

The Cellar Club Inc



Established in 1980

January 2024 Newsletter

REMINDER: There is no Club BBQ this January

Our monthly engagement details for the next few months are below.

February 2024

Riverby Estate

Wednesday 14th February 8pm start

Door Price: Members \$10 / Guests \$14

<https://www.riverbyestate.com/>

We have lined up for your February Club Monthly meeting an evening with Kevin Courtney of Riverby Estate from Blenheim.



RIVERBY ESTATE

Riverby are a boutique, family owned and run wine producer in Marlborough's Jackson Road heartland. All grapes are grown on the estate vineyard by descendants of the Matthews family, who have been farming the property for over 100 years. The Matthews farm was called Riverby and the original homestead, depicted on the Sauvignon Blanc back label, is still in use.

On their approximately 70ha vineyard they have three different soil types that allow the family to grow a variety of grapes, and their range of award-winning wines come from individual parcels on that single vineyard. Although not all their wines are made every year, as this depends on the quality of grapes for vintage.

The Riverby name originated from the Opawa River and its tributaries, which meandered through the property. This river was diverted in the 1930s to stop Blenheim from flooding, creating what was eventually to become ideal grape growing land. The rainbow trout on the Riverby label is symbolic of the fish that used to swim where grapes are now grown.

They are proud to practice sustainable grape-growing techniques throughout the whole grape-growing and winemaking cycle, and are also pleased to be eligible to be members of Appellation Wine Marlborough (AWM) because of their vineyard practices and restricted yields.

In a throw-back to past glories, sheep are used extensively throughout the vineyard to control weeds and grasses.

Wines for the evening:

- Y Riverby Rose' 2023 – *Welcome wine* – gold medal winner at NZ International Wine Show
- Y Cicada Gewurztraminer 2023 - gold medal winner at NZ International Wine Show
- Y Riverby Reserve Chardonnay 2022
- Y Riverby Sauvignon Blanc 2023 - gold medal winner at NZ International Wine Show
- Y Riverby Gruner Veltliner 2022
- Y Riverby OVB 2021
- Y Riverby Reserve Pinot Noir 2020
- Y Riverby Noble Riesling 2019 – multiple award winner

Let's Look Out for Each Other

As always, please if you are feeling unwell, do not attend the evening's presentation. Thanks

Looking Ahead

- Y **March** – Pegasus Bay
- Y **April** – New World Wine Winners, hosted by Michelle Fraser (Clearwater Wines and Wine Judge) [Home | The New Zealand International Wine Show \(nziws.co.nz\)](http://Home | The New Zealand International Wine Show (nziws.co.nz))
- Y **May** - AGM

Looking Back – December Christmas Dinner



This was a special Wellington Club evening at Bellamys in previous years.



This year's Christmas Dinner was held at the Wellington Club, a special location for our Christmas dinner.

We had 38 attendees, who enjoyed the superb venue and the manner in which we were accommodated in our own dining space.

The meal, service and the wines for the occasion ensured and added to a splendid evening for Club members.

evening, especially for Club members who had not been to the previously, and some people expressed that it was as good as

Thanks to your committee members for all the organising for our final event for 2023.

Wine News

You'll all remember the article I published on the Granite Belt in the August edition of our Cellar Club Newsletter, of course. The Granite Belt has over 50 wineries, from boutique producers through to award-winning estates – along with breweries and distilleries [for vodka and gin].

Well, I decided it would be a great break to go see what it was actually like 😊.

This holiday was a little tempered when the area in Brisbane had a series of fires start in early November just before we were due to go. So, we tracked them as best we could via the internet, plus were in contact with the locals [via email]. The locals confirmed the fires were out in their area before we departed New Zealand shores.

The damage done by the fires was quite apparent as we got close to the Granite Belt, which is between 900 -1,000m above sea level. Both sides of the road were scorched in places, and the railway line that [did] run through Granite Belt territory was completely charred. They use untreated timber in Australia and treat the rails with creosote to preserve it! Fuel to burn there.

