps
Brigade at
Ludd, 1918.**

**Lieutenant Geoffrey Inchbald of No 8 Company, Imperial Camel Corps
with his kneeling camel in the Western Desert.**





**The lines of
the Imperial
Camel Corps
shaded by
trees near
Beersheba.**

**The
Imperial
Camel
Corps
Brigade
outside
Beersheba,
1st
November
1917.**



The Imperial Camel Corps Brigade outside Beersheba, 1st November 1917.



Men of the Imperial Camel Corps washing their camels at the mouth of Wadi El Arish, February 1917.



Guerrilla Campaigns 1917: Camel lines of the Imperial Camel Corps at El Arish.

Lines of newly washed camels in camp at Abassia before the long rides of July 1918 onwards.









AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

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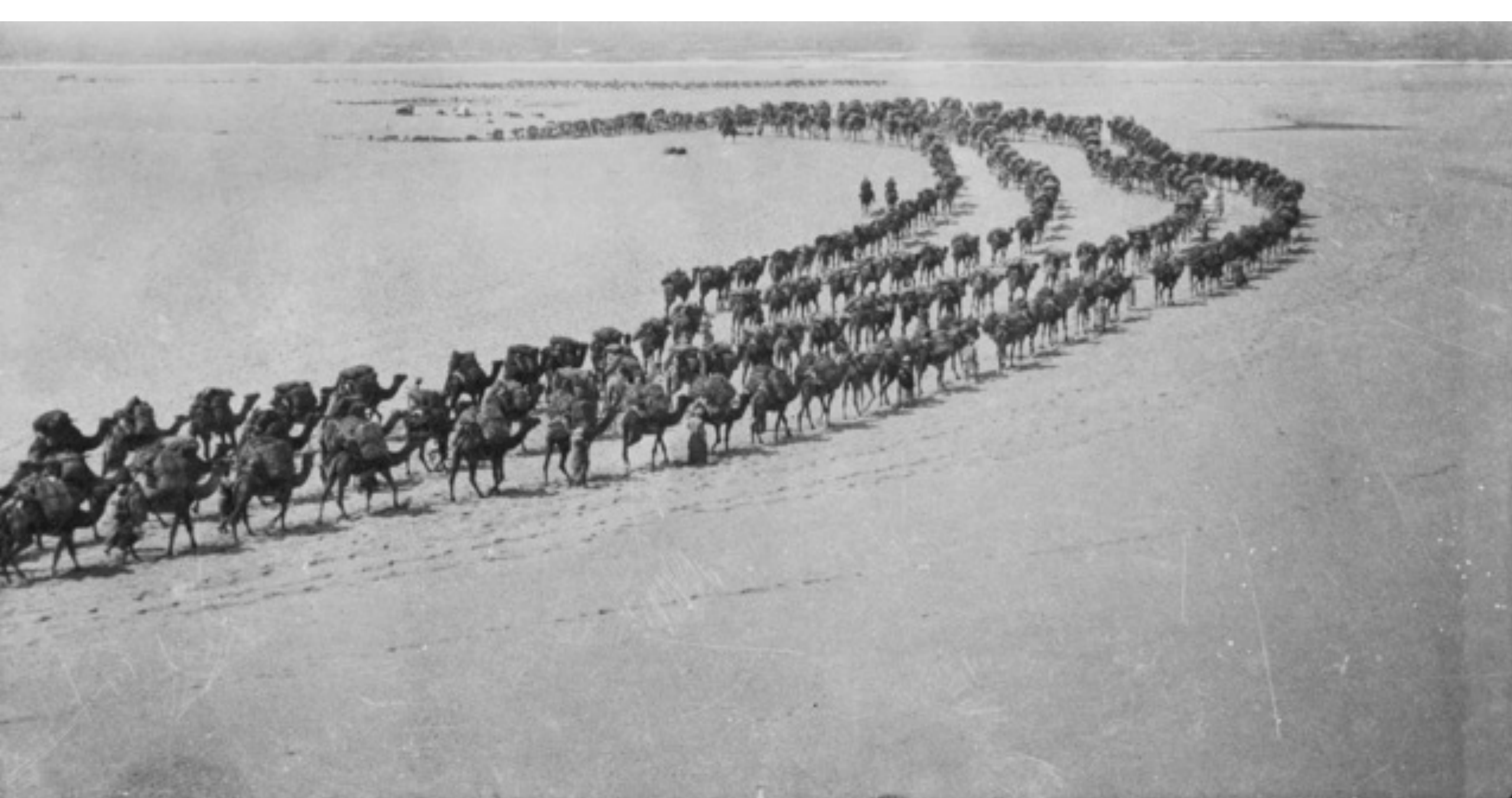






Camel Cacolet for carrying wounded







NEW ZEALAND AND AUSTRALIAN PREMIERS ATTEND THE UNVEILING OF THE IMPERIAL CAMEL CORPS WAR MEMORIAL IN LONDON.

The unveiling was performed by Lieutenant-General Sir Philip Chetwode (see left). The Right Hon. W. F. Massey, Prime Minister of New Zealand, is seen on the extreme right, while the Right Hon. W. M. Hughes, Prime Minister of the Australian Commonwealth, stands next to him.

Central News, photo.

BEFORE THE CIVIL WAR, THE U.S. ARMY EXPLORED USING A CAMEL CORPS OF TROOPS

