

The Sinking of HMS Cornwall – the Personal and Transpersonal

I had known about HMS Cornwall since I was a small boy.

My father, Robert Ernest Clark, joined the Royal Marines at the age of seventeen and did not return to “civvy street” until he was 39.



Robert Ernest Clark as a young Royal Marine

The most dramatic event in those 22 years of his life came on Easter Sunday, 5 April 1942 when he was serving on HMS Cornwall some 300 miles south of Ceylon (as Sri Lanka was known at that time).

HMS Cornwall had docked at Colombo, the capital of Ceylon, on 4 April ready to escort an Australian troop convoy which was due to arrive four days later. HMS Dorsetshire was also in port - for a refit – both ships having been detached from the main fleet which was patrolling the Indian Ocean under the command of Admiral James Somerville.

Leave was granted to both crews for the evening (what my father would euphemistically call a “run ashore”) but, after a reconnaissance flight had spotted Japanese warships, this leave was cancelled and a recall order went out to bring all the men back to their ships.

All but three of the combined crew of 1,546 were on board by the time the ships sailed from Colombo shortly after 10 pm¹ intending to rejoin the main fleet the following afternoon.

One of those who “missed the boat” (HMS Dorsetshire) was in hospital while the other two (HMS Cornwall) arrived back late from visiting a friend and could only watch from the bumboat they had hired as HMS Cornwall left Colombo.

At 1.40 p.m.² the following day, 5 April, Japanese dive bombers attacked both ships. HMS Dorsetshire sunk within about five minutes and HMS Cornwall followed around fifteen minutes later, nineteen minutes after the bombs fell.

The death toll from the combined attacks was 424 but a remarkable 1,122 - including my father - were rescued just before sunset on the following day having spent 29 hours clinging to rafts and wreckage in the Indian Ocean.

When asked what the worst part of the ordeal was, my father would reply that it was the moment a piece of rope caught on his leg and he thought it was a shark.

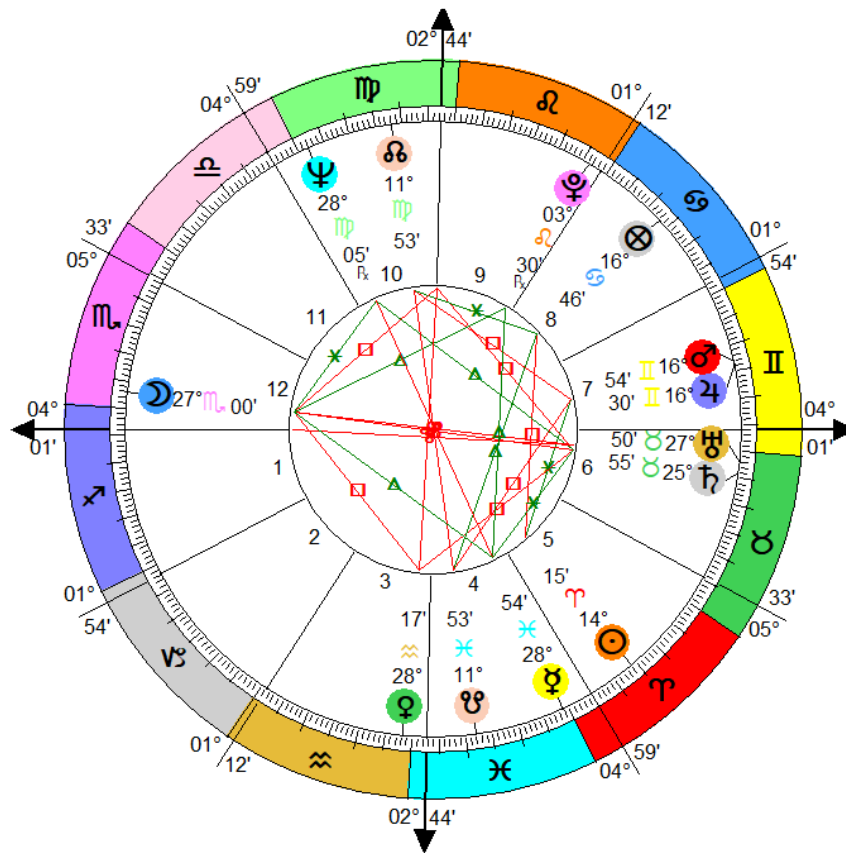
The search party was within ten minutes of being called off when the survivors were rescued.



