

CHURCH FURNITURE IN AUSTRALIA

THE WORK OF F.W. TOD, 1879-1958

Alan Perry

Frederick William Tod, a wood carver, was born on 16th December 1879, the son of Frederick and Sarah Tod, of Hackney South in the county of Middlesex, England. Little is known of his early life in England, except that his father was a wood-turner, and his mother a very well-educated woman who instilled in her son a love of music and literature. His father encouraged his ability in working with wood, and apprenticed him at Messrs. Trollopes Studio in London, where he carried out some of his earliest work. A reading desk for Milton Abbey, Dorset was executed while he was at this studio. His grand-daughter, Mrs. Buist, of Gordon, Sydney, has in her possession a medal from the City and Guilds of London Institute of Technical Education, that was awarded to Tod on his passing the Institute's technical examination.

Frederick married Alice Maud Ryan at West Hackney in 1902 at the age of twenty two and they had two sons Reginald Frederick, born on 26th August 1904 and Arthur William, born on 5th July 1907. Few details are known of Tod's working life in England, other than knowledge that he carried out his trade there for leading London firms for a period of twenty years before migrating to Australia with his family. In England he executed the carvings in the library of Hever Castle, Kent especially the carved mirror frames which were inspired by the naturalistic carvings of the seventeenth century Dutch-born carver, Grinling Gibbons. The excellence of Tod's carving won him a first prize at the London Exhibition of 1910. In England he was a member of the Woodcarvers' Guild and was known to have been a strong trades unionist who helped found the Woodcarvers' Union.

Tod's brother-in-law, Sidney Ryan, an upholsterer, who was already living in Australia, encouraged Tod to join him there. Sidney Ryan was a member of Lodge Sphinx No. 413, United grand Lodge of N.S.W. and served the lodge as Worshipful Master in 1925/26.

Tod's family arrived in Australia in 1915 after a nightmare trip. Being wartime the ship was blacked out, and in constant danger from enemy ships and submarines throughout the voyage. The atmosphere Frederick William Tod found when he arrived in Australia in 1915, and the atmosphere in which he was to work during the early part of his working life in Australia, was one influenced by feelings of war, religion and Empire, and with a confusion as to where Australia's loyalties should lie. Although Australia was already a nation, it was easy to lose sight of this significance in the chaos of war.

The magazine, *The Salon*, in August 1916 announced his arrival:

'There has lately arrived in Sydney a wood-carver and modeller of ability, Mr. Fredk. W. Tod, an Englishman, well trained in his craft. There are not too many wood-carvers of ability in this part of the Commonwealth, and Mr. Tod is welcome. Architects and those of the public who are interested in wood-carving will now be able to take advantage of Mr. Tod's talent.'

Tod's earliest residential address in Sydney was at Dangar Street, Randwick. It is known that he did ecclesiastical work from his home when he first arrived in Sydney. He must have become successful fairly rapidly as he was able to obtain separate factory premises at 5 Barlow Street, Sydney. Writing to the editor of *Building & Construction Magazine* on 3rd January 1918, on a letterhead advertising his services as wood carving and modelling of architectural decoration, as well as antique reproductions, he stated that his premises in Barlow Street were becoming too small for his expanding business and he was looking for a larger building. In the same magazine of 12 February 1919, he advertised new premises at 43 Dawson Street, Surry Hills, near Central Railway Station.

At the time Tod was carving in Sydney, there were not many commercial wood-carvers. Wood-carvers were active in the Society of Arts and Crafts and from the records of the early years of the Society, it would appear that female wood-carvers were in the forefront in this craft - at least they had schools and premises in the city but produced smaller items for the ordinary consumer market.

Frederick Tod was associated with the Society of Arts and Crafts for a period from 1915 and he displayed a strong interest in incorporating native flora in his carving. Some members of the Society formed a nature study circle with monthly excursions into the bush to study native fauna and flora for use in designs. Tod must have been influenced by this and he designed carving mouldings, door panels and furniture, using *flannel flowers*, *native pears*, *eucalypts*, *native fuchsia*, *boronia*, *waratahs* and *grevillia*.

As ecclesiastical carving was his main work, this interest influenced his traditional church carvings, as evidenced by his work in St. Matthew's Anglican Church, Manly, New South Wales. Although ecclesiastical carving was his major work (now to be seen in over two hundred churches in Sydney and country areas) it is probably least known by the general public. His work can be identified by either a metal or Zylonite label.

