

New Zealand War Horses



New Zealand's history and culture are closely intertwined with the horse, as an agricultural, transport, military and sporting animal. The first horses were brought to New Zealand by the Rev. Samuel Marsdon, they arrived in Rangihoua, in the Bay of Islands, in December 1814. One of the great sources of pride for colonial immigrants was the ability to own their own land, and their own horse! As such by 1900 there were more than 260,000 horses in New Zealand¹.

The New Zealand wars

Horses were used by both sides fighting in the conflicts of the 19th century. During the first four months of 1864, 1,000 horses were shipped to New Zealand for use by the New Zealand

¹ *Carolyn Jean Mincham A social and cultural history of New Zealand Horse 2008*

colonial defence force. Horses had a major role to play in the army. Not only were they used by cavalry riders, but also moved cannons, ammunition, and other army equipment such as tents and cooking gear. An early watercolour shows the Royal Artillery camp at Waitōtara, near Whanganui, in 1864.

Māori prophet and military leader Te Kooti Arikirangi Te Turuki and his men rode horses, and in the late 1860s captured many of their enemies' mounts. When Te Kooti was defeated and fled, the horses were abandoned. It is possible that these, and other abandoned and escaped horses, are the origin of the wild horses found in the Kaimanawa Mountains². Apart from the horses around 700 Bullocks (*as draught animals*) were used as part of the military transport system.

Anglo-Boer War



The New Zealand horse was crucial to the way the army conducted warfare in South Africa due to the operational conditions such as Geography, terrain and climate. Wars were now fought across large regions with numerous fronts, requiring the need for mobility within them, which secured the horse's military prominence. About 8,000 horses were sent to the South African War (1899–1902) also known as the Boer War), the first overseas conflict

² *Unlike countries such as Australia (the Australian Stock Horse), New Zealand has not developed an official national breed. Kaimanawa wild horses are not a genetically unique population. They have roughly the same genetic makeup as domesticated horses, although they are of mixed breed with diverse genetic influences. They have most in common with the Thoroughbred and Station Hack breeds.*

involving New Zealand soldiers³. Ten contingents of New Zealand Mounted Rifle Volunteers (NZMR) totalling 6,495 men with 8,000 horses shipped from NZ⁴. They served in South Africa between 1899 and 1903 (*the term of service for men was one year*), the largest proportion of representation from any British Colony. New Zealanders earned a reputation for expert horsemanship, resourcefulness, strength, speed and stamina.

Losses in men and equine were proportionally high, 228 men died and 166 were wounded. The hurried mobilisation in 1899 of the nation's mounted expeditionary forces for the Anglo-Boer War caused a hurried collection of horses for service in the African environment. These horses upon arrival were expected to increase their workload on reduced and unfamiliar rations in a seasonally opposite climate. Had British military authorities paid proper attention to remount experts at the time, South African-bred horses would have been used in the early stages of the war, allowing ample time for foreign horses to be weaned onto reduced rations and heavier workloads before embarking on the tough sea journey. As it was New Zealand animals arriving in southern Africa were unfit for even the lightest workload, let alone military action.

Transportation conditions were arduous for the horses during the Anglo-Boer War their diet was small amounts of grain while the wooden decks became slippery with faeces although these conditions did not directly produce large numbers of deaths onboard ships, the trip took a devastating toll on the condition of previously healthy animals. Through inactivity, exhaustion, starvation, dehydration and disease many disembarked at their destination completely unfit for military action. This had tragic consequences for the entire military campaign.

In South Africa horses experienced starvation as many went for extended periods on below the minimum required daily ration. This led to the breakdown of thousands of horses every month. The precise numbers of New Zealand horses that survived the conflicts is not clear, given they fought in for Imperial British forces. The horse mortality rate was 66 per cent in

³ *The horses had to meet some stringent standards. First, they had to be between four and seven years of age. Their height was restricted to be between 14.2 and 15.2 hands. Greys, duns or light chestnut horses were not permitted, and geldings were preferred over mares.*

⁴ *The first New Zealand contingent would depart Wellington aboard the SS Waiwera on the 21st October 1899.*

the Anglo-Boer War. After the war, it was thought to be too difficult to transport the battle-weary animals home, so they were sold to local farmers and foreign armies.