HMS Cornwall under attack, 5 April 1942.

Such dramatic incidents often produce very clear astrological charts and the events of that Easter weekend conform to the general pattern.

The first important chart is for the moment when HMS Cornwall and HMS Dorsetshire left Colombo.



HMS Cornwall Leaves Colombo
10.10 pm, (Foxtrot Time, GMT +6) 4 April 1942
Colombo, Ceylon – 06°N56' 079°E51'

Using Lilly’s signifiers:
 “The Signe ascending
 and the Moon are
 Significators of the Ship,
 and what goods are in
 her, the Lord of the
 Ascendant of those who
 that saile in her.”³

I was specifically
 interested in HMS
 Cornwall; this is signified
 by Sagittarius on the
 Ascendant and the Moon
 while the crew is
 signified by Jupiter, ruler
 of Sagittarius.

Sagittarius is a double
 bodied sign showing
 there are two ships
 leaving Colombo.

The Moon is in its fall in
 Scorpio – a sign naturally
 associated with death –
 and is ruler of Cancer on

the cusp of the eighth house of death. It is placed in the unfortunate twelfth house of secret enemies which also known as the house of self undoing.

Jupiter, the crew, is peregrine and in its detriment in Gemini in the seventh house of known enemies. It is also in partile conjunction with Mars.

While Jupiter is weakened by being in a partile conjunction with Mars, Mars is strengthened by being in a partile conjunction with Jupiter.

The seventh house of known enemies is signified by Gemini and its ruler Mercury. However, in this case Mars (also in the seventh house) provides a better description of the Japanese since it is a natural signifier of military personnel and shows the ongoing conflict by its proximity to Jupiter, signifier of HMS Cornwall.

The close connection between these two planets can be interpreted as the crew being subject to a fiery (Mars) attack. Since Gemini is an air sign, the indication is that the attack will come from the air (dive bombers) rather than from a ship or submarine which would more likely be shown by the signifiers being in a water sign.

As we can see from the Table of Dignities⁴ calculated for Mars and Jupiter below, Mars (the Japanese) is much stronger than Jupiter) (the crew of HMS Cornwall). Mars scores +19 while Jupiter scores only +3.

Jupiter also rules Pisces on the IC, the beginning of the fourth house which signifies the grave and the end of the matter.

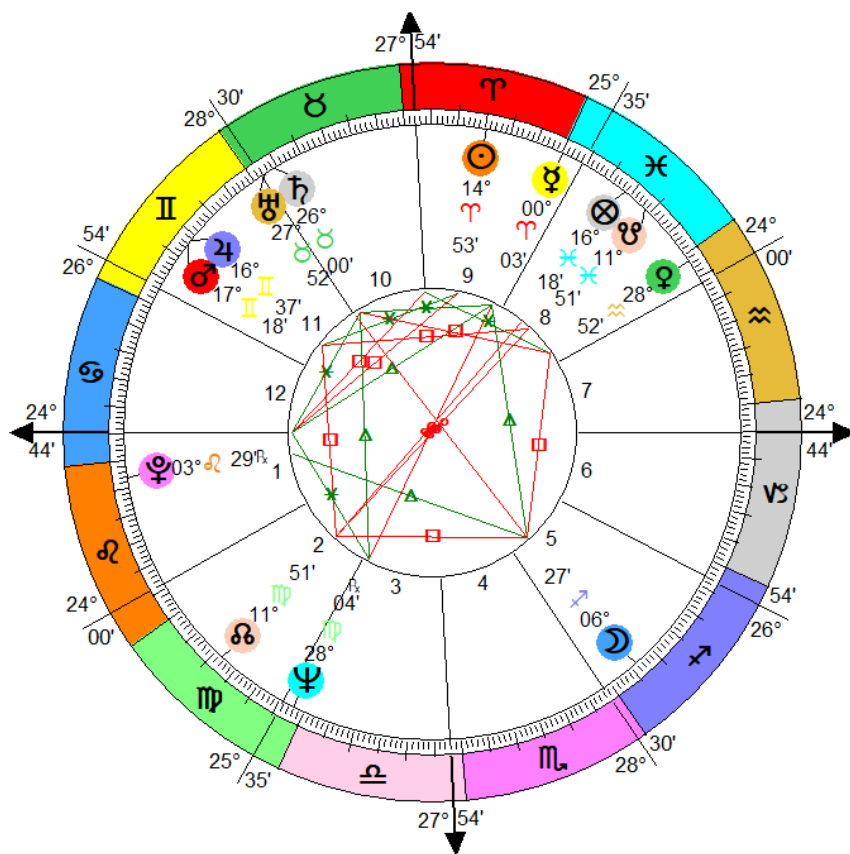
All things considered this is not an auspicious chart for setting off on a journey.

