

# GEARFINDER

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## FIELDSCOPE

### OPTICRON MM4 77 GA ED/45 FIELDSCOPE

£649 BODY ONLY

Reviewed by David Chandler

The MM4 77 is a large diameter scope (77mm) that is relatively small and relatively lightweight. It sits at the top end of the Opticron range and can be paired with various Opticron eyepieces. I was sent one for review with four eyepieces – three zooms at different price points, and a fixed magnification wide-angle eyepiece. The box also contained the 50mm and 60mm Travelscopes – I’ll look at these in a future issue.

#### The body

The Japanese-made MM4 has the look and feel of a well-made scope. The polycarbonate and alloy body is filled with nitrogen, waterproof, wrapped in rubber armour and weighs 1,259g, which, for a ‘full-size’ scope, is not too heavy. Carrying it around on a tripod with a CleySpy Mulepack was not a problem. It’s not too large either – 320mm long. I suspect some birders would consider taking it on their travels. It has a pull-out lens hood with an objective cover attached, dual-speed focusing (more on that later) and a rotating tripod sleeve. The tripod mounting plate has two thread holes for attaching to the tripod plate and will accommodate an anti-rotation pin if your tripod

plate has one. I found it well-balanced on the tripod – loosen the ‘tilt’ and it wasn’t dropping forwards or backwards. You can rotate the scope in its sleeve though 90° to the left or right – there are six (subtle) preset positions, but you can lock the scope at any point around the rotation.

#### Which eyepiece?

After some initial comparison, I worked mainly with the SDLv3, but don’t write off those other eyepieces.

Optically, the HDF T zoom didn’t seem far behind the SDL, but wasn’t quite as easy to focus. For its price, the HR3 is a fair performer but wasn’t as crisp, had more edge-softness and focusing at mid



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and long range was trickier. The differences were not as marked as you might expect. Of these four eyepieces, only the SLDv3 is waterproof and it has the widest field of view of the three zooms. If you want

a fully waterproof combination this is the one to go for. These are screw-in, rather than bayonet-mounting eyepieces. Except where it says otherwise, all that follow relates to the SDLv3 on the MM4 body.

#### In the field

An American Wigeon had been found on my local patch about two hours before I headed out to review the MM4. The wigeon moved on before I arrived, so I did the review with eclipse Gadwall, and Little and Great Crested Grebes for company, instead. Overall, the MM4’s sharpness was very good, and brightness good to very good, though, of course, both dropped off at higher magnifications. Having said that, the 54x view can impress – you’ll need a stable tripod, though, and the fine

focus control is very helpful. Most of the time you will probably be working at lower magnifications.

I was particularly impressed with the sharpness throughout the zoom range when viewing at close quarters. Colours were natural and there was only a little edge softness.

Its low light performance was good – it was still useable away from shaded areas 30 minutes after the sun set in a mostly overcast sky – though trickier at high mag, of course.

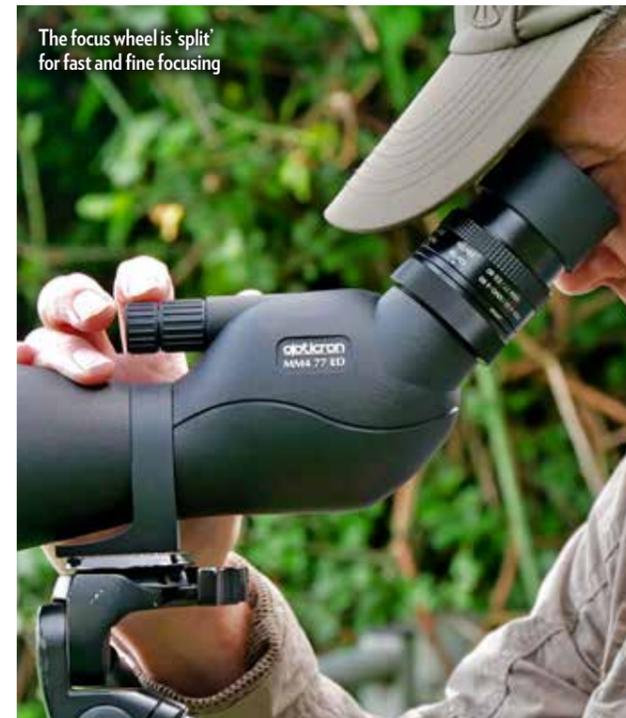
It failed to conjure up a Badger, though – I’ll have to talk to Opticron about that.

