

## Armitage Leather – Pricking Iron Review



Thank you for downloading this information sheet for the Pricking iron reviews.  
I hope it goes some way to help you choose the right tool for your purpose and that you enjoy the videos.

I am a formally trained Leather worker and have been working with leather since 1990, I can make saddles, (or could 20 odd years ago) but I don't so much these days, so I don't call myself a Saddler, I'm a Leathersmith.  
A Saddler makes saddles, a Bridle Maker makes bridles, a Cordwainer makes shoes and a Cobbler fixes them.  
I fill the gaps in-between, Luggage, Bags, Belts, Tubs and any number of other things you can use leather for.  
In that time have striven to do things the right way, I have done plenty the wrong way and discovered much in doing so.  
I subscribe very much to the traditional methods and feel that this forms much of the identity of the items I make.

I pride myself on my stitching and feel I have attained a reasonable level. I do not profess to know everything or by any stretch of the imagination believe I am the best, I think I fit nicely in to the category, 'good enough'.  
I do know what I like though and I like good stitching, done well. I was trained with wheels and irons and there is very much a place for both.

Here though I will give my views on some of the irons available on the market today.  
It is important to remember that these views are my own and cannot substitute your own experience and trials.  
If you copy my stitching method in finite detail, remembering I am left handed, we may agree on much below, if you stitch in your own style as I suspect you might, we will differ on much, take my findings as opinion only and find your own path.  
Not all listed below are Pricking Irons, the idea of a pricking iron is to partially penetrate the leather and then continue the hole often into a second or third layer with an awl.

A stitch wheel marks the leather and an awl is used to fully penetrate the leather.  
Some irons available today are designed to fully penetrate the leather up to several layers thick totally removing the need for an awl, these have various names such as diamond chisels, stitching chisels, pricking chisels, I shall refer to them as stitching irons. I can't promise I'll stick to that in the videos, but you will get the point.  
One of the things that will let a row of stitching down is poor or inexperienced awl work evident from uneven stitching on the back of items.

The new stitching irons that go all the way through remove this margin for error and allow people inexperienced in the saddle stitch to achieve a higher quality stitch much quicker than with a pricking iron or wheel.  
I do not have all the irons currently available, but I am working on it and if you know of a new iron, please let me know so I can add it to the list.

I do however have many, and hopefully it may be enough to give you an idea what to look for when looking to buy or upgrade.  
I will finish by adding that having tried all of the irons on the list, I still believe the pricking iron continues to produce the best looking, most effective and strongest stitch.  
This is because the hole is smallest and governed in the main by the awl. This grips the thread well, closes up after stitching ensuring there is more leather than hole making the item stronger.

Many of the stitching irons whilst giving a very good representation of the saddle stitch, can leave a larger hole which does not grip the thread as well, it makes a bigger hole leaving less leather on the stitch line therefore making the item weaker.  
This of course has little or no impact on smaller items such as wallets, bracelets and phone cases.  
It is relative, if you are making working items like saddles, luggage and bags, it can have an impact so the pricking iron is the way forward here.

I will leave you to make your own mind up what you want to achieve and which iron is best for you.  
I hope it helps.

Enjoy and happy stitching.

Nigel



|                    |   |
|--------------------|---|
| Make               | Tandy   |
| Level              | Beginner  |
| Model              | 88055-10 2.5mm 10 Tooth, 9spi.  |
| Other Options      | 2.5mm 1, 2, 4 and 10 teeth, giving 9SPI - 3mm 1, 2, 4 and 9 teeth, giving 8SPI. 3.5mm 1, 2, 4 and 8 Teeth giving 7SPI   |
| Available from     | Tandy Leather Factory <a href="http://www.tandy-leatherfactory.co.uk">www.tandy-leatherfactory.co.uk</a>  |
| Overall Length     | 114mm   |
| Overall Width      | 29mm  |
| Cutting Depth      | 7mm   |
| Tooth Length       | 9.75mm  |
| Tooth Width        | 2.60mm  |
| Tooth Thickness    | 1.20mm  |
| Cost               | £28 to £37  |
| Material           | Stainless Steel   |
| Finish             | Engraved Brushed Steel. Unpolished Teeth. Sharp.  |
| Overall Quality    | Very Good. Well Presented   |
| SPI                | 9SPI  |
| Recommended Needle | John James Harness No 4 Size 4 50mm length x 0.86mm. This may well go up to the No 2 as the SPI and hole size increase.   |
| Recommended Thread | Tiger Thread 0.6mm  |
| Result of Stitch   | A little flat due to the size of the teeth.   |
| Stitch Length      | 2.5mm   |
| Ease of Use        | Very Easy to use, comfortable and easy to see the points which is necessary for ensuring a straight stitch line. The prongs are a little rough having being ground and tend to stick in the leather if they are unpolished.<br>Beeswax helps with this. |

## My Views

The initial visual impact of this tool is very high. It looks very good.  
 It is well presented and looks extremely well finished. The finish is brushed steel.  
 It is stamped with the model number and engraved with the Craftool-Pro Logo.  
 Made of Stainless Steel, it feels weighty in the hand for its small size.  
 It looks immediately like it will do the job it is intended for.  
 The handle of the tool is a substantial lump of steel you can easily strike.  
 The teeth are sharp and the tool penetrates very easily through the leather.  
 The teeth look a little shallow though, closer to 33 degrees rather than 45, this can serve to flatten a stitch.  
 It makes very even entry holes and the exit holes are equally neat.  
 The teeth are somewhat oversized on the 2.5mm though which makes the stitch a little flat.  
 However, the stitch is neat and there is no trouble getting 0.6mm thread on No4 Needles through the holes without the assistance of an awl.  
 This stitches well with 0.8mm thread but flattens down even more.  
 This is probably down to the teeth being so shallow.  
 I think the 3mm and the 3.5mm may well offer a better looking stitch as I understand all the teeth are the same size.  
 A smaller tooth size on the 2.5mm would have been a better idea.  
 The tooth options are a little limited in this range with no two tooth tool available.  
 The 4 tooth tool is a nice idea, but a little un-necessary. The one tooth tool I cannot see being very practical. With one tooth you have no point of reference so will need to mark the holes with a wheel first which negates the matter a little.  
 Since making the video, Tandy have released 2 prong options of all the irons sizes which is a great addition to the set.

## Pros

Very well made.  
 Excellent value for money.  
 Sold by a long established company so the range should be around for some time.  
 Having an even tooth that penetrates the leather fully removes the need for an awl thereby ensuring an even straight stitch on the back of the item you are making.

## Cons

The tooth size on the 2.5mm is a little too large to give a crisp saddle stitch look at 2.5mm.  
 The angle of the teeth is too shallow for a crisp stitch. However, if you are a fan of stitching in a groove, this may well help a lot and be very much a pro.



|                    |  |
|--------------------|--|
| Make               | Pro-Line? This is a Chinese Iron and source company is ambiguous. If you know better, please let me know.  |
| Level              | Beginner   |
| Model              | 3mm 10 tooth iron and 3mm 2 tooth iron, 8spi.  |
| Other Options      | 3mm 1, 2, 4, 6, 10 teeth giving 8SPI<br>4mm 1, 2, 4, 6, 10 teeth giving 6SPI<br>5mm 1, 2, 4, 6, 10 teeth giving 5SPI<br>6mm 1, 2, 4, 6, 10 teeth giving 4SPI |
| Available from     | eBay: User, Grandtobuy2 along with others. <a href="#">Link</a>  |
| Overall Length     | 99mm   |
| Overall Width      | 29mm   |
| Cutting Depth      | 7mm  |
| Tooth Length       | 7.88mm   |
| Tooth Width        | 1.52mm   |
| Tooth Thickness    | 0.95mm   |
| Cost               | £19 to £26 per set   |
| Material           | Appears to be Stainless Steel  |
| Finish             | Etched Brushed Steel. Unpolished Teeth. Sharp.   |
| Overall Quality    | Very Good. Well Presented  |
| SPI                | 8 to 4SPI  |
| Recommended Needle | John James Harness No 4, 50mm x 0.86mm to No 2, 55mm x 1.02mm. This may well go up to the No 2 as the SPI and hole size increase.                            |
| Recommended Thread | Tiger Thread 0.6mm up to 1.2mm   |
| Result of Stitch   | A very nice stitch that is well angled and crisp.  |
| Stitch Length      | 3mm to 6mm   |
| Ease of Use        | Very Easy to use   |

## My Views

The cheapest of the bunch by far! Being able to buy an entire set of irons for under £30 is remarkable. The quality of these irons is staggering for the price. Not the best... but for the price far better than you would expect. They appear to be stainless steel but I am no metal expert and could be an alloy. Even so, I have hammered these irons a number of times with no bending or damage to the points. The teeth reduce in size as the stitch size comes down. This leaves a good gap between the stitch holes. The angle of the irons appear closet to 45 degrees which is ideal. The hole left on the 3mm is big enough to comfortably stitch with 0.6mm tiger thread using JJ No4 needles and no awl. There is an excellent exit hole on the back

## Pros

The price is a huge factor in this tool. You can buy a set per project and not break the bank. Ideal for those starting out or on a limited budget. The teeth are evenly placed and give a consistent stitch length. Each set has an iron size to suit any job. Whilst some are unlikely to be used frequently, having a single prong tool may come in handy at some point, you have it if you need it. As a set, these look awesome, visually you get what you would expect when you pay the premium for established makes.

