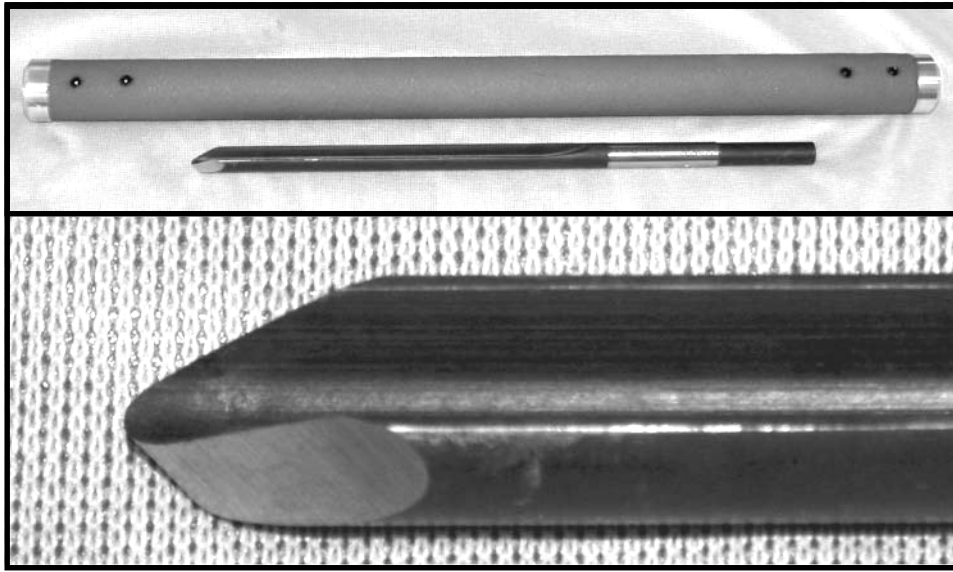


John Jordan Bowl Gouge and Steel Handles.

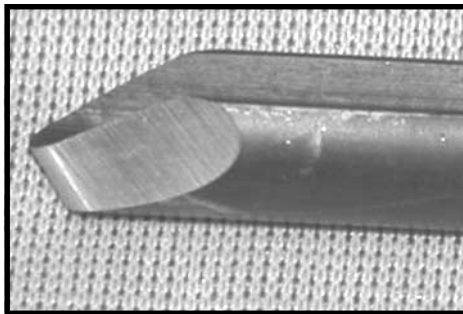
by Lyn J. Mangiameli

Many folks know that John Jordan designed the 1/2 inch bowl gouge that Oneway manufacturers. Well John has now gone a step further to offer his own bowl gouges and handles. The gouges come in two sizes; nominally 1/2 inch (actually slightly larger at 13mm) and 5/8 inch (actually 16mm). From the true sizes, you can accurately surmise they are made outside the US, in this case from the special order department of a respected Australian manufacturer of turning tools. They are made from M2 High Speed Steel, which has been subjected to a special "straw tempering, and given a black oxide finish. A section of the shaft is polished and in this area John's name is etched.

One of the most notable visible characteristics of these gouges is that they have a more "V" shaped flute than the typical gouge. It is not quite as pointed a "V" as a Glaser gouge, but is clearly of that flute style. Turners have differing opinions of the desirability of this flute shape, but I am firmly in the camp of those who find the "V" shape to be superior to both the traditional "U" and more elliptical "Superflute" shape. John notes he prefers the "V" style because it "yields a small tip that is handy for detailing and tight cuts." I agree, but would also note that the "V" shape also provides more mass behind the cutting edge and is easier to hone as well. The small Henry Taylor slipstone that comes in a two slipstone set from Craft Supplies is what I have found perfect for honing these "V" shaped flutes. Speaking of honing flutes, the flute on John's gouges comes reasonably smooth, smoother than the typical Glaser, but not as polished as you will find on some gouges, such as the Sorbys. This doesn't bother me, as I regularly use a



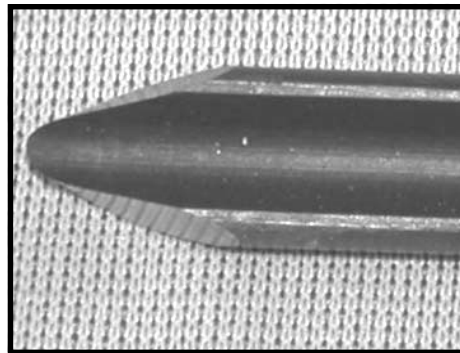
The John Jordan Gouge with Handle. The handle is a dull red. The enlarged view of the tip provides more detail about the business end of the tool.



This view of the tip shows the side of the grind on the tip.

slip stone to remove the burr from sharpening, and to clean up any build up of resin and CA adhesives, so these actions soon give a polished flute anyway.