The next important chart is for the moment HMS Cornwall was attacked. Here we find 24°44' Cancer on the Ascendant and the Moon, Lady of the Ascendant, at 6°27' Sagittarius in the fifth house. In this chart the Moon signifies both the ship and crew since it rules the ascendant – the fate of the crew is completely linked to the fate of the ship.

Table of Dignities		
Item	Jupiter	Mars
Peregrine	-5	
Essential Dignity by Face		+1
Mutual Reception by Sign	+5	
In Detriment	-5	
In seventh house	+4	+4
Occidental of Sun	-2	-2
Fast in motion	+2	+2
Free from Suns rays	+5	+5
Direct in Motion	+4	+4
Partile conjunction with Mars	-5	
Partile conjunction with Jupiter		+5
Total	+3	+19

The Moon is weakened by being peregrine, waning and below the horizon. Although the ship is sunk, many of the crew survive perhaps due to the fifth house generally being considered fortunate.

The high survival rate is also indicated the Moon's application to a trine with the Sun which is the natural giver of life although the strength of the Sun, exalted in Aries, was also keenly felt.



HMS Cornwall Attacked
1.40 pm, (Foxtrot Time, GMT +6) 5 April 1942
300 Miles Southwest of Ceylon – 01°N55' 077°E56'

The trine will perfect a couple of hours before sunrise on 6 April – “[6 April] was to prove very difficult. After the sun rose we cut pieces of clothing to soak and cover our heads as protection from the rays of the Equatorial sun.”⁵

The connection between the death of some of the crew and the fate of the ship is shown by the antiscion degree of the Moon being at 23° 33' Capricorn – just over one degree away from the Descendant.

The contra antiscion degree is therefore 23° 33' Cancer showing the connection between the crew and the ship being

severed.

Although the eighth house is generally considered to signify death it is more correctly the “Gates of Death” with the moment of death being shown by the Descendant (cusp of the seventh house). This

not only opposes the Ascendant which signifies life and the principle subject of the action but is also the place the Sun (and other heavenly bodies) sink out of sight below the horizon and lose their power.

The Japanese fighter planes are signified by the seventh house (known enemies), Capricorn on the cusp and Saturn its ruler.

Cancer is a water sign and therefore appropriate for a ship at sea. Late degrees on the ascendant indicate an ending.

Saturn is placed at 26°00' of Taurus and, if we include the modern planets in the judgement, Saturn's proximity to Uranus (1°52') which signifies surprises is no surprise, so to speak. The attack was a sudden one with the aircraft deliberately flying out of the sun to make it more difficult for the crew to fire their guns at them with any accuracy.

