

Tool Review: Hunter Carbide Tool

by Fred Holder

As I noted in the report on the Desert Woodturning Round-Up in Mesa, Arizona in February, we purchased a tool from Mike Hunter during the Swap Meet in the parking lot. I gave Mike a copy of More Woodturning, telling him that was my business card. I told him that I would do a review on the tool if it turned out to perform as well as he had indicated that it would.

The tool is available handled or un-handled. We purchased an handled tool with a 3/8" shaft and a 3/8" diameter indexable carbide cutter set into the end of the shaft. I looked it as a good end grain hollowing tool at the time of purchase. Mike said that he considered it a good roughing tool, especially for beginning woodturners who have not yet mastered sharpening. He says that you can't sharpen these cutters, you just replace the cutter when it becomes dull. He noted that they would last a long time because you can rotate the cutter to present a new cutting edge to the area of cut.

Before I go into my actual review, I'm inserting the information that Mike sent me concerning his tool. After that, I'll tell you what I found. Mike's instruction sheet says:

"Hunter Tool Cutter

"The Hunter Tool Cutters are an easy to use and productive method to turn wood. Let's chuck up the hardest piece of maple that you have in your workshop. Better yet let's do some end grain work. Do you have a burl with some dirt in it? Perhaps there might be a small rock or two in the burl or should we turn some quartz filled material!!!



This is Mike's photo of the handled tool.



The business end of the tool, with a few wood chips on it.

"The Hunter Tool will cut just about everything that you want to throw at it. Once the tool dulls, just turn the edge to a new section of the tool. Once it wears out replace the tool tip. There is no grinding or lapping of the tool.

"The Hunter Tool Cutters work best on closed grain woods. If you are working open grain woods many woodturners will use the Hunter Tool Cutter to turn the project down to size and then switch to conventional HSS tools to complete the fine finish cuts. Users of the Hunter Tool Cutter achieve desired size and finish results to prep for the final sanding operations.

"The following is the procedure to index or rotate the Hunter Tool Cutter.

1) Loosen the torx screw.

2) Rotate to an unused section of the insert.

3) Tighten the torx screw with the flag style wrench.

4) Visually inspect the cutter to make sure it is firmly seated in the pocket.

5) You are ready to go. "Happy Turning"

"The following is the procedure to index the Hunter Tool Cutter to a new cutter.

1) Loosen and remove the torx screw. Be careful, as Murphy's Law states: "The screw will fall into the wood chips and you will not be able to find it."

2) Remove the cutter and inspect and clean the pocket of the bar to remove any chips or shavings.

3) Place the new cutter in the bar and while holding the cutter firmly seated in the pocket, tighten the torx screw to secure the cutter. It is recommended to use the flag style torx wrench, supplied with the tool.

4) Visually inspect the tool to make sure the cutter is firmly seated in the pocket.

5) You are ready to go. "Happy Turning"

"Features, Benefits

- * No grinding of the tool
- * No lapping of the tool
- * Each new insert is sharpened and ready to use.
- * Tool life is 25 - 30 times even 100 times your expectations with high quality HSS
- * All tools are manufactured to high quality standards, every holder has an aluminum oxide finish to prevent rust

- * Roughing and finishing tools use the same insert
- * New tool bits, torx screws, and torx wrenches are reasonable and readily available
- * Strong metal shanks, which minimize vibration and chatter
- * All tools are guaranteed

Tool Descriptions

"# 4 Gouge - This 1/2" diameter gouge is the first choice for turning bowls. Use the same gouge for rough turning as well as finishing turning. This is an efficient tool that removes wood very quickly and will produce outstanding finishes prior to sanding.

"# 3 Gouge - This 3/8" diameter gouge is the first choice for turning pens, lidded boxes, goblets, and other small diameter work. This is also a very efficient tool that removes wood very quickly and just as important ... very clean, prior to sanding operations.

"The # 3 and # 4 round tools are held, slightly above center, at about a 45 degree angle and once you find the "sweet spot," they cut very free. Do not try to "ride the bevel," but position the tool to utilize the cutting action of the chip groove. THE TOOL IS ACTUALLY USED SIMILAR TO A SCRAPER.

