1/8" Easy Parting Tool Product Review by Kurt Hertzog

Introduction

The latest addition to the Easy Wood Tools cutting tool product line is the 1/8" Easy Parting Tool. While it is easily recognized from afar with the unique handle design and high gloss finish, this tool is a bit of a departure from the other tools in the Easy Wood Tools family. It is the first of their offerings as a parting tool. With no other information than a guess, the fact that it is called the "1/8" Easy Parting Tool" leads me to believe there may be other parting tools in the future. A carbide tipped beading and parting tool or something in a wider than 1/8" is certainly a possibility.

It has the nicely shaped and finished handle common to the entire Easy Wood Tools tool product line. Easily recognized regardless of how you view the tool. As with all of the other EWT tools, the 1/8" Easy Parting Tool comes packaged in the standard long clear tube. It is complete with the tool, the EWT Flex Key, and tool use/cutter change instructions. Unlike most other turning tools, this and other Easy Wood Turning tools is ready for use right out of the box. No need to shape or sharpen EWT tools. They bypass the grinder and go straight to the lathe directly from the retail packaging.

Using the 1/8" Easy Parting Tool

The EWT parting tool is used exactly as you would any other parting tool. The cutter is already sharpened and placing the tool on the rest as you would any parting tool readies it for use. The full sized handle makes it very attractive for larger work as does choking up on the handle for use with smaller more dextere types of turnings. As I expected, the carbide cutter worked well with every wood I tried it on. By design, the front edge of the cutter is 0.125" and about 0.025" wider than the back of the cutter. This narrower width is carried down the first 2 ½" of the tool shaft as well. Functioning much like the diamond point parting tool, the Easy Parting Tool cuts a slight relief dimension minimizing the heat build up on the shaft of the tool. Even so, good practice with this or any parting tool is to cut a relief cut next to your first cut. It can be a partial width but it serves to provide clearance for the cutter and tool shaft. Without any clearance, there is the potential of heat buildup from the friction, shaft expansion, and grabbing of the tool shaft by the rotating work. Needed or not, I would recommend that your standard practice be making the "stair step" style cut with any parting tool if you make any cut other than very minimal depth.

Changing the cutter

The replacement of the cutter couldn't be easier. Like all Easy Wood Tools cutting tools, the replacement cutter part number is prominently cut into the tool shaft next to the ferrule. Just a quick look allows you to order or buy the exact replacement cutter for that tool. Packaged with the tool is the EWT Flex Key needed for changing the carbide cutter. The instructions show the process and after one time, you'll be a master at it. The Flex Key is made of nylon (or some other plastic) and is intentionally flexible. This flexibility prevents stressing the carbide during the process and causing potential fractures. There are two different length steel rods embedded into the head of the Flex Key. The longer rod always goes into the hole on the tool shaft located below the carbide cutter. The shorter rod goes either behind the cutter or just in front of the cutter depending on whether you are removing or seating the carbide cutter. In the removal process, the short rod seated on the back side of the carbide cutter moves the cutter out of the locked position

with a slight rotation of the Flex Key around the axis of the rod in the tool shaft. This movement is almost imperceptible. A slight flex of the Flex Key is all that is needed to have the short pin hit the stop position. Once unseated from the locked position, the carbide cutter is easily removed by hand for diamond hone touch up or for the trash. The seating of the cutter is simply the reverse. The carbide cutter is slid into the tool shaft by hand until it is in position for seating. The Flex Key is positioned with the long rod in the hole in the tool shaft and the short rod on the front of the carbide cutter. A slight rotation of the key around the long rod axis pushes the cutter into the locked position. A slight flex of the shaft is all that is required. Insure that the carbide cutter is properly seated and locked into position by inspecting the front face of the cutter and tool shaft. They will be perfectly flush. If they aren't perfectly flush, you need to reseat the cutter. This may involve removing it and then reseating it to be certain you have it safely locked into place. When properly done, you'll have no projection of the cutter beyond the face of the tool shaft.