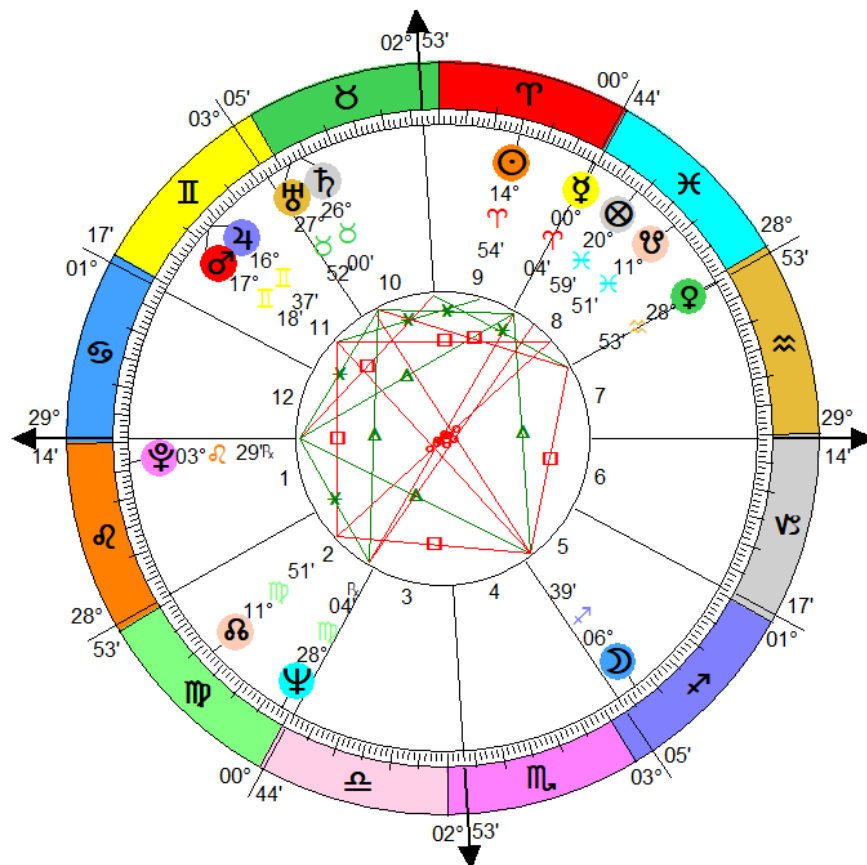
The ease of the attack is shown by Saturn's close sextile with the Ascendant while its hostile intentions are magnified by the mutual reception by sign rulership with Venus, placed at 28°52' of

Aquarius. This is close to the cusp of the eighth house of death and therefore a co-ruler of death along with Saturn itself as the traditional ruler of Aquarius and the natural ruler of death.

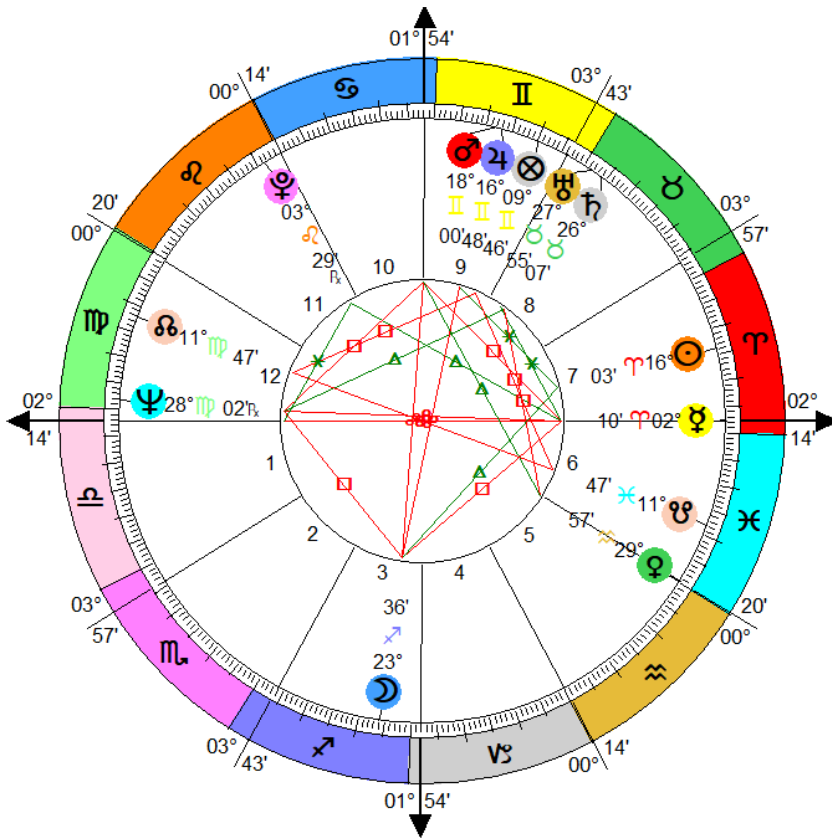
The order to abandon ship was given at 1.55 pm (Ascendant 28° 17' Cancer) and the chart for the moment the ship sank at 1.59 pm is shown above.

The last degree of Cancer is now on the ascendant showing the end of the ship's life emphasised by Pluto at 3°29' Leo close to the ascendant.