"The # 3 and # 4 round tools are very good to rough and finish bowls. They work great on end grains and are the most useful in the shop. My personnel preference is to use the # 3 Hunter Tool Cutter.

"It is possible to use standard metric thread slot, phillips, or allen screws, but for secure locking, it is recommended to use the appropriate screws as they have a taper, which matches the taper on the Hunter Tool Cutter. It is also rec-

ommended to use the flag style Torx wrench, as the screw should only be "hand snug." This flag wrench prevents over tightening or use of "cheater bars." It is also recommended to purchase an extra screw, as Murphy's Law is: "The screw always falls in the shavings and you cannot find the screw."

"# 2 Skew Right - Most bowls, boxes, goblets, and scoops benefit from light scraping cuts to improve finish. This tool is particularly useful to clean up the corner ID on interior boxes. This tool will not "self-feed."

"# 2 - 0.094 Cutoff Right - This a great tool for shallow cut off or parting operations. Side clearance permits minimal drag on the tool material being cut.

"Patent applied for.
"Hunter Tool Cutter
612-922-1197
612-922-1533"

Well that is what Mike had to say about his tools. When we were talking on the telephone, I told him that I would likely be ordering one of the 1/2" shaft tools (apparently his #4 tool) without a handle so that it could be used in one of our stabilized boring bars. Mike got excited about that and offered to send one for the test. The shaft of that tool fit nicely into the Min-O-Bar tool that we have, so I used it in the test. The shaft also fit nicely into the handle of my Kelton hollowing tools, so I was able to test the 1/2" tools in two ways.

Since I had felt that the tool was most useful as an endgrain hollowing tool, I tried the 3/8" tool we had purchased to hollow some end grain. The wood chosen was Red Birch. The tool cut away the center of the piece quickly and cleanly. I didn't



Hollowing the Red Birch box with the 3/8" handled tool.



Cutting on the outside of the box.

make a hole first, but I believe this would make it work even better. I then tried the tool on the outside of the little box I was working on. It cut cleanly without the catch that I had expected. The wood was ready to sand after the cut down the out-

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side. I was impressed with this tool, it not only hollowed end grain but would cut side grain as well.

On March 25, when Keith Goben was making a little box in my shop as a part of a class, I introduced him to the tool to hollow his box. Actually, I let him use that tool and also the Oneway Termite, which does similar work very well. Keith was impressed and wanted more information about the tool. I advised him that it would be in this issue of More Woodturning.

Recognizing that the tool would cut side grain as well as endgrain, I thought it worthwhile to try it on a bowl. I tried it both freehand and with the stabilized boring bar of the Min-O-Bar from Turningways. The bowl wood was elm and was dry. It had been rough turned in the early 1990's and had been setting on the shelf ready to final turn. I thought this would be a good test of the tool.



The 1/2" tool mounted in the Min-O-Bar from Turningways being used to hollow the bowl. I found it extremely easy to control the shape of the inside of the bowl with this set up.



Turning the outside of the bowl with the 1/2" bar held in my Kelton tool handle.



Turning the outside of the bowl with the 3/8" tool. The 1/2" was more stable for this operation.

I found it worked equally well on the outside of the bowl, but that part I had to do freehand, because the Min-O-Bar wouldn't reach around the side of the bowl.

I also used the tool mounted in the Min-O-Bar to round over the top edge of the bowl. It worked equally well at this operation. I did have to loosen the shaft and rotate it to the other side to cut the outside curve on the edge of the bowl. This was a simple operation and only took a moment. By this time, I was very impressed with this tool. I then did a couple of tests of cutting on the inside of the bowl with the tools held freehand. The shavings produced were well worth showing, so there is a picture of them.



The 3/8" tool being used to hollow the inside of the bowl. There was a bit of tendency for this small tool to chatter.



The 1/2" tool performed very well on the inside of the bowl. Creating fine shavings and cutting clean enough to be ready to sand.



A handful of shavings from the lathe bed.

So far our usage hasn't required a change of the disk to bring up a sharp edge. I can highly recommend this tool for beginners as well as experienced turners.