

REGISTERED LETTERS.

The number of registered articles dealt with in 1897, compared with the numbers in 1890, 1895, and 1896, is shown below:—

Postal Districts.	1890.			1895.			1896.			1897.		
	From Places beyond the Colony.	Registered in the Colony.	Totals.	From Places beyond the Colony.	Registered in the Colony.	Totals.	From Places beyond the Colony.	Registered in the Colony.	Totals.	From Places beyond the Colony.	Registered in the Colony.	Totals.
Auckland ..	7,119	34,398	41,517	11,042	47,350	58,392	7,396	56,550	63,946	12,517	62,903	75,420
Thames ..	130	4,781	4,911	226	7,955	8,181	1,536	12,052	13,588	206	18,038	18,244
New Plymouth ..	341	3,372	3,713	505	8,576	9,081	1,323	10,503	11,826	830	14,246	15,076
Gisborne ..	118	2,120	2,238	223	3,812	4,040	422	3,316	3,738	231	4,850	5,081
Napier ..	999	10,911	11,910	1,195	16,917	18,112	2,944	23,051	25,995	1,379	19,545	20,924
Wanganui ..	211	6,060	6,271	397	16,300	16,697	1,970	15,495	17,465	1,484	17,801	19,285
Wellington ..	6,129	30,369	36,498	10,055	50,900	60,955	7,780	60,497	68,277	11,594	54,235	65,829
Nelson ..	322	3,430	3,752	1,239	6,956	8,195	916	7,356	8,272	610	10,279	10,889
Westport ..	112	3,254	3,366	194	4,409	4,603	768	6,186	6,904	196	5,472	5,668
Greymouth ..	102	8,879	8,981	365	4,989	5,354	1,024	7,883	8,907	425	6,496	6,921
Hokitika ..	95	2,579	2,674	206	3,624	3,830	512	3,779	4,291	74	3,444	3,518
Blenheim ..	92	3,193	3,285	120	4,447	4,567	576	4,368	4,944	66	4,318	4,384
Christchurch ..	3,659	20,404	24,063	4,465	28,302	32,767	5,760	45,069	50,829	4,687	53,212	57,899
Timaru ..	312	3,551	3,863	1,510	4,514	6,024	640	5,253	5,893	232	5,478	5,710
Oamaru ..	278	2,505	2,783	1,252	2,569	3,821	426	3,433	3,859	109	4,197	4,306
Dunedin ..	4,615	19,696	24,311	5,520	28,188	33,708	4,255	33,288	37,543	7,392	37,322	44,714
Invercargill ..	1,740	9,819	11,559	2,579	14,507	17,086	2,176	17,218	19,394	3,220	17,866	21,086
Totals ..	26,374	169,321	195,695	41,098	254,315	295,413	40,424	315,247	355,671	45,252	339,702	384,954

INLAND MAIL-SERVICES.

Inland mail-communication throughout the colony has been well maintained, the only stoppage of consequence being the result of the lamentable floods in the Hawke's Bay District of the 16th April, 1897. The Town of Napier was for a time cut off from the surrounding districts, owing to the washing-away of roads and bridges in all directions. Efforts were at once made to restore the mail-services, and by the 19th through communication with Wellington was effected by means of coaches, railway-trolleys, &c.

Mail-sorting cars of a new and improved pattern have been placed on the express trains between Christchurch and Invercargill. The new cars, which are much larger than the old ones, have materially facilitated the work of the travelling post-offices, and lessened the arduous duties of the sorting-clerks on the trains.

On the opening of the through train-service between Wellington and Napier by way of the Wairarapa on the 13th December last a travelling post-office was established between Wellington and Pahiatua on the Government line, and the mail-van from Napier, which previously ran to Palmerston North, was diverted at Woodville to meet that from Wellington at Pahiatua, where the express trains to which the vans are attached cross. This travelling post-office on the through line has proved of great advantage to the service in accelerating the delivery of correspondence, and reducing the number of small mails formerly made up at country offices on the line of route. The travelling post-office on the Wellington-Wanganui-New Plymouth line has, of course, not been interfered with.

The number of contracts for inland mails in operation in 1897 was 750, as compared with 723 in 1896.

The length of inland postal routes by road (counted one way only) was 9,112 miles, and the total number of miles travelled 2,049,001, at an average cost of 3'35d. per mile. In 1896 the respective mileages were 8,683½ and 1,893,428, and the average cost 3'44d. per mile.

Ordinary trains with mails travelled 2,641,053 miles, as against 2,512,881 in 1896.

The sum payable to the Railway Department for the conveyance of mails by ordinary trains was at the rate of £30,126 13s. per annum. The payment for 1896-97 was at the rate of £29,928 10s.

The following mail-services were established during the year:—

Auckland—

As required: Cabbage Bay Post-office—Steamers.

Daily: Northcote Post-office—Wharf (giving Northcote second daily mail).

Thrice weekly: Riverhead Post-office—Wharf; Pukekohe—Patumahoe—Mauku.

Twice weekly: Whangarei—Whareora—Kiripaka (twice weekly)—Ngunguru (once weekly).

Weekly: Clevedon—Maraetai; Kaihu—Mangatu; Galatea—Te Whaiti; Kaeo—Otoroa; Mangawai—Hakaru—Kaiwaka (giving two last-mentioned places second weekly mail); Okupu—Whangaparapara; Putaruru—Lichfield (taking place discontinued railway service); Tairua—Hikuai; Tairua—Ohui; Te Kuiti—Paemako; Tauhoa—Port Albert (giving Port Albert twice-weekly mail); Whakapara—Puhipuhi.

Blenheim—

As required: Havelock Post-office and Wharf; Picton Post-office and Wharf.

Thrice weekly: Blenheim—Havelock.

Twice weekly: Kaikoura Road—Blind River.

Weekly: Blenheim—Lower Awatere—Awatere—Molesworth (giving Awatere twice-weekly service); Blenheim—Robin Hood Bay—Ocean Bay—Port Underwood.