

# Put it to the test

**Mark Baker** tests the latest Doug Thompson products

**D**oug Thompson of Thompson Lathe Tools is a very shrewd man. He has looked at the current turning tool market in the USA and developed a range of tools that will suit the turner's requirements for the standard array of tools – bowl gouges, spindle gouges, scrapers and skewers. But, he has taken a steel that was hailed as space age technology a little while back and used it throughout his product range.

The advent of powder metallurgy tools has provided the turner with a tool that has a longer edge life than the M2 HSS tools. But, and here's the rub, they were considerably more expensive than the conventional M2 turning tools so were outside the price range that many people can afford for what is often a hobby. Well, I think this is about to change. These are a fraction of the cost I expected to see for this grade of steel and some are directly comparable in price for top quality M2 HSS tools and so are no longer only for professionals.

I met Doug Thompson on a recent trip to the USA and had a look at these three tools. We had a long conversation and I was able to try the tools out to see what I thought.

I tried bowl gouges with a V-form flute profile. He sells U-flute forms as well so you can choose according to your own preference, but he also makes spindle and detail gouges, scrapers and skewers. He is developing the product range further so you will have to keep an eye out for the latest additions to the range.

The first thing I noticed was that these were sold as blades only. The reason was that he thought it prudent for people to decide if they wish to use a quick-change handle such as those from Trent



Mark Baker puts the bowl gouges to the test

Bosch, Hamlet or other such manufacturer, or make their own from wood. This results in a cost saving to the purchaser.

The blades have a gun-metal finish and are pre-sharpened with a usable grind, but like most gouges, sharpen it first to how you want it. Tools are supplied in a nice plastic tube for carrying.

I fitted a  $\frac{3}{16}$ in blade to a handle and gave it a try. I also tried the  $\frac{1}{2}$ in and  $\frac{3}{8}$ in versions.

It is worth noting that the American sizing system for gouges is different to the European method. They measure the bar diameter as that is the size of gouge we measure from the inside of one flute edge to the outer edge of the bar so a  $\frac{3}{16}$ in USA gouge is the equivalent of a  $\frac{1}{2}$ in European one. This sizing difference only occurs on gouges.

I tested the tools on a variety of timber and sharpened them differently so I could use them on

