

Reed Selection, Manipulation
Pipe Set-Up
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Chanter Reed Selection

- My Method
 - Select reed from high A
 - Hardest note to get right
 - Check for balance
 - Everything else can be balanced from high A (within reason)
 - Check for weight
 - Know your players blowing strength
 - Check for sound quality (timbre)
 - If not good initially, not likely to improve
 - Give each reed a good try
 - Try damping slightly and check effect
- Discussion

Chanter Reed Manipulation

- Method of manipulation
 - Weight
 - Squeezing
 - Eases reed, but short lived as reed soon returns to normal. Good if reed is only slightly hard
 - Shaving
 - Eases reed, flattens off top hand, reduces tonal quality
 - Use of dental elastic
 - Eases reed, sharpens pitch, can be altered to suit individuals, can be altered during the life of the reed
 - Can tend to make the reed “chokey”
 - “Poking” using tool to open up staple
 - Removing a “slither” from the end of the reed using :-
 - Very sharp knife/chisel
 - Sandpaper
 - Fingernail
 - » Makes reed harder
 - » Sharpens top hand
 - » Can tend to make reed “chokey”
 - » Reduces crow on high A
 - Pitch
 - Lifting and sinking
 - Use of dental elastic to change pitch

Chanter Carving

- Only to be considered if a number of reeds display the same issue
- Carving out low A sharpens drones and makes the rest of the notes flatter
 - Will probably mean more notes on bottom hand will also need to be carved
 - Be very careful with the size of the holes
 - Try and “under-cut” holes as much as possible

Note: As a P/M I have always had to carve every set of chanters I have worked with

Drone Reed Selection

- Select drone reed type
 - Synthetic
 - Check for volume, quality, efficiency
 - Cane
 - Check for good quality cane, properly sealed
 - Should be free sounding
 - Good volume with minimum effort
 - Balance to weight of chanter reed
 - Ensure balance of tenors is equal
 - Tune in approx same area with similar volume
 - Ensure all drones strike in repeatedly
 - If you get the chance try before you buy

Drone Reed Manipulation

- Cane
 - Use of paperclip (plastic coated if possible)
 - Small movement makes a big difference
 - Allow a small amount of moisture into reed
 - Try again
 - Alternative bridle types
 - Rubber ring
 - Elastic band
 - Shaving tongue
 - Shortening reed to sharpen or tune higher
 - Careful adjustment to optimise tone/strike in/quality
- A good idea to cork the chanter stock and play the drones on their own for a while
 - Check for weight, quality and pitch as a unit

Pipe Set-up

- Ensure you are comfortable with the weight or strength of your bagpipe
 - Everyone blows differently
 - Important for P/M to know the blowing capability of each player
- Have all reeds blown in to a stable condition
 - Important for P/M to know his preferred pitch
 - Should suit the capabilities of the relevant chanter/drone combination
 - Balance chanter against drones at selected pitch
 - Discuss my method
- Discussion