

INTRODUCING FEBRUA: A NEW WINTER BEER FESTIVAL FOR GLASGOW

A brand-new indie beer festival called **Februa** launches over the weekend of the 7th of February, celebrating Winter Ales and Proper Lagers at a small number of hand-picked venues across Glasgow.

Curated by **Simple Things Fermentations** and **Dookit Brewing**, Februa is all about giving winter beers their moment - darker, malt-forward ales alongside clean, well-made lagers - and creating something that can grow into a regular fixture in the Scottish beer calendar.



In this special supplemental interview, The Guzzler caught up with head brewers **Phil Sisson** and **Harry Weskin** to learn more about the festival and the unique beers brewed especially for the event.

Tell us about the ethos behind Februa, and what gap in Glasgow's beer calendar you were trying to fill with the festival?

(Harry): "The idea sprung from noticing all this delicious lager beer and Winter ale being released from many UK breweries around the end of January and start of February. Both our breweries took full advantage of the quieter and colder months, allowing for excellent cellaring conditions! We were also being treated to some seriously good releases from further afield. It's a fact worth celebrating, we thought. There is a natural lull around February in the Glasgow beer calendar too. So we thought why not come together, enjoy some special beers and see our Winter in style and frivolity! "

Talk us through the recipe decisions for your collaboration brew: the 6.2% Double Dark Mild - what's the malt bill, hops, yeast, and adjuncts used? Feel free to get technical!

(Harry): "Milds and 60/- ales are championed here at Dookit Brewing: I've brewed several, love doing so and find it a fascinating style. I've never dabbled commercially with brewing a strong mild. It's a special sub-category I also hold dear: ever since discovering **Sarah Hughes' Dark Ruby (6% Ruby Mild)** many years ago, I always wanted to experiment. **Boxcar's** more recent iteration (**6.3% Dark Mild**) also proves how satisfying a beer it can be: rich, velvety-smooth, with an array of warming characteristics from dried caramelised fruit to toffee, chocolate and coffee. Suffice it to say I was thrilled STF was on board with the idea.

A well considered malt bill is the firm and vital backbone to any decent mild. I find Maris Otter to be a more than suitable base malt with its natural and well rounded sweetness. A large portion of oats, both flaked and lightly toasted, enhance mouthfeel and sweetness. Cara, Brown, Special B and Midnight Wheat add a dynamic flavour profile of dried dark fruits, subtle biscuit notes and toffee. Chocolate malt, added in the last 15 minutes of the mash brings about the very little amount of roasted character needed, while making it darker and richer.

We wanted to complement the smooth, sweet and non-roasted malt bill with a locally sourced specialty: cacao husks from Bare Bones Chocolate. We were able to discern the cacao husks were from Madagascar because of the prominent cherry note. By adding them to the mash and the kettle (post boil at 75C) their chocolate aroma and cherry notes were imparted into the beer, which paired beautifully with the already chocolatey malt bill.

Although hops are of secondary importance in a mild style, the decision for which variety to play with was of upmost importance. STF have successfully used Monroe before: their bright red berry character complement the smooth and subtle Bramling Cross bittering addition, alongside the Madagascan cacao husks. This complex fruitiness pairs beautifully with the chocolate notes gained from both husk and grain!"

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“Proper Lager” is an interesting term – it reminds us of “real ale”. How do you define a proper lager in 2026?

(Phil): "There's probably a little bit of cheekiness in the term 'Proper Lager', the word 'lager' is derived from the German verb 'to store' and it implies an extended period of conditioning, which isn't part of the process for the macro lagers found on supermarket shelves. So to us, a 'proper lager' is one that has actually been lagered - left to cold condition in the tank for a decent period."

For the Bohemian Pilsner, how long was the lagering period and how did you achieve clarity and balance?

(Phil): "We brew Bohemian Pilsner every year now and brew day will be late November/early December. We'll shift it into a conditioning tank before Christmas and package it 4-6 weeks later, allowing at least another two weeks to re-ferment and condition again in the can. We don't worry too much about the clarity of the beer but that amount of time at a cold temperature with the yeast strain we use does mean the beer drops nice and bright. We do think about balance a lot - and that's down to getting the right amount of bitterness, residual sugars etc."



What can we expect from the Best Bitter?

"The **Huffman's Best Bitter**, due to be released in can, cask and keg soon, is my first commercial release of such a style. It sits astride certain modern bitters and late 19th century recipes. It's inspired by some favourite ales of mine: **Kernel's 1880 Simond's Bitter (5.9% ESB)**, **Landlord (4.3% English Pale Ale)** and various modern takes on the best bitter style - **Barney's (4.2% Best Bitter)** springs to mind prominently."

And finally, tell us a little bit about your future plans to scale up the festival/turn it in to a regular thing.

(Phil): "We're hoping that in February 2027 we'll hold an event in Glasgow where some of the best Proper Lagers and Winter Ales from all over the UK will be pouring, and yes every year from then on - why not?!"

The branch will host a pub social across the three great venues hosting Febrea beers on **Saturday 7th February**; beginning at **The Old Toll Bar** at noon; heading to the **Koelschip Yard** at 1430, and finishing at the **Clockwork** at 1630.

An email went out to members to invite you all to this amazing event. Details can also be found on our Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/GlasgowCAMRA>

Branch socials like this are what it is all about being a real ale fan, and we hope you enjoy it!

A more in-depth, full version of our interview with Phil and Harry will appear in the upcoming Spring edition of **The Guzzler**, due for publication on 1 April.

(Dookit artwork provided by Laura A. Tiliman.)

