

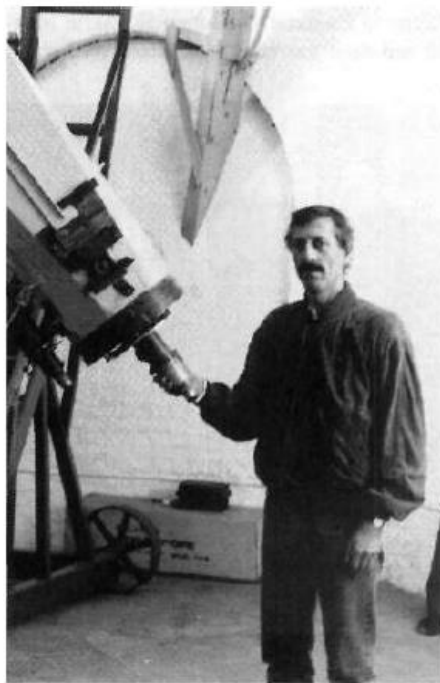
## Obituary

### Marco Falorni, 1944-1995

Marco Falorni was born in Florence in 1944, and spent all his life in the beautiful capital of Tuscany. He became interested in astronomy at an early age, and first began contributing to the BAA Jupiter Section in the 1960s. When in England for the first time in 1969 he took a trip to Newark to meet the Section's Director of the day, W. E. Fox. Falorni's more southerly latitude enabled him to make valuable observations for the Section when the planet was too low to be studied in detail from England.

In the early 1970s, Falorni founded the GOPI (Gruppo Osservatori Planetari Italiani), a first attempt to unify Italian planetary observers. This group was later absorbed into the growing national society, the Unione Astrofili Italiani (UAI). Seminars and meetings were organised, and Marco freely passed on his long experience to new observers. His personal work was done with a home-made 20cm Newtonian specially designed for planetary work, having a small secondary mirror. Marco was also interested in the history of planetary observation, and a fine paper entitled 'The Discovery of the Great Red Spot of Jupiter' was published in our *Journal*, 97, 215 (1987).

Later, Falorni had access to the fine 36cm OG (the Amici Equatorial) of the Arcetri Observatory in his native city, and made great use of the privilege. His observations of Mars from 1982 to 1993 were sent to the Association. He was an accurate planetary draftsman, and his work was artistically excellent. Many of his drawings appear in our *Journal*. In 1986 November he was able to spot a regional dust storm beginning in the Hellas basin, whose commencement was missed elsewhere in Europe, on account of the poor position of the planet in the sky. He later chronicled the event in *the Journal*, 98, 241 (1988). Marco was a hospitable friend; the writer (RJM) first met him in Florence in 1988, and again in Paris later that year, when we each took turns at the eyepiece of the Great Meudon Refractor in the company of Prof. Dollfus, Dr Ebisawa, Daniel Crussaire, Nathalie Cabrol, and other friends from the Mars Commission of the



Marco Falorni in the dome of the Northumberland refractor at Cambridge University Observatory, 1990.

Societe Astronomique de France. The experience was recounted by Falorni in the Italian magazine, *L'Astronomia*. He also made some very detailed maps of the martian south polar cap in 1988, from measurements of the best amateur photographs. In the same year Falorni founded the Planetary Section of the UAI, of which organisation he was to become Vice-President. In 1994 he co-edited with Paolo Tanga a useful observational guide, *Osservare I Pianeti*, published originally by *VAstronomia*, and now distributed by the UAI.

Marco Falorni first joined the BAA in 1969; after a break of a few years in the late 1970s he rejoined in 1981. When the Association celebrated its Centenary in 1990, he attended the celebratory meeting in London and made a speech from the platform to personally deliver the congratulations of the UAI.

Professionally, Marco was a statistician for much of his career, but he later worked at a National Council of Research centre at Arcetri. He was also involved with the observations made at TIRGO, the Italian infrared telescope in the Swiss Alps. In 1994 he suffered a breakdown in his health. Lung cancer was diagnosed (he was a heavy smoker), and early the next year he underwent an operation that seemed to have been largely successful. To the delight of his many friends, Marco was able to take up his post as the new President of the UAI. But in December his health suddenly took a turn for the worse, he was admitted to hospital, and died on 1995 December 23.

Marco Falorni was a man of considerable ability and personal charm, and his death is a great loss to Italian astronomy. Had he lived, he would doubtless have accomplished even more. We should also mention here his interests in the archaeology of ancient civilisations, and the fact that he was once the Italian bridge champion. He is survived by his mother, two sisters and a son, and to them we extend our heartfelt sympathies.

**Richard McKim** (*Director, BAA Mars Section*)

**Paolo Tanga** (*Mars Recorder, UAI Planetary Section*)