The cutter "locking" system

The way the carbide cutter is positioned and locked into place is a brilliant yet simple mechanism. The cutter has a V notch molded into the top and the bottom of the carbide cutter when it is made. Both of these V notches in the cutter mate with features machined into the Easy Parting Tool. The Flex Key is designed to spring the tool just enough to allow the V notch engagement to either unlock the cutter or lock the cutter depending on the orientation. This locking system precisely positions the cutter and secures it into place for tool use. While providing that positioning and securing the cutter, the V notch design also allows for a simple "unlocking" letting the user easily remove the cutter for replacement. It is a very simple looking feature yet incredibly clever in both design and execution.

Why carbide?

This tool follows the premise of the entire Easy Wood Tool family. You don't need to learn to sharpen tools, only to use them to turn. The tool, like all EWT cutting tools, comes sharpened and ready to use right out of the package. When you have exhausted the edge, or all of the available edges in their round or square cutter designs, you simply replace the cutter with a new one. The carbide cutter will work on any wood that you properly present the tool to as well as any of the soft metals you might work with on your lathe. I often use brass, bronze, aluminum, and soft steels on my wood lathe. The carbide cutter makes short work of all of them as it does with inlayed stone and other materials. Hard or soft, the carbide cutter works nicely on woods, plastics, stone, soft metals and other materials you might be working with on your wood lathe.

Conclusions

In my opinion, the 1/8" Easy Parting Tool is a winner. Like the rest of the family of products, it is made in America with the best materials and no compromise made in quality. The handle is top shelf as is the machining, design, and fabrication of the tool. The clever design of the cutter and the seating of it is indicative of all of the Easy Wood Tools products. Well thought out and designed. Then made with no cutting corners methods of manufacture done in America. As the packaging notes, if you aren't happy with the product, they'll buy it back from you. I don't know what else you could ask for. If you want a parting tool that is big enough for the big stuff yet maneuverable enough for the small stuff, give this tool serious consideration. As they used to say in the movie reviews, I give it a "two thumbs up".

Figure #1: The 1/8" Easy Parting Tool is nicely packaged in the same plastic tube as their other cutting tools. Included are the tool, the EWT Flex Key changing tool, and instructions.

Figure #2: The tool itself sports the nicely finished tool handle with its trademarked design as do the other cutting tools in the Easy Wood Tools family.

