



R. G. Hardie & Co.

*Makers of the worlds finest bagpipes*

# *The Bagpipe Buyer's Guide*

*Glasgow, Scotland*

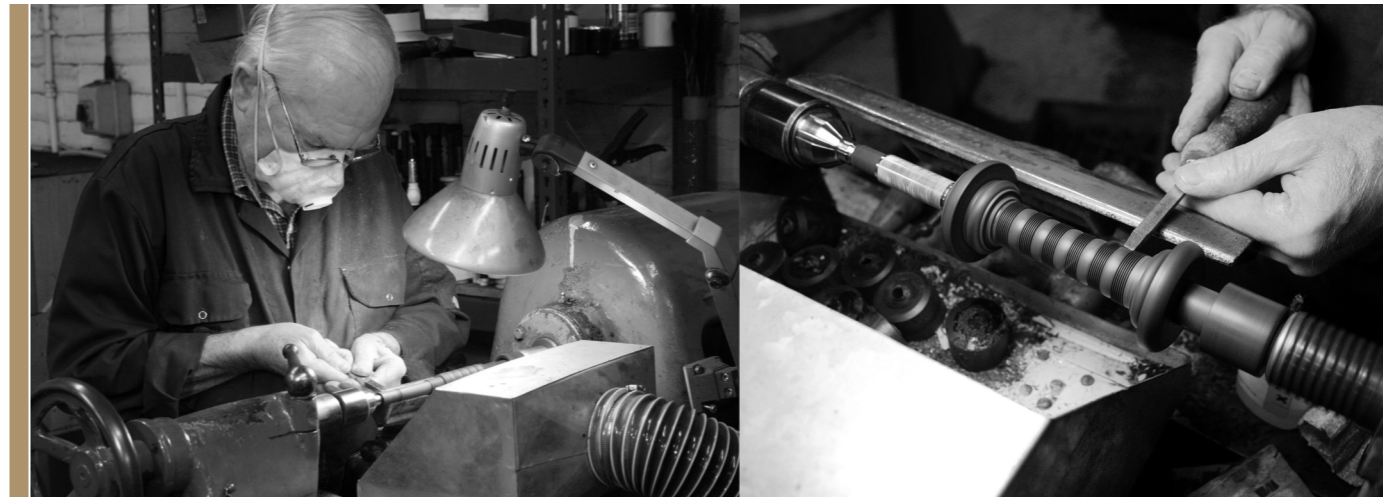
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## WELCOME TO OUR BAGPIPE BUYER'S GUIDE

Choosing the right set of bagpipes requires careful consideration in order to ensure you get the best instrument to suit your needs. This guide will help you through the process of ordering your set of R.G. Hardie & Co. bagpipes.

We pride ourselves on our strong sense of history, quality materials and experienced craftsmanship. R.G. Hardie & Co. bagpipes can be found on the shoulders of generations of the world's top champion pipers.



Before purchasing Highland Bagpipes, you should establish what stage or level you are currently at. If you are a beginner we recommend reading the full guide to begin your bagpipe experience with us. Otherwise, you can use our interactive contents menu to navigate to your topic of interest.

We hope you find this guide useful in finding your perfect set of bagpipes from R.G. Hardie & Co!

# HANDCRAFTING THE WORLD'S FINEST BAGPIPES SINCE 1950

R.G. Hardie & Co. was originally founded in a Bishopbriggs garden shed in 1950 by Robert Gavin Hardie, and his associates John Weatherston and Joe Henderson.

Hardie was a championship-winning piper and had learnt bagpipe making from the Glasgow firms of Robert Reid and later Piobmor. Hardies soon outgrew the shed and set up at Bishopbriggs Cross.

Over time their bagpipes and pipe chanters became world famous among the piping community.

R.G. Hardie & Co. acquired Peter Henderson® bagpipes in 1972 and we have continued the traditions associated with this historic name since 1868. Features of Peter Henderson® bagpipes are blended throughout the R.G. Hardie® range.

