

Arnold Culley 1867-1942
George Robson

Arnold Culley was Organist and Master of the Choristers at Durham Cathedral from 1906 to 1932. Almost his final contribution before he left Durham was to oversee the music played at John Meade Falkner's memorial service held within the cathedral on 27th July 1932. JMF and Culley had been friends, confidants and collaborators for many years.

Arnold Duncan Culley was born in Great Yarmouth on 9th March 1867 and attended Great Yarmouth Grammar School before becoming a scholar at the Royal College of Music. During his studies at the college, he was organist and choirmaster of St. Peter's Church, Hammersmith. Such was his talents that he became a Fellow of the Royal College of Organists (FRCO) in 1887 and was accepted as an Associate of the Royal College of Music (ARCM) in 1889.

Culley entered Emmanuel College, Cambridge, as a scholar and after gaining his degree 1891 was ordained as a deacon. He was appointed Chaplain of the Chapel Royal at Brighton then in 1897 moved to Exeter where he acted as the cathedral's sub-organist.

In September 1906 Culley married Eliza Granger at Exeter Cathedral, the service 'fully choral' and conducted by the Lord Bishop of Exeter. Later in the same year they moved north for Culley to take up the post of minor canon and precentor at Durham Cathedral. Shortly afterwards the cathedral's chapter added to his responsibilities by creating him Master of the Choristers but appointed an assistant to play the organ at services.

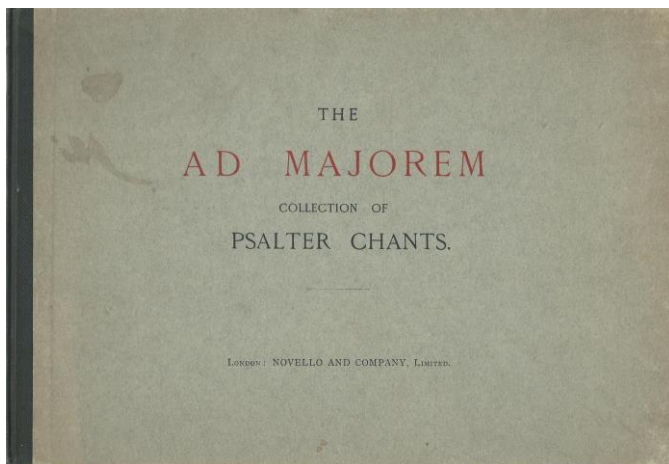
During what was to be twenty-four years at Durham Culley not only carried out his duties but composed anthems and both secular and

sacred songs. Some were used in the numerous notable services to mark national occasions, funerals, weddings.*



JMF worked with Culley on his (JMF's) drawing together a collection of liturgical chants named *Ad Majorem* and which reached three editions. Over a period of months, they put aside Sunday afternoons to work on this in the cathedral organ loft. Two of the chants that feature were compositions of Culley, one set to Psalm 145 and the other to Psalms 148 and 149.

The organ loft, Durham Cathedral

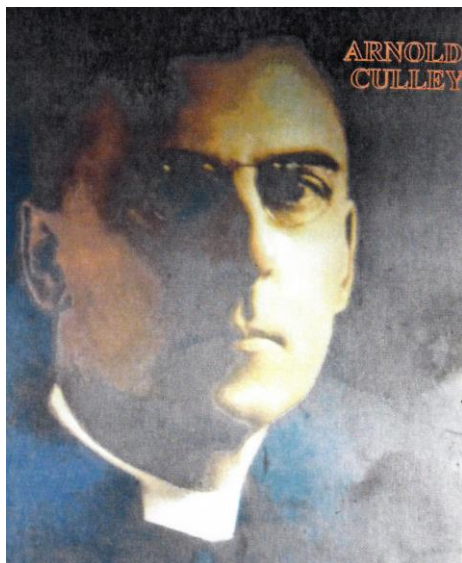


Michael Millgate's cataloguing of Thomas Hardy's Max Gate book collection shows that JMF presented Hardy with a copy of *Ad Majorem* in 1913.

Two photographs have come to light which are of interest. There was a custom to commemorate the anniversary of the local Battle of Neville's Cross (13th October 1346) by the choir singing on the roof of the main tower of the cathedral. At the 1911 performance the choir sang three anthems and allowed a photograph to be taken by the local press.



The other photograph is a colour portrait held by the Cathedral library.



During all these years John Meade Falkner was living very close to the Cathedral and the pair and their wives became close friends, often dining at each other's home.

Weeks after the death of JMF, Culley left Durham to enjoy semi-retirement in the form of a living as rector of Burwarton in Shropshire. This had been gifted to him by his friend Lord Boyne (seventh

Viscount) and involved only light duties. He held this post until 1941 and died the following year aged eighty.

Sacred works composed by Arnold Culley include:

Try Me O God

Psalm 142 (chant) (sung each month at Durham Cathedral)

Let the Words of My Mouth I Will Wash My Hands in Innocency

Lord I Call Upon Thee Ponder My Words O Lord

Secular songs composed by Arnold Culley include:

A Spring Song

No more, no more!

The Brook

Twilight

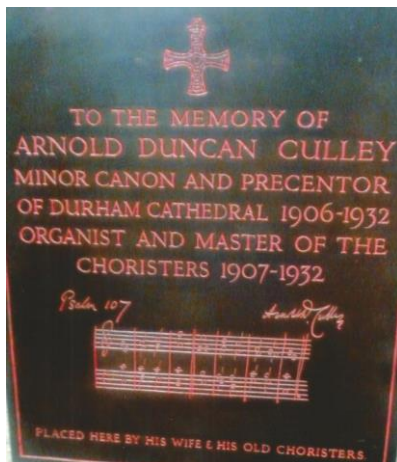
There Sits a Bird in Yonder Tree Hymn to Diana

Out of the Depths of a Nation's Heart

The Suit of Russet Brown

The Queen of the Roses

Cupid's Arrow



* A number of sources erroneously credit hymn tunes composed by JOHN CLULEY to Arnold Culley, assuming a pseudonym. Cluley was a contemporary of Culley and wrote tunes that feature in the Methodist hymn books.