# GIBSON MOISTURE TRAP REVIEW

By P/M Brett Tidswell and Michael Gilmour

*INTRODUCTION*

In the past pipers would play with a hide bag of some sort and cane reeds. The bags required dressing with some sort of homemade or commercial seasoning and moisture problems always affected the instrument to some degree. The pipers with the better maintenance regime and the knowledge of reeds shone out and bad drone sounds, stopping drones and wet chanters were commonplace among the lower echelon of pipers.

In the 1980s we saw the introduction of synthetic drone reeds and then synthetic bags. Many inexperienced pipers were then able to get a reasonable drone sound and an instrument that would play for a longer time. The synthetic bags do not absorb moisture like the old hide bags and it became essential to insert some form of moisture control system (MCS). Often the moisture control systems where too efficient and it was difficult to run cane reeds and chanters were often high pitched and dry. There have been many variations and adaptations to counter these problems over the years.

Experienced pipers have often noted a minor (which is often to them a major) loss of tonal depth from the drones whenever any sort of hose, or obstruction is placed on or from the drone stocks.

*THE GIBSON MOISTURE TRAP*

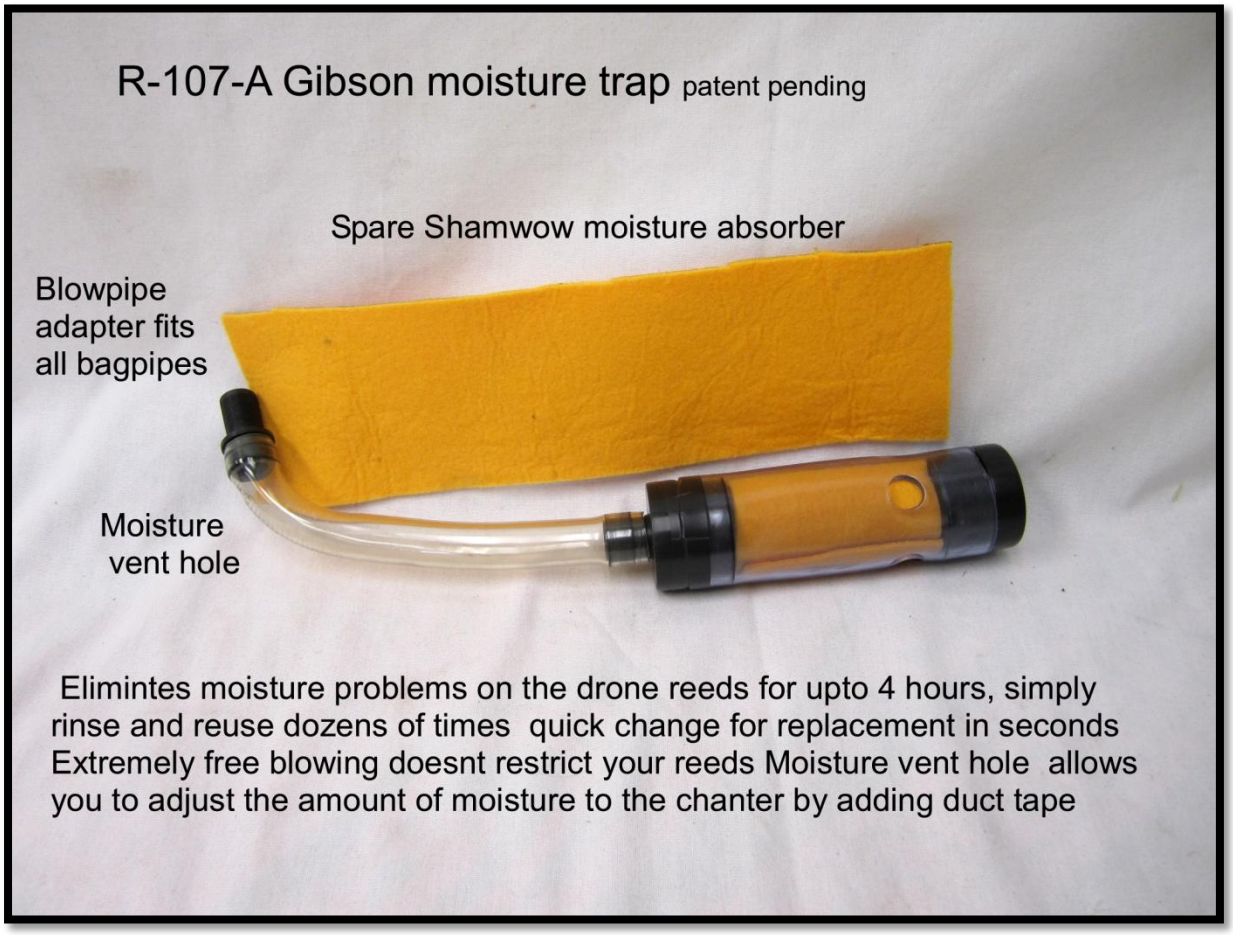
For many years now Gibson have been producing a “double” blow stock to enable a hose water trap to be inserted and easily removed from hide bags. This is now available with a new MCS that has a special cloth that allows large quantities of moisture to be absorbed. The system runs straight off your blow stock with no restriction to the drones or chanter allowing the drones to play to their full tonal value.

Reed maker Michael Gilmour ( http://www.gilmour-reeds.com/ ) tested the water trap in a hide Gannaway zipper bag and I tested in a Ross bag, Moose bag and Bannatynes hide bag. Obviously due to the size of the canister containing the cloth a zipper bag is essential, but I believe Gibson have a smaller system that fits into a normal hose and works with the “double” stock in a normal hide or synthetic bag with no zip.

Michael found the trap very effective, reporting a 3.5 hour minimum playing window before he noticed a restriction in blowing as the canister was becoming water logged. He then noticed moisture starting to bead on his drone reeds shortly after. He also noticed a little too much moisture on his chanter reed. There is a small hole in the hose, just after the stock that allows moisture to the chanter reed and Michael believed that in his case this was not necessary and taped it closed. Obviously the seasoned Gannaway bag absorbs a reasonable amount of moisture assisting the MCS in its effectiveness after it gets wet.

I tried the system in three bags that do not require seasoning. These I have found do not work effectively without a decent Moisture Control System installed.

I tested the MCS on both dry and very wet days. I found a similar playing time to Michael on the wet days although noticed that as soon as moisture built up in the system it almost immediately affected the drones in these types of bags. It is certainly a longer playing time than I would get from a hide bag and hose. It is not as long as I would get from the Ross canister, but there is certainly an enhancement in the tone from the drones. Depth of tone is essential in any quality bagpipe sound and any reduction in depth is undesirable.




*The Gibson moisture trap*

Like Michael, I also found that the hole to let moisture to the chanter was not required and soon taped it over.

When the system became fully water logged, it was simply a matter of changing the cloth in the canister and then the full playing time of the system was again available. Obviously the length of time this takes to get water logged will be determined by how wet a blower the piper using the system is. This will vary significantly from piper to piper. The amount of time before moisture affects the performance of the instrument will also be affected by how absorbent the actual bag is.

I did notice a restriction in airflow when blowing into the MCS, especially when the “chanter hole” was taped closed. This was not as noticeable when the pipes were up being played. Michael was surprised when I discussed this with him as he had not noticed the restriction until, the system was wet.

This is a well made, quality product that will give a greatly increased playing time and greater stability to any piper not using a MCS and will open the way for pipers to increase their tonal depth if they are having these concerns using any of the systems that restricts airflow to the drones.

The system is available from Jerry Gibson at http://www.gibsonpipes.com/

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