On the way to the Granite Belt area, we stopped at the Summer Lane Camel Farm. Nice, and a different place to have morning tea, buy gifts and experience camels, if you've never had this experience.



On the Friday evening when we arrived in the Granite Belt, our first stop was at **Balancing Heart Vineyard**, a short drive from the town of Ballandean, with the backdrop of Girraween National Park. We indulged in a tasting flight and one of their woodfired pizzas – well worth it. They were welcoming and had a relaxed approach at the end of the day.

- Y Blanc de Blanc – *blend of their chardonnays*
- Y Verdello – *soft, pineapple taste, dry on palate*
- Y Rose – *cherries on the tongue and nose*

While we were enjoying our time at the vineyard, we could walk along the vines and see the naturally occurring balancing rocks. These were throughout the area and are huge! You could slightly smell the smell of ash or burnt wood in the air, but as they'd had four days of rain before we arrived, the odour wasn't that strong at all.

Well worth a visit, taste wise and visually.

Saturday, and our second vineyard was **Ravenscroft Vineyard**, which is a boutique vineyard and small-batch winery, founded by award-winning winemaker Mark Ravenscroft. The new owners had worked with Mark for three years to get a good transfer of knowledge and skill. All wines are made on-site with minimal intervention and additives.



We joined in with other visitors and did a full tasting 😊:

- Y Verdelho 2022 – very gentle on both nose and taste
- Y Vermentino 2022 – really lemony [*their crop wasn't very good that year, so they imported the grapes from Chalmers in Victoria*]
- Y Skin Contact Fiano 2022 – smooth with honey and fruit on the tongue [*this is a Naples variety*]
- Y Reserve Chardonnay 2021 – it had eight months in oak, and was lovely
- Y Rose Sangiovese – dry Italian style, smooth, could alter with food [*Tuscany variety*] had added Fiano and Vermentino to boost flavour
- Y Nero d'Avola 2022 – light and grassy – would go great with pizza on a Friday night [*Chile variety*]
- Y Reserve Petite Verdot – aged in old oak barrels, you can taste mushrooms/ earthiness, smooth and dry.
- Y 2022 Cherry Bomb – total cherry nose, smooth, dry, nice cherry flavours on the tongue
- Y Pinotage Waagee 2021 – smooth, dry, fruity, lemony bite at the end as it goes down.

Would recommend a visit, to relax in the atmosphere and taste their wines.

That same day, while it's not a vineyard, it's well worth going for a meal at **Varias Restaurant & Fine Training facility**, training the staff of the future. Their menu reads like a tantalising travelogue of the Granite Belt's finest food producers. We had the two-course option at \$59 per head, plus wines of course:

- Y Sparkling Marsaane – pear, citrus and honey *esp. honey*, went magnificently with the pork bell entrée'
- Y 2023 Verdelho – pears on the nose and palate [*John's wine for the whole meal*]
- Y Tempranillo 2023 bronze medal Qld Awards – soft tannins, dry finish, white pepper, red fruit, went well with the Main of brisket with broccolini, pumpkin, greens beans and the best road potatoes.
- Y Dessert was Lemon meringue pie with Raspberry ice cream.

This establishment would be the equivalent to the Whitireia & Weltec Hospitality Campus we've been to as a Club in Cuba Street. Well balanced and thought-out meals and wine combinations. Located at the Queensland College of Wine Tourism, this restaurant is all about celebrating seasonal produce year-round.

Then on Sunday, we had what was the most comprehensive wine tasting of the week in the Granite Belt, at **Ballandean Estate Wines**. Ballandean Estate is Queensland' oldest operating winery family-owned and operated by the Puglisi family since 1932.

This is a single-vineyard, cool climate made-with-love wine establishment, with Shiraz from 50-year-old vines, as well as their 'Strange Bird' varietals.