We are proud of our commitment to a traditional style of bagpipe-making, which we firmly believe produces the finest sounding and meticulously crafted bagpipes that will be treasured for years to come.

Our range of pipe chanters have been designed and modernised by company director Alastair Dunn. Today, our blackwood pipe chanters are played by many top-flight soloists. Alastair plays a set of PH05H bagpipes with matching blackwood pipe chanter and won the Argyllshire Gathering Gold Medal with this instrument.

 [Find out more...](#)

- PH06H Full Silver Bagpipes



## WHY CHOOSE A SET OF BAGPIPES FROM R.G. HARDIE & CO?

It is our mission to hand craft the world's finest bagpipes that produce rich, resonant harmonics with a beautiful blend between the chanter and drones.

We pride ourselves on the attention to detail in crafting each set. From selecting the African Blackwood to the threaded nickel mounts and the durable imitation ivory, we understand what makes a set of bagpipes look and sound magnificent.

Our manufacturing processes have been refined over 70 years and we believe there is no match to the skill of our trained time-served turners.

### 5 Year Guarantee

All Peter Henderson® and R.G. Hardie® Bagpipes carry a five-year guarantee which protects against the cost of repair of natural wood defects and workmanship that would not be considered normal wear and tear.

To register simply fill in and return the guarantee card included with each set or register online [here](#).



### YEAR OF MANUFACTURE

Every set of R.G. Hardie Bagpipes is engraved with the name and year of manufacture, whilst each set of Henderson bagpipes is engraved with a unique serial number.



### THREADED NICKEL MOUNTS

All nickel bagpipe mounts are threaded for a perfect fit.

### PLASTIC LINED BLOWPIPE AND BLOWPIPE STOCK

Our plastic lining system protects the inside of the wood from the stresses and strains caused by moisture.



### SILVER HALLMARK

All silver parts are hallmarked by the Edinburgh Assay Office with a traditional UK mark which signifies you own a genuine set of Peter Henderson Bagpipes.

# QUALITY GUARANTEE

As Director of R.G. Hardie & Co., Alastair Dunn leads the way on all aspects of bagpipes and chanter design, production and testing. Guiding him is his experience as both a double Gold Medalist solo piper and as former Pipe Sergeant of the 12-time World Champions Field Marshal Montgomery Pipe Band.



All R.G. Hardie & Co products must meet Alastair's high standards before they leave our shop. Only the best products are offered to our customers.

- RGHFD03  
Fire Department Bagpipes



# THE PRACTICE CHANTER

A beginner piper will first learn finger positioning, embellishments and simple tunes on a practice chanter before they progress to bagpipes.

Practice chanters come in different sizes, starting with the junior which is suitable for children up to the age of 10 years old. The choice of chanter size also depends on the size of your fingers; therefore, children may progress to a standard or long chanter before 10 years old.

Our standard and long chanters will suit all ages and abilities. The difference between the lengths is the long chanter holes are spaced to match those of a pipe chanter whereas a standard chanter has a slightly smaller spread.

Like bagpipes, the cost of a practice chanter is determined by the materials and accoutrements it is made from. R.G. Hardie plastic practice chanters feature Twist-Trap tops which prevent moisture build-up on the reed, allowing for longer practice sessions. Our blackwood practice chanters include an innovative plastic lining system to protect the wood from moisture.

We strongly recommend learning using a reputable tutor book with an experienced instructor. There are many accomplished bagpipe tutors spread throughout the world and with modern technology it is easier than ever to progress onto bagpipes through distance learning.

