

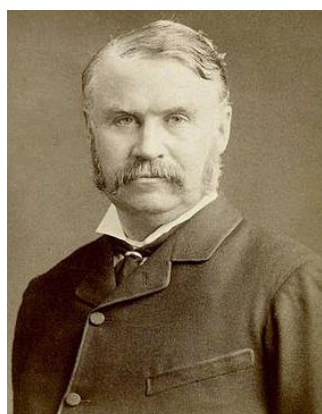
Rectifying A Chart

(How to Find the Time of Birth from Scratch)

The data required for drawing a natal astrological chart are the date, place and time of birth. While there is usually (but not always) clarity about date and place it is sometimes more difficult to obtain an accurate time.

If the time of birth is unknown or uncertain then it may be possible to identify it by reference to the physique and character of the native and the events which have occurred in his or her life. This process is known as rectifying the birth chart.

The Ascendant sign and ruler should be reflected in the native's physical appearance although account also needs to be taken of the Zodiac signs occupied by the Sun, Moon and ascendant ruler and major aspects made to any of these three bodies as these can have an important influence on body shape and complexion.



William Schwenck Gilbert
(1836-1911)

At the time of significant traumas, illnesses or other major life event the effect of Transits, Progressions and Solar Arc Directions to the angles of the chart (Ascendant, Descendant, MC and IC) should be evident in a majority of instances.

Sometimes the transits, progressions and directions will make contact with a planet in the chart but this could occur regardless of the time at which the person is born - it is contacts with the *angles* which are more important as these are the points in a chart which determine more specifically the birth time of the individual.

I have also found Astro*Carto*Graphy to be a useful technique for confirming birth times where a location holds particular importance for the individual.

As an example of this process let's take the case of the dramatist Sir William Schwenck (W.S.) Gilbert. Although he was a prolific dramatist in his own right it is the output of his partnership with the composer Sir Arthur Sullivan for which he is best remembered which includes comic operas such as *The Mikado*, *The Pirates of Penzance* and *HMS Pinafore*.

We know that Gilbert was born on 18 November 1836¹ but we have no reference to any time of birth. As the Moon changes sign during the day the first step is to narrow the search based on which sign seems a better fit for his personality - a Pisces Moon before 10.21 a.m. or an Aries Moon after that.



Sir Arthur Sullivan (1842-1900)

A Pisces Moon would offer us an Ascendant from 6° Virgo to 29° Sagittarius with the remaining degrees of the Zodiac implying an Aries Moon.

Gilbert was the master of the cutting remark or put down - his brusque manner and acerbic nature is well documented and his general personality seems to be summed up in the following quotation which might be considered to be consistent with an Aries Moon.

"He was the creature of impulse, acting and speaking as he felt without the least curiosity as to the cause or consequence of his behaviour"²

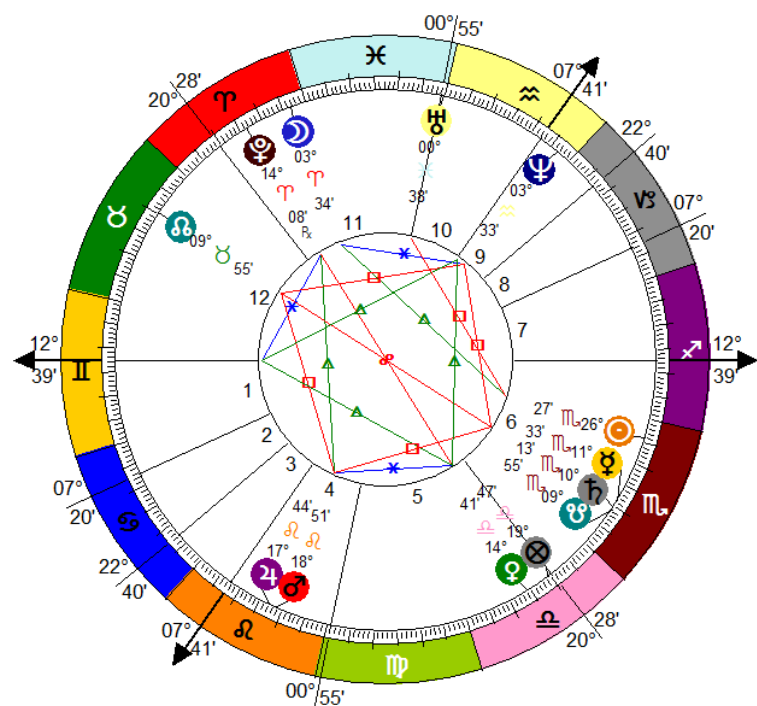
However, we also have accounts of his generosity such as the following description from the actress, May Fortescue:

