



In the course of our research for the biography of Dunedin architect Robert Arthur Lawson (due to be published late 2010) we were drawn to the memorial in the Northern Cemetery erected to the Lawson daughter Jessie, who died aged seven years. It is of a very special and unusual design (possibly designed by Lawson) and was carved and erected by "Thomson & Co" as engraved on the foundation stone.

Thomson & Co were monumental masons and sculptors in Moray Place, in early Dunedin.

Mr. Thomas Thomson, the founder of this business, was born in Perthshire, Scotland, in 1839, and came to Dunedin in 1862 by the ship "Sevilla".

Shortly after his arrival he was employed in connection with the erection of the Stock Exchange Building [now demolished] in Princes Street, and afterwards with the building of First Church under architect Robert Arthur Lawson.

In 1874 he founded the business of Thomson & Co with his two sons.

Mr Thomson took a considerable interest in the affairs of the Mornington Road Board, and was a member of the Caledonian Society. He was a most enthusiastic grower of roses, and possessed one of the finest collections of those flowers in Dunedin.

Thomas Thomson died on 19 April, 1887, and is buried in Dunedin's Southern Cemetery. The grave site has, as you would expect, a beautiful headstone, sadly now vandalised. On this Thomas Thomson is recorded as "sculptor". We are indebted to Dunedin Monumental Masons who have since repaired the damaged stone and re-erected it free of charge.



His eldest son Robert was born in Dunedin and educated at Mornington and High Street schools. He learned his trade from his father and took charge of the business on the death of his father. He was joined by his younger brother James who joined the firm in 1901 after following a commercial life for a number of years.

James also carried on accountancy work and share-broking. He was largely interested in gold-dredging and was a director of the Island Block Dredging Company, and secretary of the Unity Gold Dredging Company.

Prepared by the Historic Cemeteries Conservation Trust of New Zealand ([www.cemeteries.org.nz](http://www.cemeteries.org.nz)) from the Cyclopedia of New Zealand, Otago Provincial District.