

MM4 77 GA ED Fieldscope and SDL 18-54x Simon (Cley Spy) (May 2019)

For the last couple of years, Opticron's MM4 60 GA ED has been one of our most popular spotting scopes. Its excellent build quality, compact size and pin-sharp image quality proved to be a revelation, particularly given the £429 (scope body) price tag.

For 2019, the boffins at Opticron have revealed a new spotting scope - the MM4 77 GA ED. As its name suggests, the 60mm objective lens has been increased in size to 77mm.

This should (for a small penalty in size and weight) offer a brighter image and higher magnification than the smaller model.

I was fortunate enough to blag one to try out 'in the field' on a recent trip to the stunning Isle of Mull on Scotland's West coast. The nice folks at Opticron have also lent me an 8x32 Traveller BGA ED binocular - also one of Cley Spy's most popular items.

The first thing that strikes you about the '77' is its compact size. For a large objective lens scope it's quite diminutive, at just 32cm in length. The weight is less than I expected too, at 1259 grammes.

The design is conventional; no fancy helical focussing rings here, but the more traditional dual focus / fine focus wheels on the top of the body.

The 77 is compatible with Opticron SDL and HDF eyepieces. With this, early stock model, Opticron have included their flagship SDL v2 zoom eyepiece - also the most popular choice with the 60mm version. On the 77 this eyepiece offers 18 to 54 magnification - a wide range suitable for all kinds of birding from garden feeder spotting to seawatching.

The MM4 77 GA ED body is priced at just £649, so comes in at about £1000 once paired with an SDL v2 eyepiece and stay-on-case. This is significantly less of an outlay than that required for many of its competitors - almost all of which are larger and heavier too.

Coupled with the excellent Traveller BGA ED 8x32 binoculars, it's possible to fully kit yourself out with proper high-end birding kit for under £1300 - still £500 less than a flagship European-made 42mm binocular.

The Traveller ED binoculars are very much a known entity to all of us at Cley Spy. They are smaller than many other 8x32 binoculars (almost in 'compact' territory) and their build quality and superb optics are very difficult to beat for the price (and significantly higher).

The scope however, was an unknown entity.

I needn't have worried; the image quality is fantastic. Opticron have taken everything we love about the MM4 50 and 60mm and made it better. Pin sharp to the edges, the optics are crisp, sharp and definitely bely the 77's price tag.

I spent a couple of hours watching the many Great Northern Divers that can be found on Mull's Loch Scridain in April. The sharp black and white contrast of their plumage can cause all manner of issues to cheaper scopes, but no chromatic aberration was present here. It was easy to pick them out from the few Red Throated Divers also present - even on a typically 'dreich' Hebridean morning.

My shoulder definitely appreciated the reduced weight (compared to my usual scope) when yomping up a hill near Carsaig to watch a small group of red deer across the glen. The wide field of view made it easy to keep track of them as they ran through the heather.

I had a great couple of weeks using the '77' in Mull. Opticron have taken the tried & tested MM4 formula, tweaked it and produced a fabulous, lightweight all-round birding scope. At no point did I regret not having my (considerably more expensive) 85mm scope instead.

With the 60mm MM4, Opticron re-defined the compact spotting scope market. They now look very likely to do the same for the full-size market too.