## Cons

I can find little to moan about with tools that offer this level of service in this price bracket. There are two niggles however. Because the irons fully penetrate the leather, they stick when pulling out. You will need to take care when doing so to prevent creasing or cutting the leather. You can certainly make your holes bigger when pulling out if you are not careful. I have given these irons a good working and have not been gentle with them at all. I hammered them through the leather and into the wood below. The result was a broken tooth on the 6 tooth iron. I will not blame the tool for this, I was being brutal intentionally. Having taken care with the other irons, I have had no other issues to speak of. To combat the sticking issue, I have polished one of the tools and this has made quite a difference. Two edges of each tooth appear quite rough and a bit of time at the polishing mop resulted in it going in and more importantly, coming out much easier.



|                    |   |
|--------------------|---|
| Make               | Craft-Sha Pro Chisel  |
| Level              | Beginner  |
| Model              | 6 x 1.5mm, 8spi   |
| Other Options      | 1 x 1.5mm, 2 x 1.5mm, 4 x 1.5mm, 6 x 1.5mm, 8spi.<br>1 x 2mm, 2 x 2mm, 4 x 2mm, 6 x 2mm, 6spi<br>1 x 2.5mm, 2 x 2.5mm, 4 x 2.5mm, 6 x 2.5mm, 5spi<br>1 x 3mm, 2 x 3mm, 4 x 3mm, 4spi  |
| Available from     | Goods Japan <a href="http://goodsjapan.com/">http://goodsjapan.com/</a>   |
| Overall Length     | 110mm   |
| Overall Width      | 17mm  |
| Cutting Depth      | 8mm   |
| Tooth Length       | 9.4mm   |
| Tooth Width        | 2.3mm   |
| Tooth Thickness    | 1.4mm   |
| Cost               | \$22.99 USD £14.89  |
| Material           | Tool Steel  |
| Finish             | Black Oxide handle, bare teeth.   |
| Overall Quality    | Very good. Well-made and to the point.  |
| SPI                | The 6 x 1.5mm gives 8spi.   |
| Recommended Needle | John James Harness No 4 Size 4 50mm length x 0.86mm. This may well go up to the No 2 as the SPI and hole size increase.   |
| Recommended Thread | For this iron I have used 0.6mm tiger Thread  |
| Result of Stitch   | Awesome! The hole is a little large for the thread size, but a little short for a heavier thread so the hole looks a little large when you have finished stitching.<br>However, having tapped the stitch line down, the holes close up and leaves a very impressive stitch line front and back.   |
| Stitch Length      | 2.5mm   |
| Ease of Use        | I found this very easy. Again, this iron fully penetrates the leather removing the need for an awl. It goes in easily and exits with very little effort, without any polishing it comes free without a fight.<br>A brilliant starter iron, a bit more than the Pro-line but the quality seems to be quite high on this tool.<br>I haven't broken it yet and I have hammered it! |

## My Views

I like this tool, it feels smaller in the hand than the others and when laid out on the bench with them all you could be forgiven for overlooking it.

But the delicate appearance is deceptive, this iron is strong and effective. The rounded handle and knurled grip makes it easy to hold and keep in the right place.

Because it is a little smaller, I think this encourages finer attention to detail which will assist in getting a straight line and better stitching.

I think you can't go wrong with this range of irons. I have spoken with Good Japan and they told me the iron is hand finished. It is pressed initially then cut, hardened and finished.

The manufacturer have tried to achieve a tool that will break before it bends.

This will give a longer lasting edge to the teeth and will never make holes out of line, unless you have a severe user error.

I like this. Like I said about the Pro-Line, I went out of my way to break it, I do not think this iron would break unless it is used poorly

### Pros

Cost, even though it is more expensive than the Pro-Line, a set of three, (which is all you really need, two will do fine!) is still less than a single Dixons, Osborne or Blanchard iron.

It's sturdy, well made and does the job very nicely. I could, would and probably will use this on an item I make and be very happy with the results

### Cons

Ok... I'm struggling here... it's not a traditional iron, but if you're not a traditionalist what's the issue? Stitching chisels are certainly a new way of achieving a traditional stitch. And I can find nothing to mark this one down. A safe bet I believe you will not be disappointed with.



|                    |  |
|--------------------|--|
| Make               | Dixons Standard. No longer available new but can be found second hand.   |
| Level              | Advanced   |
| Model              | 1 ½ inch 6spi  |
| Other Options      | 4 to 12spi in two prong, ½ inch, 1 inch and 1 ½ inch   |
| Available from     | Joseph Dixon. No longer available. Second Hand irons can be found on eBay quite frequently though.   |
| Overall Length     | 127mm  |
| Overall Width      | 44mm   |
| Cutting Depth      | 1.5mm  |
| Tooth Length       | 7.3mm Tapered  |
| Tooth Width        | 4mm tapered to 1.7mm at tip  |
| Tooth Thickness    | 2.6mm  |
| Cost               | £27 to £80. This one is £55:57   |
| Material           | Mild Steel. I have sent an email to Dixons asking them about the steel but have had no reply so this is what I think it may be. The teeth on the slim line irons bend so this is where I am getting the idea that it is mild steel.  |
| Finish             | Ground and rough.  |
| Overall Quality    | Could do better. The tools shows the marks of grinding and being worked on. This is not an issue as it does the job but it lacks the appearance of care that you would expect price to reflect.  |
| SPI                | 6SPI   |
| Recommended Needle | John James Harness No 2, 55mm x 1.02mm   |
| Recommended Thread | 1mm to 1.2mm thread. This will obviously change when using different sized irons   |
| Result of Stitch   | The standard iron makes a massive hole, 4mm long and leaves evidence of this. It gives a very nice stitch but with a utilitarian look. I think this is more to do with aesthetics though. I tend to stitch 8spi mostly and the 6spi looks too big to me. That being said, with 1.2mm thread it does make a very nice looking stitch if you are after a chunky look. I wouldn't go much smaller than 6spi in the standard though. |
| Stitch Length      | 3.9mm  |
| Ease of Use        | Very easy, after I have marked the line where I want my stitching to go, I straddle the line with the iron and this iron makes it easy to do. This hides the mark giving a clean looking stitch.   |

## My Views

I have used Joseph Dixon Irons since I started, over the years though I feel the quality has changed and the tools do not have the finish you would expect from the price.

There starts the argument of aesthetics and effect. It is effective! It certainly does the job well, but it looks unfinished.

A tool does not have to look good to do the job well, I fully understand that and doing the job well is far more important than how it looks. But... looking at the tools now being made by Jeramiah Watt, Barry King, Paul Zalesak of Leather Wranglers and Terry Knipschild, why can't we have both? Evidently it can be done and it is something I would like to see.

## Pros

Tough! That is one thing you can say about most of Dixons tools, they do last even if they aren't pretty. I have had this No6, 1½ iron for 25 years. It is one of the first irons I bought and it is still going!

The steel I think is mild and this can be put in both the pro's and cons. In fact it will be. The mild steel is easy to polish making it easy to use and maintain.

They are not the most expensive irons and will last many years if used correctly.

They do a range of widths and SPI including two prong which is invaluable for detail work.

## Cons

The ugly sister of the Pricking Iron world, the mild steel can be an issue on the thinner irons and can bend which if gone un-noticed can create issues.

I think I am whining about the looks too much. This iron does do the job and they are not easy to make and were hand filed.

I'll finish with saying it is still a faithful all-rounder.

**Unfortunately Dixons went out of business at the beginning of 2015 and these irons are becoming hard to find.**

**They can still be found on occasion so I shall leave this entry included for a while.**

# Armitage Leather – Pricking Iron Review



|                    |  |
|--------------------|--|
| Make               | Dixon Slim Line. No longer available new but can be found second hand.   |
| Level              | Advanced   |
| Model              | 1 ½ inch 8spi  |
| Other Options      | 4 to 12spi in two prong, ½ inch, 1 inch and 1 ½ inch   |
| Available from     | Joseph Dixon. No longer available. Second Hand irons can be found on eBay quite frequently though.   |
| Overall Length     | 127mm  |
| Overall Width      | 42.5mm   |
| Cutting Depth      | 1.5mm  |
| Tooth Length       | 5.8mm  |
| Tooth Width        | 2.1mm  |
| Tooth Thickness    | 1.9mm tapered to 1.3mm at tip.   |
| Cost               | £61:58   |
| Material           | Mild Steel. I have sent an email to Dixons asking them about the steel but have had no reply so this is what I think it may be. The teeth on the slim line irons bend so this is where I am getting the idea that it is mild steel. I may have it completely wrong and it's a carbon steel.  |
| Finish             | Now this is rougher than the standard irons, the slim line irons are ground down from the blanks of the standard irons and it appears this is done by hand. The surface is uneven and often rough. It by no means effects the performance of the tool and the vast majority of my stitching you see has been achieved with this very iron. |
| Overall Quality    | As I have mentioned really above in the standard iron. I think working in an industry where presentation is everything, I want everything just so. I'm being picky.  |
| SPI                | 8 SPI  |
| Recommended Needle | John James Harness No 4 Size 4 50mm length x 0.86mm  |
| Recommended Thread | 0.6mm to 0.8mm. The 0.8mm can appear chunky if you get the tension wrong though. 0.6mm is a safe bet. Both look good if done well.   |
| Result of Stitch   | One I am very happy with. Like I mentioned, the vast majority of stitching you have seen me make is with this iron. Apart from the looks, I can't argue with the performance.  |
| Stitch Length      | 2.7mm  |
| Ease of Use        | Very easy, but you have to have as good command of the awl, if your awl work is poor this iron will not make your stitching look good..  |

## My Views

Perhaps I am being over critical on looks. This iron certainly works and for that I have no complaints. It would be nice in a better steel that does not bend and a smatter finish, but it does not profess to be anything it is not, it will do the job well and serve you well for many, many years.

