

# RACS

## (The Real Ale Club of Sawbridgeworth)

We were founded in 1995 and are affiliated to the Society for the Preservation of Beers from the Wood (SPBW).

The purpose of **RACS** is to enjoy good beer, visit breweries and beer festivals and be companionable over a glass of decent ale.

It costs £5 a year to join (AGM in May). Meetings are monthly - usually the last Wednesday of the month.

We have a free - almost monthly! - magazine about the exploits of members and Club activities. Generally, it is distributed by e-mail for those who are computer literate, but we can always provide printed copies on request. In the past we have had trips to Ostend, Bruges, Brussels, Lille, and nearer home, pub crawls round Cornwall, Great Yarmouth, Cambridge, Ramsgate and Whitstable.

We regularly attend beer festivals at Chelmsford, Ascot (which includes a full day's racing), Ridgewell, St. Albans and Ware. The favourite is always the CAMRA Chappel Beer Festival held in the sidings of Earl's Colne station in early September. Sup your choice from 400+ beers in a railway carriage (or cattle truck!) and wait for the hog roast to be ready. An outing not to be missed.

Come and enjoy the fun. We hope to meet you soon.

**\*\* Rumour has it that another Real Ale Club has recently appeared in Sawbridgeworth. Remember **RACS** is THE original and long-established group. Don't be fooled — or accept second best!**



*Nullam Cerwisiam Timemus*

# RACS

**The Magazine of the  
Real Ale Club of Sawbridgeworth**

**WINTER 2013**



**Affiliated to SPBW**

# YOUR RACS COMMITTEE 2013-2014

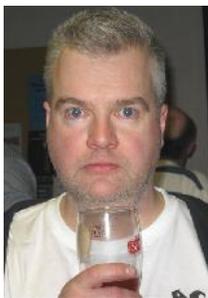


JAN MEAD  
Chair  
meadspanner@aol.com

who were unanimously voted back in at the AGM in May



ROXY MANTON  
Mascot



SPENCER RICHARDS  
Vice-Chair



CAROLINE MACY  
Secretary  
cj43@intosawbridgeworth.co.uk



ANN DODKIN  
Committee Member



KEITH CAVES  
Treasurer



MARK TURNER  
Webmaster  
www.racs.org.uk



HANNAH GADMAN  
Trip Secretary



DEB EATON

JOHN TRIMMER



# FESTIVE GREETINGS

to all who have offered **RACS** hospitality during the past year for their meetings!



*The Rising Sun, High Wych*

*The Old Bell, Sawbridgeworth*



*George IV, Sawbridgeworth*

*The Half Moon, Hitchin*



*The White Lion, Sawbridgeworth*

*The Queen's Head, Allen's Green*



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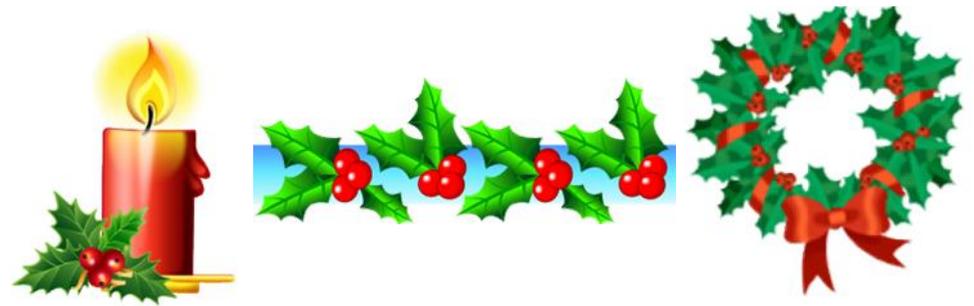


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Wishing all  
**RACS**  
**MEMBERS**

a very  
**Merry Christmas**  
and  
**Happy New Year**  
**2014**



# MEET THE BREWER

Sunday October 6th 2013 was another successful event hosted in the Woodbine Inn, Waltham Abbey at their "Meet the Brewer" evening. **RACS** and CAMRA members enjoyed a couple of hours with Russ Barnes, the very enthusiastic owner and Head Brewer of the Red Fox Brewery, Coggeshall . He brought hops and malt for us to taste and five of his beers. They were all delicious.