The Anglo-Boer War was one of the most devastating horse massacres in global history, with a total wastage of more than 400,000 horses in little more than three years. At the end of the Anglo-Boer War the precise numbers of New Zealand horses that survived the conflicts, as opposed to being shot, is not clear, due to figures being combined with British and Australian forces. However, an estimated 131,700 military horses survived, with an extra 28,700 sick horses in remount and debility camps. Between June 1, 1902, and February 28, 1903, 120,500 horses, 61,400 mules and 9000 donkeys were sold to local farmers and foreign armies. During this period, 9500 horses were destroyed due to outbreaks of glanders, mange and lymphangitis⁵.

At its peak in 1911 the horse population in NZ reached 404,284 – about one horse for every three people. At a time when horses were the mainstay of NZ farming, over 10,000 were commissioned by the Government to equip the NZ Expeditionary Force (NZEF). Stock inspectors from the Department of Agriculture bought 9347 horses, paying an average 17 pounds (\$34) for riding horses and 24 pounds (\$48) for transport and artillery horses. More than half of the horses were ridden by mounted troops and officers. Nearly 4,000 were draught, heavy draught or packhorses used for artillery and transport purposes. The government had no great difficulty securing this many horse of suitable quality. Nearly all these horses went overseas, and only around 3% of them died on route thanks to the skills of the NZ veterinarians. Horses served where New Zealanders served: in German Samoa, at Gallipoli, in the Middle East and on the Western Front⁶.

WWI

The WWI New Zealand Expeditionary Force (NZEF) Commander, Major General Godley appointed Colonel Andrew Russell, a Hawkes Bay farmer with formal British military

⁵ [*A history of New Zealand's military horse: the experience of the horse in the Anglo-Boer War and World War One* A thesis by Marcus Wilson.](#)

⁶ *Nine thousand three hundred and forty-seven horses were purchased, at an average price of £17-1-10 for remounts (5,097) and £24-10-0 for artillery horses (4,250). Every horse, like every other item of army equipment had to have a number. A "N↑Z" was branded on one fore-hoof and the horses' military number was branded on the other.*

training to command the New Zealanders. He had started his leadership at Gallipoli commanding the Mounted Rifles and must be rated as one of New Zealand's finest soldiers. Several references and documentaries refer to him as saving his troops from unnecessary wastage. Even relatively small in numbers the war in the Middle East could not have been won without the Kiwis. When the main body of the NZEF sailed from New Zealand in October 1914, a quarter of its men (1,940) and more than half of its horses (2,032) belonged to the NZMR Brigade. The brigade was arranged in three regiments (the Auckland, Wellington and Canterbury mounted rifles regiments, each of 549 men and 608 horses) with medical, engineering and support units. Each regiment contained three squadrons of 158 men and a mounted machine gun section⁷.



The Mounted brigade upon arrival in Egypt were assigned to form the New Zealand and Australian Division, however its first active role would be dismounted during the Gallipoli Campaign several months later. Like the Australian horsemen, the men of the New Zealand Mounted Rifles Brigade served as infantry on Gallipoli after landing in May 1915. Their riding horses remained at Zeitoun Camp in Egypt.

⁷ *Colonel (Rtd) R.J. SEYMOUR, MBE, JP Patron New Zealand Military Historical Society (Inc) is Patron of the New Zealand Military Historical Society (Inc), and former director of the National Army Museum at Waiouru.*

Like the Australians the New Zealanders fought with great distinction during this campaign and are the subject of many fine books. When it came to the evacuation the Mounted Rifles were used as the rear guard as all other forces withdrew, amazing they did not lose a single man during this phase.