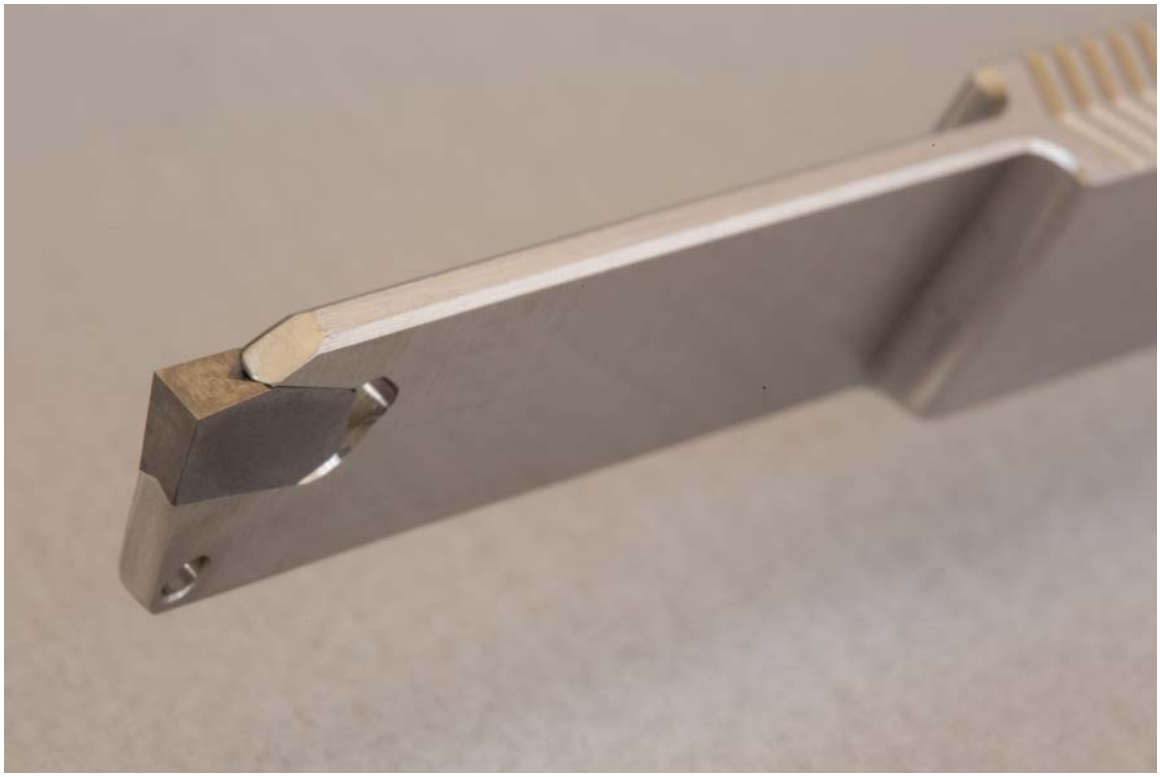

Figure #3: The business end of things is the 6” of tool extending from the 20” overall length with the 1/8” wide carbide cutter on the end.

Figure #4: In use, it works exactly as the other parting tools you’re used to. The full length handle is unique in the industry offering advantages in leverage and comfort with size of work.

Figure #5: Even though the wider cutter face cuts a small clearance to minimize friction and heat generation, good practice is to “stair step” your cut.

Figure #6: The full length handle allows for better control and the carbide cutter makes this parting tool ideal for materials in addition to wood. It works nicely on soft metals as well.

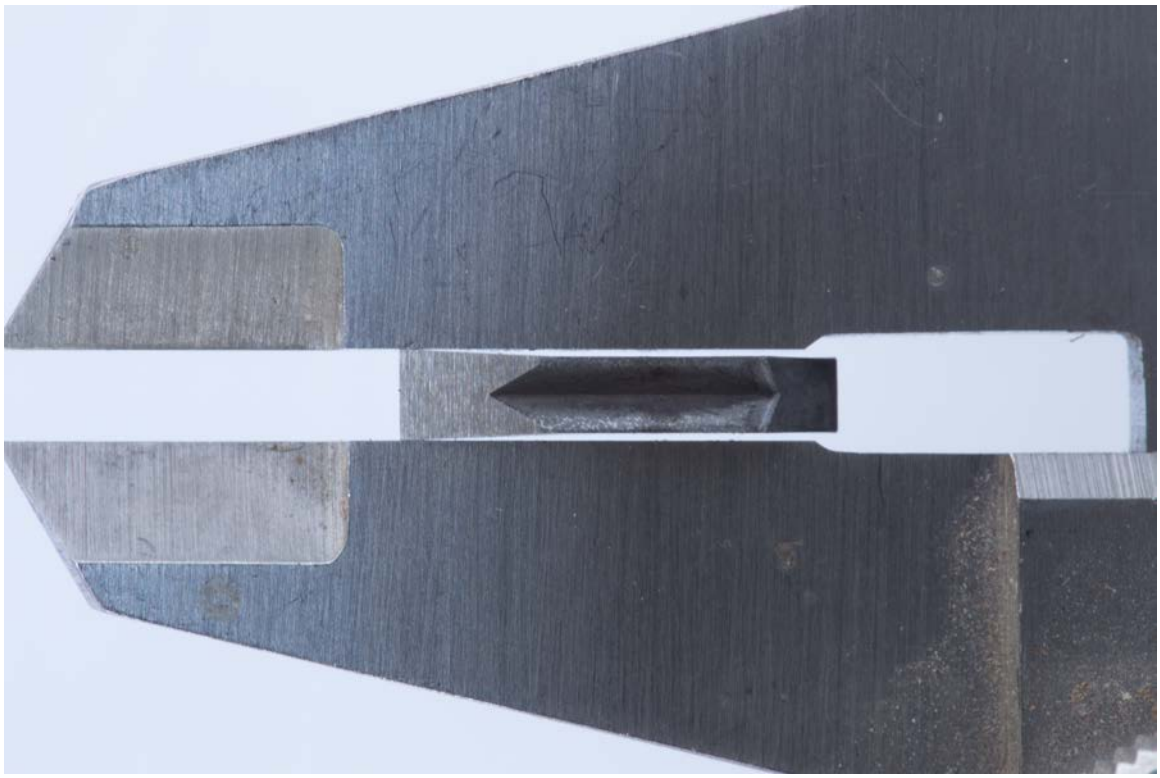

Figure #7: Cleverly designed to cut its own clearance, the front face of the cutter is 0.125” while it necks down to a shade over 0.100”.

