

# 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

both bowl and spindle work.

The tools, as I expected, performed flawlessly. They sharpened well and held an edge for a very long time – even when subjected to some quite unconventional cuts. To do a mechanical wear test on blade is expensive and protracted so my comments on edge life are purely

based on my knowledge of the various tools and comparing directly to a M2 HSS one at the same time with the same cuts. I found the edge lasts much longer than that of M2 HSS. I also found that they can be honed to an even finer edge – equalling a finer cut – with a mechanical or manual strop. Not all grades of steel respond well to

honing, so this was nice to see.

I have used the tools for over seven weeks now and am very happy with the results.

As to the cost of the tools, some of them are directly comparable to that of M2 HSS so provide an interesting choice for turners. If the cost is comparable, then there is no economic reason that these tools cannot now be on the hit list for hobbyist and professional turners alike – excellent products at affordable prices... well worth looking at.

Remember, shipping from the USA into the UK and Europe will incur shipping and import duties. Doug is looking for a UK and European distributor, but as yet there is not one.

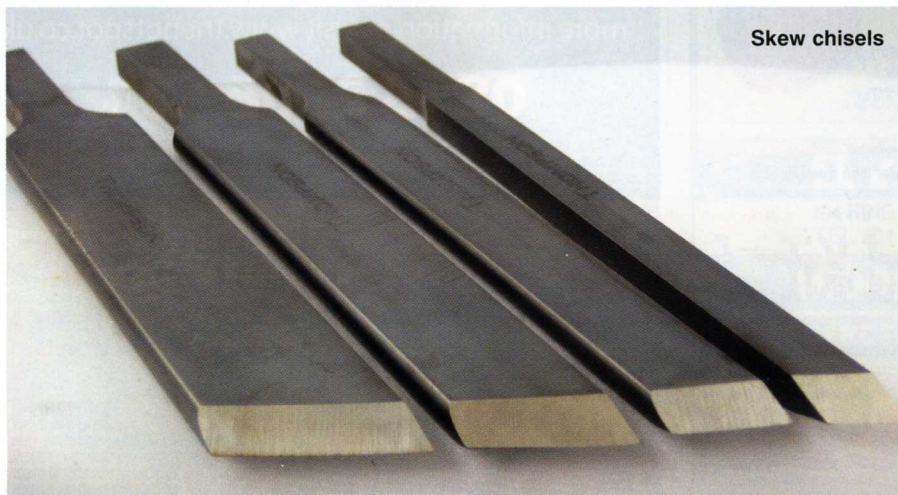
#### Pricing

$\frac{3}{8}$ in- $\frac{5}{8}$ in bowl gouges \$40-\$70  
(both V and U flute)

Shallow detail gouges  $\frac{3}{8}$ in- $\frac{1}{2}$ in  
\$35 and \$45

Skew chisels  $\frac{1}{2}$ - $1\frac{1}{4}$ in \$60-90

Scrapers  $\frac{1}{2}$ - $1\frac{1}{4}$ in \$50-\$80



#### Doug Thompson says:

"The tools are made from the best steel on the market, CPM 10V(r), a powder metal manufactured by Crucible Materials Corporation with a 9.75% vanadium content to hold an edge longer. It has a proven history in woodturning.

The steel is hardened to 60-62 Rockwell, triple tempered with a cryogenic treatment between the first and second temper. The cryogenic treatment at this stage transforms the bulk of the retained austenite to martensite and forms very fine 'eta' carbides, much finer than tempering alone. This increases the durability and toughness of the steel. Nothing else can be done to this steel!

#### Information

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