During the campaign 4,000 men served with the brigade and almost fifty per cent of them were casualties, 727 dead and 1,239 wounded.

So, seven months later after saying farewell to their horses, after the evacuation from Gallipoli, the brigade returned to Egypt, and in 1916, they were reunited with them becoming part of the ANZAC Mounted Division. They would fight on horseback all across the desert known as the Sinai and Palestine campaign taking part in clearing the Turks and Germans from Egypt.

During the next two years, along with other forces they forced the Turkish forces out of Palestine. Following this campaign successful conclusion in 1918, the brigade played a small part in quelling the Egyptian Revolution before being disbanded in June 1919.

Although the New Zealand contribution to Allenby's great army of 140,000 fighting men numbered just over 2,000 men (they were outnumbered by Australian Light Horse regiments by more than five to one) they had a fine reputation. The NZ mounted riflemen punched well above their weight, as New Zealanders often do in times of war. They performed consistently well, and they deserved the praise given to them.

In Egypt, General Murray considered the Anzac Mounted Division to be the best force under his command. Lord Allenby wrote in 1926 that none of the troops he commanded during the war were better than the New Zealand mounted riflemen.

The Anzacs were always referred to by the Turkish soldiers as 'devils on horses', the reason for this being that they never knew where they would strike next. The Turks' reconnaissance planes would report no movement at enemy camps at sundown, yet by daybreak the Anzacs would be attacking position twenty miles away from their base, which the Turks had never thought possible. Amongst the men, the Turks were talking about were the members of the New Zealand Mounted Rifles (NZMR) Brigade.

The Sinai



Mobilisation for World War 1 was initially little different to that of 15 years earlier for the Anglo-Boer war, the expeditionary force received earlier notice from the British War Office but still struggled to equip sufficient numbers of appropriate military horses. The desert corps had the good fortune of the Dardanelles campaign (Australian Troops fought on foot as Infantry) to allow their mounts close to two years for acclimatisation in Egypt. Authorities were fortunate as if the mounted force had been required immediately upon arrival, the state of the horses throughout the campaign could have mirrored the Anglo-Boer War.

The New Zealand Brigade had a long and justly earned reputation among the allied mounted troops of being the finest horse-masters in the Egyptian Expeditionary Force, a reputation which they maintained until the end of the war. To the farriers and to Major J. Stafford, D.S.O. the Brigade Veterinary Officer, the Brigade owes more than can ever be told. On June 17th, a report was sent into Divisional Headquarters showing the numbers of “original” horses still with the regiments. These original horses were horses from Australia or New Zealand, and which crossed the Canal in April 1916, with the brigades⁸.

The return is as follows: — *“1st L. H. Brigade, 671; 2nd L.H. Brigade, 742; N.Z.M.R. Brigade, 1056. All brigades had suffered much the same. The brigadiers concurred in that the ideal horse should be from 15 to 15.3 and as near 15 hands as possible and should be*

⁸ <https://nzhistory.govt.nz/war/nz-first-world-war-horses/sinai-and-palestine>

stout and cobby and if possible, with plenty of blood.” (Excerpt from "The New Zealanders in Sinai and Palestine" Powles).

The New Zealand Mounted Rifles Brigade was raised, in 1914, as part of the NZEF, it was one of the first New Zealand units to sail for service overseas. They suffered 821 battle casualties with 2,113 men wounded with an estimated 1,500 horses also being casualties. The English bred sire "Musket" arrived in New Zealand in 1866 and influenced the bloodstock of half the world. Bred with other bloodlines imported from America, England, Argentina and Germany and raised in the ideal climate of New Zealand's south pacific temperate and well-watered grasslands, the New Zealand thoroughbred was to be proved a line of champion stayers. Musket's progeny included such names as Carbine who in his day was the greatest horse in the world, and when he was purchased by the Duke of Cumberland, for his English stud, he dominated the world bloodstock scene for generations.