It was not until the afternoon of the following day, 6 April, that the survivors were spotted in the water and a message dropped to say that help was on its way. HMS Enterprise, HMS Panther and HMS Paladin proceeded to the location but the lookouts had difficulty in spotting the men in the water.



HMS Cornwall Sinks
1.59 pm, (Foxtrot Time, GMT +6) 5 April 1942
300 Miles Southwest of Ceylon – 01°N55' 077°E56'



HMS Cornwall Survivors Rescued
6.00 pm, (Foxtrot Time, GMT +6) 6 April 1942
300 Miles Southwest of Ceylon – 01°N55' 077°E56'

HMS Enterprise had received a message to change course and rejoin the fleet “when the navigating officer asked to go on “for ten minutes more” in case there had been an error in the location they had been given.⁶ It was “this ten minutes” which saved the survivors from a second night in the water during which many might have perished.

The Rescue Chart is set for 6 pm when “just as the light was starting to fail, three ships were seen and there was then no doubt that we were being picked up by our own people - whew!”⁷

The ship – or wreckage of it –

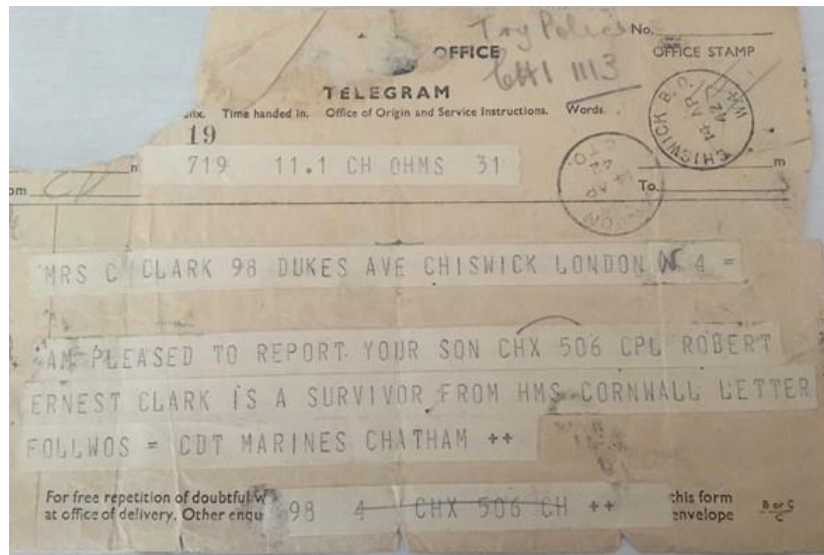
is here shown by the Libra Ascendant, and the Moon while the crew are shown by Venus, ruler of the ascendant.

The Moon is in the third house of the “local area” showing the crew and the remains of the ship are close to where it sunk.

The Moon casts its antiscion degree to 6°24' Capricorn, close to the IC showing the end of the affair and that the ship’s remains have served their purpose.

Venus, peregrine, in the last degree of Aquarius and on the cusp of the sixth house of sickness shows the mental and physical state of the survivors - but help is at hand.

