WHAT WE CLAIM IS:

1. A rigid or semi-rigid single use/disposable container having
   a. a base and side walls defining a cavity for containing an item during steam sterilisation and isolating it from its surroundings after sterilisation;
   b. a rim extending outwardly from the walls; and
   c. a sealable conduit that is elongate in cross section and configured and arranged to allow, in use, steam sterilant to be introduced into the container and steam sterilant and condensate to be removed from the container via the conduit;

   wherein the sealable conduit includes two opposing side walls that extend outwardly from the body of the container.

2. A container as claimed in claim 1 wherein the elongate conduit is provided at near or in the base to facilitate draining of the container.

3. A container as claimed in claim 1 or claim 2 wherein the aspect ratio of the cross-section of the elongate conduit is greater than 2:1.

4. A container as claimed in any one of the preceding claims wherein the two opposing side walls are greater than 50mm in length and may be sealed together to seal the elongate conduit.

5. A container as claimed in claim 4 wherein the spacing between the side walls of the elongate conduit is between 5mm and 25mm.

6. A container as claimed in claim 4 or claim 5 wherein the elongate conduit side walls extend outwardly from the body of the container more than 5mm.

7. A container as claimed in any one of the preceding claims wherein the elongate conduit extends along more than half the length of a side wall of the container.

8. A container as claimed in any one of the preceding claims formed of a material capable of withstanding internal steam sterilisation process temperatures of at least 115 degrees Celsius for at least 40 minutes.

9. A container as claimed in any one of the preceding claims formed of a material selected from polypropylene (PP), linear low-density polyethylene LDPE), high density polyethylene (HDPE), Biax Nylon (BOPA) PET-AIOx/PP (Aluminium Oxide coated PET such as Barrialox) or EVOH.

10. A container as claimed in any one of the preceding claims including a cover fused to the rim of the container formed of a thermoformable material or a non-stretch plastics material.

11. A method of steam sterilisation comprising:
    a. providing a rigid or semi-rigid container having an opening for receiving an item to be sterilised and a sealable conduit that is elongate in cross section and located at or near the base of the container, wherein the sealable conduit includes two opposing side walls that extend outwardly from the body of the container;
    b. placing an item to be sterilised within the cavity;
    c. applying a cover over the opening;
    d. removing fluid from the container;
    e. introducing steam sterilant into the container through the elongate conduit and around the container to provide the required sterilisation;
    f. extracting fluid in the container via the elongate conduit; and
    g. sealing the elongate conduit.

12. A method as claimed in claim 11 wherein the elongate conduit is sealed by heat sealing walls of the elongate conduit together or by adhesive bonding of the walls of the elongate conduit together.

13. A method as claimed in claim 11 or claim 12 wherein the cover is secured to the container by heat sealing, ultrasonic welding, microwave welding or laser welding.

14. A method as claimed in any one of claims 11 to 13 wherein steam sterilant of a temperature of at least 115° C is supplied to the interior of the container for at least 40 minutes.