

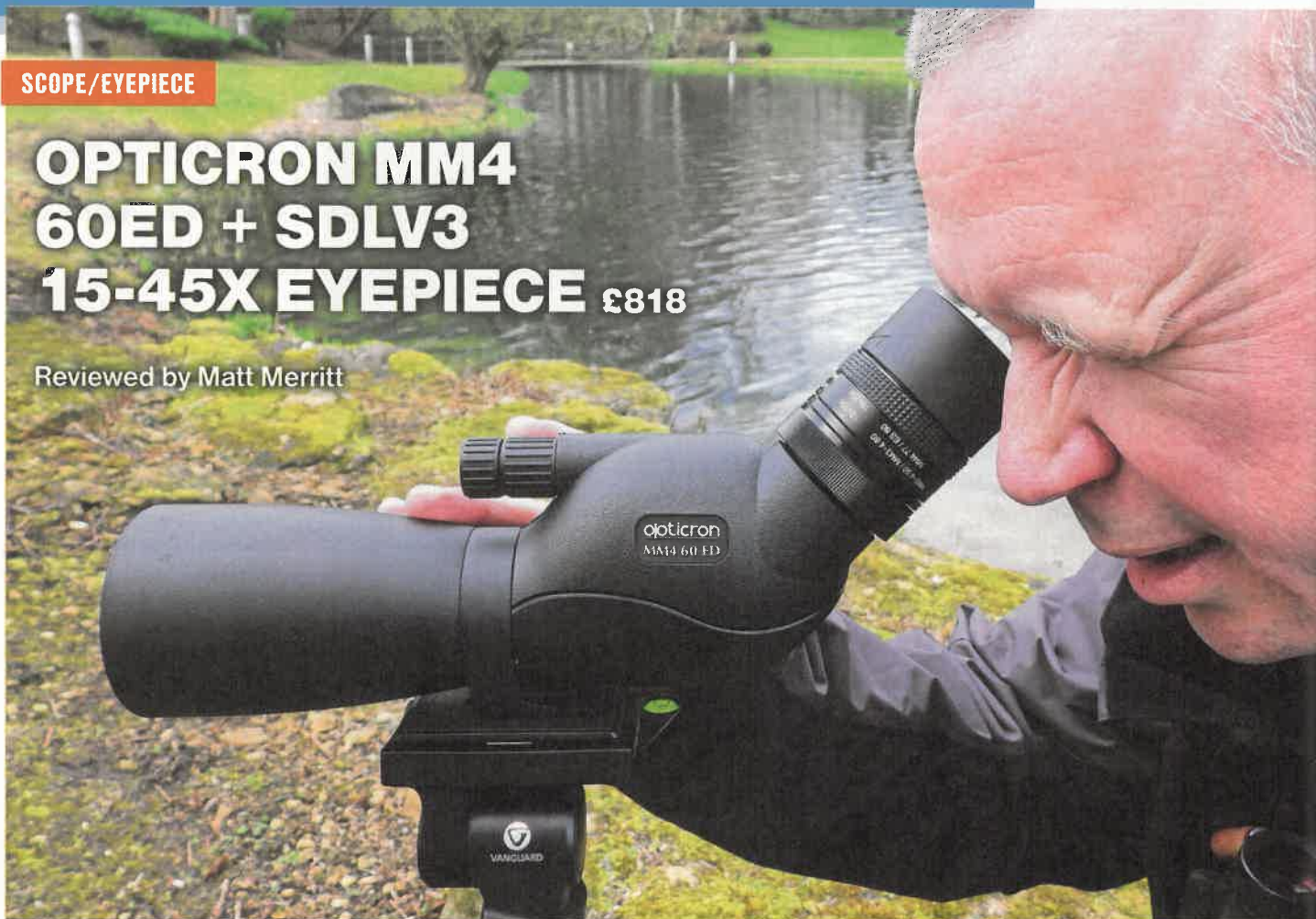
GEARFINDER

The best optics and outdoor products tried & tested for you

SCOPE/EYEPIECE

OPTICRON MM4 60ED + SDLV3 15-45X EYEPIECE £818

Reviewed by Matt Merritt



This is one of those review samples that arrived at an opportune time.