## Gŵyl Gwrw Llanbedr/ Llanbedr Beer Festival September 2013

### Report by John Trimmer

So here we were (Deb and I) in North West Wales at our friends', Karen and Micky, who have (semi) retired to the beautiful village of Llanbedr. It is, to the uninitiated, proper Welsh Wales. Many people's first language is Welsh and it is not unusual to only hear

Welsh spoken in the local pubs and shops.

We had gone to stay for the whole week and in a weak (and possibly foolish!) moment to put in a stint at the beer festival, held in the marquee in the grounds of the local pub Tŷ Mawr pub and hotel. It is, rightly represented in the Good Beer Guide and is an independent beer festival organised by the villagers for the benefit of the local village children, older folk and local charities. The catchment area includes Barmouth, Shell Island (camping site mainly for people from North West England), Porthmadog (home of the Purple Moose brewery), the Snowdonia National Park, as well as the steam railways — West Highland and Blaenau Ffestiniog — which both use Porthmadog Station, on the platform is Spooners Bar which has five real ales all the time and it serves hot food.

The Llanbedr festival only uses local breweries from North Wales and is very strict about the provenance of the beers they use. Listed below are the breweries and it is interesting to find how many one recognises

bragdy=brewery/cwrw = beer/Big Bog=?)

- Bragdy'r Gogarth y
- Bragdy'r Plassey
- Bragdy'r Nant
- Bragdy Eryri
- Bragdy Conwy
- Cwrw Cader
- Purple Moose
- Cwrw Liŷn
- Big Bog

Deb and I ended up working on the Saturday—while I slaved away pouring pints, Deb handed out a couple of cheese rolls and the odd packet of pork scratchings. The highlight came when a coachload of 50 (!) Americans turned up and proceeded to try some proper beers. There was really good entertainment, some brilliant musicians of all types and singers who sang in Welsh and English. It was a really friendly festival and we'll be back in 2014.

**Best Bitter ABV 4.0%**  
A traditional style best bitter, light brown in colour, very reminiscent of some of your old favourite beers.



# APPLICATION FORM for MEMBERSHIP of

## THE REAL ALE CLUB OF SAWBRIDGEWORTH

to May 2014

If you wish to join or renew

Membership of **RACS**,

please fill in this form, in **BLOCK CAPITALS**,

then send to

**JAN MEAD, 23, Crofters, Sawbridgeworth, Herts CM21 0DE**

and **INCLUDE** a subscription of **£5** per person per year.

**NAME:**.....

**ADDRESS:**.....  
.....  
.....  
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**COUNTY:**..... **POST CODE:**.....

**CONTACT NUMBER, please:**

**Telephone or mobile**.....

**or fax or e-mail**.....

**SIGNATURE:**..... **Date**.....



The Woodbine beer tasting evening on Sunday November 3rd was yet another very successful event. The Hop Back Brewery from Salisbury brought five splendid ales for us to taste. The accompanying roast dinner was superb — the two chefs at our table reckoned that they could have done no better! Founder John Gilbert was present, but the brief talks which introduced each beer were by the local rep, Liz. A really bubbly and vivacious character, she traced the history of the brewery since its beginning in 1987.

The evening was rounded off with a Hop Back/General (beery!) Knowledge quiz — John and Deb came third WITHOUT using a mobile phone to research the answers!



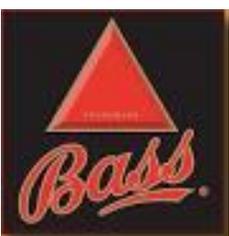


## The SPBW 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebrations

The SPBW celebrations were held in and around Derby from 1<sup>st</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup> November inclusive with about 30 of the members in attendance, including me and Sheila (Derby being where we were both born and bred). All the participants made their own travel and accommodation arrangements but fortuitously, a number of us were booked into the same hotel and we were able to exchange greetings over breakfast. Below is a brief description of the programme of events, organised by SPBW secretary John Rooth, to whom we owe a debt of thanks.

