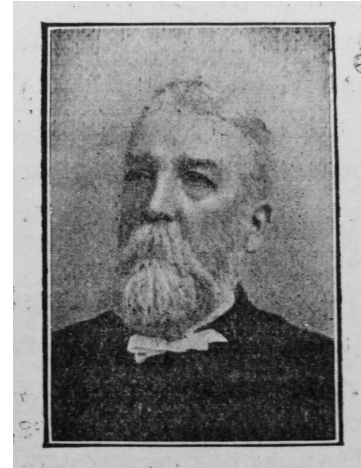


## William Thoseby

### Transcription of Obituary in the Primitive Methodist Magazine by L. Stafford

As we look back on the life of our brother, Rev. W. Thoseby, we think there are clear evidences that the Divine purpose was fulfilled in him. Born at Grassington July 20th, 1835, and converted in June, 1856, at Morton Banks, near Keighley, although without any educational advantages, in two years after his conversion he became a local preacher. In 1859 he was engaged as a supply in the Silsden Circuit in the place of the Rev. J. Nassau. In the Jubilee year of the Connexion he entered our ministry in King's Lynn, Norfolk. During the period of forty-four years he travelled in the following Circuits:- King's Lynn, Downham, Docking, Yarmouth, Cambridge, Ely, Downham (second time) Leeds (Quarry Hill), Dewsbury, Colne, Otley, Peterborough, Hull Fourth, Sowerby Bridge, Bingley, Knaresborough.



Having finished his probation while in Docking he entered for the first time into the marriage state. Miss Holmes, of Keighley, made him a most excellent wife. In eight stations she was his beloved companion. Among the greatest works of our late brother Thoseby, was the building of the chapel, school, and manse at Colne. On the day of the opening of the chapel his wife gave birth to a baby girl and was apparently doing well. But a sudden change took place, and before he could return from his appointment at Nelson she had gone to her rest with the Lord. Imagination can better fill up these circumstances than we can describe them. Left a widower with seven children, and with the care of the circuit and of the Colne properties, he must have been severely tried in every part of his nature, and would need all the faith and buoyancy of spirit for which he was renowned to brave these trials.

From Colne he removed to Otley having married Miss Lonsdale, a native of Colne. We cannot conceive of a more suitable and happy choice. For twenty-two years they had journeyed together when, on January 15th, 1905, he was called to his rest, and she and her four children were left to mourn their loss.

There can be no brighter picture of our late friend than his home life. His children have risen up to call him blessed. Among his eleven living children there is not a jarring string; all both married and single are in some form connected with our own church. And while scattered and distant from each other they have all united so willingly and cheerfully to help him in his work, not only on one side of it, but every side, that they stand forth as truly a model family. It is a joy to be in their midst. Of Mrs. Thoseby herself it may be said "her price is far above rubies." We give unstinted praise to Mr. Thoseby in the work he did not only at Colne. but at Knaresborough, and seeing what a veritable beehive his family is we must ever reckon their work with his. We have never seen a more apt illustration of the Psalmist's words, "As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man, so are children of the youth, happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them."

The work he did in Knaresborough being his last and greatest achievement we naturally linger in our thoughts around it. Any one knowing the old-fashioned and stereotyped character of the town and our weakness therein as a church and our still greater weakness in the villages contained in the circuit cannot but be astounded at the audacity of forming so advanced a project. But to see the chapel and school actually erected and a full half of the cost raised, and standing in the most prominent site of the town, a real and beautiful ornament, commanding the admiration of every passer-by, must ever speak loudly to the people of God, *Go forward.*

One special feature of Mr. Thoseby was the inspiration he gave to other people to carry into actual existence the thoughts of his own mind. When he commenced the work our people, in Knaresborough were largely what they had been for generations past. And it was this people he inspired and drew to him and drew into the work. It was this small handful of people, all hard working, and most of them very poor, over whom he threw the charm and energy of his personality, and who went with him through the whole business and are still striving most heroically to carry forward the work. Fortunate indeed it was for our friend that Harrogate is only four miles from Knaresborough. Harrogate the daughter has far outgrown her old mother Knaresborough and in her highly advanced state has done nobly a daughter's part in helping the old town.

In the execution of "The Million Penny Scheme" Mr. Thoseby not only drew to his help his relatives outside his own immediate family circle, not only friends in circuits where he had travelled and not only the ministers and others in our own church but people in other churches with many of whom he had no personal acquaintance. While our late brother did not intrude himself on others either in private or official circles he nevertheless by his personal character and force of will ever wielded an influence that commanded respect. Although unassuming and no office seeker he was twice a delegate to Conference, and in 1895 was General Committee delegate. He was the author of several booklets and services of song, and his sermons and addresses ever bespoke careful preparation. The spiritual condition of his circuits gave him due thought and care, and he ever sought to make places of worship beautiful and comfortable.

