

# Brilliant blades

Terry Porter examines some of the new turning tools currently available

## Lacer skew chisel

Hamlet has recently introduced two new skew chisels that bear the signature of Alan Lacer, the well-known American woodturner, who is a respected expert in the use of the skew.

This chisel comes in two sizes, with 16mm ( $\frac{5}{8}$ in) and 35mm ( $1\frac{3}{8}$ in) wide blades. I tried the smaller of the two. In contrast with most skew chisels, the first thing you notice is that the blade is thicker, at 10mm ( $\frac{3}{8}$ in) instead of the more typical 6mm ( $\frac{1}{4}$ in).

Then on further investigation, you see there is a difference between the long-point edge, which is square shaped with softened corners, and the short-point edge, which is rolled over.

The thinking behind these two different edges is that the rolled edge on the short-point edge is good for rolling beads and sliding on the rest when making planing cuts.

The flat edge on the long point side is good for making V-cuts, parting off and forming pommels. The cutting edge is radiused, but has a flat area just below the long point for about a third of the edge before it becomes curved. The blades are made from M2 Sheffield steel.

## Handle

This tool also comes with a much longer handle than the typical skew: 355mm (14in) for the 16mm ( $\frac{5}{8}$ in) and 405mm (16in) for the 35mm ( $1\frac{3}{8}$ in). The handles are made from ash with a black lacquer finish, and have a solid brass ferrule.

The longer than typical handle gives the tool a very nice balance, and its profile allows a choice of grip positions.

I found this skew chisel a delight to use. Its design has clearly been very carefully thought out so as to create a very versatile tool. The

The Lacer skew – excellent for spindle work



This skew has a thicker blade, meaning a vibration-free cut

PHOTOGRAPHS BY TERRY PORTER

longer handle gives excellent control and the thicker blade makes for a vibration-free cut. With the rolled edge on the short point, edge-rolling beads is straightforward.

When taking planing cuts I liked the firmness and ease with which a smooth finish can be achieved.

Using the tool with the square long edge side on the rest, it is excellent for cutting Vs and for the parting of cuts. The softening of the squared edges also allows for smooth rotation and movement on the rest.

The radiused profile of the cutting edge, with the top part being straight, also adds to the tool's versatility.

I tried the skew on both hard and softwoods, including some very dry part burr elm, and achieved clean smooth cuts straight from the tool, as it should be. I used the tool with a honed finish to the edge, which I prefer, and which is recommended by Alan Lacer, the designer.

If you do a lot of spindle work, then one or both of the Lacer skews would be an excellent addition to your armoury. A very nice piece of kit indeed!

It is worth noting that Alan Lacer

has made two videos on the use of the skew, *The Skew Chisel* and *The Son of Skew*.

## Price & contacts

16mm ( $\frac{5}{8}$ in) version £28, 39.60 ~~HT~~  
 35mm ( $1\frac{3}{8}$ in) version £42 (inc VAT) 44.40 ~~HT~~

Available direct from Hamlet Craft Tools, postage and packing extra, Unit 21-24 Penistone Road Industrial Estate, 410 Penistone Road, Sheffield S6 2FL  
 Tel: 01142 321338  
 Fax: 01142 325794  
 Email: sales@hamlet-crafttools.com  
 Website: www.hamlet-crafttools.com

Alan Lacer, woodturner, 299 Plainview Drive, River Falls, WI, 54022, USA  
 Tel: 715 426 9451  
 Fax: 715 426 9451  
 Email: alan@alanlacer.com  
 Website: www.alanlacer.com