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THE FALSE NOVA 1999 IN THE NEARBY GALAXY IC 1613

FUGAZZA, D.; MANTEGAZZA, L.; PORETTI, E.; ANTONELLO, E.

Osservatorio Astronomico di Brera, Via E. Bianchi 46, I-23807 Merate, Italy
e-mail: fugazza@merate.mi.astro.it

King et al. (1999) announced the discovery of a nova in the nearby galaxy IC 1613 on the basis of unfiltered images taken on October 12 and 13, 1999. According to them the object had a brightness of about $18\overset{\mathrm{m}}{.}5$ and the limiting magnitude of their frames was about 19. The analysis of their archival images showed that the object was present since August 23 with about the same brightness, but it was invisible on Aug. 18.

As we have been observing IC 1613 since 1995 to detect variable stars (Antonello et al. 1999) and the so–called nova falls in our Field B (Antonello et al. 2000), we had the opportunity to check that its coordinates are coincident within the uncertainties with those of our variable V2950B. According to our 57 measurements, taken between October 1995 and October 1998 with the 0.9-m Dutch telescope at La Silla Observatory, this is an object with an amplitude of variation in unfiltered light of about $2\overset{\mathrm{m}}{.}5$ in a period of about 645 days. Our exposures were of 30 min in duration and the limiting magnitude is about 24. According to this period the epochs of the observations by King et al. (1999) falls a few days before the maximum brightness of the star.

We got other 6 images in unfiltered light with the 1.5-m telescope at the Observatorio Astronomico Nacional of San Pedro Martir between October 12 and 19, 1999, i.e. just by chance we observed at the same dates of the detection of the presumed nova by King et al. (1999). According to our data the star brightness did not change by more than $0\overset{\mathrm{m}}{.}1$ with a mean value of $18\overset{\mathrm{m}}{.}52$ in our unfiltered light photometric system (see Antonello et al. 1999). The new data allowed us to improve the period, obtaining 631 days. Our measurements phased with this period are shown in Fig. 1, where the 1999 data are plotted as crosses and the best fitting sine wave is shown as a dashed line. The zero phase corresponds to JD 2450795.50.

We were able to find three measurements of this star in filtered light, which are listed in Table 1. The first one is by Freedman (1988), the second one was obtained from our V

Table 1: Filtered light measurements.

JD	V	$V-R$	$V-I$	$B-V$
2445973.88	21.20	1.26	3.47	2.02
2450305.90	20.16	0.95	—	—
2450725.80	22.52	—	4.36	—

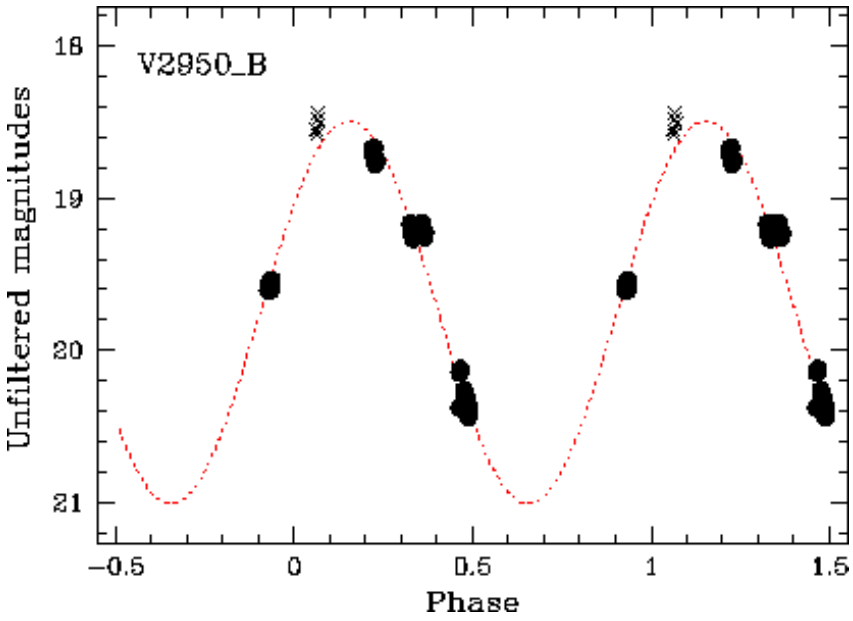

Figure 1. Unfiltered data phased with $P = 631$ d; the crosses correspond to the October 1999 observations. The dotted line is the best fitting sine wave

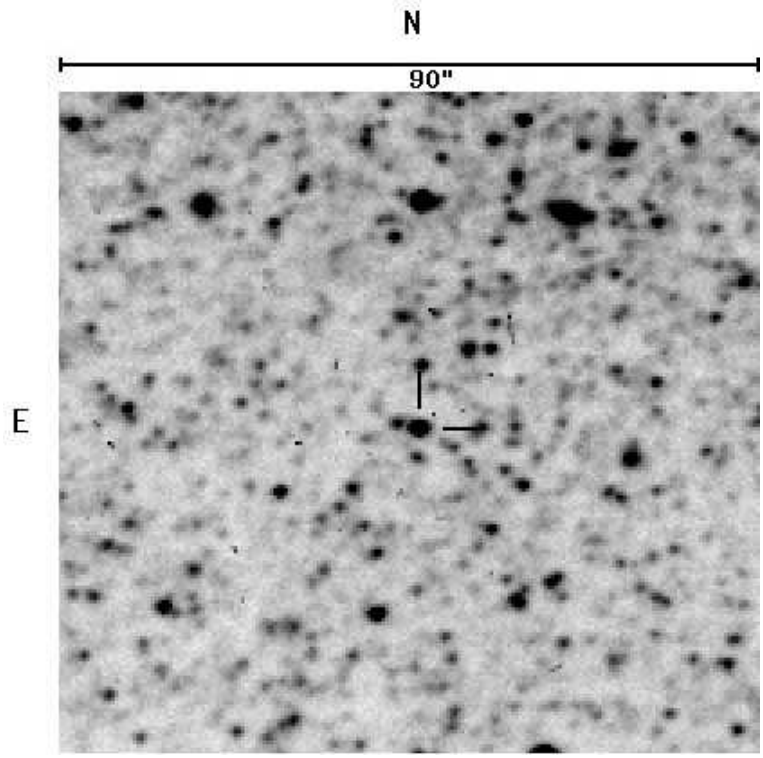

Figure 2. Unfiltered image taken on October 17, 1996: the star erroneously announced as a nova is a long period variable

and R images, and the third was measured by us on the Cole et al. (1999) frames. The star varies of at least $2\overset{\mathrm{m}}{.}4$ in V light and its colour is very red, having $V-I$ of about 4.

Fig. 2 shows the image of V2950B in unfiltered light taken by us on October 17, 1996, i.e. three years before the announcement of the detection as a nova. At that time the star had a magnitude of 19.2.

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