### Friday 1<sup>st</sup> November

The celebrations kicked off with an evening visit to Marstons brewery in Burton-on-Trent. Most of the horde travelled by train from Derby – a 12 minute journey. Me and Sheila chose to travel by bus, which took half an hour but was free thanks to our bus passes. We all assembled in a local Burton pub called the 'Coopers Tavern'. This was an old-fashioned boozier with three or four small rooms



which became very crowded when the 30 SPBW types descended on it. However, it had the virtue of dispensing 12 different ales, *all from the wood!* I can attest that the Bass was superb. We were only at the 'Coopers' for a short while before leaving to walk to the Marston visitor centre. There, two ladies welcomed us, one a 'history' specialist, the other a brewster. We went first to the brew house to

examine the enormous mash tuns and kettles with a talk on the history of the building and its contents. From there we went to the Union house with its fermenters and the famous Union system. We saw (and smelt) the fermenting beer at various stages of completion and the Union system was explained. We returned to the visitor centre where a dinner of steak and ale pie with chips and mushy peas awaited us – this was delicious and there was a lot of it. All washed down by the three half pints of Pedigree that visitors were allowed, but which turned out to be three pints plus another one for the road! After the visit, it was time to travel back to Derby on the penultimate bus of the evening. I think we all enjoyed a stimulating and very successful evening despite the weather – it persisted down the whole time – but the food and drink more than made up for it.



### Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> November

We all met at the bus station at 11.30 am for a private coach ride to the 'Derventio' brewery, 'Derventio' being the Roman name for Derby. The brewery has been in existence for 7 years and in its present premises for 2 years. It is located in Darley Abbey in the Long Mill, one of the four Darley Abbey Mills. Long Mill is over 200 years



old and Grade I listed. There are newer steel support beams holding the concrete ceiling up, but also some massive old oak beams clad in tin. This was the world's first attempt at a fire-retardant structure and they have to be maintained in place because of the Grade I listing. The brewery is soon to move out of the present premises to a different mill a short distance away because the owners of Long Mill are planning its refurbishment. The owner/brewer invited us to try two of his current brews. These were 'Mabon' (a pagan word meaning harvest) a 4.3% abv amber ale which was nice and malty with a hoppy finish and 'Emperor's Whim', a 4.2% abv brew which was light in colour with a citrusy taste. The 'Mabon' suited me well so I had a couple more of them, but the 'Emperor's Whim' was not to my taste. During the tasting session, we ate lunch which was an excellent cold buffet provided by a catering business which operates out of one of the other mills. After lunch, we were given a talk on the brewing process and the equipment used by 'Derventio'. Around 2.30pm we left in the coach and were driven to 'The Dead Poets' Inn in Holbrook. This is a lovely country inn with low, beamed ceilings and a roaring wood fire in the grate. They had Bass, Pedigree and Abbott all from the wood plus 5 other micro brewed guest ales on hand pumps. These included Mordue 'Workie Ticket', a 4.4% abv dark ale with a slightly burnt caramel taste. I'm not that fond of dark beers usually, but this one was in excellent condition and very enjoyable.



From the 'Dead Poets' we moved on to the 'Talbot Taphouse' in Ripley. This is the brewery tap for the Amber Ales brewery. It is a typical



traditional Victorian 'flat iron' shaped pub, originally built as a Shipstones Alehouse to serve the needs of the local mining and steel working community. It claims to have the best cellar in Ripley and its ales are still cooled on the original stone stillage designed to keep cask ale in perfect condition before the age of refrigeration. There were seven Amber Ale brews on hand pump plus five ciders. The 'Amber Pale Ale' at 4.4% abv had a little residual sweetness and a hoppy finish and was very moreish.

