

Essay for the Friends No. 10

STANDARD METHODS

The success of *Ropesight* as an introductory text, with the first edition of 1879 sold out within a few months, and a second edition following the following year to meet demand, clearly made Jasper Snowdon realise that there was a need for a follow-on text. With his usual unbounded energy he set to and produced *Standard Methods in the Art of Change-Ringing*, the first edition of which was published in 1881. In his Preface he set out his reasons:

'When the necessary sight of the ropes has been acquired, and a ringer is thoroughly acquainted with one plain method, he should then have little difficulty in making himself efficient in any other method, if he will only give to the study of the one selected the required mental application.

... In the following pages I have endeavoured to lay before my readers such further instructions as will enable them to proceed with the study of the other Standard Methods, and such other methods as have, from time to time, received most attention from the hands of the Exercise. In these pages I have laid down such rules as I have found most suitable in learning these methods, and as great advantages may be derived from the study of the path of a bell and its relation to that of the treble, when facilitated by some distinguishing marks, I have added, in full, a plain course of each of these methods, in which the path of the treble is made more apparent by a red line running through it, and the work of another bell, generally the second, is distinguished by a corresponding blue line ...'

Because of the problem of comparing the description of a method to the plain course of the method printed in the same volume, Snowdon used the device of printing these separately, the description in *Letterpress*, and the plain course in *Diagrams*. The latter was lithographed in bright colours, with the path of the working bell printed in blue, and so the term 'blue line' entered the vocabulary of the Exercise. The total cost was 2s. 6d. (12½p.) and such was his confidence in the likely success of the book that 1000 copies were printed, double the number of the first edition of *Ropesight*.

A book is the product of its time and to some extent reflects the current attitudes at that time. Thus Snowdon refers to a ringer as 'he'. Also, the selection of methods is not what would be considered standard today, and among the six-bell methods were the irregular methods Violet, New London Pleasure, Duke of York and Woodbine. Snowdon, of course, was from Yorkshire where these were very much part of the six-bell tradition.

The book was reviewed in both *Church Bells* (19 February 1881) and in the first two editions of *Bell News* (February & March 1881). The review in *Church Bells* was a straightforward description of the book, but that in *Bell News* was much more enthusiastic, stating that 'not only is the exercise once more indebted to Mr. Snowdon for another valuable contribution to the literature of change-ringing, but that it is once more indebted to him for publishing another work which is within reach of all its members.' The only reservation expressed by the reviewer in *Bell News* was the fact that the diagrams were printed separately, stating 'no doubt in future editions they will be found in the same volume.'

Jasper Snowdon's statement of faith in having printed 1000 copies of *Standard Methods* was justified when, just after his death in 1885, they were all sold, and in 1887 his brother

William decided to order another 1000. This second edition was essentially a reprint of the first edition, with a few typographical errors corrected and a short appendix added. In a letter that appeared in *Bell News* on 25 June 1887 William Snowdon appealed for each member of a band to have a copy when a method was being practised so that each could study the method at the same time.

The 1000 copies of the second edition were sold in less time than those of the first edition, and in 1892 a third edition was published. In this a few alterations and additions were made to the letterpress, but the same selection of methods was reproduced. To save the book being reprinted quite so often, 2000 copies of this edition were printed and it was not until 1901 that another edition was needed: this fourth edition was merely a reprint of the third edition with an appendix omitted. There was a difficulty with the proofs of certain pages of the book of diagrams, and errors on five pages had to be later corrected, resulting in obvious additions, a fact deplored by William Snowdon in an introductory note.

It was not until the fifth edition of 1908 that William Snowdon substantially revised the book, the title page proclaiming 'All Minor, Triple and Major methods with irregular lead-ends omitted; ordinary methods producing 65s at back-stroke expunged; and correct examples substituted; ...'. The cost of the whole work, including the diagrams, was still 2s. 6d. but it was now possible to buy each part separately for 1s. 6d. each. This revised edition was first advertised in *Bell News* on 19 December 1908. No review was published but a short paragraph in the same edition of *Bell News* stated: 'Everyone knows the value of the printed diagrams which accompany this particular work.'

After the death of William Snowdon in 1915, the distribution of the Snowdon Series was taken over by his widow, Mrs. Laura Snowdon, who produced the sixth edition in 1916. However, with the diagrams now being sold separately from the letterpress, they had been reprinted in the previous year, and from then on the date of the diagrams does not always correspond to the date of an edition of the letterpress.