His descendants were all Derby winners and his blood line can still to be traced today in winning lines everywhere. From such big robust horses came the mounts of New Zealand's Mounted Riflemen. Proof that thoroughbred blood lines had filtered down to the Troopers mounts came, when after three years in the arid lands in the Middle East at war's end, these horses won trophy after trophy⁹.

Winning Egypt at race meetings against all comers, including mounts from other allied military forces.

Similar to Australian mounts, kiwi horses suffered much the same fate at the end of WWI. The troopers came home without their faithful horses. One quarter of the 6,265 horses sent overseas to serve with the brigade became casualties during the war, including 370 which were killed by enemy bombs and artillery fire. New Zealand's quarantine regulations prohibited the return of horses from the Middle East, so most of the surviving horses were passed on to British Army garrison units at the end of the war. A few older animals were sold to local Egyptians or Arabs or shot. The situation was slightly more promising for the New Zealand Division's horses in France. They were similarly pooled with other British army horses and then killed, sold or retained. But the odds were far better around 100,000 of

⁹ *This article from the Auckland Star (1 February 1916), describes the purchasing of horses in Waikato during the First World War. The horses had to be between five and 10 years old; thoroughbreds were preferred, and as few mares as possible were bought. At the beginning of the war the British Army owned 25,000 horses. This was not considered enough and within a short period a further 165,000 were purchased from several countries including New Zealand.*

the British army's nearly 400,000 horses in France were eventually repatriated to England. Among them were four horses originally from New Zealand.

The patient endurance of toil and pain by the horses was a constant source of wonder to the men and made almost a human bond between horse and rider.

The Kiwis rode New Zealand horses almost exclusively, and they were well served by them. An efficient remount and veterinary service maintained the horses in good fighting condition throughout the war, although remounts stopped coming from New Zealand in late 1916. New Zealand's horses gained a reputation for toughness and endurance that was second to none. At least once, New Zealand horses went 72 hours without water, and they regularly had to put up with very poor rations. The horsemanship of the New Zealanders had to be high to preserve the horses under these conditions. The men got used to the idea of having to keep their horse fit and well day after day, week after week, and the incidence of sore backs and other horse maladies was maintained at a low level throughout the war. Horses were expected to march between 40 and 90 miles (60-150km) a day. The artillery horses had to endure such conditions with 1.5 tonnes of steel in tow.

Gallipoli

It is generally accepted that horses did not serve at Gallipoli, because of the lack of space for them, the nature of the terrain and the shortage of water. However, a limited number of ANZAC horses, including a small amount of New Zealand horses took part in the campaign. One NZ horse in particular is photographed delivering messages along the beach front to various headquarter elements.

One horse called Finnigan, a Royal New Zealand Artillery horse, served at Gallipoli and on the Western Front. He is said to have been wounded twice at Anzac Cove. When the artillery moved to France, he was wounded in action on another two occasions. Finnigan died during the Battle of the Somme after stepping on an unexploded bomb on the road near Flers. The artillery retained some horses at Gallipoli, but heavy equipment such as field guns had to be manhandled up steep slopes.

When the 5th Battery landed at Gallipoli during the August 1915 offensive, it was with all its horses.

The occupation of territory to the north of the Anzac forces' original position allowed more heavy guns – and the horses needed to move them – to be employed. But by the time of the evacuation in December 1915, all except three of the gun teams had been sent back to Egypt.

The remaining horses were subsequently evacuated with the men and their guns. However, at the end of the war would finally see Kiwi horses at Gallipoli. The Canterbury Mounted Rifle regiment left Egypt on HMT *Huntscastle* on 28 November 1918 and landed on Gallipoli on 6 December. The duties of the CMR and the 7th Australian Light Horse Regiment were to tend graves at Anzac Cove and monitor Ottoman compliance with the terms of the armistice. The CMR took with them around 80 'animals' for riding and transport purposes. It is unclear how many of these had originally come from New Zealand, but many 'original' horses had survived the campaigns in the Middle East in which the CMR had served¹⁰.

