

Additions were made to the post-office buildings at Matawai, Ohakune, Ohura, Petone, and Waipu, the lineman's residence at Murchison, the postmaster's residence at Te Teko, and the store-garage building at Kaitaia.

Residences were purchased at Christchurch, Gisborne, Greymouth, Lyttelton, Napier, and Wanganui. Land was acquired at Cromwell (extension of post-office site), Eketahuna (for post-office), Featherston (extension of post-office site), Foxton (for residence), Gisborne (extension of store-garage site), Hamilton (for store, garage, and workshops), Leeston (for residence), Martinborough (for post-office and residence), Masterton (for pole storage), Morrinsville (for residence), Otorohanga (for store-garage), Outram (for residence), Piopio (for residence), Tauranga (extension of post-office site), Tikitiki (extension of post-office site), Warkworth (for store-garage), and Wellington (for post-office).

POSTAL SERVICES

INLAND MAIL-SERVICES

Contracts covering the performance of inland mail-services in the South Island expired on the 31st December, 1943, and were relet for a further term of three years commencing the 1st January, 1944.

At the end of December, 1943, there were throughout the Dominion 35,750 rural boxholders, an increase of 773 on the figures for the previous year.

AIR MAILS

INLAND

During the twelve months ended the 31st March, 1944, the weight of letters carried by air within the Dominion was 110,923 lb. In addition, 18,760 parcels were conveyed by the inland air services.

TRANS-TASMAN AIR SERVICE

The weight of mail-matter despatched from New Zealand by the Trans-Tasman service during the year was 36,006 lb. Mail-matter conveyed to New Zealand totalled 28,018 lb. The average weight of mail carried on each trip was 375 lb. The frequency of the service was three times a fortnight until the end of December, when it was increased to twice-weekly.

AIR MAILS FOR NAVAL AND MERCHANT MARINE PERSONNEL

A scheme enabling members of the public to send to naval and merchant marine personnel overseas letters at a flat postage rate of 6d. per $\frac{1}{2}$ oz. or special air-mail letter-cards at a postage rate of 3d. each was introduced on the 13th December, 1943. The Post Office despatches the letters and letter-cards to destination by the best and most advantageous means of transport available, air transit being given wherever practicable.

For use in connection with the scheme, special air-mail letter-cards to which the appropriate postage of 3d. requires to be affixed are available at post-offices for sale to the public at the rate of two for 1d.

AIRGRAPH SERVICE

The airgraph service continues to function very satisfactorily, and it is quite evident from the increasing use that is being made of it that members of the public appreciate this additional means of communication.

Since the last report the service was extended to India and Ceylon, East African countries (Kenya, Uganda, Nyasaland, Tanganyika Territory, Zanzibar, and Seychelles), Northern and Southern Rhodesia, South Africa, Madagascar and Mauritius, Middle East countries (Aden, Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, British Somaliland, Cyprus, Iran, Irak, Palestine, Syria, and Transjordan), Malta and Gibraltar, and Newfoundland.

Up to the 31st March, 1944, 1,087,586 airgraphs addressed to members of the Forces and 253,859 addressed to civilians were forwarded from New Zealand, and 1,041,333 "Forces" and 285,563 "civilian" messages were received.

Following the lead of the United Kingdom postal authorities, the Department made available at all post-offices during October, November, and December, a specially-designed Christmas airgraph message form for conveying seasonal greetings to members of the Forces and to civilians overseas. The form depicted two well-known specimens of New Zealand flora—bush clematis and tree fern—and bore the words "Christmas and New Year Greetings from New Zealand." The ordinary charges applied to these messages, of which 86,123 were sent to the Forces and 39,044 to civilians.

NATIONAL PATRIOTIC FUND BOARD SCHEME FOR DESPATCH OF CHOCOLATE TO ARMED FORCES OVERSEAS

Arrangements were made during the year between the National Patriotic Fund Board and the Post Office for the introduction of a postal chocolate service for members of the Armed Forces serving overseas. Briefly, the system provides a means whereby a member of the public may, upon presenting a form and paying a fee of 5s. 6d. at any money-order office, arrange for 2 lb. of chocolate to be sent to a member of the Armed Forces serving overseas. The service came into operation on the 17th January.