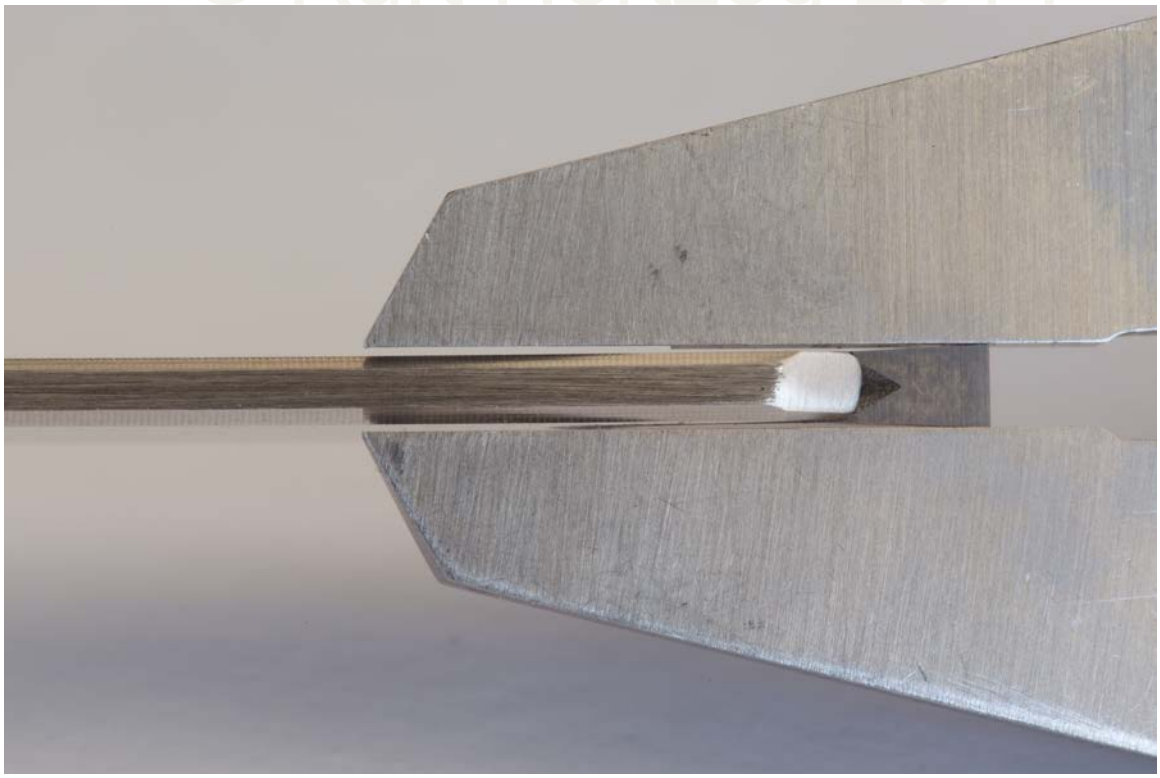

Figure #8: The tool mirrors this thinned tool thickness being just proud of 0.100”. With the first 2 1/2” of the tool having of this thinned wall, it can fit into just about anywhere.

Figure #9: The packaging of the tool includes the carbide cutter changing tool. The EWT Flex Key is made of plastic with two steel rods used to unseat or seat the carbide cutter.

Figure #10: Its use shown very well in their instructions, the EWT Flex Key has one post longer than the other. The longer post is placed in the hole in the tool below the carbide cutter.