Samoa

A total of 141 New Zealand horses were transported to Samoa rather than Egypt. Of these, 25 were dispatched with the Samoa Advance Party of the New Zealand Expeditionary Force in August 1914. Most of the rest were sent in the second half of 1915 to support the Samoan Relief Force which had taken over from the Advance Party in March. The provision of three additional horses (and bicycles) reportedly 'greatly increased' the mobility of the garrison force. Another 20 horses were dispatched in November 1916 after some of the horses already sent proved unsuitable or were impregnated by local stallions while on patrol. The horses sent to Samoa from New Zealand were all described as 'riding' horses but they appear to have been used for a wide range of tasks. Most served as mounts for troops and officers. Others were used to pull wheeled vehicles such as trucks, wagons, the nurses' gig and a meat van. A few became pack horses for the Machine Gun Section. After the end of the war the horses sent from New Zealand to German Samoa remained with the garrison force until it departed in early 1920. This force was replaced by a smaller constabulary force from New Zealand which included some mounted police. The 90-odd remaining horses were handed over to this incoming force. But they were in poor shape and proved to be of limited use, so many were sold locally. By time the force was disbanded in late 1920 and responsibility for the horses fell to the Samoan administration, few remained in service¹¹.

¹⁰ <https://nzhistory.govt.nz/war/nz-first-world-war-horses/end-of-the-war>

¹¹ <https://nzhistory.govt.nz/war/nz-first-world-war-horses/german-samoa>

The Western Front



In April 1916, more than 3,000 animals were sent from Egypt to France with the New Zealand Division. Several thousand of the New Zealand forces' horses remained in the Middle East. These animals were assigned to the NZMR Brigade, which had been separated from the rest of the New Zealand forces to form part of a new Anzac Mounted Division which also contained Australian Light Horse brigades and Royal Horse Artillery batteries. Originally the majority of the riding horses transported from New Zealand was assigned to the Auckland, Wellington and Canterbury mounted rifles regiments, which remained in the Middle East as part of the new Anzac Mounted Division. But riding horses were also assigned in smaller numbers to the units which went to France. A significant number were assigned to the Otago Mounted Rifles Regiment, which was reduced to a squadron in March 1916 and reorganized as the Divisional Mounted Troops. In *The troopers' tale*, historian Christopher Pugsley noted that the OMR 'brought over from Egypt a large number of its horses, over and above its requirements in France'. Most of New Zealand's draught, heavy draught and packhorses were assigned to units that went to France, especially the infantry and artillery.

A number of horses became sick with 'Tona', which was described by a member of the garrison force as 'a native disease which forms on the feet in the shape of a large sore which is very unsightly and causes the horse to be laid up on the sick lines'. Throughout the war there was always at least one horse out of action suffering from Tona. Like the Australians being mounted infantry, the NZ brigade was expected to ride to the site of the battle, then dismount and fight on foot, just like normal infantry.

To be a Mounted Rifleman was not easy, the training program included eight weeks of dismounted drill, two weeks of shooting, eight weeks of mounted drill and lectures on sanitation, military law and discipline, animal management and stable duties. All mounted reinforcements had to pass compulsory riding tests before being cleared to go overseas. Before joining the rest of the New Zealand Division, the horses from the artillery, transport and other sections, with their horses went via the remount depots. At remount depots they exchanged unfit horses for enough fit ones to bring the units up to establishment. They replenished their equipment at the base depots, guns and wheeled vehicles having been left behind in Egypt (with the exception of the artillery's telephone carts). While the artillery and their horses went to depots at the port of Le Havre, most transport sections and their horses went to Abbeville.

