

PAPERS RELATIVE TO THE

The Mail Service between Wanganui and Patea has been increased from once a week to twice a week ; and the service is performed by coach. Between Patea and New Plymouth, also, the communication has been increased from once a fortnight to once a week. By these services, which are now performed without interruption, New Plymouth is placed in weekly overland communication with Patea, Wanganui, and Wellington.

In Westland, a Post has been established between Okarita and Five Mile Bush, Gillespie's Beach, and Hunt's Beach. The correspondence for those places had previously not been sent further South than Okarita.

The following figures show the total number of letters and of newspapers despatched and received during 1869, and a comparison with the numbers despatched and received during 1868 :—

			1869.	1868.
Letters—Despatched	...	...	2,374,060	2,603,077
„ Received	...	...	2,642,535	2,374,122
Newspapers—Despatched	...	...	1,486,255	1,376,316
„ Received	...	...	2,076,892	1,907,369

Thus, during 1869, there were 37,466 more letters passed through the Post Office than there were during 1868; for while the despatched letters show a decrease of 228,947 on the year, there is an increase of 268,413 on those received. As to newspapers, the number dealt with by the Department during 1869 was considerably over a quarter of a million in excess of that of 1868; the newspapers despatched having increased by 109,909, and those received by 169,523, the total increase being 279,432.

A statement of the strength of the Staff of the Department at the close of 1869, and a comparison with its state at the close of 1868, is appended :—

	31st Dec., 1869.	31st Dec., 1868.
Postmaster-General	1	1
Secretary	1	1
Inspector of Post Offices	1	1
Chief Postmasters	9	9
Postmasters	20	18
Sub-Postmasters	384	363
Clerks	46	50
Letter Carriers, Messengers, &c.	28	26
Mail Agents	2	3
Total	492	472

Pending arrangements which are about to be made by the Government, for the mutual assurance of officers, it is for the present required that officers of this Department shall give the security of a private bond, instead of that of a Guarantee Association.

Of the three Letter Carriers already mentioned in connection with the Thames Office, one was appointed during 1869, and the others have been added this year.

DEAD LETTERS.

The decrease in what are called “ Dead Letters ” has been marked, and steady, for several years. Numbering 46,593 in 1866, the decrease, taken yearly, has been to 37,628, 33,072, and 29,331 respectively. The increased knowledge and efficiency of the Letter Carriers may, no doubt, be credited with a portion of this improvement ; which must, however, be mainly attributed to the fact that, year by year, a smaller proportion of the population of the Colony is classable under the term “ floating.”

The following table shows how “ Dead ” (or Returned) letters were dealt with during the years specified :—

	1867.	1868.	1869.
Opened and Returned to the writers	16,829	17,884	16,453
Returned unopened to other places	13,170	12,365	10,074
Re-issued	79	90	87
Destroyed	7,550	2,733	2,717
	37,628	33,072	29,331