 [Find out more...](#)



PRC01P Twist-Trap  
Junior



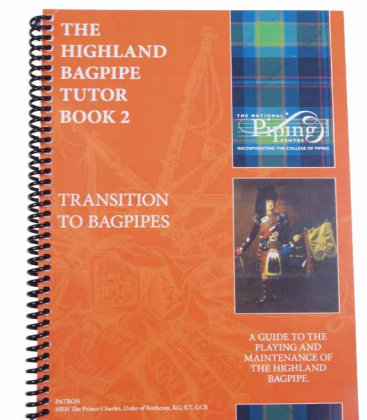
PRC02P Twist-Trap  
Standard



PRC03P Twist-Trap  
Long



Twist-Trap  
Moisture Control



- Highland Bagpipe Tutor Books

# TWIST-TRAP PRACTICE PIPES

Twist-Trap Practice Pipes are a set of mouth blown smallpipes incorporating a long practice chanter and two drones. They produce a softer more mellow tone in comparison to the Highland Bagpipes and pitch in the key of A (440Hz), a general tuning standard for many musical instruments. They are fun to play on their own or in a group setting along with other instruments.

The Highland Bagpipes are a majestic instrument synonymous with Scotland although played the world over by solo pipers, military and civilian pipe bands. They are a physically demanding instrument requiring practice to keep the pipe bag full and maintain a constant sound. As a result, many beginners are put off making this transition from practice chanter to Highland Bagpipes.

Twist-Trap Practice Pipes bridge this gap allowing beginners to start playing on a mouth blown instrument that closely resembles the Highland Bagpipes.

Twist-Trap Practice Pipes are not just for beginners however, Pipers of all abilities can appreciate the sound, making practice time that much more enjoyable.

We have produced a series of videos for you to enjoy on our YouTube channel and the accompanying sheet music available to download on our website.

 [Find out more...](#)



# HOW DO BAGPIPES WORK?

Bagpipes can be a difficult instrument to play, but by choosing the right bagpipes and accessories you will enjoy playing effortlessly.

Bagpipes work by blowing air through a blowpipe into the pipe bag which pushes air through the reeds. The reeds vibrate, projecting a sound through the drones and pipe chanter.

When you buy your first set, it is important to choose the right options so your posture allows playing without discomfort.

Bagpipes are made from seasoned African Blackwood or black Acetal. African Blackwood is a hardwood selected for its machinability and instrument tonal qualities. Acetal, which is commonly used to make practice chanters, is also used to make durable synthetic bagpipes. While the tonal qualities of Acetal bagpipes are not as harmonious when compared to African Blackwood, they produce a rich mellow tone. They are ideal for playing in hot, dry or cold climates.

There are three drones in a set, including one bass and two tenor drones. Each drone comprises a series of different diameter bores, finishing off with a bell at the top of the drone to project a magnificent sound to compliment the chanter.

The geometry and concentricity of the bores determines the quality and vibrancy of our drone sound. Our range of fine quality bagpipes are based on a 1924 vintage set of Peter Henderson® bagpipes, with the bass and tenor bottom joints having R.G. Hardie® bores. Our bagpipes produce a rich, resonant sound accommodating a wide range of reeds that can be fine tuned with ease.





# HOW DO BAGPIPES WORK?

## Acetal Bagpipes

Acetal bagpipes are cost effective, easy to maintain and designed to last the test of time. They have the same internal bore specification as our blackwood bagpipes. Acetal is among the strongest and stiffest of all thermoplastics and we have selected this material due to its similar physical properties to blackwood, with the advantage of low moisture sensitivity.



[Find out more...](#)

## The Heritage Set

In 2018, the company celebrated 150 years of Peter Henderson bagpipe making with the creation of the Heritage bagpipes set. These sets pay tribute to the Henderson tradition and features laser-etched nickel or hand engraved silver with Boxwood projection mounts. The Heritage set is an instrument of the highest quality to play and pass onto the next generation.



[Find out more...](#)

# THE BLOWPIPE

Selecting the right blowpipe is important in ensuring you are comfortable while playing the instrument. Here is what we recommend based on height:

- 5'0" – 5'7" : small pipe bag and 8 inch blowpipe.
- 5'8" – 5'11" : medium pipe bag and 9 or 10 inch blowpipe.
- 6'0" and above : large pipe bag and 11 or 12 inch blowpipe.



Our bagpipes come with a plastic lined blackwood blowpipe and blowpipe stock as standard. This protects the wood from the stresses and strains caused by moisture.