I'm looking to buy a scope, at the moment. What's more, I'm strongly considering buying a travel scope, because when you're also carrying a camera, a full-size scope can be a bit of a drag. A good friend of mine has long used an earlier MM (Mighty Midget) model, and been very happy with it, so how does this update perform?

Let's look at its travelscope credentials first. It's undeniably compact, to the extent that I could fit it in one of the hip pockets or the big inside pocket of my favourite coat. Not comfortably, necessarily, but easily and safely enough that you could save yourself some luggage room and weight if you're traveling abroad.

It's light, too, at just over 1kg for

the whole set-up, which isn't a great deal more than the average 8x42 binoculars. In fact, I was a little surprised that it weighed in at quite that much – it feels considerably lighter.

Well built

In the field, this is mainly a blessing, but also a slight problem on windy days. In such conditions, you'll need to hang something reasonably heavy from the central column of your tripod as an anchor weight – problem solved.

Build quality is good, with textured rubber armour and styling that basically scales down many of Opticron's full-size scopes (some of you may remember that the original MMs had a quite different look).

The eyecups twist up and down to four very distinct positions – there's no chance of them slipping out of place accidentally, so full

marks for that. There's a maximum of 20mm eye relief, but I noticed a quirk (for me, at least). Usually, with pretty much all optics, I get best results at the maximum eye relief setting. With this eyepiece, I found the third setting (just below maximum) most effective. The eyecup is comfortable in extended use, but I did need to experiment a bit to get

exactly the right eye position. You may, too, but don't be put off, because once you do, you're rewarded with excellent views.

The image is sharp, with only a hint of softness at the edges, and good, natural colour (it tends very slightly to the warm).

As you'd expect, performance does fall off as you zoom in. Once you get past about 22x, there is



PHOTOGRAPH: MIKE WEDSON

The ridged rubber focus wheel is split for fast and fine focusing



Good optical reach and performance in a compact and lightweight package

something of a feeling of tunnel-vision, but I found myself using it at around 20x most of the time and at this magnification, the field of view and the general image was very impressive.

Finer details

There was a little bit of chromatic aberration against very strong light, but generally only when tracking a moving object, and low-light performance was very good, too. Again, as you zoom in things do start to feel a bit gloomy, but that's common to all zooms.

At 20x and below, I found it possible to use the scope handheld,

like a monocular. You probably wouldn't do it for extended periods, but it's a good option to have, especially when close focus is around 3.5m.

The main focus wheel is well textured and takes around 5.25 clockwise turns from close focus to infinity. It travels very smoothly, but with quite a loose action, so the fine focus wheel is very useful in getting precise focus.

There's a rotating collar with five click-stopped positions, but no extending lens hood (I have to admit, I rarely remember to use one, anyway). There's a removable tethered objective lens cover, too.

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One more thing to mention is that one of Opticron's strengths has always been its range of eyepieces. Before buying I'd probably give this scope a go with a wide-angle, fixed magnification eyepiece, too, but this zoom is a solid performer.



Size-wise, it's easy to carry and store



The eyecup is comfortable in extended use

SPECS

- Close focus: 3.5m
- Weight: 1.039g
- Dimensions: 310mm x 150mm x 74mm
- Eye relief: 20mm
- Price: £818
- Website: opticron.co.uk

VERDICT

Very reasonably priced, this scope and eyepiece combo provides you with lots of optical reach and performance in a compact and lightweight package – it's well worth a close look if you're in the market for a travelscope.

- OPTICS ★★★★★
- HANDLING ★★★★★
- PRICE ★★★★★
- OVERALL ★★★★★