



# **A Provincial Organ Builder in Victorian England: William Sweetland of Bath (Music in Nineteenth- Century Britain)**

*Gordon D.W. Curtis*

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William Sweetland was a Bath organ builder who flourished from c.1847 to 1902 during which time he built about 300 organs, mostly for churches and chapels in Somerset, Gloucestershire and Wiltshire, but also for locations scattered south of a line from the Wirral to the Wash. Gordon Curtis places this work of a provincial organ builder in the wider context of English musical life in the latter half of the nineteenth century. An introductory chapter reviews the provincial musical scene and sets the organ in the context of religious worship, public concerts and domestic music-making. The book relates the biographical details of Sweetland's family and business history using material obtained from public and family records. Curtis surveys Sweetland's organ- building work in general and some of his most important organs in detail, with patents and other inventions explored. The musical repertoire of the provinces, particularly with regard to organ recitals, is discussed, as well as noting Sweetland's acquaintances, other organ builders, architects and artists. Part II of the book consists of a Gazetteer of all known organs by Sweetland organized by counties. Each entry contains a short history of the instrument and its present condition. Since there is no definitive published list of his work, and as all the office records were lost in a fire many years ago, this will be the nearest approach to a comprehensive list for this builder.

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