

The Moorgate Crash

The final section of the original article, published in The Astrological Journal of September/October 2015, contained my thoughts about what might lie ahead for London Underground in the period 2015-2020. I have now updated the article to include a further section which records what actually happened during those five years.

Picture of a Crash

The chart of a specific event can provide a very clear demonstration of astrological principles – the language of symbols may be at its most graphic in such moments.

A good example is the rail crash which occurred on 28 February 1975 at Moorgate underground station in London.

The first train ran on London Underground on 10 January 1863 and, of the major disasters which have happened on the system, the Moorgate crash is the only one not due to external attack.

There were three bombs in the Second World War (at Balham, Bank and Bounds Green) which resulted in significant loss of life and the multiple bombings of July 2005. Other major disasters were the crushing to death of 173 civilians at Bethnal Green in 1943 and the Kings Cross Fire of 1987.



Moorgate Station on the Northern, Metropolitan and Circle lines on the London Underground and the Drayton Park spur of the Overground system from which the train started its journey.

What makes the Moorgate crash even more interesting is the doubt about its cause which still exists forty years on..

The bare details of the crash are that a southbound train was driven through Moorgate station and did not stop until it hit the wall at the end of the tunnel. The tunnel was designed to accommodate the larger overground trains and therefore afforded enough space to allow the second and third carriages of the doomed train to ride up on to the top of the front carriage.

43 people died and 74 were injured.

Witnesses spoke of seeing the driver sitting upright facing forward as the train sped through the station so it appears unlikely that he suffered a heart attack or stroke in which case he would probably have been slumped forward.

Forensic evidence regarding the possibility that he had been drinking was inconclusive – although alcohol was found in his body at the post mortem this is thought to have been caused by natural decomposition as he was not removed from the train for four days due to the difficulty of cutting through the wreckage.¹

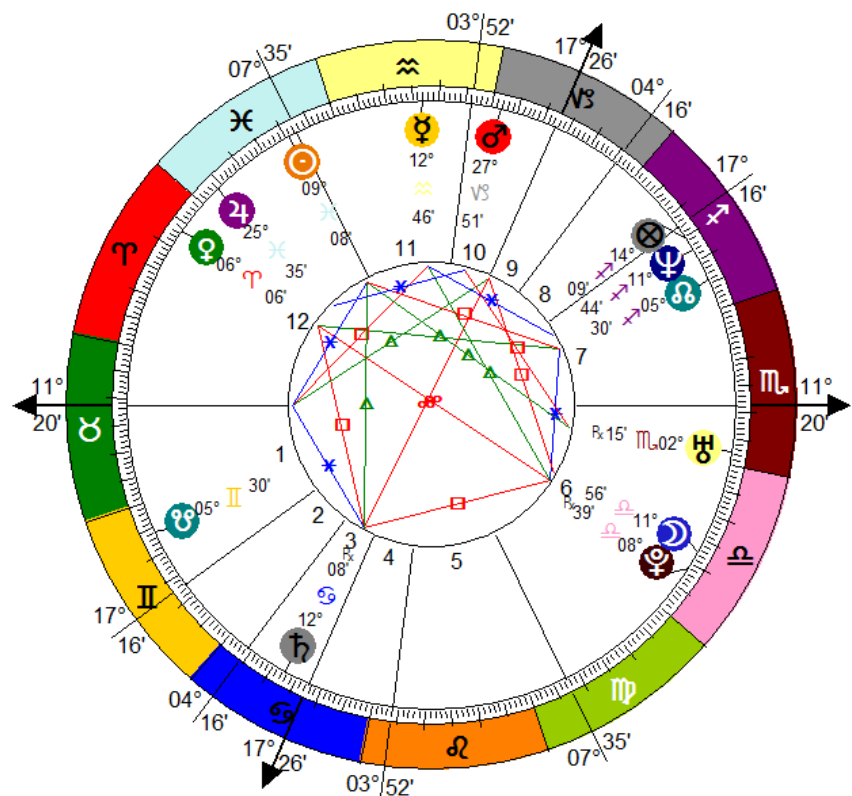
The suspicion remained that the only explicable cause was a suicide by the driver although why he would want to have killed himself in such a way with the attendant loss of life has never been established. The enquiry by London Transport found no conclusive evidence of fault by the driver or other staff on the train.

