

ES 80 GA ED v4 Telescope with SDLv2 MS Eyepiece

Mike Alibone (March 2019)

A big scope with a small improvement – that’s how I’d describe Opticron’s latest 80 mm ED telescope. However, the use of the word ‘small’ understates its significance in this instance and the improvement referred to relates to the replacement of standard, single focussing with a new, dual speed focussing mechanism.

Keen to see how this upgraded system added value and practicality in the field, I tested it out, using the scope body in combination with Opticron’s top of the range SDL v2 MS zoom eyepiece – a product I have always been impressed with.



A quick overview of the scope reveals a solidly-built, robust piece of kit, which looks from the outset like it means business! Apart from the upperside of the prism housing, which is textured rubber, the body is generously shrouded in smooth, protective armour and both the scope and the eyepiece are fully waterproof. The retractable lens hood is similarly clothed in textured rubber, offering more grip and making it easier to quickly pull out when in the field.

Sitting behind this, in a purposely designed, recessed groove, is a neatly tethered, heavy duty rubber, objective lens cover, which can be removed if desired. This method of attachment ensures the cover does not become detached or lost, although the downside is that it may add a little vibration to the scope if flapping around in a particularly strong wind.

The scope’s tripod mount sits on a rotating ring featuring an integrated eight-point click-stopping mechanism, which allows the scope to be rotated through a full 360° on the tripod. The foot itself is liberally equipped to accommodate standard sized (1/4 inch) as well as a larger (3/8 inch) screw and two ports (one threaded) for quick release plate anti-rotation pins.

Connecting the zoom eyepiece is achieved with ease – it simply screws in and is locked by tightening the milled metal ring at its base. Upon putting it all together, my initial perception was that the scope appears heavy (not far short of 2 kg with the eyepiece), despite the body being constructed from lightweight magnesium, although when compared with more expensive competitors’ models it is not the heaviest. Once in place, I very quickly discovered this combination was a force to be reckoned with in almost all aspects of handling and optical performance.

The magnification range runs from 20x to 60x, with the stippled rubber covering on the rotating magnification control helping to maintain grip and facilitating smooth operation of the zoom. In adjusting the eyecup extension, I found three subtle click-stop positions built in above the fully retracted, base setting and the full field of view was visible at the lowest magnification with the eyecup fully extended. However, to obtain the full field on the highest magnification setting I needed to have the eyecup positioned at, or just below, the second click-stop if not fully retracted.

Happy with the adjustments, the image itself did not disappoint. It’s clean and crisp, delivering clarity and brightness across the entire magnification range, as well as retaining edge-to-edge sharpness. The dual focus is a boon, making it very easy to sharpen the image without the exacting sensitivity that is often associated with a single focus wheel. Offset to the right of centre, both wheels turn remarkably smoothly and obtaining a sharp image at the highest magnification can be achieved without difficulty.

Furthermore, the level of chromatic aberration is pleasingly low, being almost absent in the image’s centre and virtually unnoticeable in the sub-periphery of the field. However, it becomes more evident at the top end of the magnification range but not to any significant degree. With so little distortion and a bright, sharp image combined with the natural colours returned by the ES 80, it is undoubtedly a winner in its class and clearly merits serious consideration for anyone considering spending up to £1000 on a new scope and zoom eyepiece combination.