He was looking forward with considerable pleasure to his settling down in Knaresborough as a supernumerary. "Man proposes, God disposes." On November 24th, 1904, while at a meeting of the British and Foreign Bible Society in the Knaresborough Town Hall he had a slight stroke. From this he somewhat rallied. But on January 10th he had another seizure, and on Sunday morning, January 15th, as people were going to church he went to the Church Triumphant to be for ever with the Lord. The interment took place in the Knaresborough Cemetery on January 19th amid universal respect and sympathy. The first part of the funeral service was conducted in our own chapel and was very impressive. Rev. W. Spivey announced the first hymn, Rev. A. Jubb, who represented the Hull Fourth Circuit, offered prayer. By request Rev. H. Cooke gave the address which was very appropriate to the occasion. Rev. T. Clamp announced the second hymn. Rev. John Bennett read the ninetieth Psalm. Rev. Jos. Burkitt, who represented the General Committee, read the portion in 1 Cor. xv. Rev. W. Fidoe concluded with prayer. Mr. Percy Jackson played the "Dead March in Saul." The town was deeply moved. A long procession accompanied the mourners to the grave. Rev. L. Stafford read the committal service at the grave side. Rev. J.T. Barkby concluded with the Benediction. Many hearts were deeply touched to see the heart stricken grief of the widow and the large family of mourners as they were led from the grave.

The memorial sermon was preached in our Knaresborough Chapel on January 29th by the Rev. J.T. Barkby to a large and attentive congregation. The influence of the life of Rev. W. Thoseby and its perpetuation by means of the new chapel as his standing monument was largely dwelt upon. Our departed brother has left a vacancy in the church which will be hard to fill, and we who remain will do well to ponder the lessons taught by his life.

Many testimonies of his worth were sent to the widow and family, but space will only allow us to record a few.

Rev. J.S. White says:- "He was emphatically a good man, unassuming, generous, devoted and faithful to the end. He has left a fragrant memory behind him. He has done an immortal work at Knaresborough. Probably no other man would have tackled the problem as he did, and few could have succeeded so well."

Rev. W. Wheeler writes:- "Your husband fought a good fight and he has gained a well-earned victory. In common with many of his brethren in the ministry I have greatly admired his heroic efforts to give the church he served so long and so faithfully a better position in Knaresborough. At an age when most men seek rest he bravely faced a difficult position and did a bit of as good work for his Master as has ever come to my notice. He has built his own monument, and the record it tells is of a life of singular disinterestedness, of cheerful courage, and of untiring labour for the glory of God and the good of man. By it he being dead yet speaketh. I shall think of him in days to come as one of the noblest types of Christian ministers it has been my privilege to know, and thank God for such knowledge."

Rev. E. Dalton says:- "During the long number of years it has been my privilege, honour and joy to have Mr. Thoseby's friendship I had formed a very high opinion of his character and worth. It was a real privilege to be called his friend, and a treasure unspeakable to have his confidence. As a minister of Jesus Christ he was devoted, sincere, earnest and true. As a friend he was truthful and trustworthy. As a parent he was loving, kind, gentle, genial and firm. As a husband he seemed to be all that could be desired. To see him in his home life, with his family about him, was an inspiration. His self-sacrifice in the Knaresborough Chapel case will be remembered for generations to come. He has honourably won the unstinted commendations of all those who have known his excellent service."

Rev. R. Harrison (President of Conference) writes:- "All I have known of your husband has made me most highly to esteem him. Personally he was so cheerful, and the relationship between him and his ministerial brethren was always so happy that he was much endeared to us all. He did seem to live on the sunny side of life's dark valley. It was a real joy to meet him or to have anything to do with him. I can assure you that the work he has done for our church in Knaresborough is regarded by us all as his real monument in the later years of his life. For this he will long be remembered."

The General Committee has recorded - "We recognise that his was a ministry filled with energetic service, and there is little doubt but that the anxiety and labour connected with the 'Million Penny Scheme,' on behalf of the new chapel seriously affected his health. He was an indefatigable worker, and enjoyed a fair measure of success on his stations. The chapel and school at Knaresborough are

an ornament to the town, and will be an abiding memorial of what a man with an earnest purpose in his soul can accomplish under even exceptional difficulties.”

The Leeds and York District Committee has recorded in its Minute book - “That this meeting learns with deep regret of the somewhat sudden death of the Rev. W. Thoseby, Superintendent of the Knaresborough Circuit, and that we place on record our high appreciation of his Christian character, deep devotion and unabating zeal in the cause of Jesus Christ. As a man he was blameless in character, lofty in ideals, sincere in purpose, relentless in the maintenance of principle, unassuming in his loyalty to his Master. His generosity of spirit, breadth of mind, wideness of outlook, together with his gentleness and unselfish brotherliness, made him a man beloved by all who knew him. As a minister he was thoughtful, whole-hearted, and earnest in his discharge of the duties of his high office, always aiming to give to his people what had cost him much. He had a very lofty idea of the ministerial functions, and always in word and deed endeavoured to live up to his ideals. As a public speaker he was frank, fearless, and oftentimes eloquent.

During his long ministry of forty-four years he was regarded by the church he served as considerably above the average in his preaching ability. His circuits always had the first claim upon his time and energies, but on many occasions he served with considerable credit other circuits and churches. His heroism in attacking a difficult problem, in lifting Primitive Methodism into a better position in Knaresborough, will give his name a warm place in the homes and hearts of Primitive Methodists all over the Connexion, and especially in Knaresborough, Harrogate, and the Leeds and York District. Only a man with living faith and dauntless courage would have faced such a herculean task. We could have hoped that his life might have been spared to reap on earth some fruits of his labours. He however laboured and others will enter into his labours.

We rejoice exceedingly that his death was calm and triumphant. We pray that his widow and family may be comforted and sustained under their loss during the time they have to wait until the day breaks and the shadows flee away.”

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## **References**

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