



TRANSIT

the astrologer's newsletter
January - February 2005

Hallo, and Happy New Year!

Local astrology groups are the lifeblood of astrology - where else can newcomers and enthusiasts get together with seasoned professionals and teachers? So I'm disappointed that there seem to be so few active ones around. Of course, it's not easy to set up a group and keep it going; people lose enthusiasm, venues for meeting are hard to come by, getting speakers for meeting is a problem, getting your meetings advertised can be difficult.

Here, the Astrological Association can be a huge help. The people who make up the AA have, between them, decades of experience in organising gatherings of all size. They have lists of speakers and and will be more than happy to advertise a group. In fact, that is supposed to be one of Transit's functions - we have a page dedicated to Local Groups.

Glenda Cole is is compiling an up-to-date list of local groups - her contact details are in the notice on the Local Groups page. If you run a local astrology group, or know of one, please get in touch with her. And if you're involved with a group and want it advertised, get in touch with me as well!

In this issue, we have articles on the astrological significance of Groundhog Day, the similarities between the current US administration and Cromwellian England, an article outlining some of the problems besetting the collectors of astrological data, plus some humour from our resident Old Grouch. And I've just had time to put in a summary of a very interesting PhD thesis about the Babylonian Zodiac; Robert Powell was awarded his degree for this work at Polish Academy of Science (Institute for the History of Science) in Warsaw on December 20. There are also all the usual roundup of news and events, plus a collection of current data, in the reinstated Data Corner.

- Val Dobson, Editor

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WANT TO BE ON TV?

Leopard Films is looking for professional Astrologers for a brand new TV programme. The pilot programme will be focussing on family dynamics. The objective of the programme is to use two experts to transform family life for the better. The expert Astrologer will identify any issues the family may have based on the individual members' astrological predisposition and they will use their expertise to offer solutions to make a successful family unit. If you would like to offer your expertise to help enhance family life please contact Fatima Luna on 0870 420 4232 or email fatimaluna@leopardfilms.com

CONFERENCE 2005

The AA's next annual conference promises to be very special. In co-operation with Continental astrological organisations and the USA's ISAR, it will be a multi-lingual conference, in English, French, German and Italian.

Held in in the conference centre of the University of York from the 30th September to the 4th October, there will be room for up to 1000 delegates. Speakers so far booked include: André Barbault, Liz Greene, Bernadette Brady, Robert Hand and Dennis Elwell. The total cost for all fives days is expected to be around £499. This will include a room for four nights, three cooked meals a day, entry to all Main Conference sessions, many of the special attractions, the Astro Exhibition, a pocket radio receiver/ earphones for the translated sessions and VAT. You can of course book just for individual days, and there will be discounts for group bookings.

Full details and an online booking form can be found on the AA's website.

CHANGES AND PASSAGES

A British Vedic astrologer was amongst the 7 victims of the November 6th train derailment in Berkshire. Barry Strevens - a member of CVA and BAVA and a successful ACVA Level II graduate - was on his way home to Wells, in Somerset, having attended Sanjay Rath's all day BAVA Workshop at Mandeville Place in London. Barry was 55 and leaves a wife, Jaqui and their two sons Oli (2) and Toby (five months), along with a 19 year old daughter and a step-daughter from his first marriage. He was also long-time devotee of Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, a practitioner of Transcendental Meditation and a dear friend to many in the Vedic Astrology community.

DATA CORNER

HELEN DUNCAN: 25th November 1897; 3am; Callander, Scotland (56:14:42N 4:12:42W). Source: biography *Hellish Nell: Last of Britain's Witches* by Malcolm Gaskill (Fourth Estate, 2001), quoting birth records. Duncan was a British spiritualist medium famous for being successfully prosecuted, in 1944, under the Witchcraft Act of 1753. (Coincidentally, Brigadier Roy Firebrace - one of the AA's founders - was involved in her arrest and prosecution, in his capacity as a Military Intelligence officer.)

MARK THATCHER: 15th Aug 1953 14:50 BST (13:50 GMT). London (51N29 0W11). Source: from Frank Clifford's collection, though he gives the rating as "B", quoting a book. (Since Mark Thatcher is a twin, the time should be recorded on his birth certificate.)

BARBARA CARTLAND: July 9th 1901; 23:40 (11:40 PM) UT (+0:00); Birmingham, UK (52N 0 001W50). Rodden Rating/Source: AA . Letter from her to Marc Penfield, quoting her mother's diary for "20 minutes to 12." (AM/PM was not specified, but Joan Reville quotes her for "shortly before midnight" in Fowler's.) In November 2004, her son announced that 160 of her unpublished novels are to published on the internet, one a month for the next 13 years.