Figure #11: The shorter post is placed in the opening just behind the cutter. A very easy movement of the EWT Flex Key frees the carbide cutter allowing for replacement.

Figure #12: A view from the working side. The long rod in the hole under the cutter and the short rod located anywhere in the slot behind the cutter readies it for cutter release.

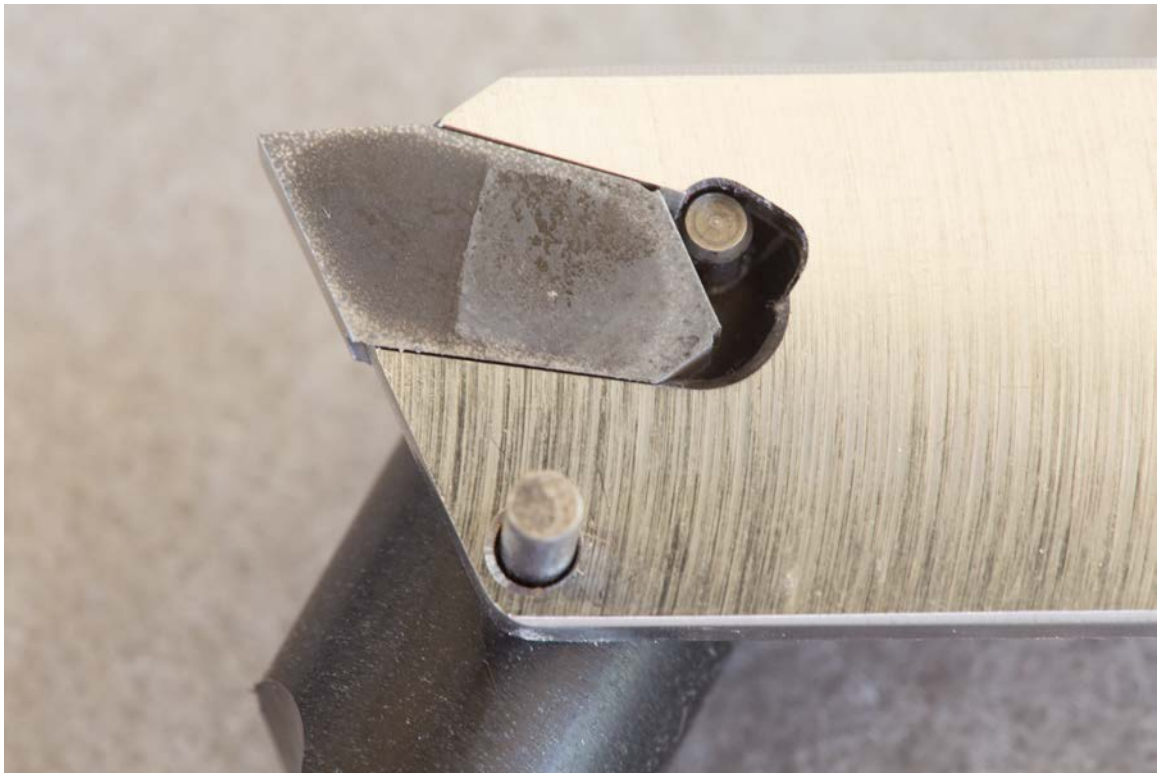

Figure #13: A slight rotation of the EWT Flex Key moves the cutter forward unlocking it for removal. The short rod will hit the stop position to prevent launching the cutter.