Probably commissioned by the Technological Museum (now the Powerhouse Museum) Tod, together with William Johnson, made the table with Australian native motifs which the Museum purchased in 1916, and which is now exhibited in the Mint Museum. The table, carved by Tod and inlaid by Johnson, complemented the Museum's curator, R.T. Baker's standing exhibition, 'Australian Flora in Applied Art'. The table has six legs, magnificently carved with waratahs and seed pods and interwoven with gum nuts and flowering gums. Similar carving can be seen on Tod's 'Festoon of Australian Wildflowers' - a pair of wooden panels carved in c.1918, now in the Powerhouse Museum. Also, Tod exhibited with the Society of Arts & Crafts at the Ideal Homes Exhibition in October 1915, where his work was particularly admired.

Frederick William Tod was initiated in Lodge Manoah No. 41, United Grand Lodge of New South Wales on 24th May 1923, passing through several degrees, and serving as Steward from 1924 to 1925, and as Director of Music for the next five years. Masonic furniture and fittings became part of his commissioned work. The family is believed to have moved residence to Canterbury, where a daughter, Kathleen, was born on 15th July 1920. When she was five years old, the family moved to 170 Cottenham Avenue, South Kensington. Kathleen was christened at St. Jude's Church of England, Randwick, where her father was a member of the choir. In 1920, Tod carved the beautiful communion table, the reredos, the side chapel screen, the honour roll and hymn board for St. Jude's Church. His church affiliation may have helped him with his many Church

of England commissions. Frederick Tod was very friendly with the Bishop of Armidale, and had one of the Bishop's sons apprenticed to him. Tod did extensive carving work for Armidale Cathedral where he incorporated Gibbons-style motifs into the Church fittings. He also did work for the New England Grammar School at Armidale. One of Frederick Tod's greatest honours must have been when he was chosen to carve the Australian Coat of Arms over the President's chair for the Senate Chamber in the Old Parliament House, Canberra in 1926. It was carved on a panel of Tasmanian blackwood, 2 ft by 3 ft 4 ins.

In a brochure by Tod, *'Art in Furnishing and Interior Woodwork'*, probably produced sometime in the early 1930s, he appeals to those who love art and can recognise the fine points of the technique which it involves, and can appreciate it in the home. To those who appreciate the class of workmanship seen in the best English homes, he offers his services. He says it is difficult to define art, but one thing is certain - 'it must not contain too much commercial element. In this age of mass production methods, much of the old time individuality and the expression of the craftsman is subdued, if not entirely lost.' He says that his work has been mainly confined to churches but (probably because of the prevailing depression) he has been advised to appeal to a wider clientele. Sometime after 1930, a fire at the Dawson Street premises forced the closure of the factory and it was later relocated at 73-77 Booth Street, Annandale, where Tod was assisted by his two sons, Reginald and Arthur. They were responsible for the carpentry and joinery while their father carried out the wood carving and design. This business went bankrupt during the depressions of the 1930s and it was possibly due to his financial difficulties that he resigned from his Lodge.

In the years that followed and during World War II Tod worked from his home at Kensington. It was said that he would rather lose money than lower the standard of his work. Frank Otto and his brother, wood carvers, still in business at Leichhardt in Sydney, remember Frederick Tod as an excellent carver and a softly spoken and very modest man. His daughter and grand-daughter both remember him as a thorough gentleman who was very fond of literature, especially Dickens, and that music also filled a great part of his life. He could play seven musical instruments and he always liked working to the accompaniment of classical music. Tod was actively involved in the politics of his adopted country, being secretary of the Kensington branch of the United Australia Party in the 1930s. As an employer, he was not happy with the way Australia was governed at that time. Frederick Tod and his wife Alice, moved to 488 Princes Highway, Sutherland in 1950, where he continued carving in a workshop/garage on the same site, as had been his custom ever since the depression years. But Alice was not to enjoy their new garden setting, as she died shortly after the move.

Frederick Tod was also to die there on 27th June 1958, aged seventy nine.

In a tribute to Tod in the magazine *Building & Construction* of 13th August 1958, the Editor, Florence M. Taylor, wrote the following tribute:

'To those of us who have been privileged to go to England and see the great wood carvings of Grinling Gibbons and others in the cathedrals, we have marvelled at how much they accomplished in life's brief span. The impression formed is 'they must have loved their work to weave so much interpretive

detail and beauty into plain pieces of wood. They knew instinctively how much each piece of timber was capable of yielding under their hands - to last down the ages of time.