CONDOLEZZA RICE: Nov 14th 1954; 11:30 (11:30 AM) CST(+6:00); Birmingham, Alabama (33N31 86W48) Rodden Rating: B. Approximate time deduced from a biography by Antonia Felix, *Condi: The Condoleezza Rice Story*, Newmarket Press, NY, 2002, p. 36, "Condi was born on a Sunday morning while her father was leading the eleven o'clock service at

Westminster... On November 14, 1954, Angelena (her mother) gave birth to a girl, and she named her Condoleezza."

VLADIMIR PUTIN: October 7, 1952; 09:30 AM BAT (-3:00); St. Petersburg, Russia (59N55 30E15) Rodden Rating A. Source: Birth records.

UKRAINE: August 24, 1991; 2:59 PM (GMT); Kiev (30E31, 50N26). This was the moment that the Ukrainian Parliament announced the result of voting and adopted the Declaration of Independence. The time was recorded by Ukrainian astrologer Tatyana Mandryka and taken from the live radio broadcast of the event. (According to an article by Sergey Smelyakov in the ISAR international email newsletter of December 19th 2004.)

SUMATRA EARTHQUAKE/TSUNAMI: 26th December 2004; 00:58:50 GMT; Aceh, Sumatra (095E46 003N20) Source: US Geological Survey.

DAVID FISHER'S DATA DEPARTMENT

NEW DATA!!

Giovanni Belzoni, standing 6 feet 7 inches, came to England in 1803 and earned his living as a circus strong man. In 1815 he went to Egypt and took to robbing tombs of their antiquities, most notably a huge bust of Rameses II which he later sent to the British Museum in London. Among his many accomplishments were the exploration of the Temple of Edfu, opening the Pyramid of Khefren at Giza and discovering the ruins of Berenice near Benghazi. He returned to England in 1819 and published his discoveries as *Narratives of the Operations and Recent Discoveries within the Pyramids, Temples, Tombs and Excavations in Egypt and Nubia* (1820). In 1823, Belzoni died of dysentery in Beni, Africa, while searching for the source of the River Niger.

GIOVANNI BATTISTA BELZONI: 5th November 1778; Padua, Italy (45N25 11E53); "at the 11th hour of the preceding night". Valerie Matthews quotes a biography which refers to the baptismal entry in the records of the Episcopal Court of Padua. She concludes that since the nights were divided into twelve equal parts, he must have been born one hour before sunrise. She has calculated that the date of sunrise on Belzoni's date of birth was 05:44 am LMT (05:56:28 GMT).

DAVID BLUNKETT resigned as Home Secretary on 15th December 2004. Blind from birth, he involved himself in the politics of Sheffield at an early age and was a Sheffield City Councillor from 1870 to 1988. He was elected MP for Sheffield Brightside in 1987 and was Labour Party Chairman 1993-4. He was appointed Secretary for Education and Employment in 1997 and had been Home Secretary since June 2001. Apparently the combination of his private life and accusations of fast-tracking visas proved too much for him in the end. Charles Clarke has now taken over at the Home Office and Ruth Kelly has replaced Clarke as Education Secretary. At the age of 36, she is already being tipped as a future Prime Minister - but then, so was William Hague!

DAVID BLUNKETT: 6th June 1947; Sheffield (53N23 001W30); 07:00 am BDST (05:00 am GMT). Caroline Gerard, from him, "as far as I am aware, I was born at 7 am".

CHARLES CLARKE: 21st September 1950

RUTH KELLY: 9th May 1968

The last two dates were taken from *The Times Guide to the House of Commons June 2001* (Times Books, 2001). Both MPs were elected to the House in 1997.

SOME PROBLEMS WITH DATA - Val Dobson

Accurate birth-data is the lifeblood of astrology - how else can we accurately predict and analyse without an ascendent and housecusps, or accurate planetary positions? However, getting the right data is often difficult - sometimes downright impossible.

Nowadays, astrologers are very interested in the charts of current Middle Eastern newsmakers. However, getting accurate data in this area is extremely problematical. The case of Yasser Arafat illustrates this; there are three dates and two places of birth of birth for him on record: 4th August 1929 in Jerusalem (Arafat's own claim), 4th August 1929, in Cairo (Arafat's university record, and various official biographies), August 24th 1929 in Cairo (his wife, and "a birth certificate") and August 27th 1929 in Cairo (*Arafat, The Man and The Myth* [1976] by Thomas Kiernan, p.33)

The Keirnan biography also says (page 23): "There is no absolute information on his place of birth; a cousin says he once boasted of having office records in Cairo destroyed in order to underscore his born-in-Jerusalem image." According to the AstroDataBank website: "...in a newspaper interview, he (Arafat) explained that 'facts' or 'truth' as known to the western mind, has a more flexible interpretation in the mid-east."