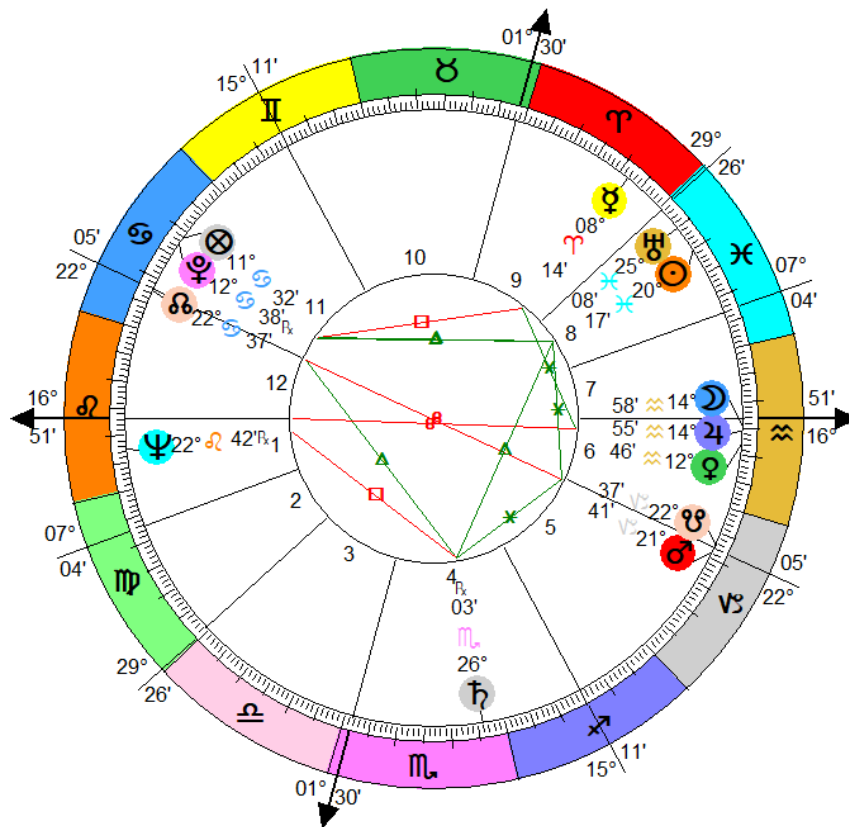
Within a couple of hours Venus will be in its exaltation in Pisces and the survivors will be safely on board the rescue ships.



The telegram my grandmother received to say my father had survived the sinking of HMS Cornwall.

Venus is also in mutual reception with Saturn which rules the fourth and fifth houses. This can be read in at least two ways. The rulership of the fourth indicates the end of the event – they are rescued – but Saturn also rules the eighth house of death and some of the crew did not survive after the rescue.

“...more than eleven hundred men in the water ‘for the most part exhausted and with a large number wounded, were brought on board in the space of an hour without the loss of a single life.’”⁸



HMS Cornwall Launch
3 pm GMT 11 March 1926
Devonport, UK, 50°N22', 004°W10'

Was the fate of HMS Cornwall written in the stars? Was it a case of “In my beginning is my end?”⁹

HMS Cornwall was launched in 1926 and, by 5 April 1942, the Solar Arc Directed Moon/Jupiter conjunction occupies the watery first degree of Pisces while the Solar Arc Directed Pluto is at 28° 37' Cancer conjunct the degree ascending as the Cornwall sunk.

The third aspect which sealed the fate of the ship was Saturn’s actual position on 5 April 1942 – 26° 00' Taurus just three minutes of one degree short of an exact opposition to Saturn’s position the day of the

launch.

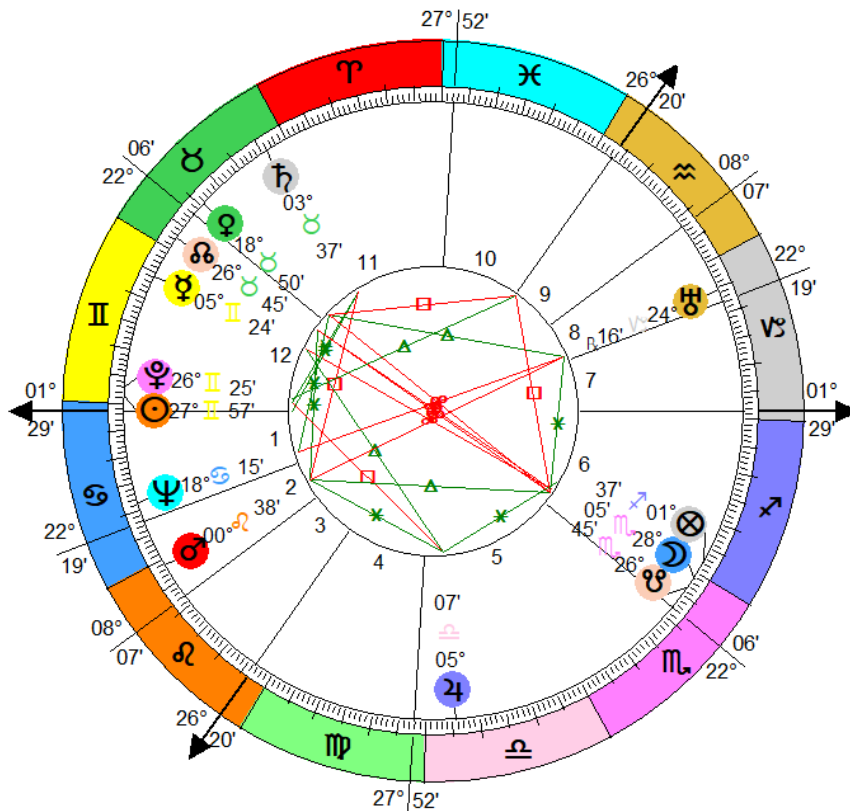
It is only to be expected that the chart for the critical moments in the life of HMS Cornwall would connect with that of each member of the crew and my father was no exception.