"His kindness was extraordinary. On wet nights and when rehearsals were late and the last buses were gone, he would pay the cab-fares of the girls whether they were pretty or not, instead of letting them trudge home on foot... Gilbert was no plaster saint, but he was an ideal friend."³

At first sight this tribute to his generosity might suggest a Pisces Moon yet the steadfastness of Gilbert's friendship together with his compassion for many worthy causes could also be readily ascribed to his Scorpio Sun - some of my best and most loyal friends are Scorpions. His strong interest in soldiers and sailors (military characters play a significant role in the majority of his operas) also seems more indicative of a Moon in Aries rather than Pisces although the Scorpio Sun probably also has a part to play.

I reviewed my database of clients and personalities and found the Pisces Moon characters were mostly very gentle souls and not consistent with the rather prickly persona presented by W.S. Gilbert. Equally, the Aries Moon characters in my database all had a certain sharpness and determination about them that seemed similar to what we know of Gilbert.

My initial thought had been that Gilbert's predilection for verbal wordplay and a lifelong interest in sport and games would best be described by a Gemini Ascendant which would put the time of birth in late afternoon and place the Moon in Aries.



William Schwenck Gilbert 4.50 p.m. LMT (Rectified)
18 November 1836, London, UK, 51N30, 000W10

Even so, I was not wholly convinced that the Gemini Ascendant worked as Gilbert was known to suffer from gout for many years - a disease primarily of the feet and therefore associated with Pisces.

I got some way down the track with a Pisces ascendant having found a number of progressions which fitted but I baulked when I came to the chart for Gilbert's death which seemed to indicate that a Gemini ascendant was much more likely - this is described in more detail below.

So it was back to the drawing board and I felt a breakthrough was achieved after consulting *Christian Astrology* - while gout is ruled by Pisces, gout specifically of the hands *and* feet, is also ruled by Mercury and Saturn⁴ and we know that Gilbert suffered from both varieties.

"[gout] attacked [Gilbert] violently in both feet, sometimes only in a hand, sometimes in feet and hands."⁵

This, I felt, was sufficient evidence to work with a Gemini Ascendant as Gemini rules infirmities in the hands and Mercury is the ruler of Gemini.⁶

Finally, Gilbert's physique - over six feet tall and of military bearing - contains none of the rotundity usually associated with a water sign on the ascendant.

I describe this process in some detail as I have found it to be typical of the early stages of astrological sleuthing involved in rectification.

I reset the chart for mid Gemini and used two significant events in Gilbert's life to fine tune it.

At the time of marriage we frequently find a Transit, Progression or Directed Solar Arc involving Venus and one of the angles of the chart - most importantly the Descendant as the seventh house rules marriages.

Gilbert married on 6 August 1867⁷ and, with the Ascendant set to 12°39' Gemini (requiring a birth time of 4.50 p.m.), the Directed Solar Arc of Mercury, the ascendant ruler, was at 11°44' Sagittarius - conjunct the Descendant.

This was a good start so I then looked at another very significant date in Gilbert's life - 15 July 1907 - the day he was knighted.⁸

On this day his Progressed Sun, a natural planet of honour and preferment consistent with receiving a knighthood, was at 8°18' Aquarius conjunct his natal MC at 7°41' Aquarius - the place in the chart which indicates one's highest achievements.

