

Obituary

Keith W. Abineri (1920–2007)

With the death of Keith Abineri on 2007 February 21, following so soon after that of Harold Hill in 2005, the Association has lost yet another significant link with the Golden Age of visual lunar observation, when the study of lunar topography was largely in the hands of a few dedicated and highly skilled amateurs.

Keith Abineri was born on 1920 July 19, of an Austrian father and an English mother. He had three brothers and two sisters, and, although he himself never married, he became an uncle and great-uncle many times over and was part of a large and supportive family. He graduated with a BSc in Chemistry and went on to work as a professional chemist before leaving industry to teach at Willesdon College. Indirectly, it was his profession as a chemist that brought him to membership of the BAA.



In 1941 Keith was directed to war work as a plant chemist at a Ministry of Aircraft Production factory in Manchester. There he met Dr E. F. Emley, also a professional chemist and a keen amateur astronomer, who persuaded Keith to join the BAA, which he did on 1943 April 28.

Through the 1950s and 1960s Keith Abineri became one of the country's most respected selenographers, his work marked by a dis-

tinctive style of line drawing that, while perhaps not rivaling the artistry of Harold Hill, certainly matched the work of all in perceptiveness and accuracy. His publications in the BAA *Journal* and the Lunar Section periodical *The Moon* addressed topographical problems relating to many areas, including the floor of the crater Schickard, the South Polar regions, and libratory features at the lunar limb. Some of his most significant work was done in conjunction with such outstanding selenographers as D. W. G. ('Dai') Arthur (on the lunar limb south of Schomberger) and Alan P. Lenham (most especially a pioneering paper on banded craters), both of whom went on to work as professionals under Gerard Kuiper in the USA.

Unlike many amateur lunar observers of the 1960s (including, to his shame, the writer of this appreciation), Keith effectively made the transition to the post-*Orbiter* age. Indeed, he employed his considerable skills as a microscopist to analyse *Orbiter* microfilm frames and generate material for further papers in the BAA *Journal*, including work on the Western floor of Schickard and the Herigonius rille system. He also continued actively to support the Association in other



ways, contributing material to Lunar Section publications, joining the Committee of that Section (along with the present writer) in the late 1960s, and serving as a member of the BAA Council from 1971 to 1974. He continued to publish observational work in the Lunar Section periodical *The New Moon* through the 1980s and 1990s, and his last paper appeared in volume 108 of the *Journal* in 1998.

Apart from astronomy, Keith's interests embraced geology, classical music (especially Wagner), literature and natural history (where he proved himself as adept in the use of the microscope as he was with the telescope). In his youth he was also a skilled alpine mountaineer. Such a wide range of interests hints at two of his most important characteristics: breadth of character and an ability to adapt. He quickly came to terms with the changing directions of amateur lunar work in the post-Wilkins era, when the Lunar Section was directed by a series of professionals (Ewen Whitaker, Gilbert Fielder and Brian Warner), each of whom brought a more analytical approach to amateur lunar study and shifted its emphasis away from routine cartography and towards the study of how specific types of feature are distributed. We have already alluded to Keith's ability to adapt to the requirements of the post-*Orbiter* period, when direct exploration of the Moon by manned and unmanned spacecraft required the telescopist to re-define his rôle. I have little doubt that he would have responded equally successfully to the changes wrought by high-resolution webcam imaging, and availed himself enthusiastically of the new opportunities it has brought to the amateur student of the Moon.

Keith Abineri stands as an outstanding example of everything the amateur astronomer might aspire to be, and he fully deserves his place in the collective memory of our Association. He will be sorely missed by all who knew and worked with him.

Bill Leatherbarrow

[I am grateful to Keith's brother, Peter Abineri, for help in the preparation of this appreciation.]

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