



Cometography: a catalog of comets. Vol. 5: 1960–1982

Gary W. Kronk & Maik Meyer

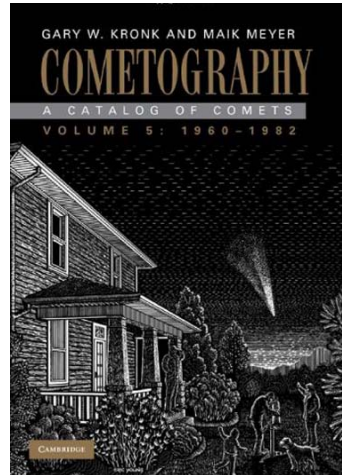
Cambridge University Press, 2010. ISBN 978-0521-872263. pp xi + 820, £130.00 (hbk).

This is the fifth volume of what was originally planned to be a four volume series, and records comets that are more likely to have been seen by BAA members. It follows the format of previous volumes and does not accommodate suggestions from reviewers such as the desirability of including illustrations. One small change forced on the authors is that with an increasing number of comet observers it was no longer possible in the main to give individual observations, and synopses are used as appropriate.

There are many descriptions from BAA observers, though these seem to come from *IAUC* or *International Comet Quarterly* records. The *Handbook* (particularly for orbits) and *Journal* are referenced for some

comets, however papers such as Michael Hendrie's on comets 1969 Y1 (Bennett) and 1973 E1 (Kohoutek) get no mention. A criticism of previous volumes was the lack of reference to original European sources, and despite the addition of Maik Meyer as an author this still seems to be the case.

One criticism that I will highlight concerns the orbits, and reflects an issue that increasingly appears in *MPECs* as well. Orbits are given to seven significant figures in this volume, a level of precision that is often unwarranted. It is instructive to watch the *MPECs* and observe how the elements of a newly discovered object change over time. New elements often dif-



fer in the third significant digit, despite often being given to eight. Whilst mathematically the orbit may fit the observations to this precision, it does not mean that the orbit has the accuracy that is implied by the precision.

Criticism is however easy, and an enormous amount of work has gone into preparing this and previous volumes. The authors are to be congratulated on providing a resource that will be referenced for many years to come.

Jonathan Shanklin

Jonathan Shanklin is Director of the Comet Section, and some of his observations are noted in this volume.

This review is copyright © the *Journal* of the British Astronomical Association, www.britastro.org/journal. If you wish to reproduce it, or place it on your own Web page, please contact the Editor: Mrs Hazel McGee, hazelmcgee@btinternet.com