Assuming a 4.50 p.m. birth time for the rest of this article we can now look at the Gilbert's chart and see whether what we know of him makes sense as well as examining other important dates in his life.

Mercury in Scorpio is one degree away from a conjunction with Saturn and in a loose square to a tight conjunction of Mars and Jupiter in Leo. The conjunction of Saturn and Mercury, while giving the native a very well ordered mind can also make him or her socially awkward at times, something which is true of Gilbert by all accounts. The Mercury/Mars square adds to the effects of the assertive Aries Moon and suggests a much sharper wit if Mercury is the

ruler of a Gemini ascendant and therefore assumes a greater importance in the chart overall.

The proximity of the first magnitude fixed star, Rigel, (at 14° 33' Gemini) to Gilbert's ascendant seems to provide an accurate description of his life - it is of the nature of Jupiter and Mars and, when rising, it confers "good fortune, preferment, riches, great and lasting honours."⁹

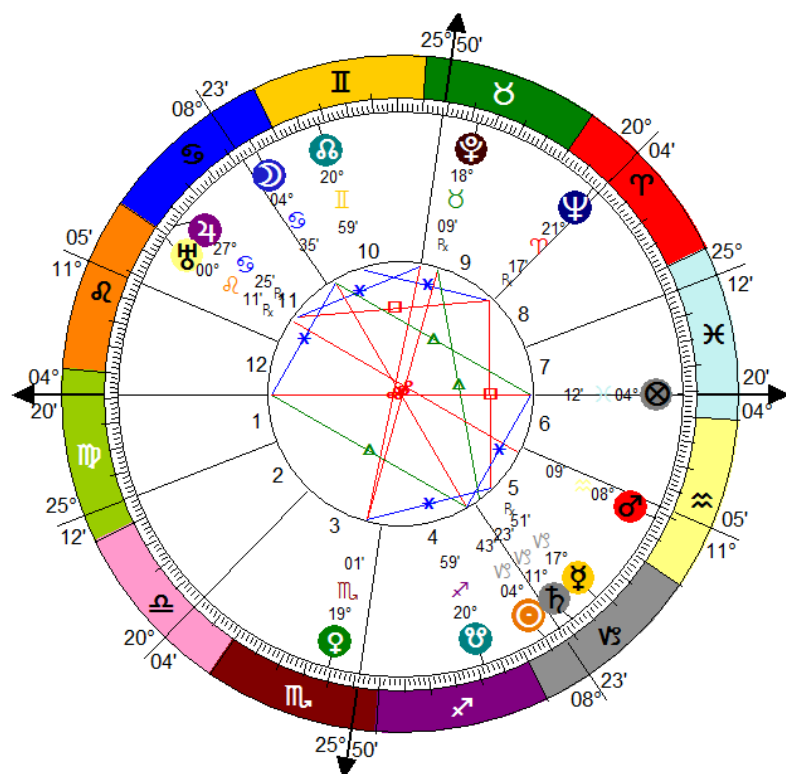
The Ascendant ruler and the Sun are both in the sixth house of the chart which rules, among other things, small animals - Gilbert had a great affection for small animals throughout his life and, after purchasing Grim's Dyke - his country house near Harrow - he built a small zoo which included a wide variety of animals including a collection of lemurs.¹⁰

Gilbert was well known for his fondness of children- although he had none of his own - and held many parties for them, participating fully in the fun and games. A combination of Gemini Rising with Moon ruling the fifth house seems to describe both his affection for children and the fascination which the theatre held for him throughout his life as well as his obsession for games.

He even wrote a treatise on billiards and one of his most famous "punishments to fit the crime" in *The Mikado* is reserved for the man who cheats at the game. He is made to play "on a cloth untrue with a twisted cue and elliptical billiard balls."¹¹ This seems a form of revenge particularly suited to someone with a Scorpio Sun and Gemini Ascendant.

Although he is best remembered for his work in partnership with Sullivan, Gilbert had already established himself as a playwright prior to the date that their first collaboration, *Thespis*, appeared on the London stage on 26 December 1871.