Further extensive investigation carried out by Laurence Marks, the TV scriptwriter, who was a journalist at the time of the crash and whose father was one of the victims. His preferred conclusion is that it was, indeed, a suicide.²

A chart drawn for the moment of the crash describes the situation and also provides some fascinating links to other related charts. Eerily, 8.46 a.m. is exactly the same minute as the first impact of the planes into the Twin Towers on 11 September 2001 although there is no obvious connection between the two incidents (a probability of 0.069%).

William Lilly, in *Christian Astrology*, offers us guidance to the signification which should be used in these sorts of charts – adapting his description as they apply to ships in the seventeenth century we can use them for trains and for accidents.

“The Signe ascending and the Moon are signifiers of the Ship and what Goods are in her, the Lord of the Ascendant of those that saile in her.”³ Lilly also notes, at the beginning of



The Moorgate Crash
8.46 a.m. GMT, 28 February 1975, London 000W10, 51N30

this passage, his variance from “the Ancients” who would use the ninth house for such judgements and believes this is “for no other reason, then because it must be granted, that all Ships are made from Travell and Journeys.” In this case, we might surmise that “the Ancients” would pay attention to the third house because it rules “small journeys”⁴ of the sort that would be taken on the Tube. Nonetheless, as per Lilly, it is the first house which matters.

The train is therefore signified by the ascendant at 11° 20’ Taurus and the Moon which is placed at 11° 56’ Libra in the sixth house. The passengers who “sail” in the train are signified by Venus, the ruler of Taurus at 6° 6’ Aries in the twelfth house.

Taurus is a fixed earth sign and offers us a description of the location of the accident – it occurs in the earth (underground) and the train slams into a brick wall. How often have astrologers said that trying to get a Taurus to change his or her mind is like banging one’s head on a brick wall?

I like to remain close to Lilly’s method which uses only the conjunction and the seven traditional heavenly bodies but, in examining event charts, I have found many instances where more modern techniques seem to offer a confirmation of the interpretation obtainable from traditional sources – this is one of those cases.

The Moon is in the sixth house which rules sickness and we know that 74 people were injured. The Moon also forms a partile quincunx to the ascendant i.e. it is exactly 150° away and the quincunx is one of those more modern aspects which is somewhere between a minor and major hard aspect.⁵



Inside one of the carriages of the wrecked train

If we bring in the modern planets then we can see that an exact Yod is formed between Neptune, the Moon and the ascendant. Pluto at 8°39’ Libra conjunct the Moon and sextile Neptune is also linked to this configuration. From a modern astrological standpoint we might say that the people (Moon) are sacrificed (Neptune) in the underworld (Pluto) - there seems to be an element of fate about this accident with the

“finger” of the Yod at the ascendant of the chart, the very origin of the event.

From a traditionalist standpoint only the seven visible planets including the sun and moon rule the zodiac signs (and by extension the houses) but this Yod is so marked that it is difficult to ignore it. The theme of sacrifice associated with Pisces, Neptune (its modern ruler) and the twelfth house is developed when we look into the aftermath of the Moorgate rail crash.

The crash led to the introduction of the “Moorgate Protection,” a device placed in the cab of the train which stopped it being able to go straight through a station without slowing down.

It might be said that the victims of the crash effectively acted as a “sacrifice” for the good of others in the future.

The Moon applies to a square with Saturn in Cancer – it is just twelve minutes of one degree away from perfection. Saturn is the natural ruler of death but in this chart it also the ruler of the tenth house signifying those in authority and which we can therefore take to rule the driver, Leslie Newson, who had command of the train - the “captain of the ship” in seventeenth century terms.

Saturn is in a sorry state being not only peregrine (without essential dignity) but also in detriment and retrograde. This, perhaps, gives us a clue to the state of mind of the driver. If we consider the tenth house as representing the driver then the ninth house – also with Capricorn on the cusp and also ruled by Saturn – is the twelfth house from the tenth or the “turned twelfth.” The strong identification between the ninth and tenth houses shows the potential for “self-undoing”⁶

Appropriately, Saturn, the driver, is placed in third house which signifies local journeys and therefore the London Underground.

The Part of Death is calculated as:

Absolute degrees of Ascendant + Absolute degrees of eighth house cusp - Absolute degrees of the Moon

$$41^{\circ}20' + 251^{\circ}20' - 191^{\circ}56' = 100^{\circ}44'$$

Converting this back to signs and degrees we find the Part of Death at $10^{\circ}44'$ Cancer - just $1^{\circ}24'$ away from Saturn, significator of the driver and the natural ruler of death.

There are a number of different ways of calculating the Part of Death and, from experience, it is this one which seems to work the best.⁷ Note that the cusp of the eighth house is of the eighth Equal House since this is the system which would have been in use when the Arabic Parts (of which the Part of Death is one) were devised.

