

The Aberfan Disaster - An Event Chart

Data

9.13 a.m. BST (-1)
21st. October 1966
51N29
3W10

Background

The village school at Aberfan in South Wales was situated in the shadow of a mountain of waste from nearby mining activities. Due to seepage from underground springs the mountain of dry material turned into an avalanche of slurry which engulfed the school. 147 people died including 116 children.

The subsequent report placed the blame for the disaster firmly on the National Coal Board (NCB) for poor management of its waste and for ignoring previous warnings. At the time of the disaster the NCB maintained that heavy rain rather than underground seepage had activated the mountain of waste.

The time the waste hit the school is taken as 9.13 a.m. BST¹ (see picture of Western Mail below).

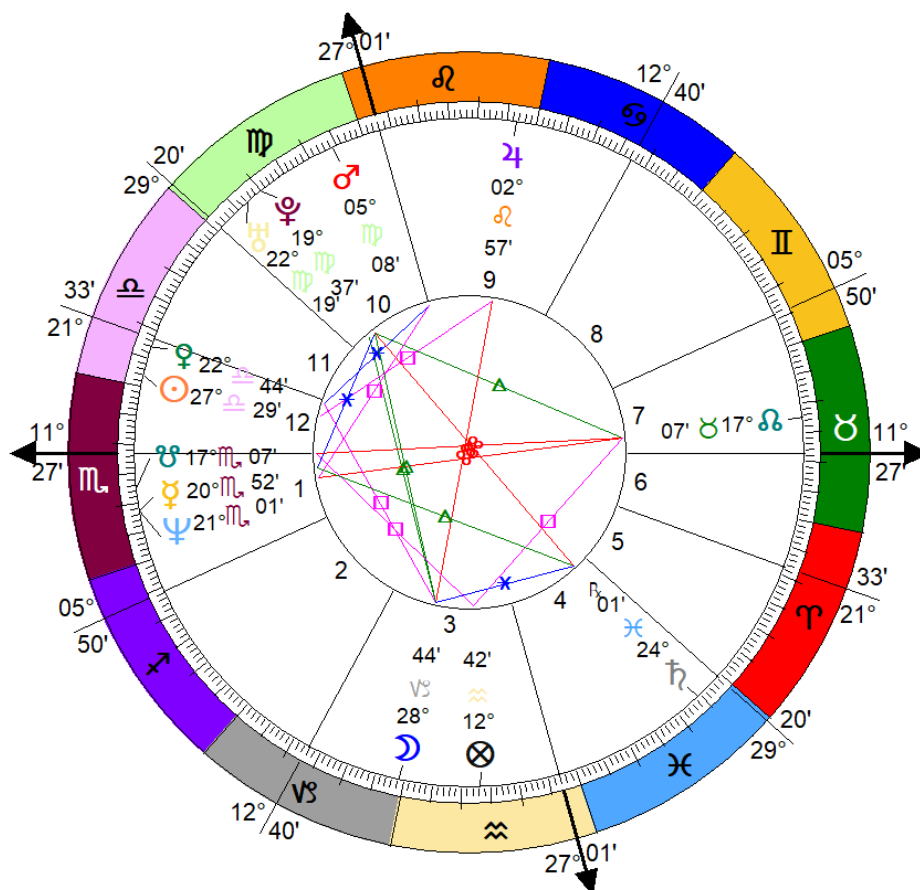
Chart Description

Since this is an event the signification may be taken as for eclipses and ingresses where the first house and its ruler represent the common people¹. The people are therefore signified by Scorpio on the Ascendant, Mars its ruler, Mercury in the first house and the Moon.

The evidence of death and disaster is clear in the chart.

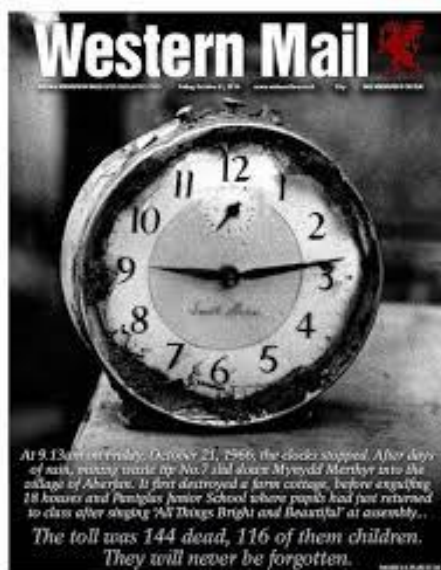
Mercury, the natural significator of schools,² is an appropriate ruler of the hour since it is a school which is being destroyed. It is also the ruler of Gemini, on the cusp of the eighth house of death and its placement in the first house shows death coming to the people.

