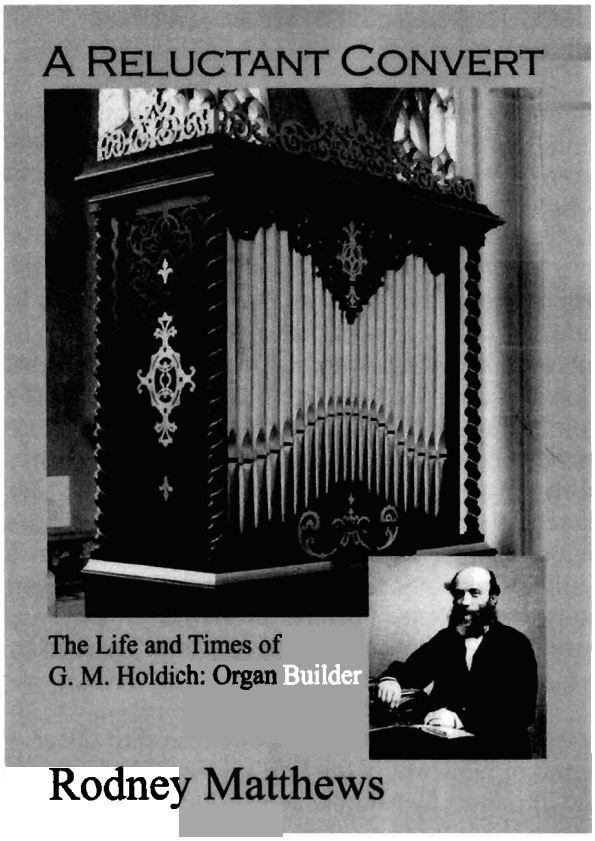

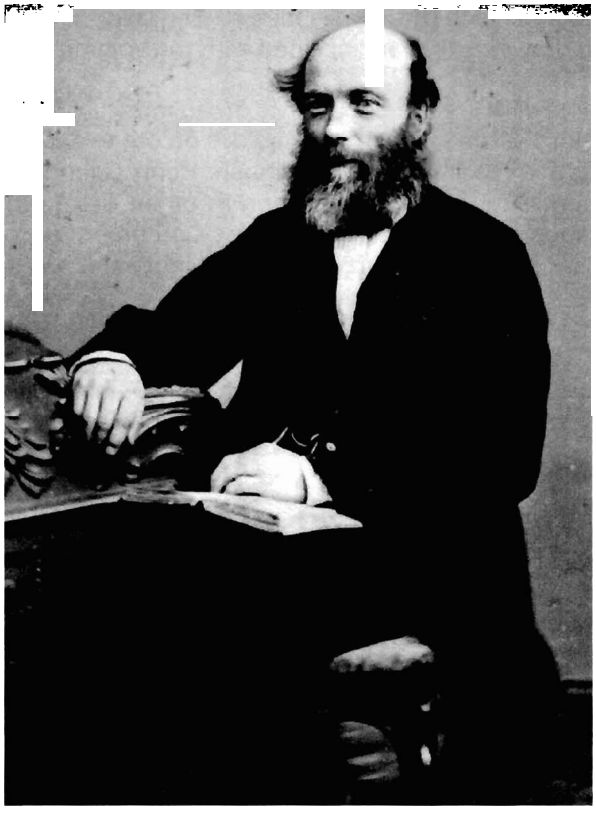

George Maydwell Holdich
(Holdich Family History Society)

Rodney Matthews, A Reluctant Convert; the Life and Times of G.M. Holdich Organ Builder. ISBN 9780956710215 Available from At the Sign of the Pipe, UK: www.signofthepipe.com or email: info@signofthepipe.com.
Cost £28.00 – payment via Paypal is accepted.

It is excellent that the life and work of this lesser-known English organbuilder has been so thoroughly documented, in spite of the accidental destruction of the firm's business records only a few years ago.

Holdich was a pupil of J.C. Bishop and his instruments bear the hallmarks of this firm's work. Holdich built hundreds of instruments during his career spanning many decades, but most were small and his *magnum opus*, at Lichfield Cathedral, only survived for a short period of time before being replaced by Hill & Son. He appears to have been a most artistic organbuilder and it is recorded that he never hesitated to help people out if they were in need.

Holdich was unusual in that his background was landed gentry – only Hill & Son could match this to my knowledge. It was clearly advantageous in securing orders, which were presumably gained through personal contacts.

While the absence of any of the firm's records has precluded the documentation of a comprehensive list of instruments built by the firm, it issued several pamphlets and these have been used as a guide in reconstructing its work, together with references in the National Pipe Organ Register.

Apart from the history of the firm, the work goes into considerable technical detail, examining specific instruments and, in particular, its development of the so-called Diaocton stop, which was an octave coupler, with the relevant windchest having an extended stop octave of pipes so that this would read through.

Holdich paid particular attention to the appearance of his instruments and many early examples included elaborate examples of fretwork, cut out by a special machine, not unlike what was used for the music desk and panels on contemporary pianos.

Holdich only built four instruments for Australia and New Zealand – none of the Australian examples, sadly, survive, but he also exported to Singapore, India and Mauritius. Alfred Fuller, the Melbourne organbuilder, learned the trade with Holdich and his instruments certainly show evidence of what he learned from him.

The work has been researched most thoroughly, full references are given, and there are many fascinating illustrations. The quality of the printing and layout is excellent. Very sadly, Rodney Matthews passed away soon after its publication.

JRM