

JASPER WHITFIELD SNOWDON



25th February 1917

1896-1917 Aged 20

**Lieutenant, 9th (Service) Battalion
Worcestershire Regiment.**

Jasper Snowdon joined up at the outbreak of war, served on four fronts and was twice wounded before his luck finally ran out. His grandfather John Snowdon, from Stockton in Co. Durham, was the Vicar of Ilkley for thirty years during the town's transition from a rural backwater to a fashionable spa town. He was a great enthusiast for bell ringing and equipped the church with a peal of six bells. His three sons shared their father's enthusiasm, and the eldest (also named Jasper Whitfield) wrote a standard account of change ringing.

In 1885, John Snowden's third son Edward married Ellen Armitage, also from an Ilkley family. Edward was manager for a Bradford silk weaver and manufacturer. He would eventually own his own silk-weaving business and move to The Garth in Embsay. They had five children. Jasper, the youngest and their only son, was born in Heaton on 5th October 1896. He was named in memory of his uncle and his grandfather. He went to Bradford Grammar School in September 1906 when he was nine. In his first year he topped form First Lower and was runner up for the form prize, but thereafter he was in the middle of the form orders. His best subjects were Art, Geography, History, and Nature Study, while he was near the bottom for spelling, composition and grammar. This record may account for the decision to move him to Rossall School, Lancashire, in September 1910. His obituary in the *Rossallian* describes him as 'shy, diffident and unassuming, and rather too ready to efface himself.' He made his impact as a long-distance runner who often finished in the top four. The magazine reported an incident which showed 'the stuff he was made of' - despite losing his shoe at the start of the Junior Steeplechase he completed the course barefoot. He took a keen interest in the study of natural history, winning several prizes from the RSPB, and was an enthusiastic member of the OTC.

Jasper was at the OTC Summer Camp at Tidworth when war broke out at the start of August 1914, and although not yet eighteen he volunteered. He was gazetted Second Lieutenant (on probation) in the 6th Battalion Worcestershire Regiment on 21st October, and he proceeded to the Western Front to join the 3/Worcesters on 17th February 1915. A month later



he was promoted to Lieutenant. After two months in the trenches near Ypres, Snowdon was wounded in the neck and head by a sniper. He convalesced in south London, then in September he was transferred to the 9/Worcesters at Gallipoli. Snowdon was hospitalized by dysentery, then rejoined his battalion in Egypt in January 1916, following the evacuation of the bridgeheads. The 9/Worcesters were next sent to Iraq as part of the force that attempted to relieve General Townshend's Anglo-Indian force besieged by the Turks at Kut al-Amara. Snowdon was wounded again on 5th April and recuperated in India for nine months. Townshend surrendered with 13,000 men, a great blow to Britain's reputation in the east.

When Snowdon returned in January 1917, the 9/Worcesters were engaged in General Maude's systematic reduction of the Turkish entrenchments at Kut with a mainly Indian army. With this episode of siege warfare successfully concluded, in February the advance on Baghdad commenced. The Turks seemed to be fleeing, abandoning their equipment, until on 25th they made a stand at Azziyeh 60 miles north of Kut. Although they had good cover and their right rested on the River Tigris, the left was unsecured. The 9/Worcesters were ordered to outflank the position. Turkish fire was heavy but wild and caused few casualties, and they gave way in the face a determined bayonet charge. The Worcesters lost some twenty men including two officers, one of whom was Snowdon. The location of his grave was lost and his name is on the Basra Memorial. There is also a plaque to him in Ilkley parish church, and he is on the town memorial as well as at BGS.



Acknowledgements:

I used Ancestry.com to research Jasper Whitfield's family history, and the Bradford Grammar School Annual Reports for 1906-7 to 1910-11 for his BGS years. Claire Moore, the Rossall archivist, kindly supplied me with invaluable information about his years there. The photo is taken from the BGS OBA Roll of Honour, with thanks to the School. For the Snowden family in Ilkley I used <<http://www.ilkleyallsaints.org.uk/heritage/SnowdenBrassTablets.php>> accessed 11-1-2017. Some of Jasper's military records are available on Ancestry.com, supplemented by forces-war-records.com. His Officer File in the National Archives is WO 339/23959.

An obituary to Snowden was published in 1919 in *Craven's Part in the Great War*, compiled and edited by John T. Clayton, 62. This also available at <<http://www.cpgw.org.uk/cpgw-book/page-62/>>. There are online biographies at <<http://www.westernfrontassociation.com/great-war-people/remember-on-this-day/2302-25-february-1917-lieutenant-jasper-whitfield-snowden.html#sthash.H2uh5OBp.dpbs>> (David O'Mara, based on the Bradford Weekly Telegraph entry 16th March 1917) and <<https://www.facebook.com/ilkleyremembers/posts/826324267399808:0>> (Edward Wild) accessed 11-1-2017. I used the 3/Worcester War Diary (<http://interactive.ancestry.co.uk/60779/43112_1415_3-00039?pid=401718&backurl=//search.ancestry.co.uk/cgi-bin/sse.dll?_phsrc%3DxBB3462%26_phstart%3DsuccessSource%26usePUBJs%3Dtrue%26indiv%3D1%26db%3DUKWarDiariesWWI%26qss%3Dangs-d%26new%3D1%26rank%3D1%26msT%3D1%26_F0007CF4%3DWorcestershire%2520Regiment%26_F00088EF%3D3rd%2520Battalion%26MSAV%3D1%26uidh%3D6n6%26pcat%3D39%26fh%3D76%26h%3D401718%26recoff%3D%26fsk%3DBEK58RUIqADtawAAINY-61-%26bsk%3D%26pgoff%3D%26ml_rpos%3D77&treeid=&personid=&hintid=&usePUB=true&_phsrc=xBB3462&_phstart=successSource&usePUBJs=true#?imageId=43112_1415_3-00050>) which notes Snowden's first wounding on 8th May. The Worcestershire Regiment website (<<http://www.worcestershireregiment.com/index.php>> accessed 18-1-2017) gives detailed accounts of the operations at Kut, but was still in process of construction at the time I consulted it. I was able to benefit from a page of the battalion history posted on <<http://1914-1918.invisionzone.com/forums/index.php?/topic/237430-2-It-jasper-whitfield-snowdon-ilkley-remembers/>> accessed 11-1-2017, posted 17-3-2016.

I hope that this is the most complete biography of Jasper Whitfield Snowden to date. It was researched and compiled, with thanks to the authorities noted, by Nick Hooper in January 2017 (Nhooper1956@googlemail.com).



The photo of Snowden in uniform was published in *Craven's Part in the Great War*. This photo of the plaque is from the Ilkley All Saints website (both above).