

# SPECIAL POSTAL, TELEGRAPH, AND TELEPHONE FACILITIES DURING THE VISIT OF H.R.H. THE DUKE OF GLOUCESTER.

On the occasion of the visit to New Zealand of His Royal Highness the Duke of Gloucester in December and January last the Department, in addition to organizing the motor-transport for the tour, provided special postal, telegraph, and telephone facilities throughout the Dominion to meet the requirements of the Royal party and those associated with the tour, including press representatives. The arrangements made included the extension of the hours of attendance, the strengthening of staffs, and the provision of special apparatus at many post and telegraph offices.

The organization of the motor transport for the tour, involving a fleet of twenty-two cars, called for careful consideration and the closest attention to detail. As His Royal Highness travelled by train wherever possible, it was necessary for the motor fleet to be so organized that cars would be available to meet the Royal train at various points.

Mail matter for the Royal party was handled with the utmost expedition, special bags for the party being made up at central points. In particular, special handling was accorded mails for His Royal Highness from England. Where a saving in time could be effected, these mails on arrival in the Dominion were conveyed by New Zealand Air Force machines from the port of arrival to the locality which the party was visiting at the time. Flights for this purpose were made as follows:—

Auckland to Napier, 19th December.  
Wellington to Hokitika, 7th January.  
Auckland to Invercargill, 12th January.  
Wellington to Longbeach (Ashburton), 16th January.  
Wellington to Christchurch, 20th January.  
Wellington to Russell, 28th January.

While the Royal party was travelling by train a post-office was established on the Royal train. A special date-stamp engraved "Royal Train, New Zealand" was used for post-marking correspondence posted on the train.

In the provision of the special telegraph and telephone facilities for the tour no unusual difficulties were involved except in the case of several of the principal tourist resorts—viz., Rotorua, The Chateau (Tongariro National Park), Waiho Gorge (Franz Joseph Glacier), and Hermitage (Mount Cook). The Royal party's official itinerary provided a stay-over period of several days at each of these resorts, and in view of the fact that the normal communication facilities fell considerably short of requirements for so important an event, it was considered advisable to make additional facilities available at these places. At Rotorua the telegraph requirements were met by the installation of a portable teleprinter set for duplex operation with Auckland, while the toll traffic was catered for by the temporary installation of one additional single-channel carrier-telephone system also arranged for direct communication with Auckland. The special systems installed at The Chateau were the same as those for Rotorua, except that the teleprinter was arranged for direct working with Wanganui and the carrier-telephone system for operation with Hamilton. In the case of Waiho Gorge and the Hermitage it was found that the successful operation of teleprinter and carrier-telephone systems presented serious difficulties, since in both cases a single earth-working line with a number of intermediate stations thereon served as the only connecting link between the out-stations and their nearest centre. On the Hermitage route the difficulties were further accentuated by the fact that seventy miles of the earth-working line were composed of galvanized-iron wire. Notwithstanding these peculiar difficulties, however, a high-grade single-channel carrier-telephone system was established for operation between Waiho Gorge and Greymouth, and one was also installed and operated between the Hermitage and Christchurch. At both places the telegraph traffic was disposed of by way of radio channels supplemented by voice-frequency teleprinter channels operated over the carrier systems when the latter were not in use for toll purposes. This was the first occasion on which teleprinters and carrier-telephone systems had been utilized in semi-portable form for meeting special requirements of this kind, and it marked the first occasion also of the use of a voice-frequency telegraph system in the Dominion. The special equipment functioned satisfactorily wherever it was installed and enabled the Department to provide the Royal party with a first-class telegraph and telephone service at the most isolated places that were visited.

Another feature of the communication services which proved very valuable was the instant linking-up of the Royal train with the main telephone system whenever the train remained the headquarters of the party during a stop of an hour or more at any point.

The foundation-stone of the new chief post-office building at Dunedin was laid by His Royal Highness the Duke of Gloucester on the 12th January last. The ceremony, which was a memorable event in the history of Otago, was witnessed by a vast concourse of citizens who crowded adjacent streets and occupied vantage-points on buildings in the vicinity. To mark the occasion His Royal Highness was presented by the Postmaster-General, the Hon. Adam Hamilton, with a miniature in gold of the new building in the form of an ink-stand. The gold model, into the top of which an ink-well is set, is mounted on a base of Bluff granite similar to that used for the facings of the building. The sides of the base are ornamented in gold, the front with a crown, above which rests a gold pen on stand, the left and right sides with the crest of His Royal Highness and the New Zealand Coat-of-Arms respectively, and the back with a plate bearing the following inscription: "Dunedin Post Office. Foundation-stone laid by His Royal Highness the Duke of Gloucester, K.G., P.C., K.T., G.C.V.O., 12/1/35."

Post-office buildings at places visited by His Royal Highness during his tour of the Dominion were suitably decorated.