We also offer a wide range of plastic blowpipes, that allow the piper to maximise the airflow into the bag. The BlowStick range includes the MaxiStick, AdjustiStick and FlexiStick which will help ensure you find your perfect playing position.



- Plastic lined blowpipe and blowpipe stock.

R.C. Hardie & Co. BlowSticks are the ultimate range of plastic blowpipes, designed to ensure pipers achieve the optimum positioning of their blowpipe.

Available in 3 models, covering a range of sizes from 8 to 12 inches. They incorporate an integral valve assembly to prevent damage to the valve and are available with either a black or imitation ivory projecting mount.



## MaxiStick

A large bore blowpipe, available in 1 inch increments, from 8 to 12 inches.

## AdjustiStick

An adjustable blowpipe which extends to the preferred length using a telescopic tube.

## FlexiStick

Fully adjustable, incorporating a swivel joint and telescopic tube to attain the perfect playing position.

 [Find out more...](#)

# THE PIPE CHANTER

A chanter is made from either blackwood or delrin, a special polymer chosen for its durability and tonal qualities. It has eight finger holes and two sound holes that produce nine notes. The internal profile consists of a reed seat and throat, moving to a conical bore with a bell at the bottom to project the sound.

Despite only having ten holes to adjust, the design of a chanter is not a simple task. The specialists at R.G. Hardie & Co. have spent years producing thousands of chanters to perfect the design of what is now considered to be a first class instrument.

When selecting a chanter, it is important to consider both versions and find out what suits your taste. A blackwood chanter produces a rich, mellow tone while the delrin chanter will project a robust tone.

The plastic chanter has gained a reputation for projection, stability and pitch which makes it the first chanter of choice for many pipe bands. Our chanters are available to play in modern pitch or B flat.

We offer chanters to match your bagpipes, either R.G. Hardie or Peter Henderson and in plastic or blackwood. In addition, the R.G. Hardie chanter is available with small holes (Infinity) for comfortable playing or larger holes (Omega) for projection.



Our chanters are played by pipers winning the highest accolades in solo piping including:

- Overall Glenfiddich Champion
- Argyllshire Gathering Gold Medal
- Argyllshire Gathering Senior Piobaireachd
- Argyllshire Gathering Former Winners March, Strathspey and Reel
- Argyllshire Gathering A Strathspey & Reel
- Northern Meeting Silver Star
- Bratach Gorm, London
- Northern Meeting Clasp
- North Meeting Gold Medal
- Northern Meeting A March, Strathspey and Reel
- Silver Chanter

 [Find out more...](#)

