

HAWK EYE



The Merlin Gen1 NV Monocular kit consists of monocular, scope adaptor and sizing rings – and all at a very affordable price

Want to try Nightvision without the burden of buying an extra rifle and Nightvision Riflescope? Then read on, as **Pete Wadeson** reckons the Gen 1 Merlin NV module and adaptor could well be the answer...

The ability to attach a NV monocular to the rear of a day scope isn't new. Previously the best by far was the now discontinued XVD system but even that, like many other systems of its kind, had drawbacks - one being the need to use a scope with an adjustable objective and to have a very intense laser IR to give that much needed 'unseen' light for the unit to draw from to create a sight picture. The Merlin is no different in that sense as it also needs a little 'help'. Here's how it works.

Got The Gear

The Merlin comes in different 'generations'; Gen 1 (Merlin) and Gen 2 (Cyclone) and they are priced accordingly. Though I've given the Merlin a full testing, I'm currently putting the Cyclone Gen 2 through its paces on a rimfire and getting to grips with it on a .222REM to see just how fox capable that particular model is, but here we're looking at the base unit, the Gen 1 model Merlin. This is a capable unit for rat and rabbit shooting at sensible ranges, when fitted to a suitable 12ft/lbs air rifle/scope combo. It comes with adapter rings, ring blinds and the monocular itself. All is straightforward in terms of fitting, and a comprehensive booklet is included to show you how, but using it does take some getting used to, as quite frankly



The Merlin NV controls couldn't be easier to use – just two switches – on/off switch and IR

you have to realise the limits of this type of equipment.

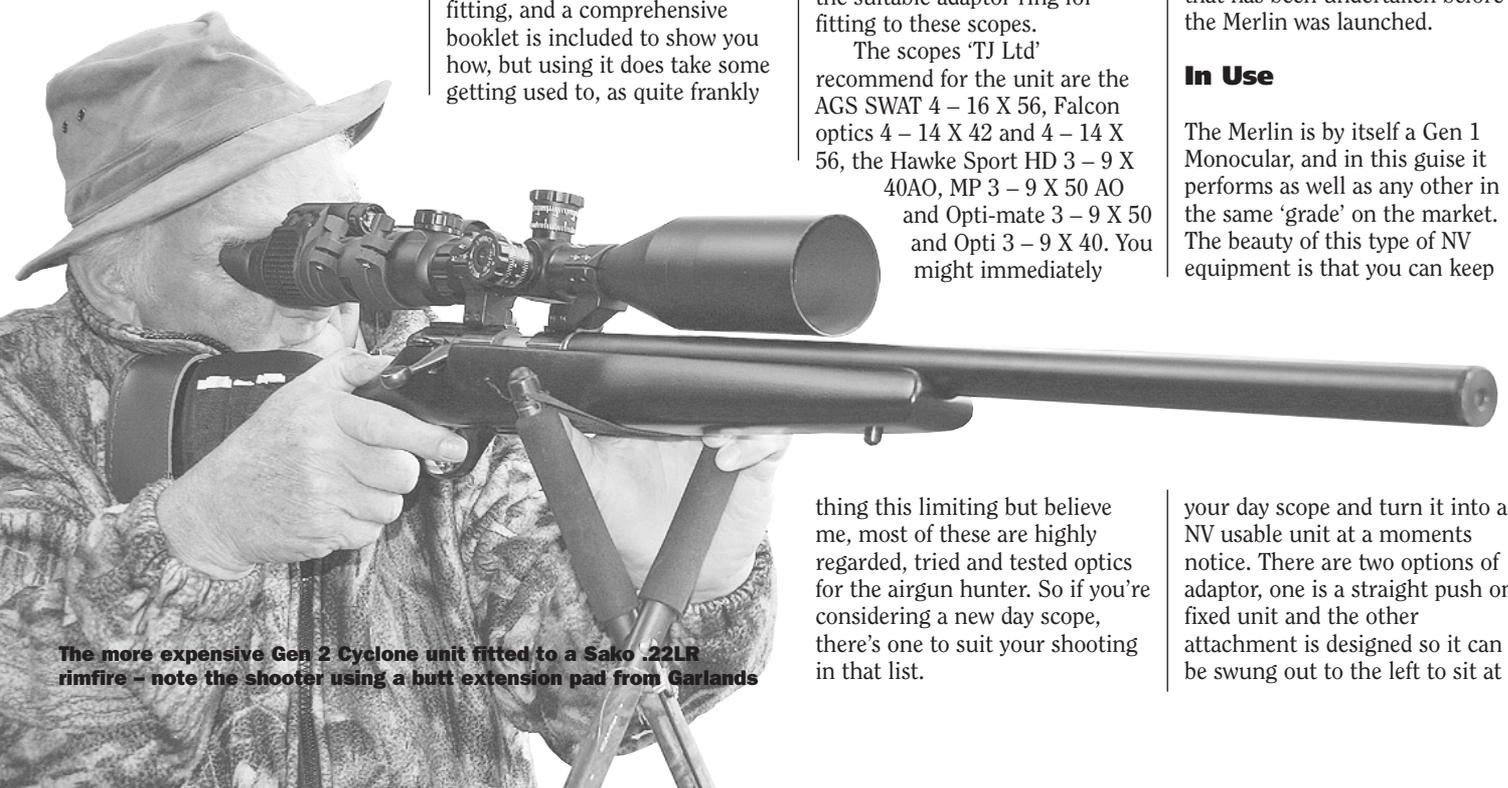
Supplied with the monocular are 7 adaptor rings to fit the various scopes 2 lens blinds and the suitable adaptor ring for fitting to these scopes.