## Pros

Easy to polish and sharpen making maintenance easy.  
 Having an iron 1 ½ wide is ideal for long lengths and it is much quicker to mark a long line for stitching.  
 Again, as mentioned in the standard iron, a variation of widths and teeth options are available including two prong which is most useful.

## Cons

The mild steel bendable tooth thing... I dropped the slim line two prong onto a wooden floor and bent one of the prongs. Not by much, but by enough to make a huge difference to the stitching I was doing. The answer to that is don't drop it! The biggest concern was it was very easy to bend back into shape.  
 This iron does do the job and they are not easy to make and were hand filed.

**Unfortunately Dixons went out of business at the beginning of 2015 and these irons are becoming hard to find. They can still be found on occasion so I shall leave this entry included for a while.**



|                    |  |
|--------------------|--|
| Make               | Vergez Blanchard   |
| Level              | Advanced   |
| Model              | 8 – 12 11spi   |
| Other Options      | The website is a little difficult to translate but as I see it, they do a range of irons from 3spi up to 14spi with teeth options that will fit most requirements.   |
| Available from     | Vergez Blanchard <a href="http://www.vergez-blanchard.fr/boutique/liste_rayons.cfm?code_lg=lg_fr">http://www.vergez-blanchard.fr/boutique/liste_rayons.cfm?code_lg=lg_fr</a>                                 |
| Overall Length     | 125mm  |
| Overall Width      | 25mm   |
| Cutting Depth      | 1.5mm  |
| Tooth Length       | 8.5mm  |
| Tooth Width        | 1.82   |
| Tooth Thickness    | 1.8mm  |
| Cost               | £86  |
| Material           | Whilst I have not had it confirmed, I have been told that these irons are made from Tool Steel and hardened. That certainly makes it an interesting iron. If this is the case, these irons are made to last! |
| Finish             | You can see this is a handmade tool. The swell and grind are slightly off centre. It shows grinding marks. It is stamped Blanchard 8 12  |
| Overall Quality    | Not bad at all. Not what I was expecting from Blanchard though, a little better in the finishing is all that is needed to make this iron incredible.   |
| SPI                | 11spi The irons are listed as teeth per inch and teeth on the tool   |
| Recommended Needle | John James Harness No 4 Size 4 50mm length x 0.86mm  |
| Recommended Thread | 0.6mm tiger thread will work with this, as does fil au chinois linen thread 532 and Barbour 18/4, 18/4   |
| Result of Stitch   | The 0.6mm is tight, but it is broad hole for this SPI so it carries well. Any thread will need to be hammered down to flatten and close the holes up. Once done, it looks nice.                              |
| Stitch Length      | 1.6mm  |
| Ease of Use        | Very easy to use for the experienced. You will need a very good command of the awl and stitching technique. Not one for beginners.   |

## My Views

What was I expecting? the Rolls Royce of pricking irons? I think so. They are evidently handmade and of a very high quality. I believe the quality is what I always expected from Dixons for the price they charge. Dixons equivalent is £57.46, this is £86 an extra £30. However, if they are indeed made of tool steel and hardened, they are never going to fail, or bend, totally worth the additional cost. Dixons had two sizes, Standard which were wide and the Slim-Line, narrow. The Blanchard have just one size which is only just over the Dixon Slim-Line size and hits the mark, no need for two sizes, it works.

What I have in front of me is evidently a handmade tool, is ground slightly off centre and showing quite a few grinding marks to the surface but not rough, it is just not polished.

It is a well-made tool, no doubt, and better than Dixons in quality by a long way.

If you are starting out and finding your feet, consider the other options until you get your feet under you.

If you can saddle stitch well and want to upgrade your toolbox, you will not be disappointed.

I initially priced this iron incorrectly thinking it was £156 and struggled to see how that was possible. Now I know it's £86, I think it is very desirable tool.

If I replace my Dixon irons... I will replace them with these! And since making this video, that is exactly what I have done.

### Pros

It is a lovely tool to use, but no better than Dixons or Osborne in it's application, they all do the same job the same way.

It is well made of high quality materials and looks and feels extremely sturdy.

This is defiantly a tool you will only ever need one of in its size, if you have a set and for me that would be 7spi, 8spi, 9spi, 10spi, 12spi, in 2 prong, ½ inch and 1 ½ inch. 12 irons, you would never need to replace them. Thankfully.

### Cons

There is little to put this tool down at all. It is by far the most expensive, but potentially the best made of the highest quality materials.

In this case, you get what you pay for.



|                    |  |
|--------------------|--|
| Make               | C S Osborne  |
| Level              | Intermediate/Advanced  |
| Model              | 609-9 8spi   |
| Other Options      | 609-9 8spi, 609-8 7spi, 609-7 6spi.  |
| Available from     | C S Osborne US <a href="http://www.csosborne.com">www.csosborne.com</a> UK <a href="http://www.handtools-uk.com">www.handtools-uk.com</a>  |
| Overall Length     | 117mm  |
| Overall Width      | 28mm   |
| Cutting Depth      | 1.5mm  |
| Tooth Length       | 5.4mm  |
| Tooth Width        | 2.9mm  |
| Tooth Thickness    | 3.9mm tapering to 1.9mm at tip   |
| Cost               | £56:59   |
| Material           | Drop forged Steel  |
| Finish             | Brushed  |
| Overall Quality    | Not too bad if put next to Dixons and Blanchard's irons. Better than Dixons and almost comparable with Blanchard visually.   |
| SPI                | 8spi   |
| Recommended Needle | John James Harness No 4 Size 4 50mm length x 0.86mm  |
| Recommended Thread | This is a broad tooth iron much like the Dixon standard, not 4mm, 2.9mm as opposed to 2.1mm on the slim line. I think 0.8mm is as slim as I'd go with this iron. 1mm may seem a bit heavy at 8SPI but on this iron it works. I looks chunky but that has charm on the right items. |
| Result of Stitch   | This will make the stitch bold and stand out. When hammered down it looks tight and even.  |
| Stitch Length      | 2.6mm  |
| Ease of Use        | Again, you will need good awl command. The Osborne are much thicker in their construction and the taper is quite harsh. You cannot therefore go deep with this iron, you are therefore more reliant of your awl work.  |

## My Views

A solid work horse. The same price as Dixons and available across the pond. If I had nothing but the three Osborne irons to work with, I could still produce nice work well stitched.

It would be nice to see a slimmer iron and a two-prong option, so put a bit of pressure on there.

This tool seems to fit the price nicely. I do not begrudge the price for the quality of tool I have here. Yes I would make changes but I feel I have value for money.

## Pros

Sturdy, solid and easy to maintain. The cost is not prohibitive and they are available easily in the US and UK.

## Cons

The range is limited to just 3 irons in 6, 7 and 8 stitches per inch but no two-prong option.

They are fat irons and will need a heavier thread to work. They are not for fine stitching which is a shame but if you are making bags, scabbards cases and belts, they are ideal.





|                    |   |
|--------------------|---|
| Make               | Kyoshin Elle  |
| Level              | Intermediate  |
| Model              | European Stitching Iron 2.5mm 9spi  |
| Other Options      | 2.5mm (9spi) – 3mm (7.5spi) 3.5mm (6.3spi) All available in 6 tooth and 2 tooth irons.  |
| Available from     | Goods Japan – www.goodsjapan.com  |
| Overall Length     | 118mm   |
| Overall Width      | 21mm at shoulder, 16mm working area.  |
| Cutting Depth      | 1.5mm max   |
| Tooth Length       | 7mm   |
| Tooth Width        | 2.5mm   |
| Tooth Thickness    | 1.75mm  |
| Cost               | £22.10 for the two tooth, £29.69 for the six tooth.   |
| Material           | Stainless Steel   |
| Finish             | Very nice with a slight polish.   |
| Overall Quality    | Even and symmetrical with a very gentle etching showing ‘EMS 1006’ I am impressed with the presentation of this iron. It is where you would expect others that carry a higher price tag should be.  |
| SPI                | 6.3spi, 7.5spi and 9spi. These irons are measured in mm rather than SPI so there may be a slight variation and the SPI is taken from the GJ website as I don’t have the 3mm and 3.5mm. I have the 2.5mm and it is bang on 9SPI.   |
| Recommended Needle | John James Harness No 4 Size 4 50mm length x 0.86mm   |
| Recommended Thread | 2.5mm is still a long hole for 9SPI, however 0.6mm Tiger thread works a dream.  |
| Result of Stitch   | As I say, 2.5mm is a long hole. If you hammer the iron in hard, you will make a big hole, not as big as other irons though. You can fully penetrate 3mm veg-tan and still have a hole small enough to look good with 0.6mm thread.<br>The stitch is fantastic! I cannot fault it. This little iron is giving a quality stitch you would expect from the big boys!!! |
| Stitch Length      | 2.18mm. this is on veg-tan, harder and softer leathers will differ. Equally, the tension you apply will also affect the stitch length.  |
| Ease of Use        | Very easy, you need a good awl standard, I do not recommend fully penetrating the leather with this iron unless you are using 1mm thick leather. It gives very even and consistent holes.   |

## My Views

I was surprised by this iron, I had heard some less than favourable things about it because of it being made in stainless steel. Issues with bending were mentioned.

