

# The joy of burying the hatchet

With Chris Hemsworth showing off his skills in *The Huntsman: Winter's War*, **Helen Croydon** tries out axe throwing

**H**AVING never wielded an axe before, I'm a little surprised how exhilarating it feels to hoist one above my shoulder and let it go with a burst of explosive energy. It's taken a long walk through the woods to reach the muddy field where I'm now standing, facing the medieval wooden target boards. I pick up another axe (well, it's more like a knife as I'm not allowed the big ones yet) and take aim, wondering whether I should let off a war cry this time.



**Go with the throw:** Helen Croydon gets to channel her inner Hemsworth

defend any castles, as all of my axes have flopped to the ground instead of splicing through the air to wedge themselves into the targets, as they should.

I'm at Tulleys Farm in West Sussex, where participants have increased from 1,100 in 2010 when it launched to 4,200 last year.

Shane Richie, Peter Andre and Michael Fassbender are said to be regulars here and some people even turn up in costume.

So what's the appeal? Well, it's outdoors, which is always a bonus now the sun is out, plus it's a great stress-buster; I seem to let go of a little bit of frustration with every haul of the axe. It's not a bad workout, too. Beginners can only use small knives but as you get more experienced you can use bigger and heavier axes, requiring more strength.

The two blades I'm let loose with are the Ninja and the Viking. The former is shaped like a cross and has multiple blades, the latter has one large blade. They each require a different throwing technique.

My instructor Kyle first gives me



**Chopper:** Chris Hemsworth in *The Huntsman: Winter's War* sees our Helen over the horizon

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the lowdown on technique: stand with the same foot forward as my throwing hand, arm up to my ear, flick my wrist and try to let go when my elbow is at a right angle. The most important thing is to throw the blade so it's upright, not tilted.

It took ten throws before I landed one of my Ninjas into the scoring zone. At first I threw too hard, then not hard enough. A



**Heavy metal:** One of Helen's missiles

typical 'circuit' has six targets, set at different heights and angles, and different-shaped blades. Land one in the yellow area, you get a point, two if it's in the blue zone and five if it's in the centre red. It isn't much of a cardio workout, but I've used a lot of upper body strength and my core has been tested as I try and keep the angle of the axe in a straight line.

It's certainly a fun alternative to an arm workout if you're looking to rock that one-shoulder fashion trend this summer.

Then there are its benefits with regard to anger management. 'Loads of people bring pictures of someone they hate and pin it to the target,' says Kyle. Of course I wouldn't want to do that. I have no enemies, which is just as well for everyone as I think I'm getting the hang of this...

*From £20 for an hour session, southernpursuits.co.uk/axe-throwing*

## CHOP CHOP

### WHERE TO THROW

#### Whistle Punks

Whitechapel, east London (from this summer), £25 an hour, [whistlepunks.com](http://whistlepunks.com)

#### Bawtry Paintball Fields

Doncaster, south Yorkshire, £20 an hour, [bawtrypaintballfields.co.uk](http://bawtrypaintballfields.co.uk)

#### Wooden Tom

Aviemore, Scotland, £200 a day (up to ten people), [woodentom.com](http://woodentom.com)

#### Llangollen Outdoors

Denbighshire, Wales, £45 for three hours, [llangollenoutdoors.co.uk](http://llangollenoutdoors.co.uk)

#### Woodend Farm

Nottinghamshire, £12 an hour, [woodendfarmcomplex.co.uk](http://woodendfarmcomplex.co.uk)

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