



Walter Guthrie was a native of Largo, Fifeshire, where he was born in 1839. His father owned coastal vessels so the son went to sea.

He came to New Zealand at the age of 22, landing in Dunedin in 1863. Some time afterwards he founded the firm of Guthrie and Larnach, hardware merchants with William James Mudie Larnach. Larnach relinquished his position as manager of the Bank of Otago to enter into partnership with Mr Guthrie, and the firm carried on business until 1883, when the partnership was dissolved, and Mr Guthrie went to Invercargill.

Mr Larnach carried on the Dunedin business until about 1887, when the business was devastated by the great fire which destroyed the premises in Princes Street, and burned everything to the ground. Guthrie & Larnach donated 100 pounds to the Dunedin Fire Brigade "in recognition of the valuable services rendered by the Brigade on the occasion of the fire at our premises".

Mr Guthrie then founded the firm of Walter Guthrie & Co Limited in Invercargill, which carried on business for some years as general importers of hardware and ironmongery. Guthrie was interested in a number of other companies, notably, the New Zealand Pine Company which was floated in 1888, the Dunedin Timber & Woodware Company, (which the partners floated in 1877, and the Otago Witness reported, "the business itself is undeniably the largest in the Colony"), and the City Sawmilling Company.

Walter Guthrie, of Southland, died at "Sunwick" Stafford Street, Dunedin, on 13 February 1902. At the time of his death he was the proprietor of the Southland Sawmilling Company, which was started in 1897, and of the Southland Implement & Engineering Company, which, during the dredging boom employed 530 men. Unfortunately, in 1897, the Bank of New Zealand put these concerns into liquidation.

During his lengthy commercial career in Dunedin and Invercargill Mr Guthrie was connected either directly or indirectly with many business ventures. Among others it might be mentioned that he was one of the provisional directors of the Otago Daily Times Company at the time of its formation, and acted as a director for many subsequent years. He took no part in politics or in public matters, that was left to his partner Larnach, but was purely a businessman, who displayed a farsightedness and a shrewdness rarely met with. While in Dunedin he was a member of Knox Church.

He is buried in Dunedin's Southern Cemetery and memorialised with a large black granite stone and obelisk. He left a widow, son, and two daughters. His estate on his death in 1902 was valued at 25,594 pounds – a substantial sum for those days.

Prepared by the Historic Cemeteries Conservation Trust of New Zealand ([www.cemeteries.org.nz](http://www.cemeteries.org.nz)) from an obituary in the Otago Witness 19 February 1902.