This is not a tool you need to be severe with and Dixon irons also bend so it’s a call for you to make.

If used as it should be, just to mark your holes, then the strength of the steel will not be an issue.

I appreciate Stainless steel is not known for keeping an edge, but pricking irons do not need to be super sharp. Just sharp enough to penetrate leather about 1mm. a nail will do this.

Here, I am not overly concerned by the stainless steel aspect.

The cost will not run to high carbon or the like, it is reflective of the product.

I think for a £30 iron it will serve you well. The Dixon equivalent in 9spi, 1 inch wide will cost you £50.95 plus shipping.

This is £29.69 with free shipping, half price if you will. I’ll leave you to ponder...

### Pros

Remarkably neat stitch, easy to use and well presented. A limited yet reasonable range to accommodate most projects and the addition of the two prong makes it an ideal set for almost any style of stitch.

### Cons

A little narrow for long runs, the 6 prong is a nice part of the set, but a wide iron would be a welcome addition.

Because these irons do not fully penetrate the leather, there would be not issue with having a 15 tooth version.

I have only had this iron a short time but have played with it quite a bit, I have not had to sharpen it and it is still marking as nicely as it was when it arrived.

I have used it on bridle and it performs well, but I do wonder how long it will keep an edge and how many years it will last.

I have not heard anything from Kyoshin Elle about the tips being case hardened which would be an ideal fix. But that being said, I have not heard they are not and they are holding up so far so they may well be.

I cannot really be that negative about this iron. I am impressed so far and will leave it at that.

**Since the making of this video, Kyoshin Elle have stopped making these irons in favour of the European Stitching Chisels, this I think is a shame, case hardening or better steel would have resolved the bending issue.**



|                    |  |
|--------------------|--|
| Make               | Seiwa  |
| Level              | Beginner   |
| Model              | 4mm 6spi.  |
| Other Options      | 3mm 1, 2, 3, 4 and 6 tooth. 4mm 1, 2, 3, 4 and 6 tooth. 5mm 1, 2, 3, 4 and 6 tooth. 6mm 1, 2, 3 and 4 tooth  |
| Available from     | Goods Japan – <a href="http://www.goodsjapan.com">www.goodsjapan.com</a>   |
| Overall Length     | 111mm  |
| Overall Width      | 23mm   |
| Cutting Depth      | 7mm  |
| Tooth Length       | 8.4mm  |
| Tooth Width        | 3mm  |
| Tooth Thickness    | 1.5mm  |
| Cost               | £8.77 to £15.59 This one is £14.94   |
| Material           | High Carbon Steel  |
| Finish             | Black Oxide handle, bare teeth.  |
| Overall Quality    | For the cost of these irons, the finish and presentation is good   |
| SPI                | The 4mm will give me 6spi, I am presuming the 3mm will give 7spi with the 5mm giving 4 and the 6mm giving 4  |
| Recommended Needle | John James Harness No 2, 55mm x 1.02mm   |
| Recommended Thread | 1mm to 1.2mm thread. This will obviously change when using different sized irons. This one makes a big hole so I will need a larger thread to fill it. |
| Result of Stitch   | Surprisingly quite awesome! I used 1mm Tiger on both vegtan and bridle and whilst 6spi is a large stitch, it was consistent and very very neat.        |
| Stitch Length      | 3.6mm, a long stitch, but with a heavy thread it looks good.   |
| Ease of Use        | Very easy, perfect control, that knurling on the handle helps with grip and the points are easy to place.  |

## My Views

For an iron of this price, it should not be as good as this.  
 This little iron produces a stitch well above its price range.  
 Well made, good materials and easy to use! It gets my vote.  
 Even the most basic novice will be able to produce an even stitch with this iron, it is that easy to use.  
 I have students on introduction days never having worked leather before producing a reasonable representation of the saddle stitch by the end of the day with these irons.  
 Great beginners tool and an excellent teaching aid.

## Pros

Worth having in your tool box at this price. It does the job very well and even as a backup iron for awkward areas, this little tool will prove itself in no time.

## Cons

Nothing... I can find nothing so say against this iron. A £15 gem!!!  
 Since making this video, and the video may have been some of the cause for this, Goods Japan seem rarely to be in stock with these irons.  
 There is constantly a waiting list but this does not in any way detract from the fact that it is a great, cheap and effective tool, you just have to wait for it a while.

# Armitage Leather – Pricking Iron Review



|                    |  |
|--------------------|--|
| Make               | Seiwa European Stitching Chisels.  |
| Level              | Beginner/Intermediate  |
| Model              | 2 (II) 4mm 6.5spi.   |
| Other Options      | Each size comes in 1, 2, 4 and 6 tooth options.<br>1 (marked I) 3mm makes 9 holes per inch giving 8spi.<br>2 (marked II) 4mm makes 7.5 holes per inch giving 6.5spi<br>3(marked III) 4.5mm makes 6.5 holes per inch giving 5.5spi<br>4 (marked IV) 5mm makes 6 holes per inch giving 5 spi   |
| Available from     | Goods Japan – <a href="http://www.goodsjapan.com">www.goodsjapan.com</a>   |
| Overall Length     | 113.2mm, they are all exactly the same length  |
| Overall Width      | 1 prong is the smallest being 9.5mm at its widest with a 6.3mm shaft and the 5mm 6 prong is the widest at 27.5mm with a 10.3mm shaft.  |
| Cutting Depth      | 7mm  |
| Tooth Length       | 7.5mm  |
| Tooth Width        | 2.8mm for every iron.  |
| Tooth Thickness    | 1.2mm  |
| Cost               | £9.08 for the single tooth up £12.33 for the large irons   |
| Material           | High Carbon Steel  |
| Finish             | Grey Oxide handle, bare teeth.   |
| Overall Quality    | For the cost of these irons, the finish and presentation is good   |
| SPI                | The .5spi appears to be a secondary consideration, it's the mm that seems to take priority with these irons. However, having a full set of 5spi, 5.5spi, 6.5spi and 8spi will give you a broad range of stitching styles that will fit most items out there.   |
| Recommended Needle | John James Harness No 2, 55mm x 1.02mm and the John James Harness No 4 Size 4 50mm length x 0.86mm will tackle all of these irons between them.  |
| Recommended Thread | 0.6mm to 0.8mm thread. With the teeth being all the same size, the need for different threads is unnecessary.<br>you can, and I have stitched every sized iron with 0.6mm tiger thread.<br>the 5mm is a bit of a stretch but it looks acceptable.  |
| Result of Stitch   | Quite good, I used 0.6mmmm Tiger on both veg-tan and bridle and whilst 6spi is a large stitch, it was consistent and very neat. The best result I have had with these irons is the 4mm (II) with 0.6mm thread.   |
| Ease of Use        | Very easy, perfect control, that knurling on the handle helps with grip and the points are easy to place. To start they are a little rough and take some getting out of thick leather.<br>I took one iron to the polishing mop and this made a massive difference, worth the effort and pulling out a sticking iron damages the holes. |

## My Views

They have had a good think about what is popular, the European style of stitching is a desired stitch across the globe but irons in that style are hard to find.

They could have thought harder though, the thickness of each tooth and width is identical for every spi, that is bearable alone but the angle of the teeth is not enough on the finer spi and works against the stitch.

You have a short stitch with a very upright hole. The angle of the hole appears to be 26 degrees, this is too abrupt and I would like to see it being closer to 45/50 certainly for the smaller irons. This give this a little perspective, the teeth of the 8spi Dixon slim line iron I have are set at 48 degrees.

A better angle would give a better looking stitch and suit the width of the teeth all being the same.

## Pros

Worth having in your tool box at this price. It does the job and even as a backup iron for awkward areas and with a bit of adjustment to your stitching it will do the job.

The slim slot emulating the European style is very exciting and a fantastic addition to the leather tool world, but it needs work. Lets sort the angle out and revisit.

## Cons

Firstly, they are well made, strong and cheap...

This angle of the teeth I can see being an issue.

In truth, I like the irons but the angle of the teeth puts me off.

The Seiwa diamond shaped hole whilst a bigger hole gives a better angle, closer to 50 that 45 but makes a stitch look good without effort.

This angle is very important in obtaining a consistent saddle stitch.

