

## Dr William Snowball

William Snowball was born in Carlton, Melbourne on 7<sup>th</sup> November 1854. He was educated at Melbourne Grammar School when the school, which had opened in 1858, was only about ten years old. He went on to Melbourne University from where he graduated Bachelor of Medicine in 1875. There were seven medical students in Snowball's year group who served their apprenticeships to the Melbourne Hospital surgeons as "Surgical Dressers" and to the physicians as "Ward Clerks".

In 1876 he went to England where he studied at University College, London, gaining the Licentiate of the Society of Apothecaries, and took the degrees of Licentiate of the Royal College of Surgeons and Licentiate of the Royal College of Physicians at Edinburgh. He undertook about two years of postgraduate work in hospitals including the Great Ormond Street Hospital for Children in London before returning to Australia. He was appointed Resident doctor at the Hospital for Sick Children in Melbourne in 1878, following Dr Hunter who had been the first House Physician. Snowball's lifelong involvement with the Hospital saw its rise from a small charity hospital to the major teaching and research hospital that it has become.

Snowball held his residency position for three years during which he took the Bachelor of Surgery degree at Melbourne University in 1881. He then resigned from the Children's Hospital to commence his own paediatric practice at 185 Lygon Street, Carlton. On leaving he was presented with a handsome testimonial certificate by the committee and invited to become an Honorary Medical Officer of the Hospital.

Snowball was a highly respected and successful practitioner. Bronwyn Hewitt, the Children's Hospital archivist, reported that "many letters of appreciation written to him by his patients and their parents are preserved in the Royal Children's Hospital archives and they show that he treated patients from all social classes and from all over the state." Two of these letters in the archives were from Lady Janet Clarke in 1899 expressing thanks, friendship and sending small 'remembrances' from her overseas travel.

Snowball was also a successful investor. He started buying rental properties in Carlton near his practice. In 1889 he purchased a block of land at the corner of Victoria Street and Drummond Street in Carlton where he commissioned a two storey Victorian terrace house that was built by his brother, John Snowball. It has a magnificent staircase in the entrance hall and some remarkable stained-glass windows. It was named 'Frosterly', after the village in County Durham, England, which had been his father's birthplace. It served both as his house and private practice. He practiced there from 1892 for only ten years before ill-health led to his retirement. The building became a private boarding school called University High School for the next five years until taken over in 1907 as the headquarters of the Melbourne Weather Bureau.

Dr William Snowball joined St John Council for Victoria in 1889 and remained for 13 years until 1901, shortly before his death. He was one of a number of very prominent Victorians who were recruited to join the Council, which was very conscious in those days of the need for official endorsement. Dr

Snowball was recruited because he was one of the most famous paediatricians of his day, referred to as “the father of paediatrics in Australia”.

Howard Boyd Graham’s early history of medicine in Victoria said of him, “He was a big, genial man of great ability and remarkable personal charm. We have reason to believe that his surgical work was mediocre, but he was a great physician. He was a talented teacher at the bedside and a skilled consultant. He served on the attending staff from 1881 until just before his death in 1902. During that time he led in the development of the small parochial hospital into one of world ranking.”

He was president of the Victorian Branch of the British Medical Association in 1895. In 1901 Snowball developed Bright’s disease. He died on 22 April 1902.

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Main source: Hewitt, Bronwyn in “A Body of Knowledge’ University of Melbourne 150 years of Melbourne medical School 1862-2012 (Ed.) Liz Brentnall p.94.

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