



The Rev. John Christie sometime Pastor of the Presbyterian Church, Hawksbury, Waikouaiti, was born in East Kilbride, Scotland, in 1830, educated at Edinburgh and Glasgow Universities, and received his license from the Presbytery of Glasgow in 1860. Mr. Christie came to New Zealand in the ship "Cheviot," landing at Port Chalmers in October, 1862. In 1863 he became pastor of the church in which he ministered till October, 1901, when he retired after a pastorate of thirty-eight years. He was succeeded by the Rev. J. J. Cairney, who was ordained to the charge in 1902. Mr. Christie was married in June, 1862, to Miss Rachel Stewart, of Carlake, Scotland, and has five daughters and three sons. On his retirement he moved to Dunedin.

Rev Christie arrived just after gold was discovered at Gabriel's Gully and at the Dunstan. Waikouaiti was one gateway to Central Otago and looked like becoming a major centre. The first Presbyterian Church was built in 1863 and Christie's parish stretched north first to Goodwood and then Palmerston, west into the Maniototo, and south to Blueskin. The church, on land donated by John Jones, opened with comparatively light debt, but a severe gale in 1866 carried off part of the roof of the church and did other considerable damage, but by 1867 even this debt had been extinguished. In 1864 he held divine service in a theatre at Hamilton's Diggings, and religious services were held in Shag Valley in the house of Mr. Samuel Dickson. Sunday School and Bible Class was started in 1863

In 1865 the first Palmerston Presbyterian Church was built, and in 1867 the Blueskin Presbyterian Church was erected.

Christie was a man of great energy. In 1880 he wrote "History of Waikouaiti", a book of 148 pages which was, in his own words, "written for the benefit of my fellow colonists in the County of Waikouaiti, that they may learn something of the locality in which they live, and for the use of

intelligent strangers and visitors who may have an interest in the district, and desire information regarding it.”

He covered a vast range of topics – geography, geology, wildlife, soil and agriculture, climate, Maori life and customs, the whaling period and its characters, Christian missions, land settlement, transport, health, religions, schooling, and so on – a veritable cyclopaedia and most interesting too.

“Inroads on the health are produced by evening meetings, particularly if crowded and overheated. Those who attend soirees and public meetings should take special care. Concerts with late dancing parties are fruitful of mischief. Many a robust youth and blooming maiden have there had the seeds lodged in their bosoms that blighted their fair promise of life. In a state of unusual excitement and perspiration they thoughtlessly rushed out of a heated and impure atmosphere into the sharp, frosty, night air, which results in a fever and an obstinate cough, and a slow consumption, which leads its victims gently to the grave. Fatal examples could be noted as proceeding from the midnight carousal; therefore, young man and scantily-dressed damsel, beware! Pleasure is good, but health is better.”

A ‘good and faithful servant’, John Christie died on 8 August 1913 and was buried in the Hawksbury Cemetery (Waikouaiti) where his family, his wife and four daughters and one son joined him.

Prepared by the Historic Cemeteries Conservation Trust of New Zealand ( [www.cemeteries.org.nz](http://www.cemeteries.org.nz) )  
from “Waikouaiti” by Rev John Christie, and “Cyclopaedia of Otago and Southland”.