The New Zealand horses like all other horses at the front must have been terrified. One day working on a farm or pulling a milk float the next standing in deep mud, rain or snow chilling it to the bone, while explosions louder than any thunder it had ever heard filled the sky, itself blacked out by smoke. Then came the sight and smell of death. Lieutenant Dennis Wheatley described an aerial bombing attack on the Western Front in December 1915.

When the bombs had ceased falling, we went over to see what damage had been done. I saw my first dead man twisted up beneath a wagon where he had evidently tried to take shelter; but we had not sustained many human casualties. The horses were another matter. They were dead ones lying all over the place and scores of others were floundering and screaming with broken legs, terrible neck wounds or their entrails hanging out. We went back for our pistols and spent the next hour putting the poor, seriously injured brutes out of their misery by shooting them through the head. To do this we had to wade ankle deep through blood and guts. That night we lost over 100 horses.

In another incident the resulting carnage is described in *The Wellington Regiment* (pp. 204–5). Bombs were dropped on the transport lines of the 2nd Battalion, and the First Machine-

Gun Company, whose animals were together near Kortepyp. The effect was disastrous. Thirty-three horses and mules of the 2nd Battalion were either killed or had to be shot. Four other animals were wounded, including Colonel Cunningham's charger which was wounded in the chest. In addition, the 1st Machine-Gun Company lost over fifty animals. ... The spread of the exploding bombs was very low, and the animals that were killed, mostly had their legs cut off. After the noise of the explosion, there was only the long-drawn-out groan from the unfortunate animals, and then the rattle of their chains and dull thuds as they fell. Among the horses lost, were the 2nd Battalion's two chestnut draught horses of which it was so justly proud. The scene was a distressing one, and it was some days before the chaos was cleared up.

It is unclear how many New Zealand horses were exchanged at this point or in the years that followed. References to the high quality of the New Zealand horses and the affection the men had for them suggest that the New Zealanders did their best to hold on to them. Horses proved more useful to New Zealand forces on the Western Front than they had been at Gallipoli. Riding, draught, heavy draught and packhorses were used to varying extents for troop work, as well as artillery and transport purposes. Riding horses were used by troops and officers across the New Zealand Division on the Western Front. But the greatest numbers were utilized by the Otago Mounted Rifles. Again, in "*The troopers' tale*", Christopher Pugsley explains that mounted troops and cavalry played a 'very limited' role on the Western Front because of the trench warfare that followed the opening battles of 1914. As at Gallipoli, the mounted men of the OMR sent to the Western Front were called upon to perform dismounted work – everything from 'repairing, draining and digging trenches' to 'salvaging artillery ammunition and the useful detritus of war'. But unlike at Gallipoli the unit retained and maintained its horses and was sometimes called upon to perform mounted work. This included responsibilities such as 'escort duty, traffic control and small detachments for miscellaneous mundane tasks', but also elite tasks such as a forward reconnaissance role, notably at the Battle of Messines in June 1917.

Military commanders, it seemed, had trouble adapting to modern warfare, particularly over the continued use of cavalry modern technology in warfare simply had advanced too far to make cavalry charges a viable offensive option resulting in thousands of horses being killed. However, all be it traditional military role was coming to an end the speed, endurance,

reliability, adaptability and manoeuvrability of the horse was unmatched by any other means until well after the war. The horse was the most feasible way to manoeuvre troops at speed and also the most reliable form of swift supply transport.

Draught, heavy draught and packhorses were generally able to carry out the tasks they had been sent overseas for, such as drawing the artillery's guns, howitzers and ammunition wagons. But conditions on the ground – such as deep mud and shell holes sometimes hampered their efforts. Progress could be slow, even when larger than usual teams of horses were employed. During the Battle of the Somme in September 1916, the 10th Battery found the road to its new position in such an 'indescribable state' that even when it employed 'twenty horses to each gun' instead of the standard six-horse team, it took many hours to reach their destination.