I am not unhappy with them, I can get a consistent stitch, but In my opinion, they have slightly missed the mark and with a tweak to the angle, this could be the one and only iron you need to get you well on the road to a good stitch.



|                    |   |
|--------------------|---|
| Make               | Tandy   |
| Level              | Beginner  |
| Model              | 88057-08  |
| Other Options      | 2.5mm 1, 2, 4 and 10 teeth, giving 9SPI - 3mm 1, 2, 4 and 9 teeth, giving 8SPI. 3.5mm 1, 2, 4 and 8 Teeth giving 7SPI   |
| Available from     | Tandy: <a href="https://www.tandy-leather.eu/en/product/craftool-fine-diamond-chisel-3-5-mm">https://www.tandy-leather.eu/en/product/craftool-fine-diamond-chisel-3-5-mm</a>  |
| Overall Length     | 114mm   |
| Overall Width      | 30mm  |
| Cutting Depth      | 7mm   |
| Tooth Length       | 9.58mm  |
| Tooth Width        | 2.90mm  |
| Tooth Thickness    | 1.3mm   |
| Cost               | £25 to £44  |
| Material           | Stainless Steel   |
| Finish             | Engraved Brushed Steel. Unpolished Teeth. Sharp.  |
| Overall Quality    | Very Good. Well Presented   |
| SPI                | 7SPI  |
| Recommended Needle | John James Harness No 4 Size 4 50mm length x 0.86mm. This may well go up to the No 2 as the SPI and hole size increase.   |
| Recommended Thread | Tiger Thread 0.6mm  |
| Result of Stitch   | The tooth is still a little flat but due to being a bigger SPI gives a nice stitch.   |
| Stitch Length      | 3.5mm   |
| Ease of Use        | Very Easy to use, comfortable and easy to see the points which is necessary for ensuring a straight stitch line. The prongs are a little rough having being ground and tend to stick in the leather if they are unpolished.<br>Polishing and Beeswax helps with this. |

## My Views

This is a revisit to the Tandy iron. It gave a reasonable account of itself and whilst I did not give it a scathing review, I was not totally sold on the 2.5mm version.

Recently a student brought the 3.5mm version with them and I was compelled to give it a try.

Whilst being virtually identical to the 2.5mm and differing only in SPI, It gave a far better account of itself and produced a very nice stitch. In addition, the range now carries two tooth options prompting a further video.

Much of what was said in the first video on the presentation, materials and construction of the tool remain the same, but the results it produces differ somewhat.

The initial visual impact of this tool is very high. It looks very good.

It is well presented and looks extremely well finished if the teeth are a little rough yes and this will make it stick in the leather.

That being said, many tools come rough and need some level of tweaking, a polished tool needs more work and will cost more, it is not difficult to polish and will stick less when done.

The finish is brushed steel and is stamped with the model number and engraved with the Craftool-Pro Logo.

Made of Stainless Steel, it feels reasonable in the hand for its small size.

It looks immediately like it will do the job it is intended for.

The handle of the tool is a substantial lump of steel you can easily strike.

The teeth are sharp and the tool penetrates very easily through the leather, a little tough to pull out though.

The teeth look a little shallow though, closer to 33 degrees rather than 45, this can serve to flatten a stitch but given the distance of the teeth, it still produces a nice consistent stitch.

It makes very even entry holes and the exit holes are equally neat.

However, the stitch is neat and there is no trouble getting 0.6mm thread on No4 Needles through the holes without the assistance of an awl.

This stitches well with 0.8mm thread as well.

The welcome addition of the two-tooth option I think will make this a set that is both affordable and practical.

## Pros

Very well made and good value for money.

Sold by a long-established company so the range should be around for some time and what's more, available almost immediately in every country there is a Tandy.

Having an even tooth that penetrates the leather fully removes the need for an awl thereby ensuring an even straight stitch on the back of the item you are making.

## Cons

This is a beginner's tool, the teeth are a little rough to start with, but then so are many of the others, it does boast a better quality of finish than some of the industry standard irons though.

I still think the angle could be increased a little which would bring the 2.5mm back into play but we need to look at this for what it is:

A beginner's iron that is cheap, available, well-made and effective. With all of that in mind, what's to criticise?

Polish it, use it and it will serve you well into your intermediate stages



|                    |  |
|--------------------|--|
| Make               | Crimson Hides - Japanese   |
| Level              | Beginner but will serve Intermediate levels well.  |
| Model              | 4mm  |
| Other Options      | 1, 2, 5 and 9 teeth in 3mm, 3.25mm, 3.85mm, 4mm and 5mm sold individually and in sets of 2, 3 and 4 irons  |
| Available from     | Crimson Hides: <a href="https://crimsonhides.com">https://crimsonhides.com</a>   |
| Overall Length     | 115mm  |
| Overall Width      | 37mm   |
| Cutting Depth      | 7mm  |
| Tooth Length       | 9.6mm  |
| Tooth Width        | 2.3mm towards point to 3.1mm towards body.   |
| Tooth Thickness    | 1.4mm towards point to 2mm towards body.   |
| Cost               | For a two-iron set in 2 and 9 teeth, 190 Singapore Dollars. \$134, £109. Dependant of current rate.  |
| Material           | DC53 tooling steel and heat treated  |
| Finish             | Powder coated with highly polished teeth. Sharp.   |
| Overall Quality    | Excellent.   |
| SPI                | 6SPI   |
| Recommended Needle | John James Harness No 4 Size 4 50mm length x 0.86mm. This may well go up to the No 2 as the SPI and hole size increase.  |
| Recommended Thread | Tiger Thread 0.6mm to 0.8mm  |
| Result of Stitch   | I have shown this stitch to a number of people sat next to a row of stitching produced with a Blanchard iron, many had difficulty telling the difference.  |
| Stitch Length      | 4mm  |
| Ease of Use        | Very easy to use, comfortable and easy to see the points which is necessary for ensuring a straight stitch line. The prongs are highly polished and this is the first iron I have seen with this level of finish. Out of the box this is a winner. |

## My Views

This is an ideal beginner's iron, straight off the bat you can fully penetrate the leather and stitch with it, exactly the same as any of the Tandy, Seiwa, Pro-Line and Craft-Sha irons let you do.

It is not a pricking iron, so you do not need an awl as it gives you a set hole to work to.

That being said, whilst a beginner can learn with this iron, it seems to have a foot in both camps and will serve an adept leatherworker just as well.

If you are looking to learn or progress your level of stitching beyond that of Craft-Sha, Tandy and Seiwa, this is an ideal option to consider. The finish is excellent, powder coated for a really nice feel and grip and the teeth come exceptionally well-polished.

This tool performs well above its weight and this is why... the teeth taper just like an awl blade, they are thinner in both thickness and width at the tip than towards the body so the less you go through the leather, or the thinner leather you use, the smaller hole you get, just like using an awl,

It is a tool that is more a row of awl blades than teeth giving a hole the right size that suits the SPI.

This tool seems to bridge the gap between the stitching irons and pricking irons, I did not think there was a gap to fill.

The stitching irons are good starting point to learn with a view to working your way towards the pricking irons but in all seriousness, you could learn your first stitch with this iron and continue with it well into advanced stages.

It is easy to use, strong enough to last and smart enough to look professional and overlaps both camps comfortably.

The teeth are set to an angle around the 35 degree mark, Blanchard sits at around the 40 to 50 degree mark dependant on iron.

If it were possible to increase the angle of the hole more, this iron would give a far better stitch and the back would benefit greatly.

## Pros

Exceptionally well made.

You are looking over £100 for a set, but for the quality of tool you are getting and the results you can produce with them I feel justify the cost. Having an even tooth that penetrates the leather fully removes the need for an awl thereby ensuring an even, straight stitch line on the back of the item you are making.

This combined with the tapered tooth make for a versatility not found in other stitching irons.

Would I recommend this as a beginners or intermediates iron? Yes, I would.

## Cons

I think I have talked myself out of any cons, the tool speaks for itself clearly enough.

I am possibly being a little pedantic over the angle of the teeth but I think that this would only strengthen the position of this tool in the current rankings.

I genuinely think Crimson Hides have something here and would like to see them go from strength to strength.



|                    |   |
|--------------------|---|
| Make               | Doldokki Pricking Iron  |
| Level              | Adept Intermediate and Advanced.  |
| Model              | 03mm 10 tooth 9SPI  |
| Other Options      | They have a range of spacing options from 2.7mm to 5mm between each tooth<br>2.7mm = Number 10, 3.0mm = Number 9, 3.4mm = Number 8, 3.8mm = Number 7, 4.0mm = Equivalent to Number 6.5, 4.5mm = Number 6, 5.0mm = Equivalent to Number 5.5  |
| Available from     | Fine Leatherworking: <a href="http://www.fineleatherworking.com/leather-tools">http://www.fineleatherworking.com/leather-tools</a>  |
| Overall Length     | 125mm   |
| Overall Width      | 32mm  |
| Cutting Depth      | 1.5mm   |
| Tooth Length       | 10mm  |
| Tooth Width        | 1.8mmmm towards point to 3mm towards body.  |
| Tooth Thickness    | Sharp towards point broadening out to 3mm towards body.   |
| Cost               | For a 10 tooth 3mm iron, \$299.00. For a two-tooth iron \$89, that's \$388 a set or £299:58 dependant of current rate.  |
| Material           | SKD11 (D2) Tool Steel hardened to 60 RC   |
| Finish             | Fine Brushed Steel  |
| Overall Quality    | Outstanding.  |
| SPI                | 9SPI  |
| Recommended Needle | John James Harness No 4 Size 4 50mm length x 0.86mm.  |
| Recommended Thread | Tiger Thread 0.6mm, 0.5mm hemp, Linen 432 and 532   |
| Result of Stitch   | Exceeded all expectations. The best I have yet seen   |
| Stitch Length      | 3mm   |
| Ease of Use        | Very easy to use, the boxy shaft felt a little heavy initially, and the offset grind seemed a bit odd. However, once in the hand and marking the stitch line, it all made sense. The weight makes placement steady, it has a balance to it and the angled grind prompts me to use the tool the same way round every time, It also seems to make it easier to keep this tool perfectly vertical. |

## My Views

This is without doubt the most expensive iron on the market to date, virtually double that of the Blanchard equivalent, is it really worth that much?

