



**Thomas Reid Christie**  
**1861 – 1933**

Thomas Reid Christie was born in April 1861 in Auchterarder, Perthshire, Scotland and was educated at the Dollar Academy in Clammananshire, eventually serving an apprenticeship as a plumber.

On the 26<sup>th</sup> August 1880, Thomas sailed from Glasgow on board the ship “Dunedin” to Port Chalmers arriving on the 26<sup>th</sup> November. Accompanying Thomas were his brother John, sister Helen, parents James and Helen and grandfather John who was in his 90’s.

Upon arriving in Dunedin, the brothers initially worked at Andersons Plumbers in Moray Place, before heading to Oamaru where a variety of work was on offer.

In 1881, Thomas and John went into partnership under the style of Messrs J&T Christie, sanitary engineers, general plumbers and manufacturers. Thomas was a member of the Worshipful Company of Plumbers of London, President of the National Association of Master Plumbers of NZ, represented the Dunedin City Council on the Technical Classes Association and was a trustee of the Dunedin Savings Bank for nearly 30 years.

Thomas was a city councillor representing the Bell ward from April 1900 until 1905 & was elected Mayor of Dunedin from 1904 – 1905 with 2,820 votes.

During his term as Mayor of Dunedin, Thomas was involved in two significant events; first of all, he was the major instigator of the policy of tree planting on the municipal watersheds, which had the effect of providing the city with an asset of considerable magnitude and which the city is still benefiting from today.

Secondly on the 3<sup>rd</sup> June 1904, Sir Joseph Ward laid the foundation stone of the Dunedin Railway Station. In his speech during the foundation stone laying, Thomas indicated that the “Government had spared no expense in the proposed structure, either from an architectural or from a utility point of view. The building would be provided with all of the equipment necessary to serve the requirements of a city of Dunedin proportions and expectations and might be expected to answer for many years to come. It pointed to the fact that Dunedin was progressing and progressing steadily. The extension of the railways into the country must also add to the importance of Dunedin and to the benefit of the railways, by securing a larger earning power, as well as bringing the back blocks into touch with the city centre and giving them much needed transit.”

In 1904 there was considerable debate raging in Dunedin about the merits of two alternate sources of electric power for the city – at Waipori Falls and at Lee Stream. The Waipori Falls Company had introduced a private Bill in Parliament to secure rights to supply Dunedin and adjacent districts with electricity. At that point, the city was backing the alternate Lee Stream project and Thomas was required to provide evidence on behalf of the city during Parliamentary deliberations. Ultimately the city realised the Waipori scheme was a better option and reached an agreement where the city purchased the interests of the Company for £31,000 in October of that year. Again, this proved to be an outstanding long-term investment for the city.

Thomas was also Chairman of the Dunedin City Tramways Committee at the time that Dunedin was the first municipality in New Zealand to introduce electric trams in 1904.

Thomas married Jessie Mercer in 1889 at the home of Mrs. Eliza Mercer in Mornington, having two daughters (Rachel & Helen) and a son James who died at 19 days. Following Jessie's death, Thomas subsequently remarried Sarah Brown on the 21 November 1906, living at 152 Cargill St. They adopted a son (also called James) in 1919. James was a battery assembler for the 23<sup>rd</sup> Canterbury and Otago Battalion, 5<sup>th</sup> Infantry Brigade & was killed in action in the Western Desert on the 15<sup>th</sup> July 1942. Neither of Thomas's daughters bore children and hence no direct descendents remain.

John, Thomas's brother was one of a male quartet that decided to form what is now the Royal Dunedin Male Choir.

Thomas died on the 6<sup>th</sup> September 1933, aged 72.

There are 11 burials within the Christie plot, in Dunedin's Northern Cemetery, with the 1<sup>st</sup> in 1892 and the last in 1985.

Prepared by the Historic Cemeteries Conservation Trust ([www.cemeteries.org.nz](http://www.cemeteries.org.nz)) using information written and supplied by Michael Christie of Dunedin.