# THE REEDS

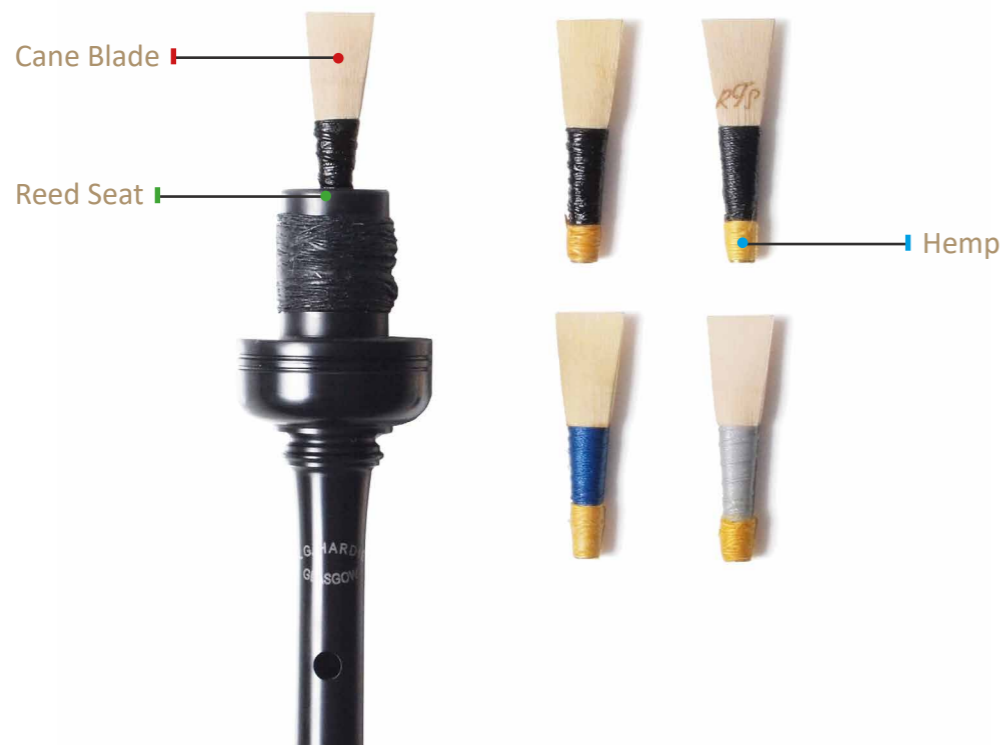
## Chanter Reeds

Chanter reeds are selected to suit the piper's blowing pressure. We have chosen reeds from makers that compliment our range of chanters and which are used for testing and quality control.

Pipe Bands prefer a more robust sound and select reeds that are stronger to blow and feel more resistant. A solo piper prefers a more comfortable reed with a mellower tone that will enhance the musical enjoyment of the performance.

The reed can be eased by either adding an elastic band to the bottom part of the blade, squeezing the blades between thumb and index finger or by shaving the centre part of the cane blade.

The pitch is sharpened by removing hemp and sinking the reed into the chanter. To flatten the pitch, add hemp to the reed and raise the reed in the seat. Black tape is used to fine tune individual notes on the chanter.



## Drone Reeds

Today, synthetic drone reeds are available that produce an excellent drone sound on a consistent and reliable basis. Cane is still used by the traditionalists aspiring to achieve the perfect tone, but the majority will select synthetic reeds for their reliability. We have carefully selected a range of reeds that compliment our bagpipes and we are happy to provide advice on what will work best in your chosen set up.



The strength of the reed is controlled by the bridle that holds the vibrating blade in place. An inverted blade bass reed will help with striking the drones in and prevent double toning. The pitch of the reed can be altered by using the tuning screw, whilst drone extenders are used to adjust the pitch of the reeds to B Flat.



# PIPE BAGS & MOISTURE CONTROL

Pipe Bags are available in leather or synthetic materials. For a premium quality sound, sheepskin is the preferred choice of leather pipe bag by many top pipe bands and solo players. A blowpipe split stock will assist with moisture control and the bag should be treated regularly using Airtight seasoning to seal the leather.



Today, many pipers play a synthetic bag as it allows greater control over moisture and stability of the drone sound.

There are two types of bags in this category: a synthetic fabric bag or a hide hybrid bag. A synthetic fabric bag is made from a lightweight, waterproof breathable material. A hybrid bag consists of a synthetic fabric interior and bonded hide exterior. The hide exterior adds weight to the bag and therefore feels more like a traditional leather bag.

A hybrid bag also provides a better counterbalance with the drones on the shoulder. Synthetic bags come with the option of a zip, which we highly recommend, as it allows access to insert a moisture control system and to allow for air drying the bag between playing.

Synthetic bags are supplied with a basic water trap that fits into the blowpipe stock and which suits pipers playing infrequently. Depending on how regularly you play your bagpipes, you might want to consider a more advanced moisture control system.

- Canmore Hybrid Pipe Bag



If you find that moisture is disrupting the performance of your bagpipes, you should consider a moisture control system that uses silica gels or drying granules.



- Bannatyne Dri-Flo System

Typically, these systems fit into the bottom of the drone stocks with an option to connect to the chanter stock. We advise initially trying the system without connecting to the chanter stock to assess the performance, as adding moisture control to the chanter may affect the quality of sound.

# THE PIPER COVER

Piper bag covers and cords are available in a range of colours to coordinate with your uniform and add the final touches to your set.