Looking at them on the website, it is hard to reconcile the price with the tool and I can see many shying away from the price tag.

I have many irons which produce an excellent stitch, why would I pay double for the same thing?

It is not the same thing.

These are professional irons, I cannot see anyone topping these for some time.

If it is your intention to produce high quality items at the best level you can achieve, then these irons will help you achieve this.

The holes are fine, consistent and with good awl command will produce a perfect row of stitching.

In high end leatherwork, saddlery and bridle making, tight stitching is imperative, a large hole will give a loose stitch and on an item which flexes a lot, a loose stitch will 'saw' this will either wear the thread or cut the leather.

This iron will give a tight stitch keeping the hole small and consistent.

It is a professional's tool.

The angle of the teeth are 38 degrees on this tool and give a very pleasing stitch.

### Pros

Exceptionally well made.

You are looking at £300 for a set, but for the quality of tool you are getting and the results you can produce with them are relative.

For a professional subscribing to the traditional methods aiming to achieve the best stitch they can, this is one you should consider.

Would I recommend this as a professional iron? Yes, I would.

It is tooling steel, it's not like it will not last.

I have a knife made from D2 Tooling Steel for 32 years now, it never seems to need sharpening. That bodes well.

### Cons

It's expensive... but think of it as an investment.

If you are making a £2300 bag, the stitching has to be the best there is, it is therefore easy to justify.

You can lose the cost of a set of these irons on one project

Apart from that, I have not found anything about this iron I don't like.



|                    |  |
|--------------------|--|
| Make               | Doldokki Stitching Iron  |
| Level              | Beginner, Intermediate and Advanced.   |
| Model              | 03mm 10 tooth 9SPI   |
| Other Options      | They have a range of spacing options from 2.7mm to 5mm between each tooth<br>2.7mm = Number 10, 3.0mm = Number 9, 3.4mm = Number 8, 3.8mm = Number 7, 4.0mm = Equivalent to Number 6.5, 4.5mm = Number 6, 5.0mm = Equivalent to Number 5.5 |
| Available from     | Fine Leatherworking: <a href="http://www.fineleatherworking.com/leather-tools">http://www.fineleatherworking.com/leather-tools</a>   |
| Overall Length     | 125mm  |
| Overall Width      | 32mm   |
| Cutting Depth      | 6mm comfortable, it can be pushed if needed.   |
| Tooth Length       | 10mm   |
| Tooth Width        | 1.4mm towards point to 3mm towards body.   |
| Tooth Thickness    | Sharp towards point broadening out to 3mm towards body.  |
| Cost               | For a 10 tooth 3mm iron, \$299.00. For a two-tooth iron \$89, that's \$388 a set or £299:58 dependant of current rate.   |
| Material           | SKD11 (D2) Tool Steel hardened to 60 RC  |
| Finish             | Fine Brushed Steel   |
| Overall Quality    | Outstanding.   |
| SPI                | 9SPI   |
| Recommended Needle | John James Harness No 4 Size 4 50mm length x 0.86mm.   |
| Recommended Thread | Tiger Thread 0.6mm, 0.5mm hemp, Linen 432 and 532  |
| Result of Stitch   | Exceeded all expectations. The best I have yet seen  |
| Stitch Length      | 3mm  |
| Ease of Use        | Very easy to use, the sleek shaft feels firm in the hand and well balanced.<br>The weight makes placement steady.<br>The distinctive centre grind makes is easy to find the line and apply pressure before striking.                       |

## My Views

This is without doubt the most expensive iron on the market to date, is it really worth that much when there are others giving similar results. Looking at them on the website, it is hard to reconcile the price with the tool and I can see many shying away from the price tag. I have many irons which produce an excellent stitch, why would I pay double for the same thing? It is not the same thing.

These are professional irons, albeit a stitching iron version. Professionally, the pricking iron is favoured over the stitching iron, but given the hole these produce, I can see professionals using them for speed and ease, I would, and probably will.

If it is your intention to produce high quality items at the best level you can achieve, then these irons will help you achieve this. The holes are fine, consistent and even without an awl will produce a perfect row of stitching. In high end leatherwork, saddlery and bridle making, tight stitching is imperative, a large hole will give a loose stitch and on an item which flexes a lot, a loose stitch will 'saw' this will either wear the thread or cut the leather. This iron will give a tight stitch keeping the hole small and consistent, just like it's pricking iron counterpart. The angle of the teeth are 38 degrees on this tool and give a very pleasing stitch.

## Pros

Exceptionally well made.  
You are looking at £300 for a set, but for the quality of tool you are getting and the results you can produce with them are relative. For a professional subscribing to the traditional methods aiming to achieve the best stitch they can, this is one you should consider. Would I recommend this as a professional iron? Yes, I would.  
It is tooling steel, it's not like it will not last.  
I have a knife made from D2 Tooling Steel for 32 years now, it never seems to need sharpening. That bodes well.

## Cons

It's expensive... but think of it as an investment.  
If you are making a £2300 bag, the stitching has to be the best there is, it is therefore easy to justify.  
You can lose the cost of a set of these irons on one project  
Apart from that, I have not found anything about this iron I don't like.



|                    |   |
|--------------------|---|
| Make               | Wuta  |
| Level              | Intermediate and Advanced.  |
| Model              | 3.85mm 8 tooth 7SPI   |
| Other Options      | They have a range of spacing options from 3mm to 3.85mm in 8 tooth and 2 tooth options in both standard and reverse options.<br>3mm - 9SPI, 3.38mm – 8SPI and 3.85mm – 7SPI..   |
| Available from     | Wuta: <a href="https://www.amazon.com/Wuta-Leather/b/ref=bl_dp_s_web_13650387011?ie=UTF8&amp;node=13650387011&amp;field-lbr_brands_browse-bin=Wuta+Leather">https://www.amazon.com/Wuta-Leather/b/ref=bl_dp_s_web_13650387011?ie=UTF8&amp;node=13650387011&amp;field-lbr_brands_browse-bin=Wuta+Leather</a> |
| Overall Length     | 114.5mm   |
| Overall Width      | 38mm  |
| Cutting Depth      | 2-3mm   |
| Tooth Length       | 10mm  |
| Tooth Width        | 2.2mm throughout.   |
| Tooth Thickness    | Sharp towards point broadening out to 2.5mm towards body.   |
| Cost               | For the 8-tooth iron, they are \$64 USD and \$29 USD for the 2-tooth.<br>This is taken from Amazon.com which appears to be what they are using as a shop front.<br>This is the case for standard and reverse irons.   |
| Material           | DC53 Cold-work Die Steel  |
| Finish             | Polished  |
| Overall Quality    | Very Good for the price   |
| SPI                | 7SPI  |
| Recommended Needle | John James Harness No 4   |
| Recommended Thread | Tiger Thread 0.6mm, 0.5mm hemp, Linen 432 and 532   |
| Result of Stitch   | Clean, Crisp and Consistent. Very Blanchard like and exceeded my expectations for an iron of this value.  |
| Stitch Length      | 3.85mm  |
| Ease of Use        | Very easy to use, a little smaller in the hand than many others but still substantial.  |

## My Views

I have tried to get Wuta to engage a number of times and to date have had no response or comment from them. This with and the lack of dedicated website made me doubt they were going to be around for any length of time or indeed had any substance. They now however sell their irons on amazon, US only but promise to ship worldwide for free and I am hearing from many people quite happy with their dealings.

I was fortunate enough to have a set of irons loaned to me by James Newman, I don't get to keep a set in the workshop for students to try but they will suffice for the review.

My initially opinion was that they appear similar to other Chinese irons of questionable steel.

Once in use however, the performance allays all fears.

The teeth are very consistent and produce a very pleasing hole, they are pricking irons but I have gone as far as fully penetrating 3mm leather with them and they still produce a very, very good stitch.

The teeth are set at 42 degrees, an excellent choice which pays off well giving a beautiful angled stitch so indicative of English Saddle Stitching.

When tapped down, the holes close up nicely and even when fully penetrated, it still gives a good result with only a slightly larger hole being made.

If you are breaking into traditional stitching and want to increase your awl skills, this iron is a good option.

## Pros

Well made with a polished finish and good consistency to the teeth.

The price is the main boon \$93 USD a set with free shipping, that's only £70 GBP.

That's not much of a gamble and a perfect option if you are looking at taking box stitching seriously wanting both standard and revers options.

The DC53 Cold-work Die Steel appears to be a good choice for tools as it is listed as being strong with good ware resistance.

## Cons

What's not to like? They are cheaper than many competitors, they do a very nice job and are well presented.

I have no issues with the irons.

I would like to see a website at the least and maybe better communication from Wuta, but no complaints about the tool and its ability to produce the goods.