Whether we think of the North Node - the Dragon's Head - in the traditional sense of a positive place in the chart or in the modern sense of the place towards which we grow, the premiere of *Thespis* reflects an important development in Gilbert's chart - the Directed Solar Arc Moon is conjunct the North Node at 9° Taurus.



**Thespis, First Performance 9.15 p.m.¹² LMT
26 December 1871, London, UK, 51N30, 000W10**

Transiting Saturn at 11°24' Capricorn is exactly sextile to Gilbert's natal Mercury/Saturn conjunction and suggests the opening up or expansion of a long term business or project as this is the first significant aspect to Saturn since his Saturn return.

This was the twenty-eighth production of Gilbert's but *Thespis*, his first collaboration with Sullivan, marks a turning point and a new phase of recognition. Only seventeen days earlier his most successful production to date, *Pygmalion and Galatea*, had received its premiere, one of eight new Gilbert productions in 1871 - his progressed Venus was conjunct his natal Sun throughout the year.

The chart for the first performance of *Thespis* shows a Virgo ascendant with ascendant ruler, Mercury, retrograde in Capricorn (which might account for reports of the confused state of rehearsals) in the fifth house of theatre. This seems most appropriate for an opera whose subtitle is "The Gods Grown Old." A full moon occurred during the first performance and the Moon, at 4° Cancer, was exactly conjunct Sullivan's Moon if we accept his rectified birth time of 4.47 p.m. (see chart below).¹³



Poster for the first season of HMS Pinafore in 1878

Thespis was not regarded as a success and the partnership produced nothing further until the one act opera, *Trial by Jury* in March 1875.

Further collaborations followed and, of the early operas, the best known are probably *HMS Pinafore* and *The Pirates of Penzance*. In an attempt to thwart pirated versions of the opera in the USA (the pun in the title is probably deliberate Gilbertian humour)

Pirates was premiered in New York on 31 December 1879 rather than London. A token performance took place in Paignton in the UK the previous day to secure UK copyright.

Gilbert and Sullivan travelled to New York to oversee production of the first run - Gilbert's Astro*Carto*Graphy shows the Sun just over 100 miles from the Midheaven over New York City which is very appropriate given not only the success of *Pirates'* first run but also the lasting success which G&S achieved in the USA. The sphere of influence for a planet in location is usually considered to be 300 miles.

At the heart of the G&S story is the tripartite agreement between Gilbert, Sullivan and the impresario Richard D'Oyly Carte which ended with the infamous "carpet quarrel." This agreement was signed on 8 February 1883¹⁴ under which the newly built Savoy Theatre in London owned and operated by Carte would be used exclusively for G&S operas.

When the agreement was signed Gilbert's progressed Moon had entered Sagittarius - my experience is that the progressed Moon changing sign is almost always accompanied by an event of some significance within a month at the most.

His Directed Solar Arc Ascendant was also about to move from Cancer to Leo indicating a larger scale of operation. In addition to the signing of this commercial agreement Gilbert also commissioned the building of a much grander home in Kensington - by the autumn of 1883 when he moved house the Directed Solar Arc Ascendant had completed its move into Leo.¹⁵