Using our tailoring expertise, we have refined the shape of our covers to neatly fit the various pipe bag sizes, providing a smarter appearance and preventing the bag from slipping. All our covers come with a YKK zip, Velcro closure and a non-slip patch.



The pipe cords add colour to the drones whilst keeping them in place and secure on your shoulder.

Band and sponsor logos can be embroidered onto the covers.



• WR Contour Cover

Our weather-resistant range offers further protection against wet weather with two material options available: WR Cord and WR Contour.

Cord is a traditional cloth that has been used for many years and is professionally treated to repel water. The WR Contour Piper Cover is constructed using a weather-resistant, breathable bonded fabric with a fleece lining that repels water and stretches.

• Weather Resistant Cord Cover



[Find out more...](#)

# THE PIPE CASE

Bagpipes should be well protected when being stored and transported. We offer a range of Piper Cases, developed over many years, to provide protection for your instrument.

**The Piper Deluxe** is our ultimate backpack case with 20mm foam padded walls, fashionable gold piping and plenty of features for storing your bagpipes and accessories.



**The Piper Case** is a padded lightweight case, with adjustable shoulder and backpack straps.

It has internal mesh pockets for storing accessories as well as velcro straps to hold your bagpipes in position during transit.



**The Piper Flight Case** is a lightweight trolley and backpack case designed to take your bagpipes as hand luggage on airlines.

It provides excellent protection with a reinforced padded lightweight shell as well as a specially designed pocket for the drone tops.



**The Deluxe Practice Chanter Case** is the perfect accessory for storing your practice chanter along with an A4 music book.

A build up of moisture in a practice chanter inhibits its performance, therefore we recommend the chanter is stored with the parts separated. The case includes fittings to securely hold the chanter parts in place, as well as zipped pockets for accessories.



[!\[\]\(274fd520e03b61c1b9ffc861754cacdc\_img.jpg\) Find out more...](#)

# MAINTAINING YOUR BAGPIPES

Premium quality heirloom bagpipes are made from African Blackwood, a natural material that will change depending on the conditions in which they are played and stored.

When played, the instrument will fill with moisture from your breath which will absorb into the wood. While in storage the wood will dry and adjust to the natural climate. Combining this with the different climates around the world and the places pipers visit, bagpipes will be in a constant state of fluctuation.

Proper maintenance of your instrument will ensure you avoid any problems with the condition of your pipes and you will continue to enjoy many years of piping pleasure.

Based on our vast experience we recommend regularly checking the hemped joints, especially after long periods of play. Moisture will absorb into the hemp eventually causing the wood to split if it is too tight and not maintained appropriately. This is particularly important for the blowpipe and stocks where most moisture passes.

## Maintenance check list:

- Remove excess moisture from your drones using our deluxe or cotton brushes.
- Leave the pipes disassembled to dry for 1 hour after every period of play.
- Check the bag is airtight by removing the drones and chanter, corking the stocks and blowing up the bag.
- Regularly clean and sanitise your mouthpiece.
- Use Piper Bagpipe Wood Oil once a year. For particularly dry climates, twice yearly may be required.



Suitable hearing protection such as Pipe Band Plugs should be worn when playing bagpipes or performing in a Pipe Band.



[Find out more...](#)



# MAINTENANCE KITS

Based on years of experience crafting and refurbishing bagpipes, we provide three kits for maintaining bagpipes for optimum performance. The items included are available to purchase individually, however the kit provides better value for money and are packed in a neat zipped case.

**Basic Maintenance Kit** – The absolute essential items necessary to look after your instrument. This kit includes brushes to clean and dry the wood, and hemp to tighten loose joints. Hemped joints should be regularly checked so they are not too loose or tight, but also allow for fine tuning.



**Deluxe Maintenance Kit** – Along with the items included in the basic kit, the deluxe kit also includes stock corks for checking the bag is airtight, tape for fine tuning the pipe chanter and Bagpipe Wood Oil for nourishing and protecting the instrument.