We left the 'Talbot' around 6.00pm and boarded the coach to go to Bonsall near Matlock, bound for the 'Barley Mow'. We got to the bottom of the hill leading to the pub and had to get out to walk the final 400 metres because there was nowhere for the coach to turn round at the top. This was bad news because by now it was pouring with rain and pitch black with no lighting on the road. We made it to the top, wet and bedraggled to find that the 'Barley Mow' was a small,

10 single room pub which, with the arrival of SPBW, was very overcrowded. We had planned on eating dinner here but that was clearly out of the question – the kitchen would have been overwhelmed. So we stayed for one beer of which there were four on hand pump – the 4.0% abv 'Hartington Bitter' (2007 champion beer) was in fine fettle. So a little earlier than planned, we re-boarded the coach to go to Milford and the 'King William IV'. This is another super country pub with low beams and a nice log fire in the grate – it had a lovely ambiance that encourages a long stay. Unfortunately, no hot food was served, so we dined on superb ham and piccalilli cobs (that's rolls, for any Southern readers) with a dish of olives. To drink there were four beers on hand pump including 'Landlord' and 'Doombar' but the star for me was the 'Bass', straight from the wood. We had to leave, regretfully, at 9.30pm to get the coach back to Derby and so to the hotel. After our busy day, sleep came very readily.



### Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup> November

Today was scheduled for a pub crawl around Derby which kicked off at noon in a Wetherspoon's pub called the 'Standing Order'. This was built as the Crompton and Evans Union Bank which later became the City branch of NatWest; that closed in 1993 and was acquired by Wetherspoons. It is an enormous pub with ceilings 3 stories high and a rectangular bar with hand pumps on all four sides of the rectangle. There were 12 different ales on hand pump including the usual big brewery suspects as well as half a dozen micros. The Backyard Brewery 'Premium' that I tried was cloudy and tasted 'off', so I rapidly exchanged it for J.W. Lees 'Cora'. This was in good condition with a nice hoppy finish and at 3.9% abv was probably a good choice for the first drink of the day. The next port of call was right next door to the 'Standing Order' and another Wetherspoon outlet, a Lloyds No. 1 bar called 'The Sir Thomas Leaper'. The pub, which at one time had been a Yates' Wine Bar I believe, was much smaller than its next door neighbour, low-ceilinged, busy but (it seemed to me) without the ambiance of the 'Standing Order'. This was probably due to the 'music' (yuk). There were 10 beers on hand pump and the St. Peter's Extra 4.4% abv, was nice and malty with a long hoppy finish. A short walk took us to 'Ye Olde Dolphin' which has parts of the building dating back to 1530 and so it claims to be the oldest pub in Derby. As befits old pubs, the 'Dolphin' consists of a number of fairly small rooms but each with its bar. In the lounge (the only room in which me and Sheila



could find a seat) there were advertised 10 beers on hand pump, seven from the major brewers and three micros. Since one of the beers was Bass, for me there was no contest. Staying in the Cathedral Quarter, another short walk took us to the 'The Flowerpot'. Its claim to fame is its range of cask-conditioned real ales,



which is constantly changing and which is certainly impressive, and its variety of good quality, live music which I have so far managed to avoid! It is also home to the 'Black Iris' brewery. It comprises a smallish bar, a large lounge, an intermediate size room and a below-ground room which can accommodate up to 250 people and in which I

believe the music fans are confined. There were 11 beers on hand pump plus three beers from the barrel and all but three of the beers were from micros. The 'Whim Hartington' IPA at 4.2 % abv was a light beer, fruity with attractive residual sweetness. A slightly longer walk than heretofore saw us ensconced in 'The Five Lamps'. This attractive pub consisted of a single large room with a single long bar. It boasted comfortable leather banquettes and had a nice fireplace with a wood burning stove and was warm and cosy and very busy. There were 14 beers on hand pump, three big brewery 'usual suspects' but the rest micros. The St. Austell 'Tribute' at 4.2% abv was in perfect condition. At this point in the proceedings, me and Sheila



had to leave the group because we had arranged to meet some of the family in Derby's third Wetherspoon pub, the 'Babbington Arms'. This is close to the town centre and required a taxi ride, not least because it was raining again. It has a single large room with a raised - so-called family - section at the rear, with a number of