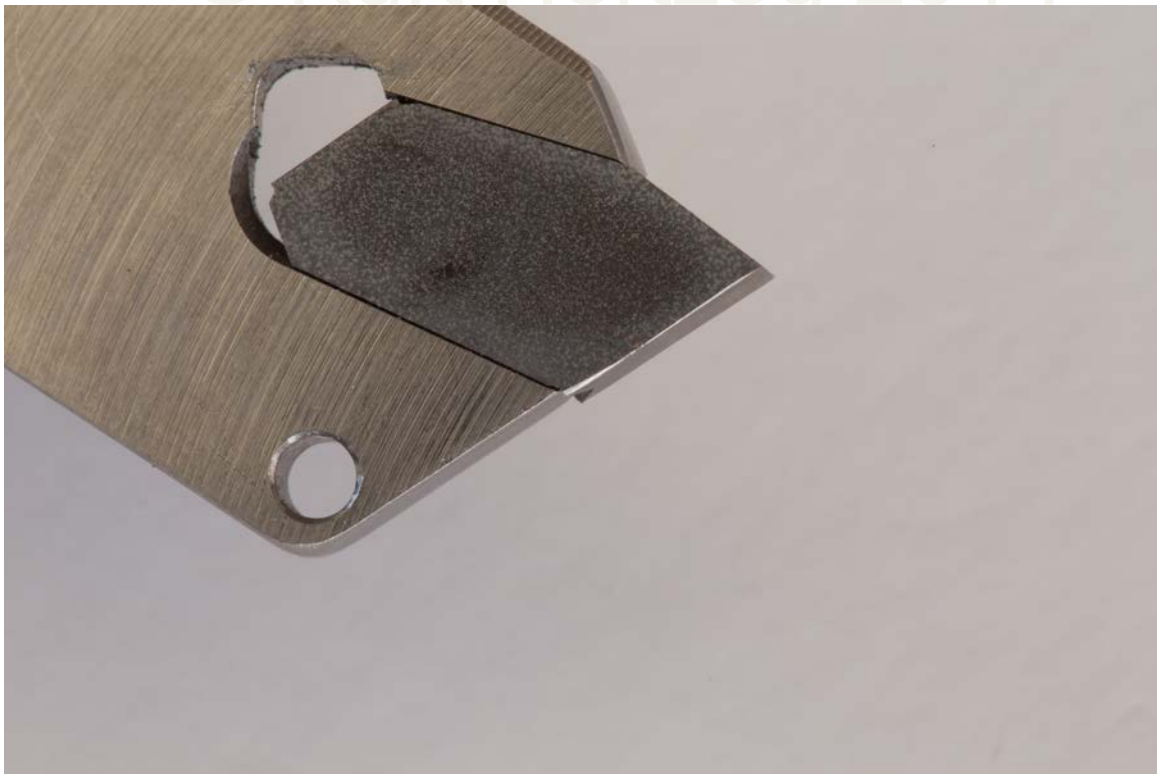

Figure #14: Shown loosened, the cutter extends only a small amount proud of the steel tool face. Being “unlocked” at that point, it is ready for changing.