The seventh, eighth and ninth editions of the letterpress (1922, 1928 and 1933), like the sixth edition, were essentially reprints of the earlier edition and it was not until 1940 that the whole work was revised by J. Armiger Trollope. The cost had gone up marginally to 2s. 10d. for the whole work, with the parts still costing 1s. 6d. each. Despite the problems of the war this tenth edition was reprinted in 1945, probably reflecting the surge in interest after the lifting of the ban on ringing in 1943 and a gradual return to normality. However, the cost of the whole work had gone up to 4s., with each part costing 2s., and when the twelfth edition was published in 1954 the cost was 5s. 6d. for the whole work, 2s. 6d. for the diagrams and 3s. for the letterpress.

The twelfth edition was the last of the true Snowdon Series, and when another version was published in 1980 it had been completely rewritten by Robert B. Smith. Essentially it consisted of a series of articles on ringing and conducting various methods, published in the early 1970s and used as the basis for the book. The cost reflected the inflation in the intervening years since the twelfth edition had been published and had escalated to £5!

At the end of this essay is a listing of the various editions of both the letterpress and diagrams. Many of the earlier editions in library lack their original covers and have been rebound in recent years. Others that have not been rebound show evidence that they have been in regular use over many years. No copy of

a set of diagrams for 1887 is in the Library, and should anyone have knowledge of a copy that is available, I would be delighted to hear.

Letterpress

Edn	Author	Publisher	Year	Pages	Comment		
1st	Jasper W Snowdon	Wells Gardner, Darton & Co, London	1881	vi + 78			
2nd			1887	viii + 78	Corrected by William Snowdon		
3rd			1892	viii + 77	Revised and corrected by Wm Snowdon		
4th		Wm Snowdon, Leeds		1901	viii + 77	Revised by Wm. Snowdon.	
5th				1908	(viii) + 92	Revised and enlarged by Wm Snowdon	
6th				Mrs Laura Snowdon, Cartmel	1916	(viii) + 92	Revised and enlarged by Wm Snowdon
7th					1922	(viii) + 92	
8th		1928	(viii) + 92				
9th		1933	(viii) + 92				
10th	J Armiger Trollope	Miss M E Snowdon, Cartmel	1940	95	Revised and rewritten		
10th rep		Miss M E Snowdon, Ulverston	1945	95	Reprint of 1940 edition		
11th		Miss M E Snowdon, Cartmel	1949	95			
12th			1954	95			
	Robert B Smith	Christopher Groome, Kettering	1980	222	Completely rewritten		

Diagrams

Edn	Author	Publisher	Year	Pages	Comment
(1st)	Jasper Snowdon	Wells Gardner, Darton & Co, London	1881	iv + 40	
(2nd)			1887	iv + 40	
(3rd)			1892	iv + 40	
(4th)		Wm Snowdon, Leeds	1901	iv + 40	
(5th)			1908	iv + 41 + 92	Revised and enlarged by Wm Snowdon
		Mrs Laura Snowdon, Cartmel	1915	iv + 41	Revised and enlarged by Wm Snowdon
			1922	iv + 41	
			1928	iv + 41	
			1935	iv + 41	
		Jasper W Snowdon	Miss M E Snowdon, Cartmel	1947	ii + 41
	1951			ii + 41	Reprint of 1947 edition
	1957			ii + 41	
	Christopher Groome	Christopher Groome, Kettering	1972	Unpaginated	Entirely new work



STANDARD METHODS

ART OF CHANGE-RINGING

BY

JASPER WHITFIELD SNOWDON,

*President of the Yorkshire Association of Change-Ringers ;
also Member of the Witley Amateur Society of Change-Ringers ; the Ancient
Society of Change-Ringers ; the St. James's Society of Change-Ringers ; the Waterloo Society of
Change-Ringers ; the Norwich, Gloucester and Bristol, and Durham Diocesan
Associations of Change-Ringers ; and the Guild of Devonshire Ringers.*

LONDON :

GARDNER, DUTTON, & Co., 25 PATERNOSTER BUILDINGS.

1881

Title page of the first edition of *Standard Methods* (1881)

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IN THE

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DIAGRAMS.

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LONDON :

WELLS GARDNER, DARTON, & CO., 2, PATERNOSTER BUILDINGS.

1881.

STANDARD METHODS

IN THE

ART OF CHANGE-RINGING.

BY

JASPER WHITFIELD SNOWDON.

DIAGRAMS.

(FOR DESCRIPTION SEE LETTERPRESS.)

ENTERED AT STATIONERS' HALL.

LONDON:

WELLS GARDNER, DARTON, & Co., 2, PATERNOSTER BUILDINGS,

1892.

LETTERPRESS AND DIAGRAM,

Post Free, 2s. 6d., from WM. SNOWDON, Old Bank Chambers, Leeds.

This is the right address

The corresponding third edition of Diagrams.