mounted on a cradle and fitted with a 40-cm diameter doublet objective lenses. The observer guided through one of the tubes and exposed through the other one. A specially developed prism by Fehrenbach could be mounted on top of the objective. A second exposure after a 180 degrees rotation of the prism allowed determination of radial velocities to an accuracy of ~ 5 km/sec.

The GPO was the twin of another one installed in Haute-Provence Observatory and firstly introduced by its previous owner, Marseille Observatory, in Zeekoegat (South Africa) in the middle of 1961. The telescope was extensively used for the ESO site testing in South Africa in combination with research astronomical programmes until the end of 1965.

After the astrograph was dismounted, the mechanical parts were sent to Chile, where they were stored during 1966 and 1967 while the optical parts were taken to France for overhaul. During May 1968, the telescope was erected and assembled at La Silla, beginning its routine job in mid-June of that year. The telescope was used by Marseille astronomers until the end of April 1969. The 1st of May, 1969, ESO took over the control of the GPO with staff astronomers observations. From October that year the telescope was given to visiting astronomers programmes. In 1992, a programme from a French consortium led by the Institut d'Astrophysique de Paris combined a 40-cm telescope tube with an array of 16 Thomson CCDs mounted in the GPO structure used as the drive unit. This programme, known as the EROS experiment, aimed at searching for halo dark matter via gravitational microlensing of visible stars in the Magellanic Clouds and the Galactic bulge, and last until the final days of the GPO.

The first plate was taken in Zeekoegat on July 18th, 1961, at 22 h local time by Ms. and Mr. Duflot, pointing at ε Scuti with an exposure time of 2.5 minutes. Comments: "un peu surexposé". No indication of the emulsion used, most likely IIaO. No less than 15,000 plates later, on June 4th, 1995, astronomers O. Hainaut and C. Coutures exposed during 45 minutes a IIIaJ plate targeted on the SMC, towards the end of the morning twilight. That is the last plate taken.

The actual site of the GPO and its dome will soon host "MARLY-EROS II" which will pursue the EROS experiment. This new project will use the MARLY 1-m telescope together with a 16-wide-field CCD-cameras array (2000 × 2000). The telescope is already operational at Observatoire de Haute-Provence, and the CCDs array is under final tests at CEA-Saclay. First observations should start next October.

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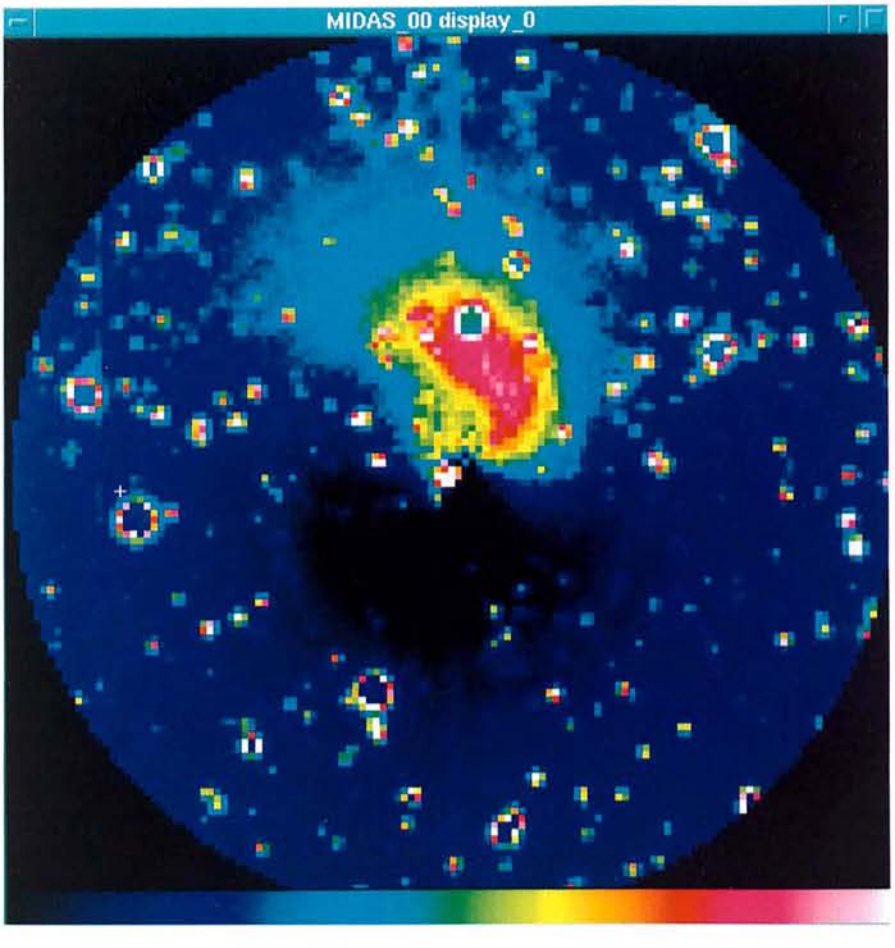
A Spectacular Jet in Comet Hale-Bopp

Astronomers at ESO and elsewhere are now preparing themselves to observe what may become one of the brightest comets of this century.

Comet Hale-Bopp was discovered in July 1995, at heliocentric distance 7 AU and already at magnitude 10.5. This is extremely bright for a comet at this large distance. When it reaches perihelion in early April 1997, and provided the brightness development follows the usual law, it may reach magnitude 0 or brighter. A small ESO Hale-Bopp Task Group has been set up to monitor the further evolution of this very unusual object. Please refer to the ESO WWW Homepage (URL: http://www.eso.org/comet-hale-bopp/) for the latest information.



This false-colour image (ESO Press Photo 25/95) shows the large jet now observed in Comet Hale-Bopp. Hans Ulrich Käufl (ESO) has prepared this computer-enhanced version of a near-IR CCD-frame, obtained on August 31 with the multi-mode DFOSC instrument at the Danish 1.5-m telescope on La Silla by Emilio Molinari from Osservatorio di Brera, Milano-Merate, Italy. North is up and East is to the left; 1 pix = 0.51 arcsec and the circular field has a diameter of 65 arcsec.

The exposure lasted 5 minutes and was made through a gunn-i filter, recording the reflected sunlight from the dusty coma of the comet at a wavelength of about 9000 Å (900 nm). The observing conditions were excellent (seeing 0.8 arcsec). In order to isolate the light from the jet, the stars were partially removed and the symmetrical part of the coma was subtracted, so that only asymmetrical structures in the frame remain visible.

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