

The total number of ordinary passengers carried during the year was 9,600,786, an increase of 774,404 over the previous year. Season tickets issued numbered 165,504, an increase of 17,515. The number of workers' twelve-trip tickets included in these figures was 44,015, and of workers' weekly tickets available on suburban lines 85,960. The steady increase in the issue of workers' tickets is a most gratifying indication that the workers for whose benefit they were introduced are taking advantage in growing numbers of the facilities offered them to reside in the suburban areas.

Holiday-excursion tickets issued numbered 856,412, an increase of 118,737 over the previous year. The issue of school, factory, and friendly-society excursion tickets, however, only reached a total of 95,664. There was thus a decrease of 24,556 passengers under this head. The decrease in the number of children carried amounted to 7,312, and of adults to 17,244. The business these figures represent was not lost, but was merely diverted into another channel. The fact of there being a decrease of 5,000 children and 9,900 adults carried at school-excursion rates in the Canterbury District is eloquent testimony to the attractions of the Exhibition, which impelled those usually content with a school picnic to forsake the beaten track and journey instead to the Exhibition at Christchurch, regardless of the difference in fare and contingent expenses of such a trip as compared with the nominal outlay involved in the school excursion.

The coaching and goods traffic show substantial increases under all the headings but one, the exception being the grain traffic, which shows a falling-off of 1,551 tons. In the coaching traffic the increases have been—parcels, 37,892; horses, 762; carriages, 64; dogs, 1,984; and in live-stock and goods traffic—cattle, 13,720; sheep, 1,312,316; pigs, 22,520 head; chaff, lime, &c., 23,432 tons; wool, 12,075 tons; firewood, 2,726 tons; timber, 33,302 tons; merchandise, 83,796 tons; minerals, 196,898 tons: representing a total increase in goods and live-stock tonnage of 409,398 tons. The increase of 1,312,316 in the number of sheep carried during the year is the highest yet recorded in any single year in the history of the railways. The large movement of sheep which took place was in a measure due to the drought, which caused a scarcity of feed in the Canterbury and Otago Districts, compelling owners to transfer their flocks temporarily to other parts of the colony where feed was more plentiful. It may be interesting to note that the actual increase of 1,312,316 sheep almost equalled the total sheep traffic carried in the year 1893.

The average number of men employed during the year was 10,858, against 9,795, an increase of 1,063.

During the year 223 members of the permanent staff resigned, 69 retired on superannuation, 37 died, 98 were dismissed, 1,050 were engaged, 6 who had been placed on the Superannuation Fund as "medically unfit" resumed duty.

Eleven appeals against decisions of the Department were heard by the Railway Boards during the year: 8 were dismissed, the punishment in 3 cases was mitigated.

Twelve members of the Second Division were promoted to the First Division during the year.

The sum of £3,649 has been allowed as compensation and compassionate allowance to members retired from the service and to relatives of members deceased. This sum includes £3,521 paid under the Workers' Compensation for Accidents Act.

A vigorous policy has been pursued in connection with the building of rolling-stock in the railway workshops. This has resulted in 3 new four-cylinder balanced compound tender engines, 60 new cars, 11 bogie brake-vans, 467 wagons—equal in capacity to 1,097 ordinary four-wheeled wagons—and 625 tarpaulins being added to the stock during the year.

New steel axles to the number of 1,449 have been placed under cars, vans, and wagons in substitution for old axles. All new rolling-stock built for the Auckland, Wellington - Napier - New Plymouth, and Hurunui-Bluff Sections was fitted with the Westinghouse brake before leaving the railway workshops.

Machinery of an improved type and greater capacity has been added to the equipment of the railway workshops. Such appliances increase the efficiency of the shops, and enable them the better to fulfil their important functions in relation to the railways.

The whole of the rolling-stock, machinery, and appliances, track, bridges, buildings, and other structures connected with the lines throughout the colony, have been kept in a thoroughly efficient condition.

120½ miles of track were relaid—viz., 84½ miles of main line with standard 70 lb. steel rails, and 36 miles of branch lines with 53 lb. steel rails that had been removed from the main line.