We had booked in for one of their tastings, hosted by their wine educators. Their tasting came six limited release wines served with a gourmet platter, to complement the tasting. The platter turned out to be a meal in itself! When you arrive at the Estate, you go through to their Barrelroom Wine Lounge 😊

Must add in that they had a disability path, as well as their main steps, into their establishment. Handy if you are disabled, but perhaps mostly handy on the way out?

Ballandean Estate is one of the vineyards in the Belt that grow 'Strange Bird' wines. Strange Bird wines are rare, alternative varieties that represent less than one per cent of Australian vines – albarino (*also known as alvarine*), chenin blanc, cortese, fiano, gewurztraminer, gros and petit manseng, gruner veltliner, malvasia, marsanne, roussane and savagnin. While we didn't taste all of these, we certainly tried a few.



Monday night we dined at **Granite Belt Brewery**. On the way up their driveway, driving past the vines, we saw kangeroos grazing the vines, with joeys in their pouches, so special. They weren't bothered by us, but were keeping an eye on us, as we'd stopped the car for the photo opportunity.

The Brewers is Stanthorpe's premier brewers, crafting delicious beers and ciders since 2012. They use the local water supply, as well as the finest malts, hops and yeast.

It wasn't a busy night for the restaurant, but it was about half full, and while they were focussed on craft beer the food and wine were fabulous. Everything was of course overwhelmed by the thunder and lightning storm that hit sometime before we were to leave to go back to our accommodation. Driving back-country roads without the sky full of stars to guide you [besides the GPS], was a little dodgy, so the valley-wide lightening was quite helpful!

OTHER things we enjoyed seeing during our stay was their Mt Marlay lookout – don't walk up to it! There is a 8% gradient to get up that particular piece of road – drive!

Go and find their pyramid – a local farmer got overwhelmed by the number of smaller granite rocks on his property, and constructed a 17m high pyramid with them! Quite impressive and good photo opportunity, though you can't get into the field now, selfie still looks pretty cool.

Viewing their giant thermometer is fun too. The Belt is the only area in Queensland that usually gets snow every winter. They're fully equipped and operational during their Winters for visitors.

They have their own Granite Belt Christmas Tree Farm, which was so much fun! This runs from Oct-Feb of each year. We were there in the last week of November and it was packed! As well as rolling up to pick your own tree, getting it cut down, then using their tree wrap machine(!) there was a huge barn set up for all sorts of artificial trees and larger decorations, a smaller building with shop full of smaller decorations, plus morning tea supplies and gelato – we tried Christmas cake gelato and Kinder gelato. Both passed the test 😊. Again, would recommend if you're there at that time.

Go to Sutton's Juice Factory & Cidery – they are famous for their apple pie, and their steak pies are pretty good to! We indulged in both.

There were two places that we wouldn't recommend, as the experience we were anticipating simply didn't happen:



1. Hidden Creek, whose website we had checked 2-3 times before we got to it, to see if we could breakfast there. According to their website this was ok, but on getting to their vineyard, not so:

2. Robert Channon Wines, was off-hand and disorganised. Not welcoming to the point that even though their vineyard had an 'Open' sign out at the gate, no-one was around, facilities were semi-closed and the only person we saw ran away!

Despite the above two businesses, we had a delightful time, met interesting and informative people and tasted some great

wines. Would recommend paying a visit to the area, if you don't mind a three-hour drive inland from Brisbane.

Screwcaps

Screwcaps are still very welcome, please bring these along to any Club meeting and leave them with Anne, remembering that the cause that benefits from this collection is Kidney Kids NZ and their families.

Club Information

President

Murray Jaspers

Murray.jaspers@gmail.com

027 280 0301

Club Address & Treasurer

C/-Wayne Kennedy

17 Stonefield Place

Johnsonville, Wellington 6037

waynekennedy51@gmail.com

Secretary

Richard Taylor

rh_mjtaylor@xtra.co.nz

Editor

Evelyn Dawson

59evelyndawson@gmail.com

Vice President & Membership

Gayl Gaukrodger

Club Website

www.cellarclub.co.nz

Club Bank Account for Internet Banking 06 0541 0056031 00