**Polishing Kit** – After extensive research and testing, we selected compounds to polish and protect your instrument. Included in the kit is Renaissance Wax, which is used to conserve museum exhibits and brings the wood back to life whilst also providing protection. Bagpipe Metal Polish gives a lustrous shine and protects all types of metals against atmospheric corrosion. Two types of cloths are provided to apply the compounds and polish your bagpipes.



# PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT

Through partnerships with world class pipe bands and soloists, we continually assess our products and make regular updates to designs and manufacturing processes to improve performance and durability.

We have a long-standing relationship with multiple world champions Field Marshal Montgomery Pipe Band who have been invaluable in the development and fine tuning of our bagpipes. The band are known for their superb drone sound and we are delighted that our bagpipes are played by pipers in the band.

Pipe Major Richard Parkes MBE said, "FMM would not be able to do what we do without the sustained support of R. G. Hardie & Co. Since 2006, their sponsorship has helped enable the band to win 12 World Pipe Band Championships.

Like most pipe bands, we are a volunteer-based organisation. Thanks to R.G. Hardie & Co, we are able to minimize the worry about how the band will dress and equip itself; more time and effort is therefore made available to developing and refining the music and our performances.'

'Half of FMM's pipers play bagpipes by R. G. Hardie & Co., and I have been delighted with the contribution these pipes have made to the band's overall drone sound over the years.'



FIELD MARSHAL  
MONTGOMERY  
PIPE BAND



R. G. Hardie & Co.  
*Makers of the world's finest bagpipes*



• FMMPB 2011 Grand Slam Winners  
Pipe Sergeant Alastair Dunn - pictured far right



• Pipe Major Richard Parkes MBE playing with Alastair at Winter Storm

# R.G. HARDIE & CO. CHAMPIONS



## Callum Beaumont

Callum is one of the world's finest pipers and is highly sought after as a teacher, recitalist and adjudicator. He has won many prestigious solo competitions as well as world pipe band championships.

Callum's expertise was crucial in developing the Infinity pipe chanter which he plays today along with a set of PH2HT Heritage bagpipes.

Callum's bagpipe set up includes:

- PH2HT Heritage Silver Peter Henderson Bagpipes
- Blackwood Infinity Pipe Chanter
- Canmore Hybrid Zip Pipe Bag
- Dri-Flo Moisture Control System
- Ezeedrone Absorption Drone Reeds

Callum's set up tip:

*"First impressions are key. Polish metalwork, cut off loose hemp and regularly replace chanter tape. The listener will sit up and take notice!"*

 [Find out more...](#)

- Callum with the prestigious Glenfiddich March, Strathspey & Reel trophy.

# R.G. HARDIE & CO. CHAMPIONS



- Connor with the prestigious Glenfiddich March, Strathspey & Reel trophy.

## Connor Sinclair

Connor is a gold medallist, multi-instrumentalist and former member of Field Marshal Montgomery Pipe Band. He is part of the dynamic Scottish folk four-piece Gness who were nominated as Up and Coming Artist of the Year at the MG Alba Scots Trad Music Awards.

As well as providing expertise and advice on our solo and pipe band products, Connor has provided invaluable insight into improving the sound of our Infinity B flat pipe chanter for integrating with other instruments.

### Connor's bagpipe set up includes:

- PH2HT Heritage Silver Peter Henderson Bagpipes
- Peter Henderson Blackwood Pipe Chanter
- Sheepskin Pipe Bag with Blowpipe Split Stock
- Ezedrone Absorption Drone Reeds

### Connor's set up tip:

“When playing a sheepskin bag, make sure it is seasoned properly, airtight and stocks thoroughly cleaned.”

 [Find out more...](#)

# CHOOSING A DEALER

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Selecting a set of bagpipes requires much thought and consideration of the options offered by R.G. Hardie & Co.

We have a network of reputable dealers around the world to guide you through the process.

Our dealers are recognised for their knowledge, expertise and for providing a high standard of service.

We select our dealers with the same care and attention that we put into making our bagpipes.

reelpipes.com 

 [Click here to visit reelpipes.com](http://reelpipes.com)



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