The chart shown uses Regiomontanus houses which is what would have been used by Lilly.

Interestingly, if we calculate the Part of Death using the Regiomontanus system then the Part of Death falls at $16^{\circ}40'$ Cancer - exactly conjunct the IC of the chart - a point which is often the significator of the grave.

The calculation is then as follows:

$$41^{\circ}20' + 257^{\circ}16' - 191^{\circ}56' = 106^{\circ}40'$$

$106^{\circ}40'$ converted to signs and degrees = $16^{\circ}40'$ Cancer.

The unanswered question is whether this self-destruction was deliberate or not.

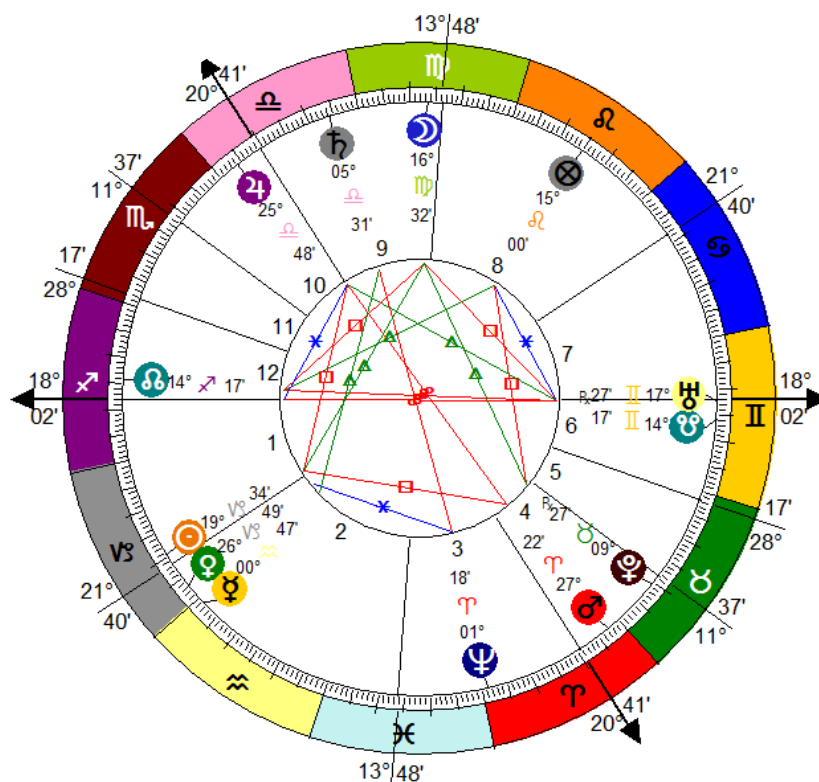


A simple plaque outside Moorgate station commemorates the worst crash on the London Underground system since it opened in 1863.

Even if Saturn's rulership of the ninth and tenth houses shows the capacity for self destruction it doesn't necessarily tell us why Leslie Newson should take this action. We do know that he had £270 (around £2,000 in 2015) in his pocket which his wife had withdrawn from the bank the previous day and which he intended to use to buy a car for his daughter.⁸ Saturn appropriately, is in Cancer – the sign most closely associated with family.

The First Degree fixed Star, Sirius, was positioned at 12°45' Cancer in 1975, the same degree as Saturn. According to Robson, when Sirius is conjunct Saturn it suggests someone who is "steady, reserved, diplomatic, just, persevering.....favourable for homes, gifts and legacies."⁸ This accords with all the descriptions of Newson especially the money in his pocket for his daughter's car.

It is unlikely that what actually happened will ever be known for sure. While some who have investigated the crash such as Laurence Marks remain of the view that it was a suicide for unknown reasons others, such as the noted psychiatrist and neuropsychologist Peter Fenwick, have suggested that the most likely explanation was that Newson suffered a temporal lobe seizure in which body posture is maintained although the patient is completely out of touch with what is happening.¹⁰



**London Underground - first train leaves Paddington
6.00 a.m. GMT, 10 January 1863, London, 000W10, 51N30**

The chart of the crash offers a clear description of the event and Fenwick's suggestion, absolving Newson from suicide/murder, seems to me to fit best with the description of the driver's temperament offered by the crucial placement of Sirius which seems to provide a full profile of Leslie Newson and which is in agreement with the description offered by those who knew him.