The Moon in a natal chart represents our daily way of life, our habits and routines.

My father had served on HMS Cornwall since July 1940 but the patterns evolved during this time were brought to an abrupt conclusion on 5 April 1942 when Uranus, at 27°52' Taurus, is within thirteen minutes of one degree of an exact opposition to his natal Moon at 28°05' Scorpio.

His Progressed Ascendant is at 26°33' Cancer and the ascendant at the time of the attack was 24°41' Cancer although one account gives the time of the attack as “about 1.46 pm” which would place the ascendant at 26°09' Cancer. Either way it is convincingly close to my father’s Progressed Ascendant.

His Progressed Sun is at 28°16' Cancer; the order to abandon ship was given at 1.55 pm when the Ascendant was 28°17' Cancer, the moment at which a critical decision had to be made whether to



Robert Ernest Clark
4.05 am GMT, 20 June 1910
London, England. 51°N30', 000°W10'

Benefic) on the Midheaven almost directly over the site of the attack at 77° East – the site of the sinking is 1°N55', 77°E56'.

His natal Mercury which dispoits his Gemini Sun has progressed to 0°56' Leo conjunct his natal Mars, the natural ruler of war, at 0°39' Leo.

The table below shows some of the major events in my father's life and the relevant astrological conditions at the time of those events based on a time of birth of 4.05 a.m.

I have very often found that a significant progression of the natal Venus is present at the time of marriage and I had used this as a starting point to indicate a birth time of 4.05 am. As this was an hour a half earlier than the reported time of 5.30 am I had been doubtful for many years that this was correct.

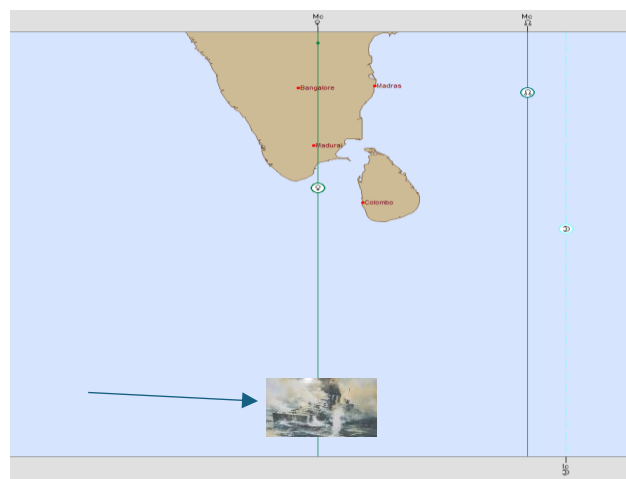
The connections found with the astrology of the sinking of HMS Cornwall convinced me that 4.05 a.m. was the right time.

jump into the ocean. Some crew members, who (perhaps surprisingly) could not swim, stayed on the ship and perished when she sank.

Like many other crew members my father inhaled a lot of engine oil which was on the surface on the ocean. It could have been so much worse.

The data from the sinking of HMS Cornwall confirmed many of the pieces of reasoning I had already used to reach a time of 4.05 am for my father's time of birth.

