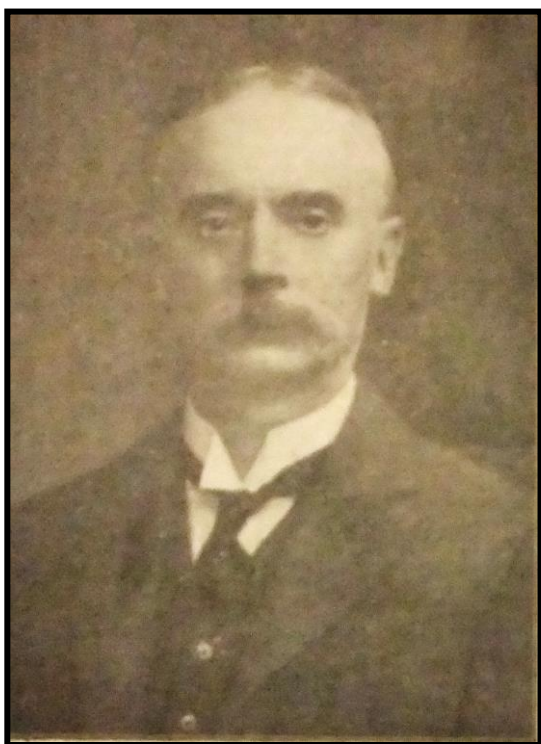


REGINALD FROUDE COULES

by Granville Hill, Musical Critic of the Manchester Guardian (from an early parish magazine).

*I often wonder if the world has ever known a more industrious musician than **Reginald Froude Coules**, organist of Worsley Church from 1873 to 1926. When, as a schoolboy some fifty years ago, I became his pupil in piano-playing, organ-playing, harmony and counterpoint, he was giving over a hundred lessons a week. His studio was a spacious, well-furnished room over the Coffee Tavern, standing near the canal bridge. A year or two, however, before he married Miss Emily Beechey, who was one of his pupils, he settled in a house in Broad Oak Park, and from that time all his lessons except, of course, those on organ playing, were given at home. Only on Thursday evenings in the winter months, when he attended the Halle Concerts, was any break performed in the regime of lesson-giving. A few words about his teaching may not be inappropriate here.*



*It is true to say that **Froude Coules** was working on scientific lines during a period when very few private teachers of music seem to have had any method at all - when such matters, for instance, as piano touch and technique were treated in the most haphazard fashion. **Coules**, who had been a pupil of Sir John Stainer, had acquired a delicate and reasonable system which, in spite of its narrowness, was infinitely better than the kind of tuition then prevailing (except perhaps in the national colleges and academies of music). His method was rigid: it hardly allowed for differences of temperament among learners,; but within its range, it was reliable and thorough. I know that in my own case, after I had left **Coules** and when my musical studies were carried on in a more comprehensive way, I still profited from that earlier discipline. In spite of the great number of lessons he gave, **Mr. Coules** never looked*

*tired or bored. I never heard of his cancelling a lesson through illness; and at all times he was an inspiring leader of hard-working students and a terror to the lazy ones. His energy and strict attention to business was unflagging. As one of his older pupils said to me, "Whether you go early or late in the day for a lesson, **Coules** always gives you good value for your money." In organ-playing **Coules** could take pupils right through from the earliest stages of the art to advanced solo performances. I think he liked to note certain friendly rivalries among the students. I myself was encouraged to follow the example of his pupil Tom Sharples of Swinton, a young musician known to everybody in the district. Tom and I took the A.R.C.O. and F.R.C.O. diplomas when we were about the same age; we both gave organ recitals at the Crystal Palace, London, and at St. George's Hall, Liverpool, and we took turns at playing in Worsley Church when **Mr. Coules** was away on his summer holidays. Occasionally I took a choir rehearsal - with the Vicar, the Rev. F. K. Hodgkinson, there to keep order. By the way, my first organ recital was given in the Parish Church of Farnworth, near Bolton, and I was terribly nervous, for I knew that the audience included many of my fellow students. (But I must not write any longer in this vein, otherwise readers will be telling themselves that the trumpet is my instrument).*

*Well do I remember some of the distinguished people who visited **Coules**. One of them was Dr. Kendrick Pyne, organist of Manchester Cathedral and Town Hall. When he called he would try - always without success - to induce his hand to miss a few pupils and settle down for a smoke and a talk. Then there was the Organist of the Chapel Royal Windsor – Mr. Walter Parratt - who did his best to lure everybody into playing there. But of all the visitors, the most interesting was Canon Beechey, grandfather of **Mr. Coules**. Though I was only a youngster, I could appreciate, in some degree at any rate, his remarkable personality. He was ninety-two when I first met him, yet he was extraordinarily alert in mind and body. His memory was unfailling, and I remember how thrilled I was to hear his own recollection of events that had long ago passed into musical history. He remembered the death of Beethoven in 1827. The year before that he was present at Drury Lane Theatre for the first performance of Weber's opera "Oberon," with the composer conducting. He had often listened to the piano recitals of Mendelssohn, Chopin and Liszt, and noted the rising fame of these musicians. Canon Beechey was an enthusiastic phrenologist, and he did me the honour of "feeling my bumps." The verdict was not too bad. If he discovered any criminal tendencies, he was kind enough not to mention them.*

***Froude Coules** had indeed many interesting friends, and I dare say he wished that he could have found more time for social enjoyments; but his teaching was too continuous to leave much chance for leisure. It left him few opportunities even of keeping up his practice on the piano or the organ. **Mr. Coules** was no soloist. His organ-playing in church was competent, and he did not claim that it was more than that. During my knowledge of him it was as a teacher that he excelled. As a trainer of the choir and of his private pupils he revealed unique gifts, and all who knew him admired him for the thoroughness of his work, for his unswerving devotion to duty, and for the entire honesty of his aims and ideals and of the methods he employed to realise them. Many years have passed since I last saw **Mr. and Mrs. Coules** in their Worsley home, but my memory of them is vivid. I was grieved to hear of their death.*

[Sir Walter Parratt: born Huddersfield 1841.

Appointments:

St. Paul's Church, Huddersfield, 1854-1861

private organist to the Earl of Dudley, Witley Court, 1861-1868

organist of Wigan Parish Church, 1868-1872

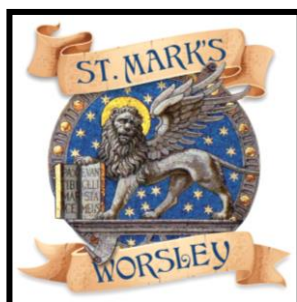
Magdalen College, Oxford, 1872-1882

St. George's Chapel, Windsor Castle, 1882-1924

Knighted in 1892- Ed.]

[Although this article first appeared in a parish magazine, no date was given. In the final sentence, Granville Hill talked of his grief over their death. **Reginald Froude Coules** was buried in the churchyard on 4th May **1926**. He was aged 69 and lived at Egerton House, (on Broad Oak Road), Worsley. His widow, Emily, was also buried here on 4th November **1932**, aged 56, although by then she had moved to Watford, Herts. This therefore means that the article was written some short while after their deaths.]

In November **1922**, R. F. Coules completed 50 years' service as organist. On 16 December **1922**, Lord Ellesmere presented him with a purse containing over £100 as a mark of appreciation.



For further details about his life, please visit the entry under Private Graves A-D.