Missing Letters.

1,662 inquiries for letters and 1,545 for other articles alleged to have been posted and not delivered were made during 1903. In 924 of the inquiries for letters and 811 for other articles—over one-half the total number—the investigations by the Department resulted in the missing articles being traced or accounted for. These may be summarised as follows:—

Number of Traced Cases. Letters.	Other Articles.		Found to have been
93	82	...	Missent, misdelivered, or otherwise delayed through fault of Post Office.
57	50	...	Delayed in delivery through fault of addressees.
45	40	...	Not posted.
77	68	...	Posted later than advised; forwarded by slower routes than letters of advice, &c.
156	136	...	Defectively or wrongly addressed.
51	45	...	Mislaid or lost after delivery.
63	55	...	Returned through Dead-letter Office as unclaimed, &c.
382	335	...	Delivered. Reason for inquiry not given, but probably in most cases omission by addressees to acknowledge receipt.
924	811		

Money-orders.

Twenty money-order offices were opened during the year—namely, Aitutaki, Awatuna East, Clifden, Fanning Island, Fern Flat, Hatuma, Inangahua Junction, Matakanui, Mayfield, Piriaka, Putaruru, Riverhead, Rough Ridge, Scargill, Seddon, Taumarunui, Te Horo, Te Uku, Urenui, Waipara.

Four offices were closed—namely, Cheltenham, Kaimanuka, Ongarue, Tokaanu.

The number of offices open at the end of the year was 510, as against 494 twelve months previously.

396,312 money-orders were issued for £1,416,224 12s. 4d., as compared with 367,207 for £1,277,059 2s. 3d. in 1902—an increase of 29,105 in number and £139,165 10s. 1d. in amount.

304,106 money-orders amounting to £1,224,842 12s. 4d. were paid, as against 286,642 for £1,117,137 12s. 8d. during 1902—an increase of 17,464 orders and £107,704 19s. 8d.

There were 54,933 telegraph money-orders issued for £187,472 14s., as compared with 49,230 orders for £152,407 14s. in 1902—an increase of 5,703 in number and £35,065 in amount.

122,777 orders for £308,157 6s. 8d. were issued on places beyond New Zealand, as against 109,097 orders for £262,335 6s. 3d. during 1902.

30,812 orders for £117,521 9s. 11d. were issued in places beyond New Zealand for payment in the colony, as compared with 28,259 orders for £103,530 3s. 11d. during the previous year.

The commission received for money-orders amounted to £15,881 18s. 5d., as against £14,915 18s. 2d. received during 1902.

Savings-Bank.

There were sixteen offices opened during the year for the transaction of Savings-Bank business—namely, Cross's Creek, Fern Flat, Hatuma, Inangahua Junction, Mayfield, Piriaka, Riverhead, Rough Ridge, Seddon, Scargill, Springfield Railway Works, Taumarunui, Te Horo, Te Uku, Urenui, Waipara.

Four offices were closed—namely, Cheltenham, Kaimanuka, Ongarue, Tokaanu.

There were 493 offices open at the end of 1903, as against 481 at the end of the previous year.

57,047 accounts were opened and 40,837 closed, the net gain on the year's working being 16,210 accounts. The number of depositors on the 31st December was 243,675, and the proportion of accounts per head of population was 1 in 3·42, as compared with 1 in 3·51 at the end of the previous year.

The deposits numbered 444,510, representing £5,661,592 15s. 2d., an average of £12 14s. 9d. per transaction. The withdrawals numbered 301,076 for £5,343,828 5s., an average of £17 15s. for each withdrawal.

The net amount added by the depositors to their savings during the year was therefore £317,764 10s. 2d., plus £187,130 2s. 8d. interest earned and credited, making a total of £504,894 12s. 10d.

The total amount at credit of depositors increased from £6,883,787 5s. 9d. at the close of the previous year to £7,388,681 18s. 7d. on the 31st December last, representing a sum equal to £9 0s. 2d. per head of the entire population, and £30 6s. 5d. to each depositor. Last year the figures were £8 10s. 5d. and £30 5s. 3d. respectively.

The interest credited to depositors since the Post-Office Savings-Banks were established in 1867 now amounts to £2,706,217 6s. 11d.

The cost of working the Savings-Banks amounted to 4·83d. per transaction, or about £15,000 for the year.

The cost of management per cent. on the total amount at credit of depositors was 0·203 per cent., or 4s. 1d. per £100.

Cheques may now be accepted as deposits to Savings-Bank accounts, provided they do not exceed the total amount of the deposit. Cheques drawn by local bodies may also be cashed on the local body indemnifying the Post Office against loss arising from forgery, fraudulent alteration, or any other cause. At isolated places, where no bank agency exists, arrangements may be made whereby cheques aggregating to a fixed amount, if drawn by well-known firms and settlers, may be accepted by Postmasters, provided the bank on which the cheques are drawn guarantees to honour them up to an amount to be determined between the drawer, the bank, and the Post Office.