

## The Glasbury Ringing Contest of 1912

by Colin A. Lewis



Competitors at Glasbury, 24th May 1912 (courtesy of Derek Price)



The Kidston Shield (from John Eisel, 2001)

On 24th May 1912 the Hereford Diocesan Guild of Bell Ringers held a ringing contest at Glasbury. This was made possible by the generosity of Captain Archibald Glen Kidston (1871-1913), who then lived at Gwernyfed Park in that benefice. Kidston paid the travelling expenses for all bands that competed in the competition, and provided lunch and tea for all the competitors (Eisel, 2001).

Archibald Glen Kidston was born in 1871, the son of George Jardine Kidston (1835-1909), a wealthy ship-owner in Scotland. Glen Kidston became a Captain in the Third Battalion of the Black Watch. In June 1898, at St George's Church in Hanover Square, London, he married Helene Adeline Blanche Chapman. They had five children, the first being George Pearson Glen Kidston, born on 23rd January 1899 and registered in Kensington.

Captain Glen Kidston leased Gwernyfed Park, in Glasbury benefice, from the Wood family as a sporting estate, and took great interest in the local community. He employed over thirty servants as well as gamekeepers and others. The men had to play cricket (Kidston developed his own cricket field at Gwernyfed, with a wooden pavilion), and sing in the choir at St Peter's church or ring bells there. Not surprisingly, while Kidston was at Gwernyfed there was a band of change ringers at St Peter's.

The Glasbury competition was open to all towers affiliated to the Hereford Guild: 'the name of each member of a competition band to appear in the annual Hereford Guild report for the band to qualify'. At that date the Hereford Guild included many towers that are now in the Swansea and Brecon Guild but used to belong to the Brecon District of the Hereford Guild. Each band had to ring a test-piece of 360 changes of Grandshire Doubles: 'to be rung at the first attempt'.



Captain Archibald Glen Kidston  
(Colin Lewis, 2015)



Glasbury church in the 1950s (Colin Lewis, 2015)

Twelve bands competed and Kidston paid for photographs of each band as well as for a group photograph of all the competitors. A copy of the appropriate band photograph was sent to each competing ringer and a copy of the group photograph, showing over seventy ringers, was sent to each competing tower.

The ringing was judged by Harry Withers, from Birmingham. The winning band was presented with "a shield for the belfry", and each ringer in the winning band was given a leather purse with his name engraved on it in silver. Perhaps it would be wrong to suggest a fix, but Glasbury came first and Talgarth (the adjacent tower) second! Was engraving done after the competition ended and while the competitors were having tea, or had the result been foreseen?

In 1913 the competition, for what was then called "The Glasbury Bell Ringing Competition" was held at Clifford and a challenge shield, donated by Captain Glen Kidston, was presented to the winning tower: St Leonard's, Bridgnorth. At the annual meeting of the Hereford Guild that year Captain Glen Kidston was elected a Vice-President of the Guild, in appreciation of his support of the Guild. Sadly, he died of cancer on 2nd September 1913, aged 42.

The competition survived one year longer than Glen Kidston, being held at Leominster on 23rd May 1914. Later that year saw the outbreak of the 1914-18 War, and all thoughts of ringing competitions were replaced by those of survival. The Glasbury Bell Ringing Competition has not been revived, although the bells were rehung in 1999 and tower repairs were underway, with the louvers being replaced and the tower stone-work repointed, when this article was written.

Captain Glen Kidston was buried in the churchyard at Glasbury on 5th September 1913 and a peal of Grandshire Doubles was rung on the bells three later that day. The peal took 3 hours and 21 minutes and was "Rung with the bells half-muffled as a tribute to the memory of the late Captain Kidston, a munificent benefactor of the local ringers. He was a valued friend of the Hereford Diocesan Guild". Five of the ringers were Glasbury men (Thomas Drew, John Vizor, Edgar R. Jones (conductor), James P. Hyett, and Thomas Turner), the other was from Ibuilt Wells: Robert E. Sparkes.

Eighteen years after Captain Kidston was laid to rest his son, George Pearson Glen Kidston, a renowned motor racing driver and aviator, who flew the plane that delivered the

first air mail to Cape Town from the UK, was buried beside him. Kidston had crashed into the Drakensberg Mountains during his return flight, and the headstone on his grave is carved from Clarens Sandstone from those uplands. His body was brought back to Glasbury for burial. Like his father, his coffin was carried into the churchyard while the local Boy Scouts provided a guard of honour.

The Kidstons, father and son, are still remembered in Glasbury and members of the family still live in the village. Gwernyfed Park is now a secondary school and there are no more gamekeepers there, the former cricket ground is grazed by cattle; the wooden pavilion has been dismantled. Once tower repairs have been completed, however, the bells of St Peter's Church will still ring over Glasbury and the fertile Wye valley, and pheasants still live in the churchyard and call over the Kidston' graves.