The London Underground Chart

From an astrological point of view it is also instructive to look at the connections from the chart of the

Moorgate crash to the chart of the London Underground (LU) itself. The chart for LU is set for 10 January 1863 when "the trains commenced running as early as six o'clock in the morning from...Paddington."¹¹

The underground system itself can be attributed to the Sagittarian ascendant and its ruler, Jupiter, which is placed in Libra in the tenth house of the chart - this is a high profile and popular entity. "From [nine o'clock] it became evidentthat neither the locomotive power nor the rolling stock....was at all in proportion to the requirements of the day."¹²

Jupiter is also the traditional ruler of Pisces and therefore the ruler of the third house which has natural signification for "inland-Journeys" as noted above.

Travelling on the trains is a business transaction so, if we attribute the entity of London Underground to the first house then the customers of the system are shown by the seventh house with Gemini on the cusp and its ruler, Mercury, in the second house of LU's finances.

The presence of Uranus, even though a modern planet, screams for attention sitting, as it does, right on the Descendant and showing customers using a new form of transport. Uranus is said to symbolise "revolutions" and this is a transport revolution - the world's first underground railway.



The tracks were cleared at Farringdon Station and tables set out on the tracks for a banquet the day before the first train to run on the London Underground arrived from Paddington

This is underscored by the fact that Mercury, a natural ruler for a local railway system, is placed at 0° of Aquarius - the beginning of the sign is, symbolically, the beginning of the Underground while Aquarius - at least in modern astrology - is ruled by Uranus.

The Moon is in the ninth house and is a natural significator of the general population. The ninth house signifies long distance journeys and perhaps here is showing the many foreign visitors to London who will travel on the Underground.

The Moon may also be considered a co-significator of LU and its placement in Virgo might be considered to play itself out in the sheer complexity of the system as it develops over the years.

The map of the system is pure Virgo while the newspaper report of the system being used by "thousands of anxious travellers" on the first day also carries Virgoan connotations.

In the chart for the crash the Progressed Ascendant of the LU chart is at 12°20' Gemini – 1°57' degrees from South Node (Dragon's Tail) in the same chart at 14°17' Gemini. Lilly classes the South Node as one of the "Accidental Debilities"¹³

The progressed Mercury from the LU chart - natural ruler of transport systems - is placed at 24°31' Taurus – perilously close to the fixed star Caput Algol for which Lilly allowed a five degree orb of influence.¹⁴ In 1975 this star was sitting at 25°49' Taurus and Robson pulls no

punches about the malefic nature of this celestial being - "it causes misfortune, violence, decapitation, hanging, electrocution and mob violence.....It is the most evil star in the heavens"¹⁵



Paddington Station achieved fame as the station from which the first train made a journey on the London Underground but found even greater fame when the fictional Paddington Bear, created by Michael Bond, was first published in 1958.

I am not generally convinced about the importance of the aspects of two progressed planets to each other - it seems a little too derivative for my taste. However, in this situation the Progressed Sun at 11°27' Taurus is conjunct the Progressed Pluto at 11°12' Taurus and, like Uranus on the Descendant, is clamouring for recognition since Pluto is the planet so closely, symbolically, associated with the underground and the Sun is the intercepted ruler of the eighth house of death in the LU chart – it does not get much more underground than that.

Pluto, of course, moves very slowly so the progressed Sun is also very close to the Pluto in the LU chart at 9° 27' Taurus - exactly two degrees separate them.

The Solar Arc Directed South Node moves to 6°11' Libra at the time of the crash and is conjunct Saturn in the LU chart at 5°31' Libra - a veritable outpouring of death and destruction - the fatal South Node is placed next to the natural ruler of death.

Finally, the Solar Arc Directed Saturn in the LU chart is at 27°24' Capricorn in February 1975 conjunct Venus in the LU chart which rules the MC - the natural ruler of death tarnishing the reputation of the Underground system.

At the time of the crash the Progressed Moon of the LU chart is at 25°13' Libra – almost exactly conjunct natal Jupiter (25°48' Libra) and probably provides the trigger for the event against the background of other aspects.

The general picture is that this was a time of fatality for London Underground both in the sense of loss of life and that there was an element of fate shown from the time the first train left Paddington on 10 January 1863.

What Lies Ahead?

So what of the future? When are the sensitive times for the London Underground looking ahead?

Uranus will be transiting Mars in the LU chart in 2017 and 2018 - a combination of planets which speaks strongly of accidents - exact conjunctions are on 10 June 2017, 28 September 2017 and 30 March 2018.

