

Other works as follows were also in progress: Additions and alterations to the chief post-office building at Oamaru: to the post-office buildings at Geraldine, Mount Albert, Newmarket, Taradale, Te Aka, Te Awamutu, Waimauku, and Wakefield: and to the garage at Huntly. At Maungaturoto the old post-office building is being converted into a residence for the lineman. Alterations are being made to the first floor of the Wellesley Street (Auckland) post-office building to provide accommodation for the telephone branch.

At the time of the Coronation of the King and Queen in May most of the chief post-office buildings and one or two of the larger sub-office buildings were illuminated and decorated. Some twenty-six buildings were decorated and beflagged, and a considerable number of other buildings were decorated to a lesser extent.

DEPARTMENTAL MOTOR-VEHICLES.

During the year 135 new motor-vehicles were placed in service. Of these, 24 were cars and 111 were trucks or vans. With the exception of six the vehicles were of English manufacture. The bodies for the commercial vehicles were constructed in this Department's workshops at Auckland and Wellington, with the exception of nine built by the Railways Department.

In order to make comparisons in respect of low-powered vehicles driven by oil fuel, several 10 h.p. chassis with Diesel type engines were obtained. These will be used on line-maintenance work meantime.

Vehicles in commission at the end of the year numbered 767, comprising 557 trucks and vans and 210 motor-cars.

Sixty-six vehicles were withdrawn from service, and the fleet, including the vehicles held for sale, shows an increase of 69.

The mileage travelled for the twelve months was 6,208,651, an increase of 950,931.

Arrangements were made for this Department to act as a clearing depot for the repair and further use by other Departments of vehicles no longer required by the Departments releasing them.

BICYCLES.

The following are details of bicycles in use at the end of the year:—

701 machines owned by individual officers for the use of which allowances are paid:
166 machines purchased by the Department and supplied free of cost to officers who are required under agreement to maintain the machines and utilize them in the Department's service for a fixed period, based on the average weekly riding time; and

562 machines owned by the Department and held for use by officers as required for official purposes.

POST OFFICE.

INLAND MAIL-SERVICES.

New contracts for the inland mail-services in the South Island were arranged for a further term of three years as from the 1st January, 1938. A large number of the contracts were extended by arrangement with the contractors. The total of the subsidies was increased by approximately 10 per cent., which can be regarded as satisfactory.

At the end of March, 1937, the total number of boxholders served by rural mail deliveries was 26,740, the highest number then on record. It is pleasing to report that this service was extended during the ensuing twelve months to 2,106 additional settlers. The total number of boxholders at the end of March, 1938, was 28,846, a new record.

During the year the co-ordination of the delivery of railway and post parcels was carried a step further by combining these services in the City of Wellington. The delivery of railway parcels in conjunction with post parcels is now being undertaken by this Department at Auckland, Wellington, Christchurch, Dunedin, Palmerston North, and New Plymouth.

As the result of an improvement from the 1st January in the steamer service between Bluff and Half-moon Bay (Stewart Island), the frequency of the mail service between those offices has been increased from weekly (with a twice-weekly service during holiday periods) to thrice-weekly throughout the year.

In February exceptionally heavy floods were experienced in the Napier, Gisborne, and Auckland postal districts, resulting in serious interruptions to road transport services. To prevent any avoidable delay to mail matter, alternative services were used wherever possible.

OCEAN MAIL-SERVICES.

The Auckland-Vancouver ocean-mail-contract service was maintained during the year by the "Aorangi" and the "Niagara," except that for one round trip the "Aorangi" was replaced by the "Monowai."

Regular despatches of mail for Great Britain and Europe were made via North America by vessels of the Canadian-Australasian Line and the Matson Line. In addition, the all-sea routes via Panama and Cape Horn were used for full despatches on a number of occasions during the year when advantage in arrival time was offered.

The service between New Zealand and Australia was maintained by the "Awatea" and the "Wanganella" in conjunction with vessels of the Canadian-Australasian and Matson lines, except that during the winter months the "Awatea" was replaced by the "Maunganui." The "Awatea" in particular provides an excellent mail-service connection with Australia, and during the withdrawal of the vessel in the winter the time-table was adversely affected. A service between Bluff and Melbourne was maintained during the winter months by the "Waitaki" and during the period October-March by the "Maunganui." Regular sailings were also maintained between New Zealand and Rarotonga, Niue, Apia, and Tonga.