

In December last a through express train between Auckland and Opua was inaugurated. After a trial it was found that a curtailment could be made in the running-time. The time-table has since been altered, and forty minutes have been cut off the up journey and thirty minutes off the down journey. The altered running provides more convenient hours of departure from and arrival at Auckland; and the train from Auckland also makes a connection at Newmarket with the 6.40 a.m. passenger-train from Mercer.

The Auckland-Opua express service is now running daily between Auckland and Whangarei, and thrice weekly between Whangarei and Opua.

The Thames and Rotorua expresses were maintained as separate trains a little longer than usual this year; but a fall in passenger traffic (the usual winter reduction) necessitated an amalgamation being made at the end of June. When arranging this change an alteration was made to the Thames-Paeroa local services, whereby the train which provides the express service from Thames for Auckland became a non-stop train between Thames South and Paeroa. This enabled passengers from Thames to entrain forty minutes later than formerly. Improved schedules for the Thames and Rotorua expresses are now being compiled in anticipation of the time when the traffic warrants these trains again being run separately.

As foreshadowed in last year's report, a night express was instituted between Auckland and Wellington. By limiting the load and making a minimum number of stops it was possible to reduce the through time materially, the "Limited" express making the journey in about fourteen and a quarter hours.

The Wellington-New Plymouth and Wellington-Napier express trains have been rearranged, and the time in transit has been reduced by periods varying from an hour and a quarter to an hour and a half. A later start from Wellington eliminates almost entirely the possibility of the ferry-boat from Lyttelton missing the connection with these trains, besides affording passengers off the ferry-boat ample time to obtain breakfast before entraining. In remodelling the Napier and New Plymouth expresses opportunity was taken to provide an express service connection from Napier to Wanganui and New Plymouth. The down Napier-Wellington express now connects at Palmerston North with the Wellington-New Plymouth up express. Passengers from Napier are thus enabled to travel through to New Plymouth in the one day, and passengers for Wanganui can reach their destination without being subjected to undue delay awaiting a connecting train from Palmerston North. It is anticipated that this alteration will be much appreciated.

For many years the express train from Invercargill for Christchurch started from Invercargill at 6.10 a.m., and the express from Christchurch arrived at Invercargill at 10.15 p.m. Both trains have been accelerated, the reduction of time on the journey being about an hour and a quarter in each case. At Invercargill the departure time is now 7 a.m. and arrival time from Christchurch 8.55 p.m. These alterations have met with the general approval of the people of Southland.

Although it has been customary as a measure of economy to reduce the running of the Christchurch-Invercargill express trains to three days per week during the winter months, it was hoped that the traffic would be maintained sufficiently to warrant a continuance of the daily running throughout the current year, but with the advent of the winter season the traffic dropped considerably and a curtailment of the services became inevitable. These trains are, however, being maintained on Mondays as well as on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays. This provides an additional day's service, and has proved a convenience to passengers for south arriving in Lyttelton by the ferry-steamer on Sundays, and also to Christchurch business houses. The mail-trains between Christchurch and Dunedin and between Dunedin and Invercargill have been accelerated, about forty minutes having been cut off the journey each way.

The running-time of the Christchurch-Greymouth mail-trains has also been reduced by about half an hour.

The improvements effected in the retiming of the express trains have been favourably commented upon by travellers, public bodies, business organizations, and other commercial interests concerned.

The night "Limited" expresses between Wellington and Auckland have especially received a large measure of praise. These trains make very good connections throughout, and have the special advantage of running through the night and so leaving the daylight available for business or pleasure.

In making the alterations every effort has been made to suit the convenience of the travelling public, by fixing convenient hours for departure from and arrival at the main centres, by arranging suitable hours for meals, by making suitable connection with branch trains, and by giving the quickest possible transport.

The Sunday trains between Auckland and Helensville were reinstated in November. Additional trains were added in March, and the service is being maintained.

To meet the demand from the Napier and Hastings districts a Sunday service was instituted between Napier and Hastings, and is up to the present receiving sufficient support to warrant its continuance.

Additional Sunday trains have been provided between Wellington and Lower Hutt to meet the growing requirements of the district.

A Sunday train was also run between Dunedin and Palmerston during the summer months from January until April, and it is proposed to run this train again next summer.

The Wellington-Woodville passenger-train has been accelerated in order to make a connection at Woodville with the Wellington-Napier express train, and the Woodville-Wellington passenger-train has been altered so as to make a connection at Woodville with the Wellington-Napier express, thus providing a through service (round trip) in one day from Wellington (Thorndon) to Wellington (Lambton) via Palmerston North and Woodville. It is also possible to make this round trip in one day in the reverse direction, Wellington (Lambton) to Wellington (Thorndon).

A trial is being made of an early morning train on Wednesdays from Parnassus to Waipara to connect there with the morning train for Christchurch, and a return train from Waipara after arrival there of the evening train from Christchurch. The traffic has not so far been up to expectations, but the service is being continued in the meantime in anticipation of an improvement.