The other very visible characteristic is the impeccably sharpened tip. My gouge came with a 60 degree angle bevel (the same as a Glaser and consistent with the Ellsworth grind) and flat swept back wings that are slightly longer than the Glaser wings and come to a slightly sharper front point. Of course the owner can grind it to whatever geometry strikes his or her fancy, but I would recommend that one at least give



This view shows the top of the tip.

John's geometry a serious try before making any changes. I like the grind a lot, and suggest using it as a model for other gouges.

The handle is ever so slightly narrower in diameter than the typical steel handle, and in my medium sized hands the smaller diameter feels very comfortable for gouge work. The comfort is increased by a durable rubber-like surface covering that is textured for grip, but slightly soft for comfort. The handles are of consistent diameter, like most metal handles, and because of this I find them not as nice as the contoured Glaser Handles, but still I find them to be one of the better metal handles available. Of course the rubberized covering avoids the too hot in summer/too cold in winter effect some turners (though not me) complain comes from the bare anodized aluminum of the Glasers. They also lack the lead shot weighting and vibration absorption of the Glaser, but since they are open on both ends, it would be easy to weight them with brass rod or lead shot (the latter would require

making up a couple of wooden plugs) if you find this desirable. Speaking of being open on both ends, one end is sized to take John's 1/2 inch gouge, the other end is sized to take his 5/8 inch gouge. You could also use them for many hollowing tools, and I am certain he would be pleased if you chose to mate them to his 1/2 inch small hollowing tools.

I only have his medium sized handle, which is 18 inches long. He makes two others, one which is 12 inches and the other is 24 inches. Their cushioned grip is colored red, blue or black, respective to the 18 inch, 12 inch and 24 inch lengths. If you really would like another length, John is likely to be able to accommodate you by special order, as I believe he makes these up in his own shop. Like with most metal handles, they offer the advantage of allowing you to adjust the extension of the gouge shaft from the handle, which makes it possible to at least partially maintain a consistent gouge length as your tool shortens from repeated grinding.

So, the specs are good, but do I like using the tools? The answer is mostly yes. I must admit, I'm spoiled by my Glasers, and miss the Glaser handles and extraordinary edge retention of V-15 particle steel. But the comparison is not really fair. The Jordan bowl gouge retains its edge as well as any traditional gouge, and the price difference between the Jordan and the Glaser is considerable. Yet the geometry is comparable to the Glasers and for some detail work, is actually a little better. Unlike most traditional gouges, but again like the Glaser, John's gouges come perfectly sharpened right out of the box. Used as a bare shaft fitted to a wooden handle of your making (or if you already have a metal handle of appropriate size), I think they are very well priced. And when used with his handle, you have that advantage of being able to move the handle to other turning tools. So I think these are winners, and if you haven't yet tried a V fluted deep winged bowl gouge, I think these are one of the very best places to start.

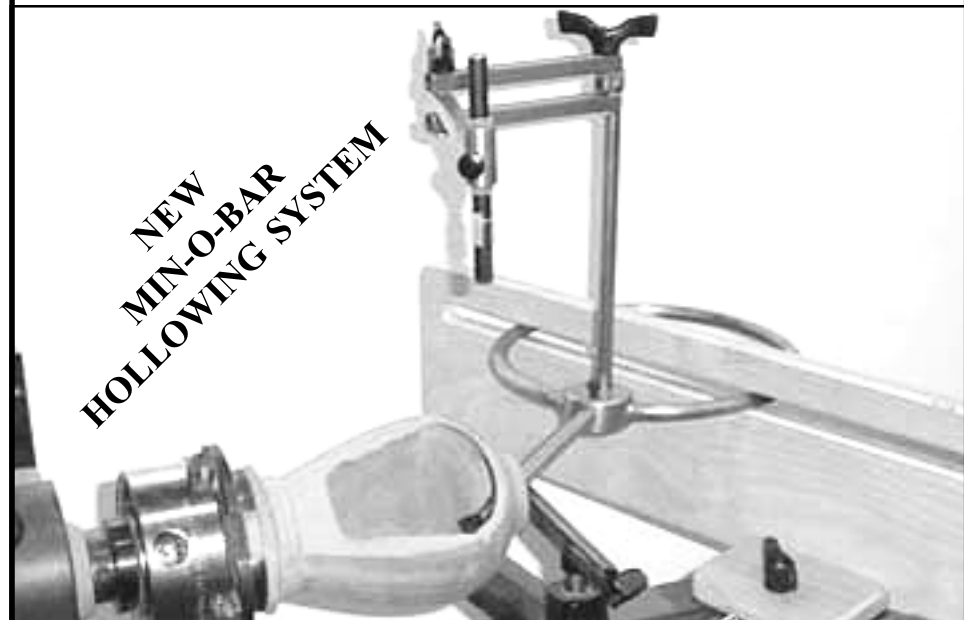
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