I looked for colour-fringing – it’s part of the job – and did find a little, but it seemed very well controlled. This is not a wide-angle zoom and the view does not feel wide (I’m used to a fixed magnification wide-angle eyepiece). The

SDLv3’s field of view is however similar to other, comparable, non-wide-angle zoom scopes. Opticron say the close-focus is 5.5m, which seems to be pretty well par for the course. My measurement put it at a little bit more than that – around 5.8m.

I very much liked the feel and mechanics of the dual-speed focusing. It moves very smoothly through almost 5½ revolutions (of the fast focuser) clockwise towards infinity. That’s a lot of movement, but using the focusers is easy and natural. The two wheels together are about two fingers wide.

The fast focuser moves against light resistance, the fine focuser against very light resistance. Mostly focus precision was good to very good, but was trickier, as you would expect, with distant



The focus wheel is ‘split’ for fast and fine focusing

subjects at high magnification. The fine-focuser is nine times more sensitive than the fast-focuser, and is very useful.

The zoom ring on the SDLv3 eyepiece is well calibrated and moves fairly stiffly (not a criticism) and smoothly. On my sample, the movement was too noisy for my liking – but that may just have been my sample.

The rubber-coated eyecup twists up and down with two intermediate positions. For me, one notch down from fully extended worked better than fully extended – I could see more of the field of view, especially as I zoomed in.

The screw ring that attaches the eyepiece enables you to turn the eyepiece so that the calibrations are positioned wherever you want them – I liked that – I could choose where I looked to see the zoom setting.

#### A wider view

The 20x wide-angle lens delivers a clean, natural view with a bigger feel. It was very bright, and sharpness was very good up-close and at mid-range, and good at distance. I saw a tad of edge-softness but nothing distracting.

## SPECS

Close focus: 5.5m (quoted)

Weight: 1,259g

Length x width x depth (body):

320x107x95mm

RRP: £649 (body only)

Guarantee: 30 years

Web: [opticron.co.uk](http://opticron.co.uk)

## VERDICT

The MM4 is well-made, has good ‘mechanics’ and isn’t too big or heavy. With the SDLv3 it delivers sharp, bright images, with some understandable drop-off at the highest magnifications. The dual-focusing mechanism is very good, and necessary. I would have liked a wide-angle zoom – maybe Opticron will add one to their range at some point.

I reviewed the angled version. A straight version is available for the same price.

OPTICS ★★★★★

BUILD ★★★★★

VALUE ★★★★★

OVERALL ★★★★★

#### Summary of eyepiece options that came my way

	SDLv3	HDF T	HR3	HDF T
Magnification	18-54x	18-54x	20-60x	20x WW (wide-angle)
Field of view: m@1,000m	35.1-22.9	34.7-15.9	31.1-15.5	46.9
Field of view: °	2.0-1.3	2.0-0.9	1.8-0.9	2.7
Eye-relief: mm	20-18	22-17	20-16	22
Eye-cup ‘stages’	4	3	4	2
LxWxD: mm	68x52x52	76x50x50	78x52x52	40x44x44
Weight: g	260	206	222	151
Waterproof?	Yes	No	No	No
Made in...	Japan	Japan	China	Japan
Guarantee: years	10	10	5	10
Price	£349	£209	£129	£139