



Outdoors-Magazine.com

<http://outdoors-magazine.com>

Hatchets continued (4)

OldJimbo

- Gear reviews and tests - Edged tools - Axes and hatchets -



Publication: Saturday 7 September 2002

Description :

Hatchets Part Four. Playing with old stuff.

Copyright (c) Outdoors-Magazine.com under a Creative Commons

Attribution-Non-Commercial-Share Alike License

Hatchets continued (4)

When I saw a 10oz hatchet on ebay I just couldn't resist! I wasn't expecting too much compared to a Gransfors mini hatchet - but I wanted something to play with while I'm waiting. The 10oz is the total weight - not the head weight. Of all the hatchets I've seen, this one is the greatest puzzle, which is why I wanted it. It's a pretty thick head with a very obtuse bevel - almost toy like. This is belied though, by the great handle grain and alignment. The steel is also some of the hardest I've come across - but doesn't appear brittle. It also came with the cutest little sheath - which appears well made. So far as I can tell, such hatchets were sold to chop off the legs of little critters during hunting.

It took a good couple of hours of grinding to get the edge into shape and then I went for a drive to find a suitable tree to initiate the thing on. A stick just wouldn't do -but seemed more in line with an axe that you really can carry in your back pocket without noticing it. So I chose a nice 5" alder to start. That's half the length of the handle so it was easy to choose - seemed appropriate. I was quite shocked at how the little axe went through that tree. The thin handle wasn't so great - but it wasn't that bad either which really surprised me. After a bit of chopping down trees, I had to get out the Norlund to put things into perspective! It soon does - a 20oz hatchet with proper bevels soon shows how much faster a tree can be dropped! Naturally I had to go look for some dead seasoned wood: large knives chop green trees too - but things come to a standstill on hard wood. Well the little hatchet did well on that wood too. The hole for the handle is very narrow, but the advantage of that is that the sides are quite thick so the hatchet could certainly be used with a baton for splitting wood.

Here are the original pictures which led me to buy it..



Hatchets continued (4)



A lot more grinding and then a blueing or browning job and I'll be ready to put up some more pics.. If anyone has more information on such hatchets, I sure appreciate an email.

It occurred to me that if one wanted to know how a hatchet should be designed - one should go look for a boy scout hatchet. Dan Beard who wrote "Shelters, Shacks and Shanties" was a leader in the boy scout movement - so those "official" hatchets should be OK. The trouble is that everyone seems to want a piece of BSA memorabilia and prices are high. Eventually though I got a genuine Plumb hatchet with the BSA mark. The handle was poor and had to be replaced. The head shows lots of pounding but the edge didn't appear to ever have been sharpened and had a crude secondary bevel with lots of dings. When I weighed the head I was amazed - it's a 1lb 2oz head much like modern hatchets. The head is quite thick too. I don't expect to make a good woods hatchet out of this one, but it was certainly worth the price of admission to try! The head had a nice patina and is cleaning up quite nicely. The finish and steel of these old axes is very good - but the weight and design is still puzzling me. It's just too heavy to carry around all the time, and is a poor head shape for use as a tool for slicing and fine work. I guess I'll learn what is good about it as I go along! I was lucky enough to be able to use the old handle from a Plumb "tomahawk" hatchet on this one and the weight comes out at 1lb 9oz. So it's not pounds more than a GB Wildlife - but enough to notice!

Here are some pictures of a mint BSA hatchet. This one will probably go for \$25-30 US. Mine being more dinged was \$10 - which is great as I intended major regrinding.

Hatchets continued (4)





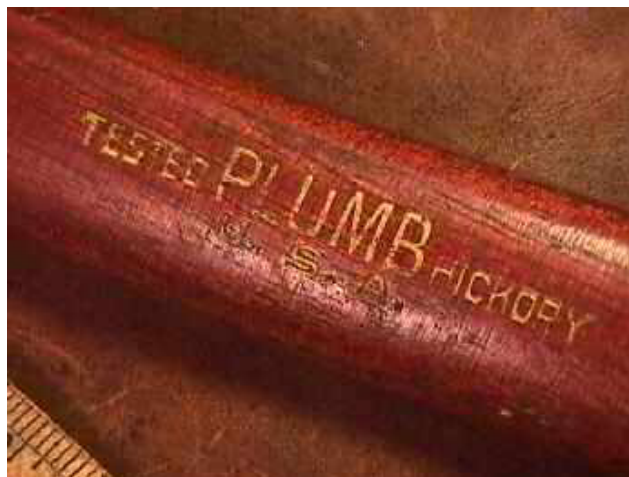
If you are interested in scout stuff from the old days - when they had badges for throwing their hatchets and pistol shooting - well you could lose yourself for a while in this wonderful site! [Click the pic!](#)



Naturally seeing an "Old Design" plumb hatchet with a Hudson Bay shaped head threw me into a buying spree - and I got it quite cheap as the head had a lot of pitting. The nicer examples are going for real money so there must be some special collectors value. The person who sold it to me had cleaned up the head with some rust remover, which left a neat rough black finish - almost like the forge scale on a Gransfors. That's worth knowing before tossing a rusty old axe head. He'd also ground an edge onto the hatchet. I wanted to see what it could do so I gave the hatchet an hour on the belt grinder before heading off into the bush. The bottom line of this hatchet is that you have a 1 3/4 lb head on a short hatchet: it cuts OK because of the weight and is coming along with further grinding. It's just too heavy for a hatchet though. The head weight combined with a fairly skinny handle makes for a pretty unstable hatchet - it really does. Soon it gets resurrected as a short axe. In hatchet form it has extremely poor balance and cutting power compared to the GB sfa or even the Hults long hatchet I made up. Right now I have it temporarily fitted onto a Garant cheap handle, which at least has vertical grain: suddenly it feels good to hold with a proper thickness of handle and some balance. I just have a lot of work ahead to scrape off varnish, thin the blade a little. It's 2lb 8 oz total now with a 24" handle and should come a couple of ounces lighter.

Here are some pictures of a mint specimen - pretty, if not practical as is...

Hatchets continued (4)



Hatchets continued (4)



I'm certainly spending some time playing with these cheap buys. The steel is great and so is the overall finish and shaping, so I'll end up with decent tools. I got pretty lucky in that the (\$19 US) Tomahawk - or as I prefer to call it Hudson Bay style hatchet handle had come loose in the past and was re-wedged with aluminium wedges which I was able to remove. It'll still be a bunch of work but the handle is a great fit on the (\$10 US) boy scout hatchet. I got the Garant handle for \$10 Can, and it slipped right on with just a little shaving (scraping) with a knife. Customs didn't stop the hatchets because they were cheap old stuff, so even with shipping I got two hatchets for about \$70 CAN. Add on the tiny hatchet at the top and we're a little over \$100 CAN. That's not bad for tools like these!

Hatchets continued (4)

there's going to be lots added as I work with the hatchets (well two and a newly made light axe)... I think that the next in the hatchet saga though, will be to write about the Norlund hatchets I have coming and the wonderful 2lb Warren axe head I got. Now that one is nice!!!!

Post-scriptum :Original article at [OldJimbo's site](#).