As at Gallipoli, the artillery was at times forced by the conditions to manhandle its guns and ammunition into place. On other occasions horses were superseded by mechanical transport. During the Battle of Messines in June 1917, light rail was used to transport large amounts of ammunition to forward positions.

Conditions on the Western Front were often physically trying for the horses. Sometimes food, water or suitable shelter was in short supply. They suffered particularly in winter because of the dampness and mud. The winter of 1916-17 was said by locals to have been the worst for 40 years. Horses soon lost condition and became more susceptible to disease. Many horses were injured, wounded or killed in action. 'Very frequent and serious injuries' were caused when nails penetrated their hoofs. Nails littered roads in the war zone, particularly near dumps and ruined houses¹².

Designated as divisional cavalry during the First World War, the OMR had a different war from the other New Zealand mounted rifles regiments. At Gallipoli, an advance guard of the OMR were the first mounted riflemen to arrive at Anzac Cove, and the first New Zealand troops to land at Cape Helles. OMR troopers fought with distinction during the harrowing August offensives and the survivors were among the last to leave the peninsula at the evacuation. They were the only New Zealand mounted troops to

¹² *Actions could be costly: the Otago Mounted Rifles lost eight horses and had 32 wounded during the Battle of Messines. Frantically galloping under fire across the devastation of No Man's Land on the Western Front, the men of the Otago Mounted Rifles rode their way into New Zealand's military history at Messines in 1917 on the Western Front.*

fight on the Western Front and were part of the unique ANZAC Mounted Regiment. - Trooper Fred Naylor, Otago Mounted Rifles.

Talk about the charge of the Light Brigade. The infantry said we were mad, and by Jove we were! We charged over barbed wire entanglements, over trenches..."

In the final months of the war, they operated as scouts ahead of the infantry to locate enemy guns, often acting as decoys to draw enemy fire. The OMR had the honour of being the first mounted troops from Australasia to arrive at the firing line in 1915 and were still in action on the morning of Armistice Day in November 1918.

Many losses also occurred during the war as units advanced to new positions, and occasionally as a result of shellfire or aerial bombing in rear areas where horses were tethered or stabled together. Given such losses, and the exchange and replacement of horses – for example, with horses and mules from North America – it is unclear how many New Zealand horses were still serving with the New Zealand Division at the end of the war. The New Zealand Division had just under 4,500 'animals' on 31 December 1918¹³.

In a similar incident in August 1917, the 2nd Battalion, The Wellington Regiment, and 1st Machine Gun Company lost many horses when their transport lines were bombed.

The resulting carnage is described in *The Wellington Regiment* (pp. 204-5):

Bombs were dropped on the transport lines of the 2nd Battalion, and the First Machine-Gun Company, whose animals were together near Kortepyp. The effect was disastrous. Thirty-three horses and mules of the 2nd

Battalion were either killed or had to be shot. Four other animals were wounded, including Colonel

Cunningham's charger which was wounded in the chest. In addition, the 1st Machine-Gun Company lost over fifty animals. ... The spread of the exploding bombs was very low, and the animals that were killed, mostly had their legs cut off. After the noise of the explosion, there was only the long-drawn-out groan from the unfortunate animals, and then the rattle of their chains and dull thuds as they fell. Among the horses lost were the 2nd Battalion's two chestnut draught horses which it was so justly proud. The scene was a distressing one, and it was some days before the chaos was cleared up.

At the end of the war, the horses serving with the New Zealanders in the Middle East were pooled with other British army horses in the Imperial Remount Depot, which initially kept the fittest. An acute shortage of transport, and quarantine restrictions related to animal diseases prevented these animals returning home. Only one New Zealand horse (Bess)

¹³ <https://nzhistory.govt.nz/war/nz-first-world-war-horses/western-front>

serving in the Middle East made it back to New Zealand and that was because 1918 she was sent to France.