In Australia we have had another such craftsman, of whom it can be said 'he loved his work', and the vast quantity of orders he executed - from the comparatively simple to the highly ornate - will leave the impression that that particular job was faithfully rendered.

Nothing shoddy had ever left his workshop in his fifty years in Australia'

As a measure of his ability, Tod left his mark in Parliament House Canberra, St. Andrew's Cathedral, Sydney, St. Phillip's Church, Sydney, The Registrar General's Office, Sydney, St. Margaret's Hospital Sydney, both Wesley and St. Paul's Colleges at the University of Sydney, Sydney Grammar School, and many churches, masonic halls, clubs and businesses in Sydney and country areas. His work is also represented at the Mint Museum and the Museum of Applied Arts & Sciences. (Powerhouse Museum)

These biographical details give in some measure a picture of the influences that motivated this craftsman, musician, craft teacher, amateur inventor and Freemason. The standard of his craft was based on the ideals of the old craft guilds of his home country, which he never saw again.

Frederick Tod's younger son, Arthur William, followed in his father's woodworking footsteps and in 1944, formed the staircase, handrail and joinery firm of A.W. Tod Pty. Ltd. in premises at 1 Talbot Street, St. Peters. As in the case of his father before him, Arthur Tod's factory burned down in 1958, and the business subsequently recommenced in new premises at the corner of Clarendon and Campbell Streets, Artarmon. After Arthur Tod's retirement in 1962, the company's name was changed to A.W. Tod, Stair and Joinery Company Pty. Ltd. and Arthur Tod's son-in-law, John Buist, who had been employed in the company since 1957 became the Managing Director. Following his retirement in 1996, his son Andrew (a great grandson of Frederick), a skilled wood turner, was appointed General Manager. A.W. Tod Stairs and Joinery Co P/L closed in 2006.

WORKS EXECUTED BY THE LATE FREDERICK WILLIAM TOD

This list was taken from photographs that are now held by the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences. Mrs. Cooper feels that there was probably much more during the earlier years of her father's life, of which no record remains, particularly work executed while he was still in London. The greater part of the work is of an ecclesiastical nature, mainly for Anglican churches throughout New South Wales. Those works marked with asterisks are considered by Mrs. Cooper to be more elaborate.

Compiled by Tod's daughter Mrs. K. Cooper from Designs and Photographs remaining of his works.

LOCATION	SITE	DESCRIPTION
Albion Park		Altar and Reredos
Annandale	Church of England	Honour Board
* Armidale	Cathedral	Litany Desk, Bishops Stall, Hymn Board
Armidale	N.E.G.S.	Ministers Chair and Pulpit
Armidale	St. Paul's Presbyterian	Pulpit
Armidale	A.M.P. Building	Carved Consoles
* Arncliffe	St. David's	Pulpit, Reredos, Altar, Prayer Desk, Communion Rails
Auburn	Presbyterian	Font
Balgowlah		Altar and Reredos
* Balmain	St. Johns	Cornice
Bathurst	Church of England Cathedral	Choir Stalls, Crosier, Altar and Reredos
Bega		Font Cover
Bellevue Hill	St. Stephen's	Altar
Belltrees	St. Johns	Church Door, Pulpit
Bemboka		Communion Rails, Altar and Reredos
* Berry	St. Luke's	Credence Table
Bingara		Lectern
* Blackheath		Altar Rails
Blaney	St. Paul's Presbyterian	Pulpit and Honour Board, Altar and Reredos
Bombala		Altar and Reredos
Bong Bong		Altar
Bonnie Doon	Golf Club	Honour Board
Boorawa		Honour Board
* Bowral	Presbyterian	Altar
Brighton		Altar and Pulpit
* Broken Hill	St. Peters and Children's Corner	Credence Table, Prayer Desk, Chair Panelling Cupboard
Bundarra		Hymn Board
* Burwood	Roman Catholic	Rood Cross
Camden	Presbyterian	Altar and Pulpit