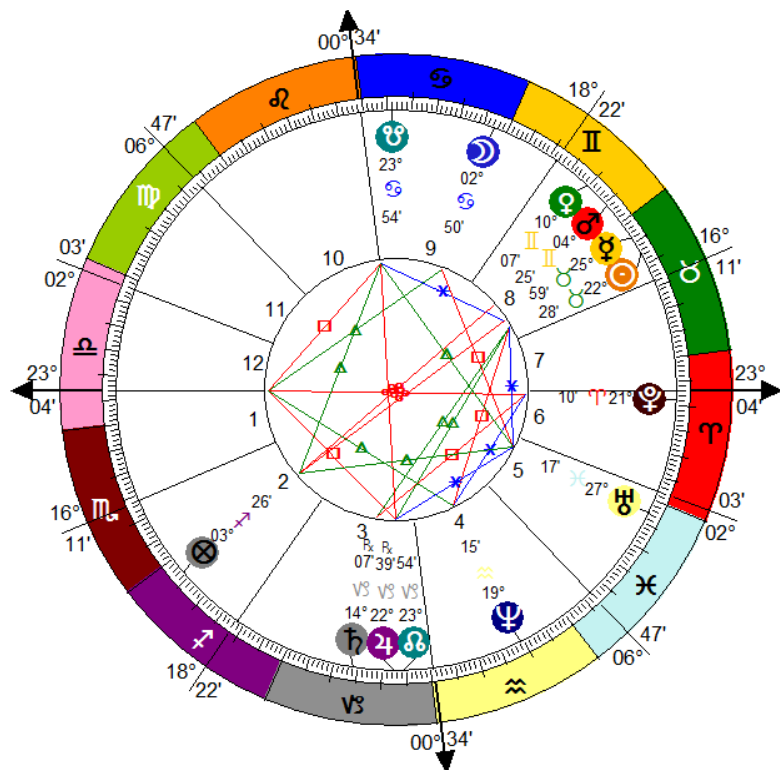
The next seven years saw the production of five new operas as well as revivals of earlier works. Chief among the new operas was Gilbert and Sullivan's greatest success, *The Mikado*, whose initial run was 672 performances.

Unsurprisingly there is a strong aspect in Gilbert's chart at the time *The Mikado* was first performed - his progressed Venus is at 13° 16' Sagittarius conjunct the Descendant at 12° 54'. If his marriage was the most important personal partnership of Gilbert's life, the collaboration with Sullivan was its professional counterpart and the astrology confirms this.

The quarrel which led to the end of the partnership in the Spring of 1890 concerned the cost of a carpet for the Savoy Theatre which D'Oyly Carte had charged as an expense before calculating the profit share for the first production of *The Gondoliers* in 1889. Gilbert declared this unacceptable as he did not think that the expense was directly related to the opera but gained no support from the more peaceable Sullivan.

It subsequently turned out that the alleged cost of £500 was actually only £140 - perhaps an indication of Gilbert's hasty Aries Moon at work. Even so, Gilbert served notice and the agreement was ended on 5 May 1890.¹⁶

Astrological aspects that day included Venus conjunct Neptune (music disappearing into the ether) and Mercury conjunct the undiscovered Pluto - the death of words. Gilbert's Directed Solar Arc Moon was at 27° 56' Taurus - well within range of the malevolent fixed star Caput Algol whose name means to lose one's head, often through one's own actions. Although there had been artistic and other conflicts throughout the partnership Gilbert's hasty and vociferous objection to the cost of the carpet seem to have been instrumental in bringing it to an end.



Arthur Sullivan 4.47 p.m. LMT (Rectified)
13 May 1842, London, UK, 51N30, 000W10

By 31 December 1890, when the original run of *The Gondoliers* ended, Gilbert's progressed Mercury was at 7° 23' Aquarius - 0°21' short of his natal Midheaven. This was the culmination of the partnership - although two more operas (*Utopia Limited* and *The Grand Duke*) were produced under new arrangements neither were considered successful.



Programme for The Mikado in 1885.

The death of both of Gilbert's parents also emphasises the angles of the chart adding further weight to a 4.50 p.m. birth time. His mother died on 20 March 1888¹⁷ when the transiting Nodal Axis was conjunct Gilbert's natal IC/MC axis - the South Node symbolising ill fortune conjunct his MC signals the mother.

Less than two years later, when his father died on 3 January 1890¹⁸, Gilbert's Directed Solar Arc ascendant was at 6°55' Leo conjunct the IC of 7°44'

Leo. This aspect was a major influence throughout 1890 - the year that his agreement with Sullivan and Carte also ended as noted above.