Mars also rules the fifth house which is naturally associated with children³ and is placed in Virgo where it is disposed by Mercury, the ruler of the eighth house of death. Yet another connection



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is offered by the mutual reception by sign rulership between Mercury and Mars – Mars is in Virgo (ruled by Mercury) while Mercury is in Scorpio (ruled by Mars).



The front page of the Western Mail for 22 October 1966 showing the clock stopped at 9.13 a.m. the previous day when the slurry hit the school in Aberfan

The slurry and mud which cause the disaster is well indicated by Mercury's placement in Scorpio which signifies *inter alia* muddy grounds and quagmires.⁴

11°27' Scorpio on the Ascendant reinforces this description of the agent of death as does the presence of the South Node at 17°07' Scorpio, also in the first house.

The fixed star, Unukalhai, at 21°32' Scorpio is within one degree of Mercury and adds further to the description - it is of the nature of Saturn and Mars, according to Ptolemy, and signifies "accidents, violence and danger of poison."⁵

Scorpio is a fixed sign which shows the difficulty in clearing the debris - rescue teams worked for several days to recover all the bodies - while the privacy associated with Scorpio is shown in the hostility extended to London journalists by the local people.⁶

If we include the "modern" planets in the description of the chart then Mercury's close conjunction with Neptune in the first house is also very descriptive. Neptune has been taken

to signify anything connected with water and also has undertones of death by association with Neptune and the twelfth house. However, Neptune is hardly needed in a chart which is so well described by traditional astrology.

Mercury is in mutual application to a trine with Saturn, natural significator of death and retrograde in Pisces in the fourth house. Pisces, a water sign, underlines the liquidity of the slurry and the fourth house which is known as the house of the grave.⁷ The theme of death is further emphasised by Saturn, ruler of Aquarius, also being the ruler of the fourth house.

The Moon also represents the people and is most appropriately positioned at 28°48' Capricorn for here it is peregrine and in its detriment while its position in the last but one degree of the sign shows that life has ended for the people signified in the chart.

It is also a reminder that Capricorn is not just the earth sign (which is how it is always treated in modern times) but was traditionally considered a mixture of water and earth: "the beginning of Capricorn is earthy and its end watery."⁸

There could hardly be a more accurate description of the mixture of earth and water which slid down the mountain on that Welsh Autumn morning.

Ironically, the Moon is in third house which is the house of its joy⁹ yet even this adds to the description for there was indeed much "trotting and trudging"¹⁰ of neighbours and brothers and sisters as the local residents spearheaded the rescue effort.



The school at Aberfan was buried under a river of sludge that slid down the side of the mountain.

The Moon separates from a square with the Sun which is the natural ruler of life but is placed in its fall in Libra in the twelfth house of misery. The Moon now applies to an opposition with Jupiter,

dispositor of Saturn with all its connotations of death noted above. Jupiter might also be considered a significator of death in this chart since it occupies almost the whole of the fourth house.

In a murder chart the killer is signified by the seventh house since this opposes the first house of life and in this chart we can see that Venus, ruler of the seventh, is perched on the cusp of the twelfth house which signifies imprisonment.

Venus, dignified in the sign of its rulership, Libra, is no friend in this instance since it is combust and the people are trapped in the school where they die. This also reflects the mutual reception by exaltation between Venus and Saturn, ruler of death and constriction.

The tenth house is also important in this chart as the owners of the waste tip were the National Coal Board - a government body and therefore ruled by the tenth house. Mars, significator of the people, is peregrine and placed in Virgo in the tenth house. This shows them to be powerless and in the hands of the NCB.

Virgo occupies virtually all of the tenth house and, since it is ruled by Mercury, the common rulership by Mercury of the eighth and tenth suggests the culpability of the NCB in causing the disaster by its poor waste management. The mutual reception between Mars and Mercury mentioned earlier adds more weight to the culpability of the NCB since Mars, ruler of the ascendant and signifying the school and its inhabitants is placed in the tenth house which signifies the NCB – the school is in the hands of the NCB.-

A number of television programmes and articles marking the thirtieth anniversary of the disaster in 1996 showed the extent to which parents and relatives of the victims had (very understandably) hung on to the grief and refused to forgive the NCB officials responsible for the events of 21st. October 1966. Lack of forgiveness perhaps takes us full circle to the characteristics of the Scorpio Ascendant of the chart of this sad event..

Notes

1. p. 50 *Christian Astrology*, (CA) William Lilly 1647
2. P. 78 *ibid*.
3. p. 53 *ibid*
4. p. 97 *ibid*
5. p. 213, *The Fixed Stars and Constellations in Astrology*, Vivian Robson 1923.
6. *Daily Telegraph*, 22nd. October 1966.
7. p. 52 CA – the fourth house signifies “the determination or end of anything” which is taken to mean include the end of life.
8. p. 281 *Carmen Astrologicum*, Dorotheus, first century CE, Ascella Publications, 1993.
9. p. 52 CA.
10. p. 52 CA.

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