Campbelltown	St. David's Presbyterian	Honour Board
* Canberra	Cathedral, Presbyterian	Moderators Chair
Canberra	Parliament House	Commonwealth Coat of Arms
Captains Flat		Lectern
* Casino	Church of England	Lectern, Altar and Reredos, Credence Table, Hymn Board
* Chatswood	St. Paul's	Altar and Rails, Prayer Desk Lectern, Minister's Chair
Chatswood	Congregational	Chair
* Clovelly	Church of England	Eagle Lectern
Cobar	St. Luke's	Honour Board
Cobar	Methodist	Honour Board
Cobargo		Eagle Lectern
Concord	St. Luke's	Altar and Reredos
Concord	Golf Club	Honour Board
Condobolin	All Saints Church of England	Altar, Reredos, Prayer Desk, Credence Table, Font, Eagle Lectern, Bishop's Chair
Condobolin	Presbyterian	Communion Table
Coogee	St. Nicholas"	Altar and Minister's Chair
Cooma		Screen, Prayer Desk, Chair
Coonabarabran		Font
Coonamble		Lectern
* Coopersnook		Reredos
Cootamundra		Reredos Vine Frieze
Corowa		Altar
Cowra	Church of England	Credence Table
Cremorne		Lectern
* Cudal		Altar and Reredos
Dapto	St. Luke's	Communion Rails, Hymn Board
Darling Point	St. Mark's	Font Cover
** Darlinghurst		Altar, Font, Honour Board, Font Cover
* Darlington	St. Michael's Convent	Litany Desk, Prayer Desk
Dorrigo	St. Stephen's	Altar
** Dubbo	Holy Trinity	Honour Board
Eastwood		Altar and Reredos
Eastwood	Methodist	Font
Emmaville		Eagle Lectern
Enmore	Church of England	Credence Table
Enmore	Church of Christ	Choir Stalls, Prayer Desk
* Epping	St. Albans	Reading & Pulpit Desk, Altar
Exeter	St. Aiden's	Pulpit, Altar Rails, Prayer Desk, Chair
Figtree	St. Andrew's	Notice Board
Fairfield		Altar and Rails
		Altar

Glenorie		Honour Board
* * Gordon	St. John's	Altar, Prayer Desk, Chair Eagle Lectern
* * Goulburn	Cathedral	Font Cover
Gunnedah	Presbyterian	Communion Table
Guyra	St. Columbas Presbyterian	Altar, Font, Pulpit, Chair
Guyra	Church of England	Altar and Rails
* * * Hever Castle	England	Picture Frame, Carved Door
		Six Carved Panels
* Hornsby	St. Peter's	Altar and Reredos, Prayer Desk,
		Credence Table, Hymn Board,
		Angel Lectern, Chair
Hornsby	Methodist	Chair, Hymn & Tune Board, Altar and
		Reredos, Pulpit
* Inverell	A.M.P.	Consoles, Wall Brackets
Jugiong		Altar
June		Altar
* Katoomba	Roman Catholic	Pulpit
Kangaroo Valley		Palm Stand
Kempsey		Litany Desk
Kensington	Masonic Club	Honour Board
Kentucky		Altar and Chair
* * Killara	St. .Martin's	Altar and Reredos, Honour Board
* * Killara	Golf Club	Memorial Shield
Kingsford		Prayer Desk
Kurrajong		Pulpit
Kyogle	Presbyterian	Altar
Lakemba		Pulpit
Lane Cove		Altar and Pulpit
Leetopn		Altar
Leichhardt	Methodist	Pulpit
Leura	Methodist	Altar
* Lindfield	St. Albans	Altar, Panelling, Pulpit, Choir Stalls,
		Prayer Desk, Credence Table, Chair
Lismore		Credence Table
Lithgow		Altar and Pulpit
Liverpool		Altar
* * Maitland East		Font Cover
Majors Creek		Altar and Credence Table
Manilla		Riddel Posts, Kneeler Rails, Prayer Desk
* * Manly	St. Mathew's and Chapel	Altar and Reredos, Screen, Altar Rails,
		Bishops Chair, Prayer Desk Credence
		Table, Pulpit
Manly	Golf Club	Memorial Shield, Notice Board
Maroubra		Altar
* Marrickville	St. Clement's	Altar and Reredos, Desk and Chair

