The Windows.

The concrete apse at the east end of St Matthew's was erected in 1881 in memory of Emily, wife of John Thomas Brown of Mt Thomas. The central Faith Hope Charity window bears the memorial inscription. The south-east window (The Woman at the Well) commemorates John Thomas Brown himself.

The north-east window(depicting Mary Magdalene's meeting with the Risen Christ at the first Easter) is in memory of Mrs Ann Mannering who started a small boarding school for girls at Fernside. Her daughter (Annie Emily) was organist for over 30 years and carved and presented the organ stool to St Matthew's.

The West window was presented by Mrs Brown in memory of her husband Herbert who was warden for 33 years.

St Matthew's, Fernside, continues to figure prominently in the life of the district. Services are held twice a month (1st and 3rd Sundays) at 10.30am. All visitors are assured of a warm welcome.

St Matthew's, Anglican Church Fernside

St Matthew's Church can be found on the corner of Mt Thomas road and Mairaki Downs Road at Fernside five kilometres west of Rangiora. Nestled snugly in a bush setting, the church is a memorial to the tenacity and devotion of the early district runholders.

The history of the building of St Matthew's is closely associated with that of the early Canterbury settlement. The first runholders who settled in the Fernside area arrived on the first four ships that brought the Canterbury Association settlers to Lyttelton.

Rev. Benjamin Dudley, chaplain on board the Cressy, cared for the congregation of St Matthew's while he was vicar of St John's Parish, Rangiora.

St Matthew's was designed by Benjamin Mountfort and built by Messrs Allen and Son for £243 in 1874 on land gifted by Mr F. M. Rickman. The foundation stone-laying ceremony for St Matthew's was conducted in 1874 by the Bishop of Christchurch, the Rt. Rev. Henry Harper.

The enthusiasm of the prospective congregation ensured the church was completed in six months. It seated 70 persons. Bishop Harper returned to consecrate St Matthew's that same year.

Money for the church was raised by the runholders with 25% of subscriptions raised being pledged by John Thomas Brown the owner of the Mount Thomas Estate.

More money was raised by friends of the runholders in England to support a St Matthew's vicar.

The Fernside estate was established by Charles Torlesse, a surveyor who accompanied Godley to the Rangiora region

before the early settlers arrived in 1850. The estate was 20,000 acres of land which extended from the Rangiora bush along the south bank of the Ashley River into the Cust valley.

The Springbank homestead adjacent to the Fernside block was established 2 months later by Robert Chapman.

Mount Thomas Station was licensed to John Brown, a surveyor who arrived in 1851 on the Midlothian.

Canterbury was divided into parishes in 1854 and all of the country north of the Waimakariri formed the Parish of Kaiapoi. The Rev. John Raven was vicar and lived in Woodend. Bishop Harper assisted by visited the more outlying areas to hold services. By 1857 there were 183 settlers in North Canterbury for Bishop Harper to visit. Services were held in sheds, kitchens and huts.

In the early 1870s Fernside was the main church for a parish that included Loburn and Ashley. By 1874 the township of Fernside that formed around the railway station included a post office, store, bakery and two blacksmith shops.

In 1876 the Rev. J. K. Wilmer became the first permanent vicar.

The parish history records several changes in the intervening years. It became part of the Ohoka parish in 1904 and the parish of Cust in 1914 before finally returning to Rangiora, its original caretaker parish, in 1945.