



Obituary

Michael Philip Candy (1928-1994)

Michael Candy was born at Bath, Somerset, on 1928 December 23, the eldest of six children. He joined HM Nautical Almanac Office, then located in Bath, in 1947 September. In 1949 the NAO moved to the Royal Greenwich Observatory's new site at Herstmonceux Castle in Sussex.

Mike Candy was elected to membership of the Association on 1950 November 29 and was particularly interested in computing and the smaller bodies of the Solar System, and put his skills to good use computing orbits for recently discovered comets. Dr Gerald Merton was Director of the Comet Section when comet Arend-Roland was discovered in 1956 November, and Candy computed a series of orbits as more observations came to hand, leading to an accurate orbit which he described at the Association's meeting on 1957 March 27. Candy was the first person to see the comet from Great Britain after perihelion, on the evening of 1957 April 20.

A few days later he was appointed Assistant Director of the Comet Section and upon Merton's retirement from the Directorship in 1958 April, Candy took over the running of the Section and the editorship of the BAA Circulars. On 1960 December 26 Mike Candy was checking out a new 125mm aperture short-focus refractor (a comet-seeker made for him by Horace Dall) from an upstairs window of his home in Hailsham when he discovered Comet Candy 1961 II, an 8th magnitude object in

Cepheus. Although he spent many hours in further searches, it was to be his only comet discovery.

During his term as Director of the Comet Section Candy greatly encouraged both established Section members and newcomers. He had a friendly manner and was always approachable. He found time to reply to letters and acknowledged observations, usually by postcard in his own clear hand, adding useful bits of information or an extended ephemeris.

During this time Candy was also busy with his professional astronomical career, moving to the Astronomer Royal's Department in 1958, taking a Bachelor of Science degree at London in 1963 and a Master of Science at Sussex in 1965. His observational work included measuring double stars visually with the 28-inch (71cm) refractor at Herstmonceux and visits to Egypt (Helwan) in 1965 and Spain in 1968.

During 1969 Candy found an opportunity to further his interest in minor planets and comets in the under-observed southern skies, accepting a position on the staff of the Perth Observatory, Western Australia. He resigned from the Directorship of the Comet Section and Circulars editorship about the end of 1968 and S. W. Milbourn succeeded him. Although Candy remained a member of the Association for the rest of his life he was not able to take any direct part in its affairs after his emigration to Australia. He was awarded the Association's Merlin Medal for his work on comet orbits in 1975.

The Perth Observatory, founded in 1896, is situated in the hills at Bickley outside Perth and though not famous for large telescopes is important for its work on Solar System objects in the southern hemisphere. Perth made the accurate astrometric observations for the 1977 occultation observations that led to the discovery of the rings of Uranus. During the 1986 apparition of Halley's Comet and under Candy's direction, Perth Observatory contributed the most positional observations of the comet (538 in number) of any observatory worldwide. As the Giotto encounter took place when the comet was well south of the equator, these observations were of particular importance to the success of the mission. Under Candy's direction more than 100 new asteroids were discovered and five 'lost' comets recovered.

Mike Candy was a member of

the Organising Committee of the International Astronomical Union Commission 20 (Positions and Motions of Minor Planets, Comets and Satellites) (1979-1988), Vice-President of IAU Commission 6 (Astronomical Telegrams) (1979-1982) and its President (1982-1985). He was appointed Acting Government Astronomer (Acting Director of the Perth Observatory) in 1984 and later confirmed as Government Astronomer and Director. Asteroid 3015 Candy was named after him for his work on southern hemisphere astronomy. He also served as Councillor of the Astronomical Society of Australia (1988-1990), and Councillor (1988-1990) and President (1989) of the Royal Society of Western Australia.

He fought attempts in the late nineteen-eighties to close down Perth Observatory, mobilising international as well as local support for maintaining it. His campaign was in the end successful and the observatory has now changed from a closed research centre to a more open public institution with government and local support.

Candy retired from the Directorship of the Perth Observatory in 1993 on reaching the age of 65 but continued to work there part-time, and was re-measuring the Johannesburg plates of Comet P/Gale from 1927 to 1938 at the time of his death. He had a new house built at Serpentine 60km south of Perth where the skies were dark and he hoped to renew his searches for further new comets. Sadly he suffered a brain haemorrhage and died two days later in hospital in Perth on 1994 November 2. He had little time in retirement free from the burden of administration during which to further his astronomical and other ambitions.

Mike Candy had two children from his first marriage to Audrey, one of whom Peter is an astronomer, and four children from his second marriage to Vicki. Our sympathy goes to them and all his friends and colleagues in Australia.

I should like to thank Peter Birch of Perth Observatory for his personal communication and the use of his article in 'The Australian' covering Candy's time in Perth; Gordon Taylor for his help over the period of Candy's time at the NAO and RGO, and Pat Barber and Stan Milbourn for checking on the dates of events during his active years with the BAA. Also I thank Brian Marsden for memories of Candy's early days in the Association and for notes on Candy's observational work carried out at Perth, and his membership of national societies and international committees.

Michael J. Hendrie



Mike Candy with his comet-seeker taken in his garden at Hailsham soon after his discovery of comet Candy 1961 II. (*M. J. Hendrie*)