# Armitage Leather – Pricking Iron Review



|                    |   |
|--------------------|---|
| Make               | KS Blade  |
| Level              | Beginner, Intermediate and Advanced.  |
| Model              | 3.38mm 12 tooth 8SPI  |
| Other Options      | They have a wide range of spacing and teeth options from 2.7mm to 5.4mm.<br>2.7mm - 10SPI, 3mm – 9SPI, 3.38mm – 8SPI, 3.85mm – 7SPI, 4mm, 4.2mm, 4.5mm – 6SPI, 5mm, 5.4mm – 5SPI.<br>What’s more, the come in 12 different tooth options from 1 to 12.<br>If that is not enough, all of these are also available in a reverse option. |
| Available from     | <a href="http://ksbladepunch.com">http://ksbladepunch.com</a>   |
| Overall Length     | 109mm   |
| Overall Width      | 41mm 12 tooth, 12mm 2 tooth   |
| Cutting Depth      | 4mm   |
| Tooth Length       | 10mm  |
| Tooth Width        | 1.8mm broadening to 2.2mm at the top.   |
| Tooth Thickness    | Sharp towards point broadening out to 1.5mm towards body.   |
| Cost               | For the 12-tooth iron, they are \$150 USD (£114) and \$50 USD (£38) for the 2-tooth with varying options for different combinations ranging from \$30 up to \$150   |
| Material           | It’s a secret... they won’t tell me, but they assure me with 30 years industry experience, they have chosen the best steel for the job.   |
| Finish             | Black Oxide   |
| Overall Quality    | Very good.  |
| SPI                | 8SPI  |
| Recommended Needle | John James Harness No 4   |
| Recommended Thread | Tiger Thread 0.6mm  |
| Result of Stitch   | Exceptionally Clean, Crisp and Consistent.  |
| Stitch Length      | 3.38mm  |
| Ease of Use        | Very easy to use, a little smaller in the hand than many others but still substantial.  |

## My Views

My thoughts when I opened the box... I have seen Cinderella... and I immediately compared this to an ugly sister. Looking at it I had to wonder what they were thinking when they made this iron, the 12-tooth version is made of 14 individual parts with each tooth being added separately.

It is not sleek, it is not slim or attractive and is more akin to a mini broom than a pricking iron. The huge head gives the impression of getting in the way and blocking your view for accurate placement of the iron. They are heavy... at least you get the feeling you are holding something substantial.

And then I used it... oh my goodness, I was not expecting it to do what it did. It immediately went through the 3mm leather I was trying it on and left a hole like I had hardly touched it. I then stitched the row and was immediately smitten with the tool; this thing is unreal.

I can go on... watch the video, see for yourself

## Pros

Secret steel, multiple parts that apparently, they can replace if damaged in the first 12 months of purchase.

The hole it leaves is the smallest I have yet seen on an iron like this.

The stitch it produces is excellent and consistent with minimal distortion to the leather.

Everything about this tool looks wrong, everything about it works right.

## Cons

It looks odd... that’s it.  
Who cares?



|                    |   |
|--------------------|---|
| Make               | Sinabroks   |
| Level              | Beginner, Intermediate and Advanced.  |
| Model              | 3.85mm 12 tooth 7SPI  |
| Other Options      | The teeth options made are 3mm – 9SPI, 3.38mm – 8SPI, 3.85mm – 7SPI, 4mm, 4.5mm – 6SPI, 5mm, 5.4mm – 5SPI. The spi, stitches per inch are estimates on the larger sizes.<br>The offer 12 different tooth options from 1 to 12 and are available in reverse and round options. |
| Available from     | <a href="http://sinabroks.com">http://sinabroks.com</a>   |
| Overall Length     | 114mm   |
| Overall Width      | 40mm for the 12 tooth and 12.3mm for the 2 tooth  |
| Cutting Depth      | 8mm   |
| Tooth Length       | 12mm  |
| Tooth Width        | 2.2mm broadening to 2.7mm at the top.   |
| Tooth Thickness    | Sharp towards point broadening out to 1.5mm towards body.   |
| Cost               | For the 12-tooth iron, they are \$160 USD (£122) and \$60 USD (£46) for the 2-tooth with varying options for different combinations ranging from \$50 up to \$160   |
| Material           | High Speed Steel at the business end with a body of brass.  |
| Finish             | Polished Brass  |
| Overall Quality    | Very Nice.  |
| SPI                | 7SPI  |
| Recommended Needle | John James Harness No 4   |
| Recommended Thread | Tiger Thread 0.6mm  |
| Result of Stitch   | Exceptionally Clean, Crisp and Consistent.  |
| Stitch Length      | 3.85mm  |
| Ease of Use        | Very easy to use, a good fit in the hand substantial weight and comfortable over long use.  |

## My Views

I was a little taken aback when I saw the brass and you hear me have a battle with myself in the video over this. I have become used to steel being the standard that brass as a choice surprised me. That being said, brass is still hard enough to deal with this task, many old chisels made with wooden handles still survive today and brass is harder than wood. The tool has been used a fair bit and I have struck it fairly hard intentionally, much harder than you would ever think of doing using it properly and the brass shows no signs of any marks. It is very similar in design to the KS Blade Punch Irons but the link to that is Jin, Jin worked for KS Blade Punch before going independent and creating Sinabroks.

## Pros

All teeth are replicable and Sinabroks not only sell all the teeth, flat and round but also the teeth setting jig. The brass is to help prevent corrosion and I have to say, it does look shinny. The teeth on this iron are a little wider and a little longer. This iron would lend itself well to a heavier item. Many students have preferred this larger tooth and this transfers into an easier stitch.

## Cons

Getting used to this style of iron now, I cannot complain about the shape of it. I will take some convincing on the use of brass though and protracted use will tell. I have had the irons for about 4 months at the time of making the video. I wanted to give these a really good run before making comment, this was mainly because of the brass. I could tell they worked straight off. They have had a good run and been used a lot. they were with one on my regular students being used daily prior to the video and no marks can be seen yet. I put brass down as a con, but even here, I am having the battle over it being the right material or not. I certainly seems to be standing up to the task.

# Armitage Leather – Pricking Iron Review



|                    |   |
|--------------------|---|
| Make               | Black Mountains Leather Co  |
| Level              | Beginner, Intermediate and Advanced.  |
| Model              | 3.85mm 8 tooth 7SPI   |
| Other Options      | The teeth options made are 2.25mm - 12spi, 2.7mm – 10spi. 3mm - 9SPI, 3.38mm – 8SPI, 3.85mm – 7SPI, 4mm - 6SPI.   |
| Available from     | <a href="https://www.blackmountainsleather.com">https://www.blackmountainsleather.com</a>   |
| Overall Length     | 120mm   |
| Overall Width      | 38mm for the 8 tooth and 18mm for the 2 tooth   |
| Cutting Depth      | 3mm   |
| Tooth Length       | 9.3mm   |
| Tooth Width        | 1.3mm to 1.9mm dependant on SPI.<br>These are 1.9mm at tip broadening quickly to 2.5mm 3mm up the tooth.  |
| Tooth Thickness    | Sharp at the tip, broadening out to 1.3mm 3mm up the tooth.   |
| Cost               | For the 8-tooth and the 2 tooth irons (they come as a set) they are £109 (\$137)  |
| Material           | W-Mo-V-Co alloyed PM high speed steel with a hardness 58. European equivalent being approx. Rapidor 3207  |
| Finish             | Polished Teeth with Finley Brushed Body. The edges feel sharp but they are not, it is just very well machined. Very nice etching on one side with the SPI and Black Mountains Co. |
| Overall Quality    | Really rather very good.  |
| SPI                | 7SPI  |
| Recommended Needle | John James Harness No 4   |
| Recommended Thread | Tiger Thread 0.6mm, Yue Fung, 0.55mm,   |
| Result of Stitch   | Exceptionally Clean, Crisp and Consistent.  |
| Stitch Length      | 3.85mm  |
| Ease of Use        | Very easy to use, a good fit in the hand substantial weight and comfortable over long use.  |

## My Views

These are reminiscent in looks of the traditional style of Pricking irons.

In materials however, they exceed what has come before.

These have been tested by a friend, the results are:

BML irons are very good grade of HSS with the European equivalent being approx. Rapidor 3207

It is a very good quality cold work tool steel.

In essence it is a steel that is far in excess of what it is required to do, prick or punch through leather.

That's the closest we've had to an expert's opinion of the steel used to make irons and it serves to instil confidence.

## Pros

As a consistent tool as you are ever likely to find.

Exceptionally well made and finished.

The teeth are perfectly aligned, I was told they were set at 45 degrees and I am happy to confirm this is indeed the case.

This gives a very clean stitch,

## Cons

£109 for a set, they give a cracking stitch, they are well made, excellently finished and made from a steel to last.

What's not to like, I can't find anything bad to say about these irons. No Cons.

# Armitage Leather – Pricking Iron Review



|                    |   |
|--------------------|---|
| Make               | Crimson Hides – French Style  |
| Level              | All levels.   |
| Model              | 3.85mm  |
| Other Options      | Available in 2.45mm and 2.7mm in 2, 6 and 10 tooth options.<br>3mm, 3.25mm, 3.85mm, 4mm in 2, 5 and 9 tooth options.<br>All the above irons are also available in reverse.  |
| Available from     | Crimson Hides: <a href="https://crimsonhides.com">https://crimsonhides.com</a>  |
| Overall Length     | 115mm   |
| Overall Width      | 38mm  |
| Cutting Depth      | 9mm   |
| Tooth Length       | 9.72mm  |
| Tooth Width        | 2.1mm towards point to 2.9mm towards body.  |
| Tooth Thickness    | Sharp towards point to 1.32mm towards body.   |
| Cost               | For a two-iron set in 2 and 9 teeth, 190 Singapore Dollars. \$134, £109. Dependant of current rate.   |
| Material           | DC53 tooling steel and heat treated   |
| Finish             | Powder coated with highly polished teeth. Sharp.  |
| Overall Quality    | Excellent.  |
| SPI                | 7SPI  |
| Recommended Needle | John James Harness No 4 Size 4 50mm length x 0.86mm. This may well go up to the No 2 as the SPI and hole size increase.   |
| Recommended Thread | Tiger Thread 0.6mm and also Crimson Hides own thread at 0.4mm, 0.5mm and 0.6mm  |
| Result of Stitch   | Outstanding, comparable to the stitch produced by some of the finest irons out there.   |
| Stitch Length      | 3.85mm  |
| Ease of Use        | Very easy to use, comfortable and easy to see the points which is necessary for ensuring a straight stitch line. The prongs are highly polished and this is the first iron I have seen with this level of finish.<br>Out of the box this is a winner. |

## My Views

This is an ideal iron for all levels.