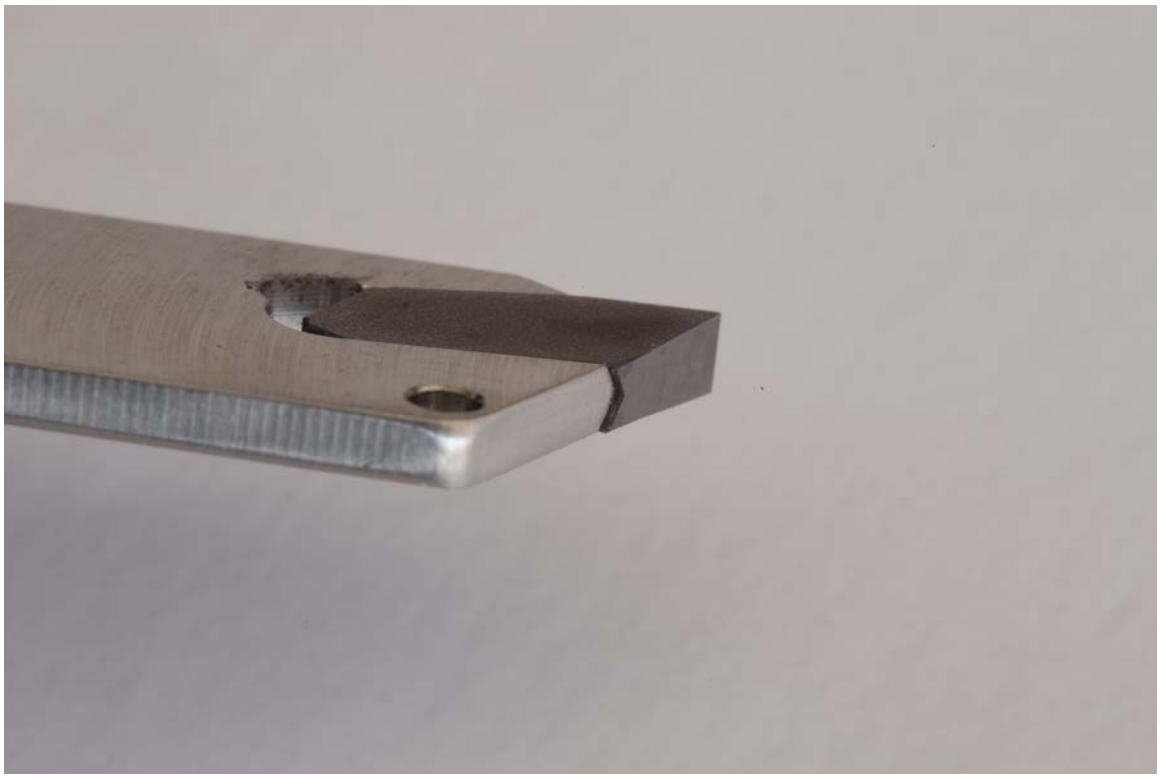

Figure #15: The amount of protrusion is indeed very small yet that is all that is needed to free the cutter from its seated ready for use position.

Figure #16: The unlocked carbide cutter is now removed by hand. It can now be swapped for a replacement cutter or touched up with a diamond hone if you desire.

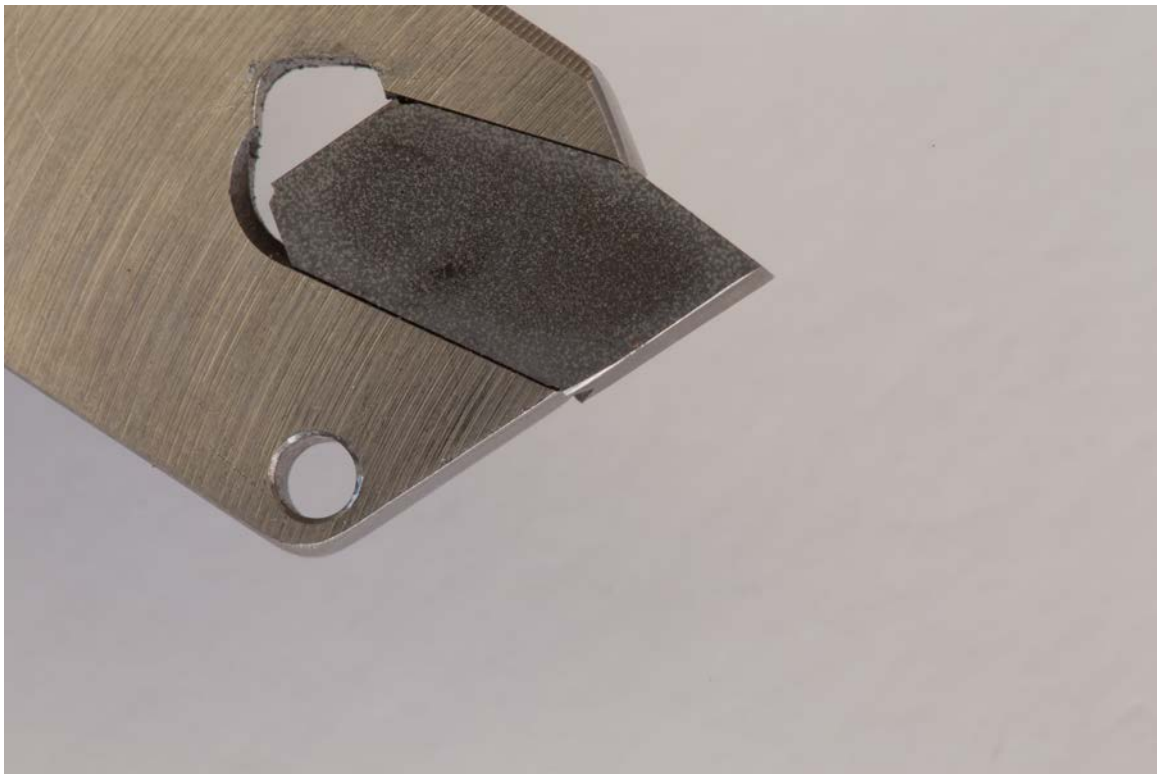

Figure #17: The replacement cutter is positioned in the tool as shown. No force is needed to get it to the proper position for seating with the EWT Flex Key as it easily slides into place.

