

The following table shows the number and weight of parcels exchanged with the United Kingdom, and foreign countries *via* London, the Australian Colonies and the South Sea Islands, during the years 1897 and 1898:—

Country.	Received.				Despatched.			
	1897.		1898.		1897.		1898.	
	Number.	Weight.	Number.	Weight.	Number.	Weight.	Number.	Weight.
United Kingdom and foreign offices (<i>via</i> London)	15,742	lb. oz. 53,002 4	17,823	lb. oz. 58,865 0	4,197	lb. oz. 9,510 8	4,023	lb. oz. 9,705 8
Victoria	3,174	10,105 12	3,292	10,682 8	1,526	2,869 1	1,311	2,792 3
New South Wales	3,521	9,875 6	4,614	13,384 3	1,681	3,838 4	1,779	4,601 15
South Australia	239	791 12	235	688 2	179	414 4	190	517 13
Queensland	374	858 12	343	704 0	256	540 14	267	686 15
Tasmania	243	446 0	143	382 0	224	723 0	308	747 4
Western Australia	185	454 6	190	459 11	270	676 12	236	543 2
Samoa	4	33 0	17	65 11	117	299 14	123	382 4
Rarotonga	11	22 7	5	18 5	48	163 8	62	218 4
Hawaiian Islands	54	97 3	42	97 8	39	96 7	18	55 9
Ceylon	150	343 5	326	701 12	126	289 6	145	249 0
Straits Settlements	1	4 14	..	..	..	..	..	..
Uruguay	..	..	..	..	7	4 4	15	18 13
Vancouver	..	..	..	..	..	..	37	101 8
Fiji	..	..	14	53 12	..	..	27	112 3
Totals	23,698	76,035 1	27,044	86,102 8	8,670	19,426 2	8,541	20,732 5

The declared value of parcels received from places outside the colony in 1898 was £57,627. The Customs duty collected amounted to £13,302 11s. 4d. In 1897 the value was £41,820, and the Customs duty collected amounted to £9,567 12s. 11d. The declared value of parcels despatched to places beyond the colony was £9,245, as against £8,153 in 1897.

Since the issue of the last report foreign parcel exchanges have been established with Russia, Guatemala, Bolivia, and Formosa.

The principal alteration in parcel rates has been the reduction of postage to almost all British colonies and possessions by the abolition of the former 1lb. progression, and the substitution thereof of a three-stage scale—(1) Under 3 lb.; (2) over 3 lb., but not over 7 lb.; (3) over 7 lb., but not over 11 lb.

An insurance scheme for parcels was inaugurated on the 10th April last. So far the system applies to parcels for places within the colony, New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia, and Tasmania, the United Kingdom, and other places with which the United Kingdom has exchanges, but the time during which insurance has been in operation has been too short to permit of any conclusion as to the extent to which it is likely to be availed of.

The other colonies having now consented to join in the adoption of the scheme, arrangements will probably, from the 1st October next, be made to enable senders of parcels to and from the United Kingdom and the Australian Colonies and New Zealand to insure delivery of parcels to the addressees free of Customs duty and all other charges.

OFFICIAL CORRESPONDENCE.

The estimated volume and value of official and other free correspondence posted during the year 1898 is given in the statement below:—

District.	Letters.	Packets.	Registered Articles.	Newspapers.	Value of Official Correspondence.
Auckland	266,642	24,770	12,714	98,915	£ 7,524
Thames	48,476	3,158	1,426	22,850	1,382
New Plymouth	102,550	10,280	1,645	31,632	2,657
Gisborne	20,752	2,856	904	11,024	637
Napier	114,036	9,152	2,240	46,488	3,128
Wanganui	174,037	11,946	2,656	78,420	4,859
Wellington	920,711	144,521	22,298	168,956	22,819
Nelson	68,319	4,686	3,622	31,890	1,965
Westport	24,316	156	682	18,720	800
Greymouth	57,600	2,849	1,957	33,188	1,729
Hokitika	19,757	1,799	896	9,784	582
Blenheim	40,018	2,000	500	21,000	1,146
Christchurch	266,890	17,925	14,615	108,800	7,415
Timaru	57,718	2,400	1,033	24,200	1,547
Oamaru	31,759	1,144	864	28,080	1,126
Dunedin	288,440	39,456	2,949	89,031	7,634
Invercargill	133,272	11,850	3,106	59,439	3,780
Totals	2,635,293	290,948	74,107	882,417	70,730