It gives the look of a pricking iron and can be used exactly as such, however, the design of the teeth are long and slim with no larger tooth at either end like many conventional pricking irons.

Because of this, it can be used as a modern stitching iron to allow the leatherworker to fully make all the holes and stitch without the need of an awl.

I said of the now named Japanese style irons that whilst a beginner can learn with this iron, it seems to have a foot in both camps and will serve an adept leatherworker just as well. This statement stands for this iron as well but I will add an experienced leatherworker to that.

I had a minor bugbear with the Japanese style insofar that the teeth were set to 35°, this has been addressed in the French style and the teeth are now very firmly set at 45°. This has made a significant difference to the stitch and put this iron at the top of its game.

It is easy to use, strong enough to last and smart enough to look professional and overlaps both camps comfortably.

## Pros

Exceptionally well made.

You are looking over £100 for a set, but for the quality of tool you are getting and the results you can produce with them I feel justify the cost. Having an even tooth that penetrates the leather fully removes the need for an awl thereby ensuring an even, straight stitch line on the back of the item you are making.

Would I recommend this as a beginners or intermediates iron? Yes, I would and I would also suggest professionals need to take a look at these as well.

## Cons

Nope... got nothing for you.

Are they perfect? Nothing is perfect... they are rather close though.



|                    |  |
|--------------------|--|
| Make               | Amy Roke – New Shape   |
| Level              | All levels.  |
| Model              | 3.38mm 8spi  |
| Other Options      | Available in 2.7mm (10spi) 3mm (9spi), 3.38mm (8spi) 3.85mm (7spi)<br>Tooth sizes are 1, 2, 5, 8 and 12. No evident reverse options at this time.  |
| Available from     | Amy Roke <a href="http://www.atelieramyroke.com">http://www.atelieramyroke.com</a>   |
| Overall Length     | 120mm  |
| Overall Width      | 34mm 8 tooth. Sizes will differ according to spi and tooth count.  |
| Cutting Depth      | 5mm  |
| Tooth Length       | 8mm  |
| Tooth Width        | 2.2mm at the point, 3.04mm towards body.   |
| Tooth Thickness    | Sharp towards point to 1.89mm towards body.  |
| Cost               | For a two-iron set in 2 and 8 teeth, \$137 US Dollars, £104. Dependant of current rate.  |
| Material           | ASSAB Alloy Steel  |
| Finish             | Appear to be Oxide Coated with highly polished teeth. Sharp.   |
| Overall Quality    | Stunning.  |
| SPI                | 8SPI   |
| Recommended Needle | John James Harness No 4 Size 4 50mm length x 0.86mm.   |
| Recommended Thread | Tiger Thread 0.6mm and Yue Fung 0.55mm, 0.45mm   |
| Result of Stitch   | Outstanding, comparable to the stitch produced by some of the finest irons out there today.  |
| Stitch Length      | 3.38mm   |
| Ease of Use        | Very easy to use, comfortable and easy to see the points which is necessary for ensuring a straight stitch line. The prongs are highly polished with the shaft sporting a swelled out section which gives you the option of a high or low grip. Both are very comfortable. |

## My Views

The first impression of these irons out of the box was wow!  
The attention to detail is amazing.  
A lovely black oxide finish that contrasts well with the polished sharp teeth.  
All corners have been chamfered to a high degree which gives the tool a rounded feel when held.  
The angle of the teeth of this iron are 40 degrees.  
These irons are pricking irons, not stitching irons. The tooth broadens out as it gets closer to the body.  
However, the teeth for the first 5mm are quite slim so punching through thin leather is certainly an option.

## Pros

Exceptionally well made.  
A quality of tool without doubt. I would have a full set of these in my workshop any day.  
Looking into the steel the irons are made of, the ASSAB Alloy Steel appears to be an alloyed machinery steel offering high strength in small and medium sizes. In truth I am non-the-wiser but apparently it is good for high strength bolts so I suspect it is a lot stronger than it needs to be to do the job we are asking of it.  
They look great, they do the job very well, they are tough enough to last and they are good value for money.

## Cons

The 40 degree angle was a surprise but does not detract from the stitch.  
In my hands, which to be fair are like a bears paws, the tool initially felt a little small, I think this is actually down to the chamfering and the tool is more sleek than petite. At no point did I struggle with the size of the tool.  
At this time, there does not appear to be a reverse option. I imagine if demand were high enough this would be addressed.



|                    |   |
|--------------------|---|
| Make               | Kevin Lee French Pricking Irons   |
| Level              | All levels.   |
| Model              | 2.7mm 10spi   |
| Other Options      | Available in 1.93mm (14spi), 2.25mm (12spi), 2.45 (11spi), 2.7mm (10spi), 3mm (9spi), 3.38mm (8spi), 3.85mm (7spi), 4mm (6spi), 4.5mm (6+spi), 5mm (5spi).<br>Tooth options are: 1, 2, 8, 10, 12 and 20 with all listened options available in reverse. |
| Available from     | Kevin Lee <a href="https://kevinlee.global">https://kevinlee.global</a>   |
| Overall Length     | 140mm   |
| Overall Width      | 26.5mm 8 tooth. Sizes will differ according to spi and tooth count.   |
| Cutting Depth      | 7mm   |
| Tooth Length       | 10.5mm  |
| Tooth Width        | 1.7mm at the point, 2.5mm towards body.   |
| Tooth Thickness    | Sharp towards point to 1.42mm towards body.   |
| Cost               | \$20 to \$170 For a two-iron set in 2 and 8 teeth, \$90 US Dollars, £70. Dependant of current rate.   |
| Material           | Not listed but tested and found to be very good quality cold work tool steel.   |
| Finish             | Brushed steel with Polished Teeth.  |
| Overall Quality    | Very High.  |
| SPI                | 10SPI   |
| Recommended Needle | John James Harness No 4 Size 4 50mm length x 0.86mm.  |
| Recommended Thread | Tiger Thread 0.4mm and Yue Fung 0.45mm, 0.35mm  |
| Result of Stitch   | Beautiful. These can compete with most of the top irons on the market today.  |
| Stitch Length      | 2.7mmmm   |
| Ease of Use        | These irons stand alone in style, you can very much recognise Kevin Lee irons at a glance.<br>Tall slender and well made.<br>They fit all hand sizes and the top heavy design helps to hold the iron steady when setting your line.                     |

## My Views

I like the fact that these irons stand alone in design, being able to recognise them as Kevin Lee irons with only the briefest of glances. Taller than many of the other irons, the iron presents itself as tall and slender.  
Each iron is etched with the logo, stitch count, stitch measurement and tooth count with no harsh or sharp edges except where it counts. The teeth are the most interesting part, longer than most at 10.5mm yet slimmer as well.  
This means good penetration of the leather, less distortion and maximum presentation of the stitch.  
I like them.

## Pros

Great quality, clearly thought through and very well made.  
I like the longer slimmer tooth. The thought of strength fleetingly crossed my mind with this different approach but a freeing on mine, Martin who is a Chief Engineer has tested the steel and has stated that they are made from very good quality cold work tool steel which far exceeds the strength required of this tool.  
In view of that, unless I do something stupid with these irons or use them incorrectly, they will last a very, very long time.  
The teeth are set at 45 degrees which give a very pleasing stitch at this spi.

## Cons

8 teeth is too few for me in a long iron, however this is a trial iron and you have a huge range to choose from, 10, 12 or 20 tooth options and if that is not enough, you can order custom sizes. This is really a pro than a con.

## Armitage Leather – Pricking Iron Review



This is by no means an exhaustible list but it covers most of what is available on the market today.

I am not a tool expert, I use them so if I have something wrong let me know and I will be happy to adjust.

Anyway, this is not so much about the technical specifications of the tools, it's more about the practical application to get you stitching well.

If you would like to see more reviews, let me know what you want to see next, I shall start gathering.

If you are a tool manufacture and I have the details wrong, let me know and I will put it right or if you would like your tool reviewed, drop me a line. [nigel@armitageleather.com](mailto:nigel@armitageleather.com)

For now, I hope this helps give you an idea what is out there and what may be useful to you.

Please, don't take my word on its own, speak with others who have the tools you are looking for, get their view and reactions.

The more information you have, the better informed you are to make the right decision.

Join me on Facebook, tell me your thoughts and offer you're your opinions to help others. That is after all what this is for, to help people who may not be as far along the path as others and bring the standard up a little.

Find me on:

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/ArmitageLeather/>

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/armitageleather/>

YouTube: [https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC8urn9I3pybW5LztUa6zbOA?view\\_as=subscriber](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC8urn9I3pybW5LztUa6zbOA?view_as=subscriber)

Vimeo Channel: <https://vimeo.com/ondemand/armitageleather>

Warm regards

Nigel