The final confirmation emerged from looking at the Astro*Carto*Graphy for this time – there was lucky Venus (the lesser



Robert Ernest Clark:
Astro*Carto*Graphy for a birth time of 4.05 am 20 June 1910, London, UK. Natal Venus on MC at 77°

Robert Ernest Clark – Rectification Table for birth time of 4.05 am, 20 June 1910, London, UK			
18/7/27	Enlisted in Royal Marines	Progressed Mercury 00° 13' Cancer Progressed Moon 18°53' Cancer	*Conjunct natal Ascendant Conjunct natal Neptune
20/6/28	Reckonable Service begins	Progressed Mercury 01° 59' Cancer	*Conjunct natal Ascendant
10/5/35	Death of father	Progressed Moon 29° 24' Libra	*Change of sign
23/7/40	Re-engaged in Royal Marines	Progressed Moon 1° 52' Capricorn	*Conjunct natal Descendant
5/4/42	Sinking of HMS Cornwall	Transiting Saturn 25°59' Taurus Transiting Uranus 27°52' Taurus Transiting Venus 29°03' Aquarius Progressed Moon 23°30' Capricorn. Progressed Sun 28°16' Cancer Progressed Mercury 0°56' Leo Progressed Venus 26°03' Gemini	Conjunct natal North Node and opposite natal Moon *Conjunct natal MC Conjunct natal Uranus Conjunct Ascendant of chart for sinking of HMS Cornwall Conjunct natal Mars Conjunct natal Pluto
8/9/46	Marriage	Progressed Venus 1°19' Cancer Progressed Ascendant 29°46' Cancer	*Conjunct natal ascendant Change of sign – new chapter in life. Also conjunct ascendant of sinking of HMS Cornwall chart
19/6/49	Leaves Royal Marines	Transiting Uranus 00°32' Cancer Solar Arc Directed North Node 3°58' Cancer	*Conjunct natal Ascendant
5/6/54	Birth of son	Progressed Mercury 24°40' Leo Progressed Ascendant 5°15' Leo	Conjunct my natal ascendant Conjunct my natal Moon
13/5/55	Death of mother	Transiting South Node 28°24' Gemini Transiting Jupiter 25°22' Leo Transiting Pluto 28°02' Leo Progressed Mercury 27°04' Progressed Mars 29°02' Leo	Conjunct natal Sun *Conjunct natal IC/MC axis
20/6/1975	Retires after more than twenty years service as security officer with HJ Heinz.	Progressed Sun 00°06' Virgo *Solar Arc directed Moon 00°14' Aquarius Solar Arc directed North Node 28°55' Cancer – crucial degree in his life	Major change in life

The items in the right hand column marked with an asterisk are those which are dependant on an accurate time of birth. Aspects to natal planets – apart from the Moon – would be largely relevant for any time of birth on 20 June 1910.

This article has evolved over several years - although there is good data available for the times of the various events I had always been unsure which time zone to use for the charts in connection with the sinking of HMS Cornwall.

Eventually I contacted the Ministry of Defence who responded with a definitive answer within a couple of hours.¹⁰

Only when I started to dig out the material I had accumulated a few years earlier did I realised the date on which they had my answered my email was 11 March 2024 – 98 years to the day after HMS Cornwall was launched. As if that were not enough of a “co-incidence” the time I received the email from the MoD was 2.47 pm - just thirteen minutes short of the exact time of the launch.¹¹

“There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, than are dreamt of in your philosophy.”¹²

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Notes

1. P. 157, *Turns of Fate*, The Drama of HMS Cornwall 1939-1942, Ken Dimpleby, 1984, William Kimber, ISBN 0-7183-0523-X
2. P. 164 and p. 168 *ibid*
3. P. 157, *Christian Astrology*, William Lilly, 1647, Regulus Publishing Co. Ltd. 1985 ISBN 0-9484-7201-4
4. P. 145 *ibid*
5. Account of the sinking of HMS Cornwall by one of the survivors - Lieut (E) E. A. (Teddie) Drew RN at (sixteenth paragraph) https://www.world-war.co.uk/cornwall_loss.php
6. p. 185 Dimpleby.
7. Drew, op cit.
8. P. 187 Dimpleby, quoting Captain Augustus Agar of HMS Dorsetshire.
9. Line 1, *East Coker*, TS Eliot.
10. Extract from 1942 War Diary: Time Zones were recorded daily in the ship's log on an alphabetical basis. GMT was known as Zulu time with A-M (omitting J) representing zones east of Greenwich and zones N-Y being the zones west of Greenwich. All the entries in the War Diary which are relevant to these events have the later F (Foxtrot time) after them indicating a time zone six hours ahead of Greenwich, F being the sixth letter of the alphabet.
11. Western Morning News, 10 March 1926.
12. Lines 165-166, Act 1 Scene 5, *Hamlet*, William Shakespeare.