

The number of Post Offices open on the 31st December last was 758, and the total number of officers on the strength of the department, inclusive of 730 Sub-Postmasters, was 915.

The following comparative table shows the number of Post Offices open in the several postal districts for the years 1876 and 1877 :—

Postal Districts.	1877.				1876.			
	Chief Offices.	Second-class Post Offices.	Sub-Post Offices.	Totals.	Chief Offices.	Second-class Post Offices.	Sub-Post Offices.	Totals.
Auckland	1	2	150	153	1	2	140	143
Thames	1	...	9	10	1	...	9	10
Taranaki	1	...	13	14	1	...	12	13
Hawke's Bay	1	2	46	49	1	2	39	42
Wellington	1	1	61	63	1	1	60	62
Nelson	1	1	26	28	1	...	25	26
Westport	1	...	18	19	1	...	17	18
Marlborough	1	2	14	17	1	2	12	15
Canterbury	1	3	147	151	1	3	132	136
Hokitika	1	...	28	29	1	...	26	27
Greymouth	1	...	22	23	1	...	19	20
Otago	1	2	157	160	1	2	153	156
Southland	1	1	38	40	1	1	36	38
Chatham Islands	1	...	1	2	1	...	1	2
Totals	14	14	730	758	14	13	681	708

9 additional receiving offices were opened, viz.: Auckland, 2; Napier, 3; Christchurch, 1; Akaroa, 1; Timaru 1; and Lawrence, 1. 20 iron pillar receivers, and 53 receiving offices, were open at the close of the year.

55 additional stamp licenses were issued in 1877, and 12 cancelled. The total number of licensed stamp vendors on the 31st December last was 251, who received £805 12s. by way of poundage on the sale of stamps. Sub-Postmasters, not on the permanent staff, were also paid poundage amounting to £217 15s. 1d.

For the carriage of interprovincial and intercolonial mails by unsubsidized vessels, £2,482 15s. 5d. was paid.

The number of private boxes occupied was 2,255. These, together with 160 private bags, produced a revenue of £2,243 5s.

The following return of officers of the Postal Department for the years 1876 and 1877 shows to what extent the staff was increased during the year :—

Officers.	1877.	1876.	Officers.	1877.	1876.
Postmaster-General	1	1	Postmasters	14	13
Secretary	1	1	Clerks	91	86
Inspector of Post Offices	1	1	Sub-Postmasters	730	681
Accountant, Money Order and Savings Bank Department	1	1	Letter-carriers	38	36
Clerks in General Post Office	5	4	Messengers	11	9
Clerks in Money Order and Savings Bank Department	4	4	Mail-cart Drivers	2	2
Chief Postmasters	14	14	Shipping Officers	2	2
			Totals	915	855

A branch Post Office at the Port, Nelson, was opened on the 1st December last, and has been found a great convenience both to the public and the department. The office is connected with the Chief Post Office by wire; and in the matter of the transhipment of mails, the notifying the arrival and departures of steamers, as well as the postponements, the telegraph is of great service.

The insurance business at Auckland was separated from that of the Chief Post Office on the 11th December last. So soon as suitable accommodation can be secured, a similar arrangement will be made with respect to the Chief Post Office, Wellington.

An additional Letter-carrier has been appointed to the Chief Post Office, Wellington, and the deliveries, more particularly at the Te Aro end of the city, extended.

It has been found necessary to extend the Letter-carriers' deliveries in the Christchurch District, over the Borough of Sydenham, which involved the appointing of an extra Carrier. It is contemplated at an early date to establish a free delivery over the entire borough, and possibly over the whole of the suburbs of Christchurch.

The Letter-carriers' deliveries at Timaru have also been extended, and a second Letter-carrier appointed, enabling an additional daily delivery being made.

Oamaru has also had the free delivery extended, as well as its frequency increased. Letter-carriers' deliveries have been established at New Plymouth, Gisborne, and Kumara.

It is also intended to establish deliveries by Letter-carrier at Ashburton and at Reefton. The removal of the Post Office at the latter place to the new buildings on the public reserve has rendered the appointment of a Letter-carrier necessary.

POSTAGE STAMPS.

A new issue of postage stamps, of the respective values of 2s. and 5s., was made on the 1st July instant. The following are the designs and colours of the postage stamps :—Two shillings: Queen's Head in dotted circle, figure 2 in upper corners, and fern leaf in lower corners, printed in morone lake. Five shillings: Queen's Head in dotted circle, figure 5 in each corner, printed in silver grey.

The cost of preparing and electrotyping the dies for these stamps, &c., is estimated at £13 each forme of 120 stamps. The stamps were produced at the Government Printing Office.