Marrickville	Methodist	Pulpit, Altar and Reredos
Merino (Vic)		Font Cover
Millthorpe		Altar
* Moree	All Saints	Holy Table, Communion Rails, Credence Table, Notice Board, Honour Board
Morpeth	College	Holy Table
Morpeth		Font Cover
Morpeth	Methodist	Altar and Reredos
* * Mosman	St. Clement's	Litany Desk, Prayer Desk, Chair
Mosman	Congregational	Seating and Pulpit
Moss Vale		Altar
* Moss Vale	Mr. Lyton-Hitchens	Family Crest, Furniture
Mundario		Honour Board
Murrumburrah		Prayer Desk
Narrandera		Altar and Reredos
Narromine	Methodist	Refractory Table
* * Neutral Bay	St. Augustine's	Altar, Pulpit, Reredos, Litany Desk, Choir Stalls, Font, Chair, (Organ Casing?)
* Neutral Bay	Presbyterian	Chair, Communion Table, Pulpit
* Newcastle	The Rock	Pulpit
* * * Newcastle	Cathedral	Bishops Throne
Newcastle	Church of Christ	Font Cover and Pulpit
& Newtown	St. Paul's College	Clock Case
Northbridge	Presbyterian	Altar and Pulpit
Nowra	Methodist	Pulpit
Nowra	Church of England	Altar
Nyngan		Font
Orange	Holy Trinity	Altar and Reredos, Screen
Paddington	St. George's	Pulpit
* Parramatta	St. Johns	Altar, Credence Table
Parramatta	All Saints	Altar and Reredos, Rails
Parramatta	St. Johns College	Standard Light
	Chapel	Ministers Chair
Parramatta North	Methodist	Font
Peak Hill		Communion Rails, Lectern, Credence Table
Pennant Hills		Honour Board
Penrith		Altar
* Petersham	All Saints	Altar, Reredos, Side Chapel
Pillaga		Chair
Pittsworth (Qld)		Lectern
Port Kembla		Lectern
* Pymble	St. Swithun's	Pulpit

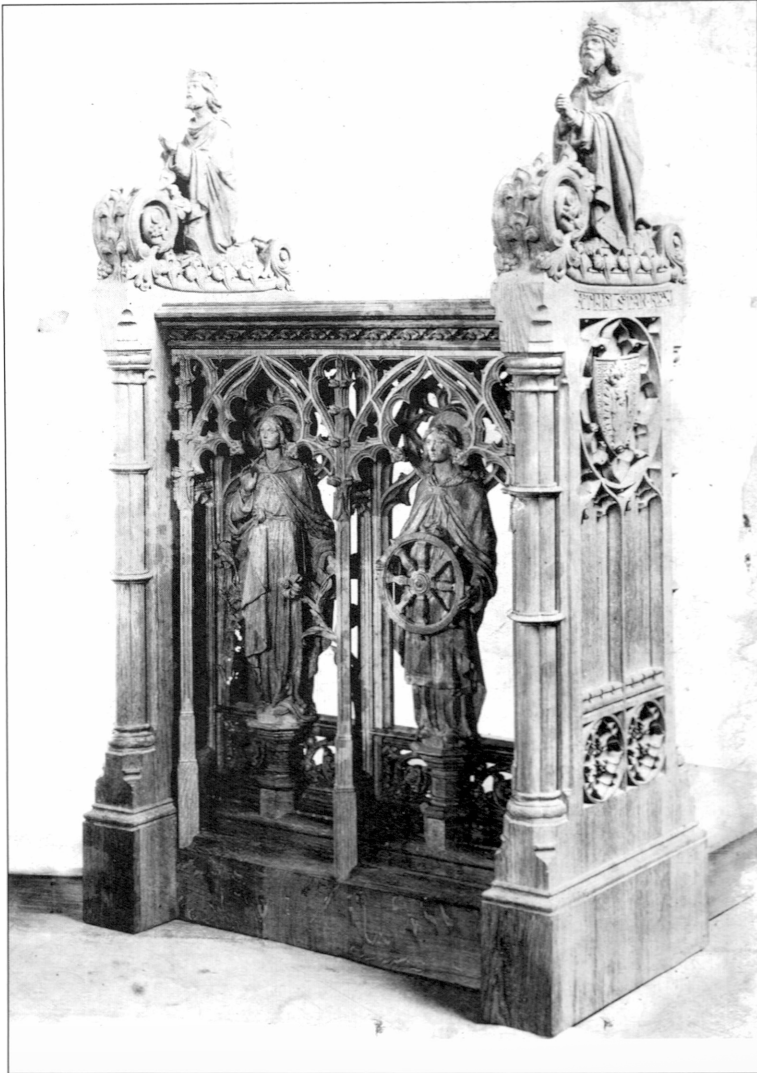
* Queenbeyan		Altar and Reredos, Clergy Desk and Seat, Credence Table
Quirindi		Pulpit and Altar
Rabaul (PNG)	Masonic Temple	Notice Board
** Randwick	St. Jude's	Altar and Reredos, Screen, Side Chapel, Hymn Board, Honour Roll
Rockdale	Presbyterian	Altar
Rockely		Lectern
Roseville	Church of England	Altar and Panelling
* Ryde	St. Anne's	Altar, Honour Roll
* Ryde West		Clergy Stall/Chair
Singleton		Sounding Board
* Stanmore	St. Augustine's	Communion Table and Stalls, Reredos
Strathfield North		Pulpit
Summer Hill	St. Andrew's	Altar, Lectern, Desk, Chair, Hymn Board
Sydney	Angus & Robertsons	
	Castlereagh St.	Spandrills
* Sydney	Dept of Labour and Industry	Plaque
Sydney	Lyceum Chapel	Vine and Wheat Panels in reredos
** Sydney	Mint Museum	Table c1915
** Sydney	Museum of Applied Arts & Sciences	Festoons of Australian Wild Flower Panels c 1918
Sydney	Registrar General's Department	Pilasters on Honour Roll, Wreath, Carved Festoons
* Sydney	St. Andrew's Cathedral	Communion Table, Rails
Sydney	St. Margaret's	Clock Case
* Sydney	St. Phillip's	Church Door
* Sydney	Singer Sewing Machine Co.	Carved Grille Panel
*** Sydney	Sydney Grammar School	War Memorial (desk?)
Sydney	Wesley College, Sydney University	Five Conventional Lions, Stalls
Sydney	Late Mr. Wheeler former Director Daily Telegraph	Figure Head on Cruiser Yacht
* Tarcutta		Altar and Reredos, Honour Board
Taralga		Prayer Desk
Temora		Tabernacle
* Townsville		Figures of Calvary
Trangie		Minister's Chair
Tumbalong		Honour Board
* Taree	Masonic Temple	Master's Throne, Senior & Junior Chairs, Pedestals & Light & Working Columns
Tumbarumba		Font
* Tumut	All Saints	Pulpit
Uarby (Nr. Coolah)		Altar, Credence Table
* Unanderra	All Saints	Altar, Reredos, Side Panelling