The same aspect was reflected in his purchase of Graeme's Dyke which, with typical sardonic humour, he renamed Grim's Dyke during the summer of 1890 and his removal there in September.¹⁹

Gilbert settled in to the role of country squire and his promotion to Deputy Lieutenant of Middlesex in 1891 might be seen as a positive expression of progressed Mercury which was still conjunct the MC. As it continued to progress through his tenth house Gilbert was appointed a Justice of the Peace two years later in 1893.

On 29 May 1911 Gilbert was teaching two teenage girls to swim in a lake in the grounds of his house. When one of the girls got into difficulties Gilbert attempted to rescue her but the exertions precipitated heart failure and death at 4.20 p.m. The Sun - which rules the heart in men²¹ - in the sixth house of sickness in his natal chart - seems to show the vulnerability.

The chart for the time of death is marked by a very close conjunction of Mercury (Gilbert's ascendant ruler) and Saturn the ruler of Gilbert's eighth house of death and the natural ruler of death). Both planets are close to opposing a conjunction of the same two planets at 10°/11° Scorpio in his natal chart.

The Moon is 16' of one degree past an exact conjunction with the undiscovered Pluto - an auxiliary ruler of death - while the Directed Solar Arc Pluto at 0°36' Cancer speaks eloquently of death by drowning at home. There is further emphasis on water as Venus, the ascendant ruler in the chart for the moment of death, is less than one degree away from a conjunction with Neptune.

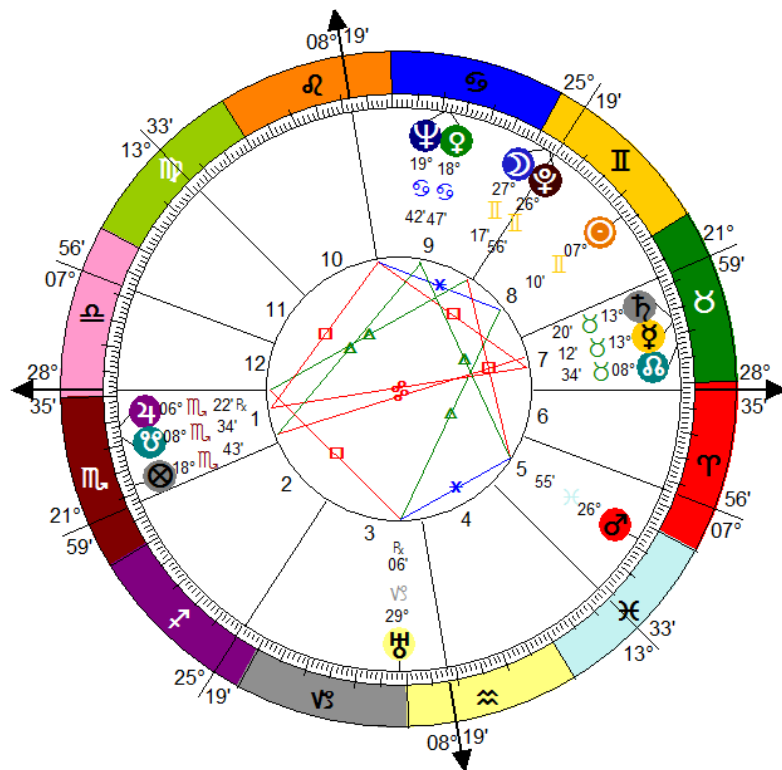
The progressed Moon at 13°38' Sagittarius is at the Descendant of the natal chart - 12°54' Sagittarius - where life ends.

Poignantly, Gilbert's natal MC/IC axis is inverted at the moment of death - an aspect which is so exact that it settled the question in my own mind that a birth time of 4.50 p.m. was as accurate as I could find.

While we can never be 100% certain that a rectification is correct, when we see a series of transits, progressions and directions at critical points in the life of the native emphasising particular degrees of the Zodiac this provides strong justification for our choice of the time of birth. The inversion of the MC/IC axis at death was the last in a series which showed close connections (mostly within one degree) to the angles of a chart erected for 4.50 p.m.

A Table showing the significant events in Gilbert's life and their astrological correspondences is shown below.