Kiwi soldiers serving in World War I saw the brutal way in which local horses were pressed into labour on farms. Many believed a quick and painless death for their loyal mounts was the best option. And so, the men who had shared years of conflict, who with their horses had witnessed carnage and faced hardship together, said their farewells to their mounts. Some found homes with kind locals, but many of the battle-worn animals were dispatched with a shot to the head.

A substantial majority were duly sold to work in the streets of the cities in Egypt, in remote market villages and worst of all in the stone quarries. However, this haunted one woman, Dorothy Brooke. 16 years later her husband was appointed as Brigadier commanding the Cavalry brigade and they returned to Egypt. Many of the war horses would be 22, with the average life of a horse being 30. Mrs Brooke could not forget the horses and one of the first things she realised upon hearing of her husband's appointment was that she must use the opportunity to discover if any of the horses were still alive, and there were many.

Dorothy was so very shocked by what she saw that she wrote a letter to the British newspapers to obtain funding for the proposed "Old War Horse Hospital". The letter changed history and the lives of many horses. Letters poured in to her office in Egypt and within three years she was able to purchase 5000 cavalry horses still working in Egypt - with the equivalent of more than 20 000 pounds of donations from the British public. Since the opening of the Old War Horse Memorial Hospital, it is now known as the Brooke Hospital for Animals and has helped literally millions of animals and their owners.

The situation was slightly more promising for the New Zealand Division's horses in France. They were similarly pooled with other British army horses and then killed, sold or retained. But the odds were far better: around 100,000 of the British army's nearly 400,000 horses in France were eventually repatriated to England.

Among them were four horses originally from New Zealand – including Bess - which were subsequently transported home in 1920. All four of the New Zealand horses that made it home belonged to officers: Beauty to the late Captain Richard Riddiford, Bess to Captain Charles Powles, Dolly to General Sir Andrew Russell, and Nigger to Lieutenant-Colonel George King.

Early in the demobilisation process Russell expressed a desire to return home 'a few' New Zealand Division horses which had originally come from New Zealand, 'owing to association over a long period of warfare'. The list subsequently provided included Beauty, Bess and Dolly, which had left the country with the Main Body of the NZEF in 1914, and King's horse, which had left in 1915 or 1916. The four horses were repatriated from France to England in March 1919 and subjected to 12 months' quarantine. They arrived back in New Zealand in July 1920. There can be no doubt that the horse became the animal that became most associated with the Great War and formed an integral part of New Zealand's war effort.

After WWI

On occasions individual New Zealand units would obtain local horses and use them in a scouting capacity over rough mountainous areas or where terrain and snow frequently immobilised trucks. In New Zealand the NZMR continued to operate troops of horsemen for training and also to mobilise a Home Guard to patrol the long New Zealand coast. As after the Great War 1914 - 1918 it was obvious that with the invention of armoured Tanks and high-performance Machine Guns the days of Mounted Riflemen and Cavalry as an attacking force were over.

Memorials

One of the first war horse memorials established in New Zealand is at Birch Hill Station, this large curved stone monument officially opened in 1937 by Lt Col Milton. There are two plaques the first reads "In Memory of the Horses of the 8th Regiment N.Z.M.R. that died in the Great War 1914 – 1918. The other plaque is dedicated to the 10 men who served from Birch Hill Station.



When Australia was granted permission to erect a war animal memorial at Pozieres the President of the Australian war animal memorial organization Nigel Allsopp and ex-NZDF member paid for a New Zealand memorial to be added.



On Feb 24 2018, New Zealand opened its official war animal memorial at the National Army Museum, Waiouru. It is a spectacular location surrounded by the Army training grounds and several National parks. It was a fitting tribute during the centenary of WWI to honour the

deeds and sacrifices of New Zealand's war animals. Over 10,000 horses left NZ in WWI only a handful ever returned.



Today Queen Alexanders Mounted Infantry Regiment is equipped with modern LAVIII Armoured vehicles. On ceremonial occasions 12-man mounted section parades.