250 CHURCH FURNITURE IN AUSTRALIA

Uralla	Church of England	Altar, Reredos, Side Panelling and Hymn Board
Urana		Altar, Lectern, Font, Pulpit, and Credence Table
Wagga Wagga	St. John's	Credence Table
Wagga Wagga	Roman Catholic	Altar
Wagga Wagga	Methodist	Pulpit
Watsons Bay	St. Peter's	Pulpit
Waverley	St. Mary's	Altar
* Wee Waa	St. Luke's	Altar, Reredos, Honour Board, Prayer Prayer and Litany Desk
West Wyalong		Prayer and Litany Desk
Weston		Font
Whitton		Font
* Wilcannia	Roman Catholic	Altar
Willoughby	St. Cuthbert's	Pulpit
Willow Tree		Hymn Board
W. Woolongong		Angel Lectern
Woodstock	Methodist	Communion Rails, Font, Pulpit, Lectern, Chair
Woolahra	All Saints	Desk and Stalls
Woolahra	Presbyterian	Hymn Board
Yeppoon (Qld)		Font and Cover

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

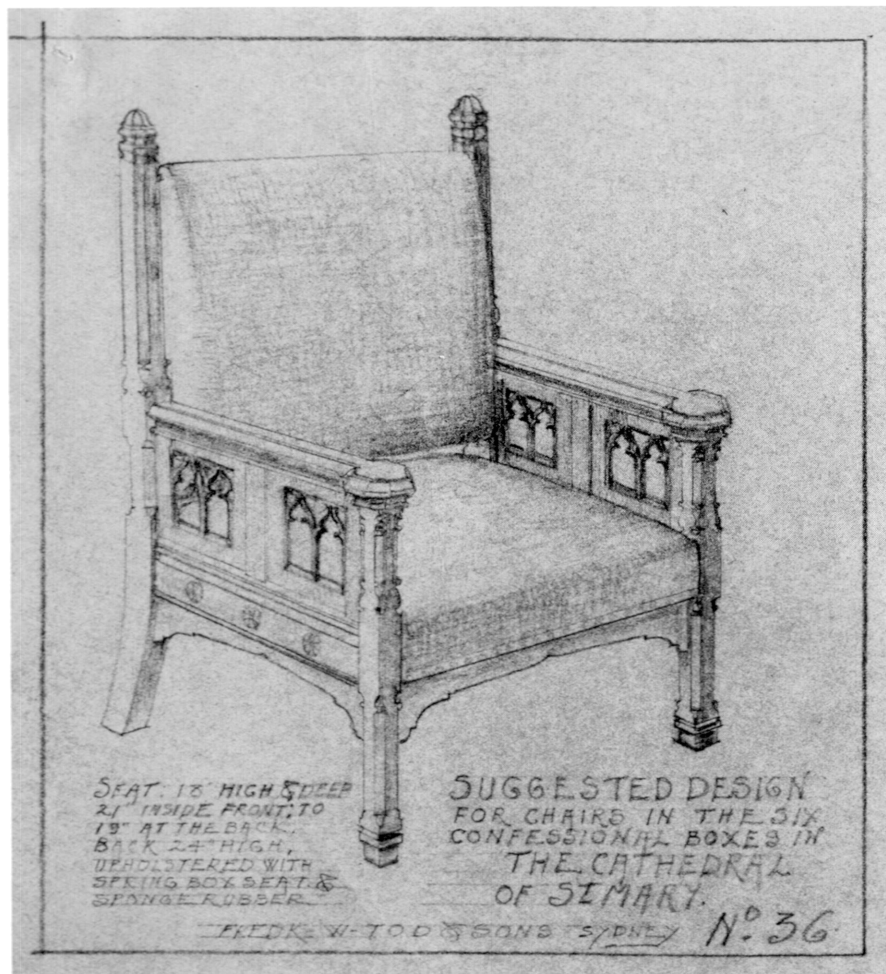
The author would like to thank and acknowledge D.G. Davis, whose essay for The Masonic Historical Society of New South Wales, Paper no. 45, delivered on 27th July 1998, was a useful source.



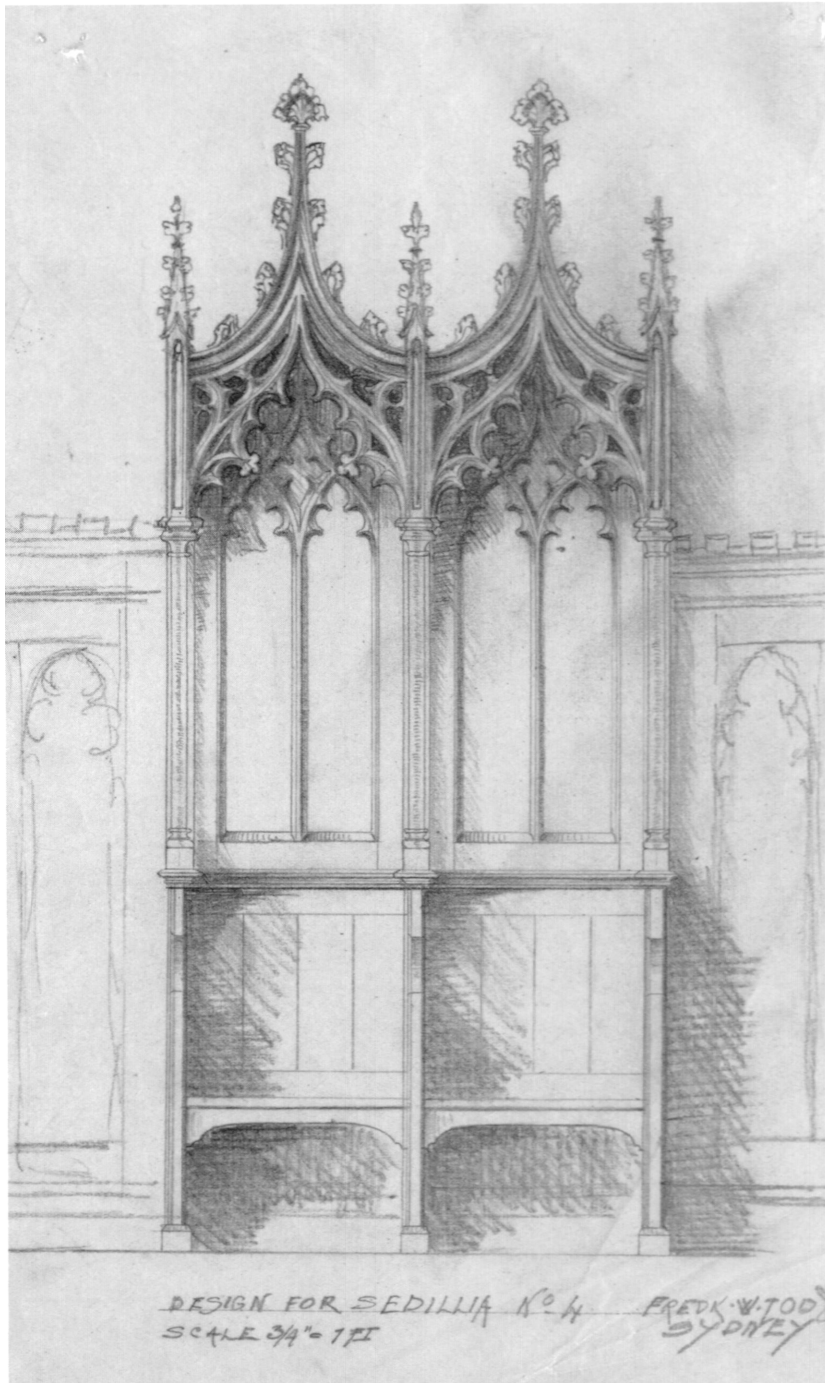
1. Lectern at Milton Abbey, Dorset, carved by FW Tod whilst working at Messrs. Trollopes