Figure #18: The seating process still uses the long post in the hole on the tool but now the short post is positioned on the front face of the carbide cutter.

Figure #19: A small rotation of the EWT Flex Key around the long post in the hole on the tool seats the carbide cutter into the proper locked position indicated by flush on the front face.

Figure #20: The trick to getting the carbide cutter to lock into place is the brilliant locking notch system in the tool. The carbide cutter has a V notch molded into the top and bottom.

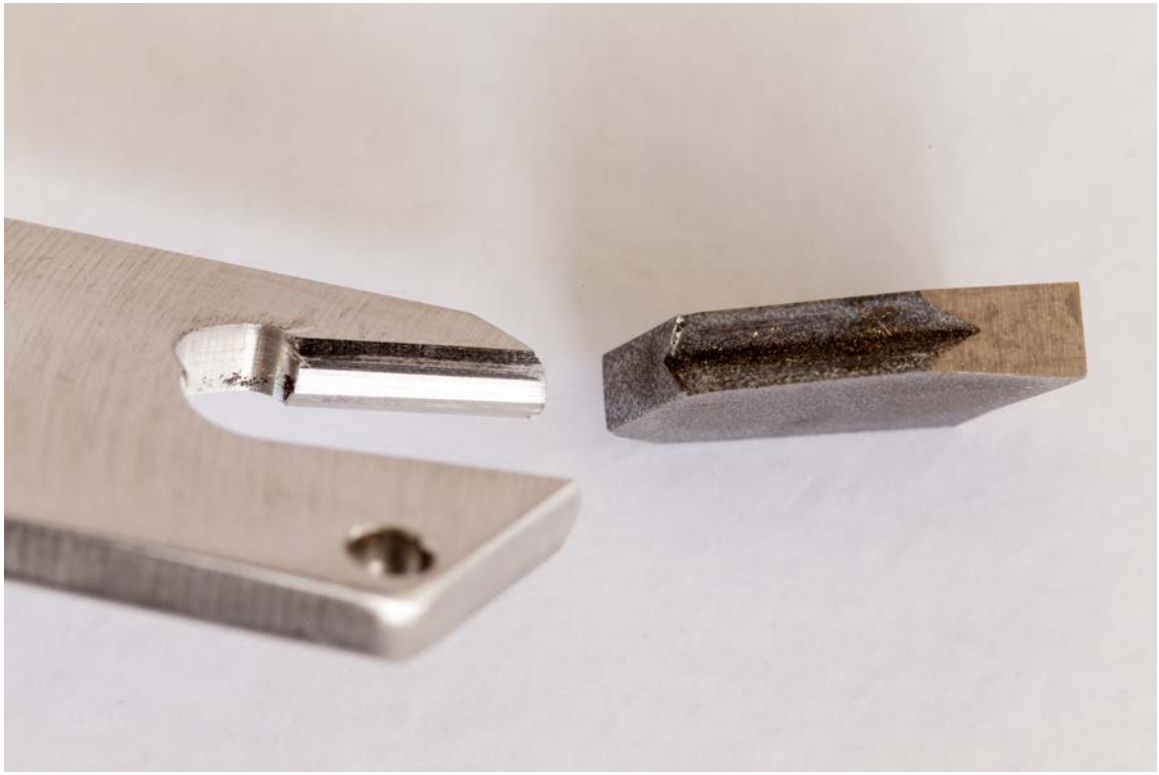

Figure #21: There is a mating V milled into the top of the tool that will lock into the V on the carbide cutter.

Figure #22: That same V mating face is machined into the bottom face of the cutter slot. These two V faces lock into the V slot features in the carbide tool locking things in place.