The scopes 'TJ Ltd' recommend for the unit are the AGS SWAT 4 – 16 X 56, Falcon optics 4 – 14 X 42 and 4 – 14 X 56, the Hawke Sport HD 3 – 9 X 40AO, MP 3 – 9 X 50 AO and Opti-mate 3 – 9 X 50 and Opti 3 – 9 X 40. You might immediately

What is practical is the fact that Thomas Jacks actually state which scopes the unit is best suited to, that in itself is testament to the testing and work that has been undertaken before the Merlin was launched.

In Use

The Merlin is by itself a Gen 1 Monocular, and in this guise it performs as well as any other in the same 'grade' on the market. The beauty of this type of NV equipment is that you can keep



The more expensive Gen 2 Cyclone unit fitted to a Sako .22LR rimfire – note the shooter using a butt extension pad from Garlands

thing this limiting but believe me, most of these are highly regarded, tried and tested optics for the airgun hunter. So if you're considering a new day scope, there's one to suit your shooting in that list.

your day scope and turn it into a NV usable unit at a moments notice. There are two options of adaptor, one is a straight push on fixed unit and the other attachment is designed so it can be swung out to the left to sit at

90° or a full 180° to lie alongside the scope. There are obvious benefits to the latter but I'm sure most airgun hunters will opt for the straight adaptor.

Once you've fitted the appropriate adaptor ring the monocular can be fitted to the eyepiece of the day scope and secured with a screw on the attachment – that's virtually how simple it is to convert your scope from day to night use.

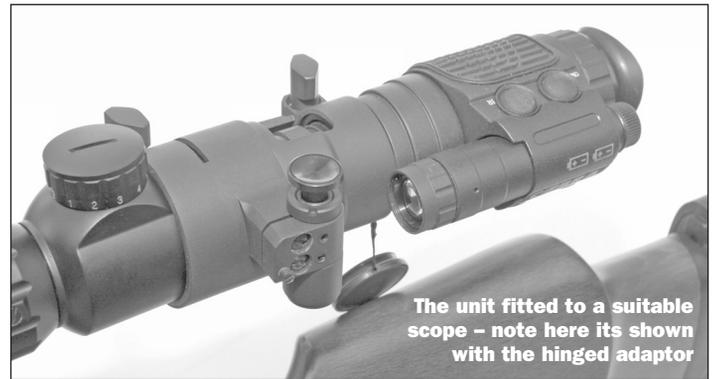
As mentioned before, the unit will work better with extra IR illumination but for air rifle use this can easily be overcome by fitting the rifle/scope combo with an extra more powerful IR. My recommendation is to fit a Deben Tracer Atom lamp with IR filter to the scope body tube for much needed 'unseen' light the unit can work from – Thomas Jacks also offer a powerful IR (infra red) torch and mount as an optional extra. Using either of these the Merlin easily gives detection for rat shooting and even rabbits out to approximately 60yds. For the latter you'll have a clear sight picture for sure fire targeting to take a shot out to 25 - 30yds. You might think that's a short range, but you have to be realistic about the units and despite what you may have read elsewhere on

Nightvision you really do get what you pay for and if you want to stay low Gen and low price, then this is the performance you'll get.

The big bonus with the Merlin Gen 1 is the ease of operation. Only two push button rubberised switches turn the monocular on and the IR on separately. The unit focuses by a combination of using the adjustable objective, a front main focus ring on the module and an ocular adjustment at the rear. At first it does seem fiddly but you soon adapt and it quickly becomes practical and easy to use.

Conclusions

Not everybody has the money to have (or wants) an extra rifle with a dedicated Nightvision Riflescope onboard for this hunting at night. However priced at £339 the Merlin does give you the option to affordably try NV shooting and the extra bonus is the 'module' uses the scopes reticle as an aimpoint, so no re-adjustment of zero is needed and it also takes it's magnification range from the scope it's fitted to. However, once fitted it adds a fair few inches to the back of the scope so head alignment can in some cases be



uncomfortable unless you have a scope with a very long eye-relief or use a butt extension pad. Also, they need a powerful IR facility to work at their best but with gun mounted lamps with IR

filters and high-strength IR torches readily available, we are coming to a point where they are indeed a viable alternative if you don't want a dedicated NV combo. **GM**

Tech Spec

Cobra Optics Merlin Gen1 Night Vision (NV) Monocular kit

Dimensions:	136 X 70 X 47mm
Weight:	0.38kg
Objective:	26mm
Magnification:	1X (but it will use the magnification range of the scope it's fitted to)
Price:	£339 with standard straight adaptor. £369 for hinged variant.
Contact:	Thomas Jacks Ltd Tel. 01789 264100

• The Cobra Optics Merlin G2+ now replaces Cyclone Gen 2+ model •

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