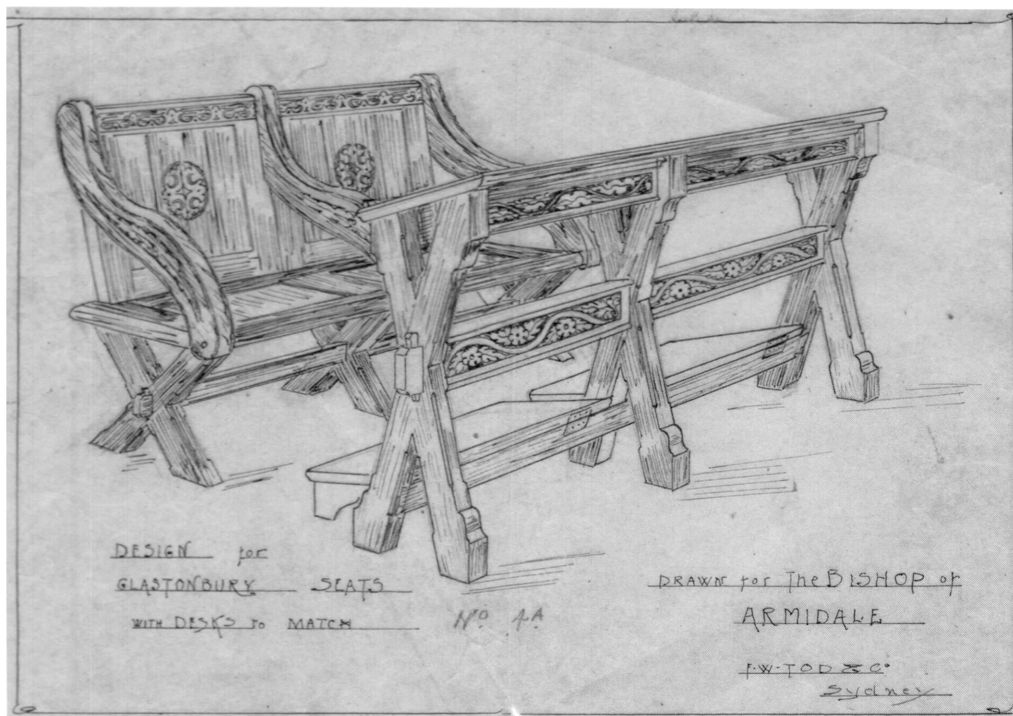
2. Advertisement in the *Church Record* (Australia), 1922



3. F.W. Tod, Design for chairs in the confessional boxes in St. Mary's Cathedral, Sydney



4. F.W. Tod, Design for sedilia. Location unknown



5. F.W. Tod, Design for Glastonbury seats with desks to match.
Drawn for the Bishop of Armidale