George Pearson Glen Kidston's funeral cortege arriving at the churchyard in Glasbury, 1931 (Colin Lewis, 2015)

#### Acknowledgements

Thanks to Dr John Eisel for his article in *The Ringing World* of 26th October 2001 entitled "The Glen Kidston Trophy" and for a photograph therefrom, to William Bowker for allowing the author to reproduce photographs from the Glasbury History Group's archives in Lewis 2015 and to Derek Price for the group photograph of competitors at the 1912 Glasbury Ringing Contest.

Further information on ringing at Glasbury is in Lewis, C. A., *Glasbury Bells and Bell-ringers*, published by The Whiting Society of Ringers, 2015.

#### 50 Years Ago

*The Ringing World*, 10 September, 1965  
Selected by the Editor

##### STARTING YOUNG

Mr. and Mrs. A. A. Jopp, who have their own campanile at Stoulton, Worcestershire, rang in an interesting quarter of Plain Bob Doubles on August 28th. It was the first quarter of their son Paul, who is their second son to ring a quarter peal while still only seven! It was his mother's first quarter as conductor.



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#### 1955 Wood family quarter peal

SIR, – One of my ex-pupils has passed a copy of an obituary from *The Ringing World* dated 19th September 2014 of my cousin Harold Wood with whom I rang at St. Mary's Church Billingshurst many years ago. This prompted me to write to you with details of a quarter peal rung by six members of our family. This was never reported at the time and I wondered if your readers would be interested in the details.

On Easter Sunday, April 10th 1955, a quarter peal consisting of 1,020 changes of Grandshire Doubles was rung at St Mary's, Billingshurst, West Sussex, in the time of 39 minutes by the following six members of the Wood family:

Peter Wood (senior)	Treble
Raymond Wood (senior)	2nd
Cecil Wood	3rd
Harold Wood	4th
Raymond Wood (junior)	5th
Peter Wood (junior)	Tenor
Conducted by Raymond Wood.	

As far as I know this was the first time in Sussex that a quarter peal had been rung by ringers of the same Sussex family. The ringers of the Treble and Tenor were father and son. Raymond Wood, senior, was the brother of the Treble ringer and father of the ringers of the 3rd, 4th and 5th bells. The death of Harold leaves me as the only survivor!

Unfortunately owing to a back problem I no longer ring.

PETER WOOD

By email

#### WWI names that resonate

SIR, – Alan Regin has done a detailed job to collect names of ringers who were killed in WWI. The assembly makes, I think, an important historical document.

Before 1914 the ringing of bells was rarely of complex methods week by week and still more rare in peals. Reading the CVs of those who had been ringers one gets a description of a young chap of 18 to mid 30s who was a member with his family at his local church and had joined its band of ringers whose regular output was rounds, call changes and Plain Bob or Grandshire; ringing for him could not have required a higher level of education such as many ringers-to-day have had. He would most likely have an irregular income in farming or one of the building trades; welfare income was very little before WWI. Young ringers of these times were also the sort of young man responding to the national call.

When the war started there was an immediate need to recruit men in large numbers. Hence devices like the famous poster of Lord Kitchener pointing out "YOUR COUNTRY NEEDS YOU", which undoubtedly stirred feelings of patriotism; few had any idea of the reasons for WWI starting. For young men there was the opportunity to be paid 1 shilling a day – every day – and for those joining up there was 'all found', albeit in a trench in France.

Alan has built a picture for us from his collection of men who, also, were ringers and were arguably exploited in the greatest obscenity of European history. From his collection we ringers of today may derive some fellow feeling for the men who were thus tricked.

PHILIP GRAY

Backwell, Bristol

#### Donations and charges

SIR, – From a rather casual observation of the last couple of editions of *The Ringing World* it seems that quarter peal ringers are going to meet the 70% challenge but peal ringers will not.

I assume, therefore, that quarter peals will continue to be published free of charge but peal ringers will have to pay a fee to have their performances published?

Redditch, Worcestershire A J BARNFIELD

#### 25 Years Ago

*The Ringing World*, 14 September, 1990  
Selected by the Editor

##### Let the bells ring out across the country

Those who watched the excellent Gala Performance in celebration of the 90th birthday of HM The Queen Mother will recall that the final items included a chorus line exhorting the bells to ring out across the country. Well they certainly did.

In spite of the extreme heat and the inevitable difficulty of arranging bands with many ringers away on holiday we received during the week following 4th August no less than 62 peal reports and over 300 quarter peal reports.

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