Obtaining a list of the significant events in the client's life is the first step in carrying out the process of rectification which, as I hope I have shown, is possible even when there is no indication at all of the birth time. It may take time and effort but the results can be well worth the effort - especially for clients who had long given up on getting their chart read because they did not know their time of birth.



**W.S. Gilbert, Death. 4.20 p.m.²⁰ GMT, 29 May 1911
Stanmore, Middlesex, 51N38, 000W20'**

W.S. Gilbert - Transits, Progressions and Directions at Significant Life Events		
Date	Event	Astrological Influence
6 August 1867	Marriage	Directed SA Mercury (Ascendant Ruler) to Descendant
26 December 1871	Premiere of <i>Thespis</i> - first collaboration with Arthur Sullivan	- Directed SA Moon conjunct North Node - Transiting Saturn sextile natal Mercury/Saturn - Progressed Venus conjunct Sun
8 Feb 1883	Agreement signed with Sullivan and D'Oyly Carte	- Progressed Moon enters Sagittarius - Directed SA Ascendant in last degree of Cancer
1 October 1883	Occupies new home in Kensington	Directed SA Ascendant in first degree of Leo.
14 March 1885	First Performance of <i>The Mikado</i>	Progressed Venus conjunct Descendant
20 March 1888	Death of mother	Transiting South Node conjunct MC
3 January 1890	Death of father	Directed Ascendant conjunct IC
5 May 1890	Notice served to end agreement with Sullivan and D'Oyly Carte	- Venus conjunct Neptune - Mercury conjunct Pluto - Directed SA Moon conjunct Caput Algol
September 1890	Moves to Grim's Dyke	Directed SA conjunct IC
1891	Appointed Deputy Lieutenant of Middlesex	Progressed Mercury conjunct MC
31 December 1890	Notice of Termination of agreement with Carte and Sullivan takes effect.	Progressed Mercury conjunct MC
1893	Appointed Justice of the Peace	Progressed Mercury in tenth house.
15 July 1907	Progressed Sun conjunct MC	Knighthood
29 May 1911	Death	- Natal ascendant ruler conjunct natal eighth house ruler. - Progressed Moon conjunct Descendant - IC/MC Axis inverted

Notes

1. p. 13 Gilbert His Life and Strife, Hesketh Pearson, Methuen 1957.
2. p. 95 *ibid*
3. pp 157-8 W.S. Gilbert: His Life and Letters, Sidney Dark, Methuen 1923.
4. pp. 59, 79 and 82 *Christian Astrology*, William Lilly, 1647.
5. p.176, Pearson, *op cit*.
6. p. 74, *Christian Astrology*
7. p. 32, Pearson
8. p. 244, *ibid*
9. pp 197-8. *The Fixed Stars and Constellations in Astrology*, Vivian E. Robson, 1923, republished by Ascella Publications.
10. pp. 213-7 Pearson, *op cit*
11. p. 625, *The Complete Annotated Gilbert and Sullivan*, Ed. Ian Bradley, Oxford University Press, 1996
12. London Evening Standard, 27 December 1871 “at 9.15 Thespis second time” - it seems reasonable to assumed the premiere was performed at the same time on the previous evening particularly as the play which preceded it, “Dearer Than Life” is billed as commencing at 7 p.m. on both days.
13. No. 877, p. 361, *The Sabian Symbols in Astrology*, Marc Edmund Jones, Sabian Publishing Company, 1953.
14. p. 251, *The Gilbert and Sullivan Book*, Leslie Baily, Cassell and Company Limited, 1952.
15. P. 116, Pearson *op cit*.
16. p. 351 Baily, *op cit*.
17. Sporting News - 27 March 1888.
18. London Daily News (Saturday) 4 January 1890. The death of Gilbert’s father is usually quoted as 3 January 1890 but newspaper reports of “late on Thursday night” suggest it may have been 2 January. The difference would not affect the astrological effect on Gilbert’s chart.
19. p. 144 Pearson, *op cit*.
20. *The Aberdeen Journal*, 1 June 2011.
21. p. 71 *Christian Astrology*

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