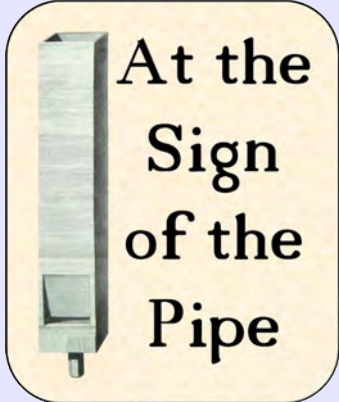


A RELUCTANT CONVERT

The Life and Times of G. M. Holdich: Organ Builder

Rodney Matthews



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George Maydwell Holdich (1816–1896) came from a land-owning Northamptonshire family with clerical connections that were to prove useful to the young London-based organ builder. In many ways Holdich was typical of the innovative businessmen of Victorian Britain and he built around 500 organs over a fifty-year period. Holdich was firmly attached to an earlier British tradition of organ-building that was not particularly suited to the passion for the music of J. S. Bach that followed Mendelssohn's visits to England in the 1840s. Nonetheless, Holdich built some large organs whose independent pedal divisions were ahead of their time. In the development of organ specifications he showed that he was prepared, perhaps reluctantly, to respond to changing times. Many of Holdich's small organs for country churches have survived and are highly regarded but the larger instruments, with one or two notable exceptions, were replaced within a few decades of their installation. Holdich's work records were accidentally destroyed some years ago and Dr Rodney Matthews has undertaken the painstaking task of trying to reconstruct both the career and business history of this interesting organ builder. Examples of Holdich's surviving organs that illustrate the various phases of the business are described in detail and a partial job list has been reconstructed.

"Rodney Matthews has done us all a service by charting the career of this interesting and unusual man."
From the Foreword by Nicholas Thistlethwaite, author of *The Making of the Victorian Organ*.

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