

Timeline of Camels and Cameleers in Australia

Compiled by Gary Cook (inpsyght@yahoo.com.au)

1840 The Phillips brothers, Henry Weston Phillips (1818-1898); George Phillips (1820-1900); G M Phillips (?-?), bought nine camels at Tenerife in the Canary Islands. Four or six of the beasts were loaded aboard the SS Apolline which had been chartered by Henry in London. The Apolline, under Captain William Deane, docked at Port Adelaide in South Australia on 12 October 1840 and the sole surviving beast of the sea journey, named "Harry", became the first camel in Australia.¹

1846 John Horrocks purchased "Harry" to explore the west of Lake Torrens in South Australia. The expedition was abandoned when "Harry" caused a fatal injury to Horrocks.

"On the 1st September, 1846, having only the camel, loaded with light equipage, and being accompanied by Mr. Gill and one man (Kilroy), after reaching the lake and traversing the northern shore Kilroy, who was walking in advance (the remainder of his party, horses, &c., were camped at ' Depot Creek '), saw a beautiful bird which he asked Mr. Horrocks to shoot Halting the camel Mr. Gill was unstrapping the gun (double-barrel), while Mr. Horrocks inserted the ramrod to draw the charge of shot. He was going to load one barrel with slugs. The camel gave a lurch, and the trigger caught against the equipment. The gun exploded, driving the ramrod through his hand and carrying away the lower part of his jaw. His companions returned with him at once, and on September 20, after painfully retracing the 200 miles, reached Penwortham, where medical aid was procured. He died from the injuries three days afterwards, viz., September 23, 1846, aged 28, and at his funeral the camel was shot over his grave."²

9th June 1860 First cameleers came to Melbourne with 24 camels purchased for the Burke and Wills expedition³. Dost Mahomet was the senior cameleer, with Hassam Khan, Belooch⁴. Esau, a Hindu cameleer, resigned from the expedition when he realised he could not eat the meat (beef) provided for the expedition.

¹http://www.burkeandwills.net.au/Camels/Introducing_Camels_Into_Australia.htm

²Newcastle Morning Herald and Miners' Advocate (NSW), Saturday 23 March 1895, page 6

³ Cigler, 1986, p.7

⁴ Jones & Kenny, 2007, p.50

- 1861 First mosque built in Marree⁵.
- 1862 Samuel Stuckey, partner of Thomas Elder, travelled to Karachi to hire cameleers and purchase camels⁶, but was unable to hire a ship to bring the camels to Australia⁷.
- 1864 Camels introduced to Marree by Elder⁸. Faiz and Tag Mahomet, and camel dealer Sultan Raz Mahomed based in Marree⁹.
- 1865 Samuel Stuckey returned from a second trip to Pakistan. He arrived on the *Blackwell*, on 31st December at Port Augusta with 31 cameleers and 124 camels¹⁰. The first camel camp at Port Augusta was established¹¹.
- His partner, Thomas Elder, established the Beltana Pastoral Company with camel farms at Beltana and Umberatana¹².
- 1870 Cameleer strike at Beltana Station¹³.
- South Australian parliament legislated to build the Overland Telegraph Line. Camels transported materials and supplies for this construction¹⁴.
- 1872-3 P. E. Warburton purchased camels from Elder for his exploratory expedition from Alice Springs to the West Australian coast¹⁵. Accompanied by cameleers Saleh Mahomed and Halleem¹⁶.
- 1873 William Gosse explored the Gibson Desert with Kamran, Jemma Khan and Allanah as his cameleers¹⁷. Gosse was the first European to sight Uluru and Kata Juta¹⁸.
- 1875 Ernest Giles explored from Beltana to Geraldton and Perth with Saleh Mahomed and Halleem¹⁹. Four expeditions from 1875 to 1876; the last one to Perth with 22 camels managed by Saleh Mahomed²⁰.

