

● PALM OS PDA

palmOne Tungsten E2

PRICE £116 (£136 inc VAT)

DELIVERY £5 (£6 inc VAT)

SUPPLIER www.dabs.com/uk (code: 3NH1D1)

INTERNET www.palmone.com/uk

VERDICT No shocks in terms of design or features, but the E2 is more about the things it can do than the hardware itself – and all for a low price. Rather than trying to outsmart smartphones, this simple PDA could be your phone's ideal partner.

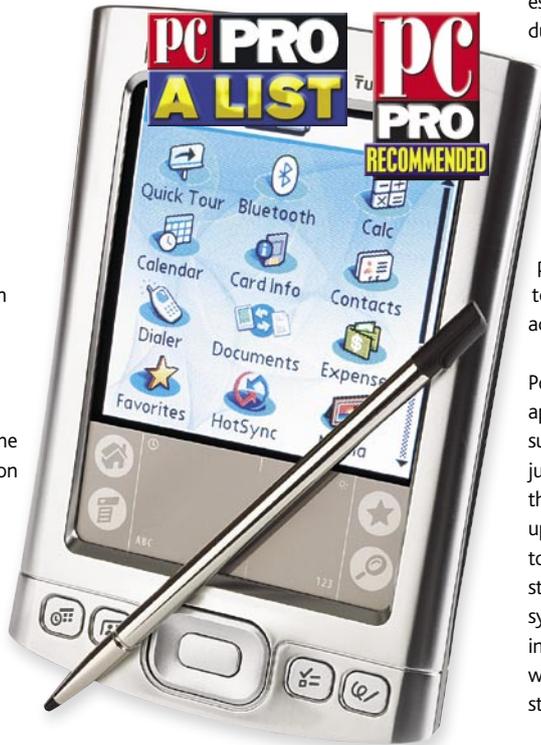
With PDAs declared dead by all and sundry, including long-term advocate Dick Pountain (see p13), some might wonder why palmOne has even bothered to release this update to the Tungsten E (see issue 110, p140). A look at the E2's specs will no doubt prompt further derision. The screen resolution is 320 x 320 rather than 320 x 480, there's no Wi-Fi and, perhaps most disappointingly for Palm fans, it's only based on Palm OS 5.4 rather than the long-announced but still unused Palm OS 6.1 (aka Cobalt).

The question is, do these omissions really matter? For example, one of Cobalt's most hyped benefits is better wireless support, but the Tungsten E2 still provides a neat implementation of Bluetooth. We tried it with a Sony Ericsson T630, and were browsing the Internet within two minutes: crucially, not only was the T630's profile preloaded into memory, but also the UK-specific GPRS settings of Vodafone, Orange, T-Mobile and O₂.

This also reminded us how superior web browsing is on a PDA compared to a smartphone. With the Tungsten E2, a visit to www.bbc.co.uk is simplicity itself, with the text links appearing on the 3.5in screen within a second – and then you just click on the link. With a smartphone, you not only have to put up with a tiny screen, but you also can't access all sites properly, and there's usually no touchscreen.

The idea of the Tungsten E2 being a large screen extension to your phone applies to email too. By including VersaMail on the CD, it becomes possible not only to stay synchronised with your desktop email via HotSync, but also to download POP3 and IMAP email over the Internet. Setup is inevitably trickier – we had to resort to a forum to get the right settings for VersaMail to work with Gmail – but once set up, it works effectively. The icing on the email cake is support for Exchange/Outlook and Domino/Notes setups via a VPN (Virtual Private Network).

Another plus is the screen of the Tungsten E2 itself. As with the original Tungsten E, it



With minimal fuss, the Tungsten E2 becomes a large touchscreen extension to your phone.

occasionally feels like you're looking at paper rather than a computer screen. It's surprisingly easy to read outside in sunshine too. The only drawback is a lack of vibrancy and colour accuracy compared to the latest Pocket PCs, so photos don't look quite so good.

In general use, we can't criticise the E2 for speed. It couldn't quite face running full-screen video without stuttering, and it will stall for a second the first time you launch a 'big' program like Contacts, but once open it's quick to switch between screens. It's also good to see Documents To Go Professional bundled.

The E2 offers a number of other benefits too. It slips easily into a pocket and, even when placed in the faux-leather flip cover, it's slim. In day-to-day use, it also fares better than most

Pocket PCs for battery life, allowing over eight hours' continuous use with the backlight set to medium, even with Bluetooth switched on. What's more, it doesn't leak charge as quickly as a Pocket PC, with palmOne claiming it can last for eight days of normal use. The use of flash memory means you'll never have to worry about losing data or settings either. Plug it back in after two years, and everything will be just as you left it.

The 32MB of RAM doesn't sound much, especially as just 26MB is available to users, but due to the compactness of Palm OS programs (and the different way they use memory when they run) you'll still be able to include plenty of apps. It's just music and photos that will need to be stored on an SD card. With 1GB cards now costing less than £50, and an 18-hour battery life when playing music, the E2 has decent claims as an MP3 player, but the RealPlayer front end is starting to look old now, and we found volume adjustment to be fiddly.

Where Palm devices still lag behind Pocket PCs is synchronisation with Microsoft applications. Although third-party programs such as Documents To Go and VersaMail are just as good at keeping hold of vital information, they add an extra layer of complexity: setting up Outlook to work with VersaMail is simply too difficult when it should just work. Worse still is the lack of continuous, automatic synchronisation, which feels positively archaic in 2005: not only is it clunky to press a button when you want to synchronise data, this extra step means you'll forget to do so on occasion.

We have other niggles with the E2 as well. The list of compatible Bluetooth phones is far from comprehensive and doesn't include any of the new smartphones. Adding Wi-Fi is a non-starter, unless you're willing to buy an additional SDIO card for almost the same price as the E2 itself. And text input isn't as simple as it should be, with a relatively sharp learning curve necessary for Graffiti 2 whether you're completely new to character recognition or you're used to Graffiti version 1.

However, the ease with which you can browse the Internet and access POP3 email on the move makes the Tungsten E an excellent partner for a Bluetooth phone. With a low price that even Dell's X30 can't match, the Tungsten E2 is an obvious choice for PDA buyers on a budget.

TIM DANTON



Setting up Bluetooth partnerships via the E2 is surprisingly easy, thanks to well thought-out wizards. The end result is that you'll be browsing the Internet within minutes.

PC PRO RATINGS	
PERFORMANCE	★★★★★
FEATURES & DESIGN	★★★★★
VALUE FOR MONEY	★★★★★
OVERALL	★★★★★
SPECIFICATIONS 200MHz Intel XScale processor; 32MB flash memory; 320 x 320 transfective TFT (54 x 53mm); SD/MMC/SDIO slot; Bluetooth; infrared; USB synchronisation cable; Palm Desktop; DataViz Documents To Go 7; Palm OS 5.4. Dimensions: 78 x 15 x 114mm (WDH). Weight: 133g.	