These transits are followed by Pluto conjoining the Sun in the LU chart at 19°34' Capricorn. The exact dates of this transit will be 24 January 2018, 31 July 2018 and 29 November 2018 - as noted above the Sun in the LU chart is the intercepted ruler of the eighth house of death.

The first of these transits occurs just a few days after the Progressed Moon of the LU chart enters Gemini which has particular significance for transport systems in general and, as we have seen, for the London Underground passengers in particular.

However, it is the middle of these three transits which seems to carry the greatest danger with retrograde Mars at 0° Aquarius on 9 August 2018 conjunct Mercury in the LU chart - early August of that year looks like a time of particular importance for the Tube.

To close off this two and a half year period of what we might call “red alert” the single Saturn/Pluto conjunction of **12 January 2020** will occur at 22°46' Capricorn - still only three degrees away from the LU Sun and only four degrees away from the LU Venus, ruler of LU's reputation.

Although many improvements in the safety of the London Underground have been made since 1975 the period from mid 2017 to early January 2020 looks to be one of particular concern from an astrological point of view and the extent to which the fate London Underground can be modified by further upgrades in safety standards remains to be seen.

Alternatively, if London Underground were to pro-actively express theses aspects then its fate might not be thrust upon it in such a dramatic fashion. The Pluto transits in particular when in Capricorn speak of the removal of structures which are no longer necessary and even as I write there are proposals being put forward to make it more difficult for strikes to be called. By embracing the aspects which greet us we, personally and corporately, “take arms against a sea of troubles” rather than having to “suffer the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune.”

2020 Update

This article was published in *The Astrological Journal* of September/October 2015 – here's a note of some of the events which occurred in the five years reviewed in the final section.

Although there were no significant crashes The London Bridge attacks which resulted in eight deaths and the closure of a number of stations occurred on 3 June 2017 – just a week after the highlighted danger date of 10 June. See <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-london-40147164>



Crowded rush hour scenes disappeared in 2020 during the Covid-19 pandemic

On 15 September 2017 a homemade bomb was detonated on a train at Parsons Green station, thirteen days before the highlighted danger date of 28 September 2017.

There was no major incident on the Underground close to the highlighted date of 30 March although it is worth noting that Ahmed Hassan was found guilty on 15 March of the Parsons Green bombing six months earlier - <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-43431303>

The triple conjunction of Pluto with the London Underground's natal sun has coincided with continual delays in the completion of the new Crossrail line and a drop in passenger numbers. This has been attributed to increased working from home, the growth of Netflix and other home entertainment options and the growth of restaurant delivery services such as Just Eat, Uber Eat and Deliveroo.

This decline has been accelerated by the advent of the Covid-19 virus which started shortly after the Saturn-Pluto conjunction of 12 January 2020 and was close enough to the Sun in the London Underground chart to have a major effect. See, amongst others, <https://www.mylondon.news/news/zone-1-news/london-coronavirus-tfl-says-passenger-17985439>

The conjunction of Mars and Saturn at 0° Aquarius on 1 April 2020 exactly conjunct Mercury in the London Underground chart will have been the trigger for a further reduction in passenger numbers - the major conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn in the same degree on 21 December 2020 might just be the start of a major new phase for the system after a very difficult four years.

Notes

1. See paragraphs 78-83 of the Department of the Environment Report for a discussion of the conflicting views on the reliability of the forensic evidence regarding the role of alcohol in the crash and of Leslie Newson's character and habits. Available online at http://www.railwaysarchive.co.uk/documents/DoE_Moorgate1975.pdf
2. *Daily Mail* 5 January 2010 - available online at <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1240625/Thirty-years-Britains-worst-Tube-crash-victims-son-asks-Did-suicidal-driver-kill-42-innocent-passengers.html>
3. p. 157 *Christian Astrology*, William Lilly, 1647
4. p. 52 *ibid*
5. p. 166 *Horary Astrology*, Anthony Louis, Llewellyn Publications, 1991.
6. p. 56 *op cit*.
7. p.156, *Horary Astrology Rediscovered*, Olivia Barclay, Whitford Press, 1990.
8. para 80 - DoE report
9. p. 209 *The Fixed Stars and Constellations in Astrology*, Vivian E. Robson 1923. Reprinted by Ascella Publications ISBN 1898503508.
10. *No Known Cause* - documentary TV programme on Discovery Channel. Available online <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IzNuOAW2IVc> - note particularly passages from 16'54"-17'13" and 19'30"-21'00"
11. *The Daily News*, 12 January 1863.
12. *ibid*
13. p. 115 *op cit*.

14. *ibid*

15. p. 124 *op cit*

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