

Biographical Record

Jasper Whitfield SNOWDON (1844 – 1877)

Jasper Snowdon was born in Ilkley on 18 June 1844, second son of the vicar, and educated at Rossall, near Fleetwood. At fifteen he entered an engineering works in Leeds as a student, where he worked for fifteen years, during which time he took charge of one of the drawing offices. He then managed an engineering works in Wakefield for two years. From 1877 to 1884 he and his brother William were in practice in Leeds as consulting mechanical engineers, after which he managed another company near Leeds.

He became known as a fine sportsman, in athletics and cricket.

Jasper learnt to ring in 1861. He was ‘talked through’ a 720 in 1862 but did not ring again until 1870, when he formed the Ilkley Amateur Society. In June 1871 he rang a 720 of Bob Minor and his first peal was in seven minor methods at Ilkley on 7 December 1872, which he conducted.

He attended the quarterly friendly meetings of ringers, at which in January 1875 it was agreed to form a Yorkshire Society to promote ringing. That summer he was unanimously elected to the chair a meeting to formulate a constitution and rules, and when the Yorkshire Association was founded at Birstall on 30 October 1875 he was elected President by acclamation, and held the post until his death in 1885.

On 20 November 1875 he conducted and rang the Tenor to the first peal on the recently augmented eight at Ilkley (one of the first for the Yorkshire Association) 5024 Kent Treble Bob Major. At the time, Kent was a favourite method in Yorkshire, nick-named ‘Yorkshire Glory’, and it accounted for 104 of his 129 peals. His longest was 10,000 Kent Treble Bob Major, at St. James', Bolton, on 16 November 1878.

Snowdon is best known as an influential author, and he wrote many articles for *Church Bells* and *Bell News*. In 1876 he wrote a six part article for *Church Bells* on Annable’s manuscript. In April 1877 he and Robert Tuke published a transcript of the records of the Union Scholars of London. In 1878 he published Part I of his *Treatise on Treble Bob*, with Part II in 1879. 1879 also saw the first edition of his elementary textbook *Ropesight*, which has since been in print more or less continuously.

Standard Methods followed in 1881, and by marking the Treble path in red and a working bell path in blue line introduced the term ‘Blue Line’. 1884 saw his book on Double Norwich Court Bob, and in 1885 he left an incomplete manuscript for a book on Grandsire, which edited by his brother William edited, appeared in 1888.

At the tenth anniversary meeting of the Yorkshire Association Snowdon was presented with an illuminated address and a traveling bag subscribed for by the members. A few weeks later he was taken ill with typhoid fever and died on 16 November 1885, aged 41. He was buried on the north side of Ilkley parish church, near to his parents and an older sister who died in infancy. There was much muffled ringing round the country in his memory and the ringers of England paid for a memorial window dedicated on 11 June 1887.

Tributes to Snowdon appeared in Bell News 1885, pages 265, 272, 276, 291, 298

This description is based on the account given in John Eisel’s book *Giants of the Exercise*.

