

# THE HUNTER TOOL SYSTEM

by Terry Scott



At Christmas I sent Mike Stafford, who specialises in making exquisite boxes, a Soren Berger Hollowing Tool to try out. Check out the Teknatool projects page to see some of his work: <http://www.teknatool.com/projects/MikeBOX/Boxfrommike.htm>. Unknown to me Mike had been working with Mike Hunter to develop his carbide tipped Hunter Tools. Back came an e-mail to ask if I'd like to give those tools a work out. Who am I, a major toolaholic, to say no.

A set arrived in the mail each in a nice tube with red ends. First impression 10 points. What Mike Hunter has done is to develop the original cup tool from Teknatool to a new level by making the cutter with carbide. A lot of you (I was going to say older) experienced turners with a few years behind you will remember that cup tool and still probably use one on end grain turning things like egg cups and goblets. Newer turners can still purchase one from the Woodcut range of tools.

Mike Hunter reckons they can be dropped on the floor or cut through the toughest material you want to throw at it, but if you let the tips touch each other they will chip. Another ten points, even I was impressed by this statement

Mike said they do work extremely well for rough hollowing, but can be slow. I have since corrected Mike on this, my first thing I turned was a mallee burl. Roughing out was no problem rubbing the bevel on the cutter allows you to move timber in a hurry. My method of doing this is to have the tool rest above centre and have the handle 10 degrees tilted. Mike also states that the nipple is hard to get rid of. Not so. Bring the cutter on the right of centre push, lift and slide at the same time. With a bit of practice no hole needs to be pre-drilled. But it is still a handy thing to do as one can drill to the finished depth saving those embarrassing moments of going through the bottom.

It is important and essential that the speed be turned up. If all is secure, I often run at 3000rpm or more. Yes another 10 points, this is my kind of turning. A word of warning, don't do this unless you have a lathe and a chuck up to the task. The same stresses are applied as in bowl saving.

After I turned four large burls there was still no need to rotate the cutter as I still cut my thumb when I rubbed it on the cutting edge to see if his recommendation was correct. Even I couldn't bring myself to drop the tool on the concrete floor. (But I guess in time it will test itself.)

The real benefit is no grinding of the tool; no lapping of the tool. Each new insert comes sharpened and ready to use. Tool life is 25 - 30 times, even 100 times, your expectations with high quality HSS. New tool bits, torque screws, and torque wrenches are reasonable and readily available. They have strong metal shanks which minimise vibration and chatter.

The full range of the Hunter Tools can be seen at <http://www.hunterwoodturningtool.com/>. The cutters are in three sizes: 3/16, 3/8, and 1/2 inch. The 3/16 are supplied with short shafts specially designed to replace the tips in captured hollowing systems such as the Jamieson or Trent Bosch Systems. The 3/8 and 1/2 inch can have straight or two shapes of swan-neck shafts. Then there is a 3/4 inch shank which holds the 1/2 inch cutter. The swan neck options have the cutter set at an angle to the line of the shaft and this makes them excellent for shear cutting.

Ok, my conclusion. I think these tools should only be used by someone with some experience with a cup tool. Many of the capped cutter systems, and there are many, are a bit more user friendly but I have found wet kauri to clog most of them (yes I have one of each).

For those of you that don't know me I have a bit of a reputation for 'If Terry cannot break it no one can!' The Hunter tools put up with everything I threw at them. I even tried some brass



and alloy. Replacement tips are only \$20 so why even attempt to sharpen them.

A problem I found was when I went to undo the grub screw it was clogged up. Unlike some tools that the screw does up from underneath. I confronted Mike on this (obviously he has come across a smart...like me before, his reply was "Oh, just melt some wax into the head before turning"). I have taken this tip and used it on a number of tools and it works a treat. If you are heavy handed like me and the wax melts put some hot melt glue in the hole, it has a higher melting point.

If you use or have used a cup tool then the swan neck tool is a must as the angle is preset and you don't have to worry about a dig in. They cut just as well drawing the tool out as with a push cut. These are also great for getting under that undercut rim. I found the tool worked well on both cross grain and end grain.

No doubt you will be asking do I need one of these, of course you do. Look at it like this it's only another bowl you have to sell. Or better still come around and try mine.

## Hunter Tool Systems



Razor-sharp, long-lasting edges for turners

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