booths that are popular with diners. The long bar holds 18 hand pumps with a few beers from some of the major brewers like Marstons and Greene King, but the majority dispense a constantly changing range of micros, including mild, stout and cider. The first beer I tried was Rok IPA at 4.2% abv, and this turned out to be a rather insipid pint. Next up was the Wairea from Tring brewery, 4.4% abv brewed with N Zhops and dark crystal malt. The result was a dark, malty and very tasty beer. I finished with a pint of 'Skull Monster' at 4.0% abv from the Coastal Brewery in Cornwall. This was a light coloured bitter with good mouth feel and hoppy finish. That brought our SPBW weekend to a close. Sheila is not a beer drinker (she prefers Chardonnay) but she enjoyed the whole experience almost as much as me. Talking to other SPBW members, they all agreed it had been a terrific weekend, so my question to the SPBW committee is, 'can we do it again next year please in a different town, say somewhere in Yorkshire'?

Report from **Keith Caves**

## PUB of the YEAR AWARD

The winner:

**The Eleanor Arms**  
**460 Old Ford Rd,**  
**Bow,**  
**London E3 5JP**

*(on the Number 8 bus route)*

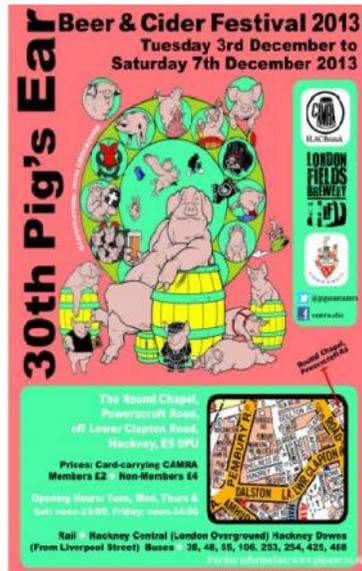


The presentation of the award to this fine Shepherd Neame community local, where you are always assured of a warm welcome from Frankie, Leslie & staff and where the cask beers are always in tip-top condition, will be on **Wednesday January 27th 2014.**

All SPBW members welcome to join us from about 7.30pm onwards — or as early as you like!

And on the Wednesday of the Pig's Ear beer festival – **December 4<sup>th</sup>** - we are having an SPBW social as our friends at the Pig's Ear are featuring wooden cask beers as their Traditional element of the festival. This festival is always an excellent event with lots of the less commonplace beers and also the old favourites. The festival will be acknowledging the 50th anniversary of the Society for the Preservation of Beers from the Wood, which advocates the use of wooden barrels as part of British beer heritage, so several wooden casks will be featured. This year's Traditional anniversary special will be 7% classic Red Ale brewed by the award-winning Cambridge Moonshine Brewery.

**The Pig's Ear Festival** can be found at **The Round Chapel, Powerscroft Road (Off Lower Clapton Rd) Hackney E5 0PU** from **December 3rd — December 7th**



## 36th Peterborough Beer Festival

Report by **John Trimmer**

This year, Deb and I visited the Peterborough Beer Festival for the third time and it was an easy decision as the previous two years we had only stayed one night. Also Deb was offered a second night at a special reduced rate in our hotel — only a stately five-minute walk from the festival, so what else could we do! Since there was a list of a potential 350 beers, including beers from at least 60 new breweries, we were looking forward to trying more and different beers. As well as the beers, the entertainment included live music and a demonstration of the cooper's art from Theakston's master cooper, Jonathan Marby, many different food outlets and a mini funfair with a bouncy castle, dodgems, plus the indoor tombolas and games such as shut-the-box. Anyway we were there for the beer, so on to the major event. We tried lots of beers over the three sessions we went to, but I won't bore you with the complete list, merely pick out some of the real highlights. As always the Oakham Bar was well organized and professionally run; The Hunter's Bar from Devon gave a very passionate presentation — you will probably already know the Pheasant Plucker beer; a new brewery to look out for is the Polestar from Padstow, Cornwall. I have to say a couple of the beers from some of the bigger East Anglian breweries were a bit of a disappointment, but generally the beers we had were brilliant. The weather was brilliant. The hotel was brilliant and the entertainment was brilliant, as was the atmosphere. We are already looking forward to next year.