⁵<https://mvslim.com/a-mosque-built-by-19th-century-camel-breeders-the-beauty-of-the-marree-mosque-in-australia-lies-in-its-simplicity/>

⁶ Jones & Kenny, 2007, p.42

⁷ Simpson, 2018, p.37

⁸ Litchfield, 1983, p.2

⁹ Cigler, 1986, p.35

¹⁰ Simpson, 2018, pp.56-60

¹¹ McKnight, 1969, p.63

¹² Cigler, 1986, p.11

¹³ Aird & Klaassen, 1985, pp.12-13

¹⁴ Stevens, 2002, p.71

¹⁵ Collins, 2016, p.51

¹⁶ Jones & Kenny, 2007, p.48

¹⁷ Jones & Kenny, 2007, p.48

¹⁸ Collins, 2016, p.29

- 1878 Construction began on the Port Augusta to Darwin railway line. Again, camels were used to transport materials and supplies²¹.
- 1880s–90s Some cameleers became independent camel dealers and carriers, including Mahmoud Hassan in Port Augusta²², Abdul Wahid in Bourke, brothers Faiz and Tagh Mahomet from Oodnadatta²³, and Syed Goolamdeen from Marree to Broken Hill²⁴.
- 1882 Railway reached Farina and soon after Hergott Springs (renamed Marree)²⁵.
Emergency supplies transported from Port Augusta and Farina to Milparinka²⁶.
- 1883 Charles Rasp thought he had discovered tin but in fact he had discovered silver, zinc, and lead. (Ion Idress)
- 1885 BHP founded.
- 1885-6 David Lindsay travelled from Alice Springs to the Gulf of Carpentaria with Joorak Mahomed²⁷.
- 1887 The first camels to arrive in Western Australia came on ships SS Abergeldie and SS Yeoman, both coming from Karachi, arriving in Fremantle in October 1887²⁸.
- 1887 West Camel Camp Mosque built at Broken Hill.
Arbitration Act cameleers declared as aliens and denied citizenship and union membership.
- 1890 Railway reached Oodnadatta²⁹.
- 1888–91 Mosque built in Adelaide.
- 1891 North Camel Camp Mosque built at Broken Hill³⁰.

¹⁹ Jones & Kenny, 2007, p.p.48

²⁰ Collins, 2016, p.42

²¹ Stevens, 2002, p.74

²² Jones & Kenny, 2007, p.96

²³ Jones & Kenny, 2007, p.96

²⁴ Litchfield, 1983, p.71

²⁵ Stevens, 2002, p.74

²⁶ Gerriston, 1980, p.26

²⁷ Jones & Kenny, 2007, p.48

²⁸ <https://history.cockburn.wa.gov.au/Migration/Afghans>

²⁹ Stevens, 2002, p.74

³⁰ Stevens, 2002, p.306

- 1891-2 Lindsay explored Great Victoria and Gibson Deserts with Hadjih Shah Mahomet, Mahyedine, Alumgool, MahmoudAzim, Abdul and Joorak Mahomed handling the camels³¹. Financed by Thomas Elder.
- 1893 Discovery of gold at Kalgoorlie.
- 1894 Horn Scientific Exploration Expedition to MacDonnell Ranges with Moosha and GuzzieBalooch managing the camels³².
- 1896-7 L.A. Wells led Calvert Expedition through Great Sandy and Gibson Deserts with cameleers Bejah Dervish and Said Ameer³³. Funded by Samuel Calvert.
- 1898 Drought at White Cliffs forced residents to get supplies for general store by camel from Broken Hill³⁴.
- 1901 Federal Immigration Restriction Act³⁵.
Survey for West Australian rabbit proof fence. Hassan and FaizelDeen were cameleers for survey team.
- 1904 Sher Khan shot romantic rival in Marree, returned to Farina where he was arrested, tried, and gaoled³⁶.
- 1907 Afghan hawker, Chumpter Khan, shot five whites and killed a teamster³⁷.
- 1912 East West rail link started. Camels used to transport materials, supplies and in construction of railway.
- 1915 Gool Mahomed and Mullah Abdullah opened fire on the New Year's Day picnic train. Killed four and injured five (seven?) people. Both assailants were also killed by police and local militia³⁸.
- 1916 Edgar Waite led the Strzelecki Expedition from Farina to north-eastern South Australia with cameleer Mahomet Salaam³⁹.

³¹ Jones & Kenny, 2007, p.48

³² Jones & Kenny, 2007, p.48

³³ Jones & Kenny, 2007, p.48

³⁴ Rowe, 1983, p.?

³⁵ Jones & Kenny, 2007, p.135

³⁶<https://www.australiangeographic.com.au/topics/history-culture/2011/07/australias-afghan-cameleers/>

³⁷ Stevens, 2002, p.152

³⁸ Kearns, 1975, p.5

³⁹ Jones & Kenny, 2007

- 1924 Gool Mahomet and his sons bought Mulgaria Station⁴⁰
- 1929 Overland railway reached Alice Springs⁴¹.
Sultan Aziz left Broken Hill with the last string of camels from that town bound for south Queensland.
- 1936 1500 camels but only one cameleer at Birdsville.
- 1939 Madigan Simpson Desert Expedition. Jack (Abdul) Bejah and Nur Mahommed Moosha managed 19 camels supplied by Jack's father, Bejah Dervish.
- 1956 Marree's original mosque demolished under instruction by Syed Goolamdeen⁴²
- 1965 Date Palm trees planted at Broken Hill Mosque current site by Broken Hill Historical Society.
- 2008 Islamic Council of NSW planted two olive trees at current Broken Hill Mosque site.

References & Bibliography

Aird, Graham, & Klaassen, Nic, 1984, *Beltana- The Town that will not Die*, Lutheran Publishing House, Adelaide.*

Cigler, Michael, 1986, *The Afghans in Australia*, Australian Ethnic Heritage Series, Australian Echuca Press, Melbourne.

Collins, Neville, 2016, *Tietkins – Explorer and Pioneer*, openbookhowden.

Drewery, Roberta J., 2008, *Treks, Camps, & Camels Afghan Cameleers Their Contribution to Australia*, self-published.

Gerritsen, John, 1980, *Tibooburra – Corner Country*, Tibooburra Press.

Hull, Ivan K., 1973, *The Rise and Fall of Beltana: A Settlement Study*, Specialty Printers, Adelaide.*

⁴⁰Aird&KLaassen, 1985, p.13

⁴¹ Stevens, 2002, p.74

⁴²Weidenbach, 2005, p.61& Litchfield, 1983, p.72

Jones, Philip & Kenny, Anna, 2007, *Australia' Muslim Cameleers: Pioneers of the Inland 1860s-1930s*, South Australian Museum, Adelaide, 2007.

Kabir, Nahid, 2005, *Muslims in Australia: Immigration, Race Relations and Cultural History*, Kegan Paul International, Oxon, UK.

Kearns, RHB, 1973, *Broken Hill 1883-1893*, Broken Hill Historical Society.

Kearns, RHB, 1974, *Broken Hill 1894-1914*, Broken Hill Historical Society.

Kearns, RHB, 1975, *Broken Hill 1915-1939*, Broken Hill Historical Society.

Langley, George E. & Edmee M., 1980, *Sand, Sweat and Camels*, seal books Rigby Ltd., Melbourne.*

Litchfield, Lois, 1983, *Marree and the tracks beyond in black and white: A History of the Birdsville Track*, published by author.*

McKnight, Tom L., 1969, *The Camel in Australia*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton.

Murray, Ian, Bianchi, Phil, Bloomfield, Maria, and Bridge, Peter, 2008, *'The Afghan Problem' and their camels*, Hesperian Press.

Rajkowski, Pamela, 2012, *Beltana and Beyond: History of Beltana town & the pastoral far northern Flinders Ranges*, Hyde Park Press, Richmond, SA.*

Rowe, Gwen, 1983, *Saltbush Rainbow: The Early Days at White Cliffs*, self-published.

Simpson, Mary, (ed.) 2018, *Memoirs of Mixed Fortunes: Samuel Joseph Stuckey, a pioneer of the North and South East of South Australia, 1837-1912*, Wakefield Press, Mile End, S.A.

Solomon, RJ., 1988, *The Richest Lode: Broken Hill 1883-1988*, Hale & Iremonger, Sydney.

Stevens, Christine, 2002, *Tin Mosques & Ghantowns: A History of Afghan Cameldrivers in Australia*, Paul Fitzsimmons, Alice Springs, NT, 2002.