Similar problems of truth afflict the data of Saddam Hussein and Osama bin Laden. Although there is no dispute about Saddam's place of birth (Tikrit), there are at least four or five different birthdates for him. April 28th 1937 is the one most widely used, but I'm not the only person who feels it is more than coincidence that this is also the foundation date of the Baathist party that he led. It appears that no birth records were kept in that region at that time, so it's perfectly possible that Saddam himself didn't know his precise date of birth; his Stalinist propensities would easily have allowed him to create the myth - for himself as well as his people - that he and his party were one.

Up until recently, the practice of inventing your own birth date wasn't that uncommon in some Arabic countries. War is an efficient destroyer of records and recording births in a centralised register is a fairly recent practice in remote communities anyway. When officialdom required a 'proper' date, and there was no extant record and the family could only remember the month of birth, the 15th of the month was often picked, or perhaps the birthdate of a powerful relative or a local hero that fell in that month.

As for Osama bin Laden, you can pick just about any date for him - apparently, even the CIA have no idea of his birthdate. In fact, the tangle surrounding OBL's data is a good illustration of many of the problems in gathering birth data from countries that use non-Western calendars.

Let's begin with the birthdate most often cited for OBL: 10th March 1957. Now, if it was ever recorded, his birthdate would have been written down as a date in the Islamic calendar, which is not the same as our Western calendar. The Islamic calendar is Lunar - each month starts at the sighting of the first evening crescent Moon. One complication of this is that the crescent Moon cannot be seen at the same time from different world locations - evening moonrise in Kabul, for instance, would be lunchtime in Washington DC. For this reason, nearly all Muslim communities follow moon-calendars set for their own locality (with the exception of a few traditionalists who follow the calendar set for Mecca wherever they are in the world); a further complication is that they don't all agree on just what constitutes a 'sighting' - is it a sighting if the crescent Moon is visible before the Sun fully sets, or after? Often the decision is left to local committees, who can and do change their minds from year to year. Yet another complication of the Islamic calendar for Westerners is that the Islamic 'day' begins and ends at sunset. So, in practice, it is possible to have an error of up to two days in converting Islamic dates to Western dates.

Another, very common, error in date conversion is that a Westerner may be told that so-and-so was born on "the tenth day of the third month" and assume that the speaker means the 10th of March, when they actually mean the 10th day of the third *Islamic* month. This is what may well have happened with Osama bin Laden and the "10th of March" date. OBL is on record as saying that he was born in the Islamic year 1377 AH. That covered July 29th 1957 to July 17th 1958 (give or take a day or two), so the 10th

day of the 3rd month of that year would have been around the 4th October 1957 (give or take a day or two) in the Western calendar.

(Similarly, Michael Ridout tells the story of a Korean-born man who said that he had two birthdates - his "American birthday" of 14th February 1958 and his "Korean birthday" of the 14th day of the second month of the Year of the Dog. Koreans follow the Chinese lunar calendar; like the Islamic calendar, the month begins at the New Moon. In this case, a Western birthdate had been required for immigration purposes when his family moved to America when he was a child; unsure of the date conversion, his parents knew that the Year of the Dog had been in 1958, so they put down 14th February 1958. In fact, the year of the Dog began on 18th February 1958, so the man had actually been born around April 2nd.)

And finally, even when dealing with the Western calendar only, there is always the possibility of getting the date format mixed up. Americans use the mm/dd/yy format; Europeans use the dd/mm/yy format. So a birthdate simply noted as "10/03/57" could be read as either 10th March 1957 or 3rd October 1957. Who knows - perhaps Osama is a peace-loving Libran after all!

GROUNDHOG DAY - Paul Newman

The echo of Halloween at Imbolc in early February, (both these cross-quarter days are when the Sun is at a declination of approximately 15 degrees South) is also concerned with new life in the dead of winter. It coincides with the first signs of approaching spring breaking through the earth and the legend of the Groundhog emerging from the dark to look for his shadow has a similar folk status.

The essence of the American groundhog superstition is the belief that making a tricky choice through observing the current state of nature determines the future. By old tradition the state of the weather in early February in the Northern Hemisphere gave farmers a clue as to an early or late spring. This belief found echoes in many agricultural societies. In Britain there is an old rhyme "If Candlemass Day be bright and clear, there'll be two winters in the year". In the United States, Pennsylvanian folklore centred on the groundhog, a little animal believed to emerge from its winter sleep on this day to see if it could find its shadow on the ground. If it saw no shadow the groundhog decided the climate was mild enough for it to remain above ground, and human observers predicted an early spring. However if it did see its shadow the groundhog knew it was still too cold and returned underground for another six weeks of hibernation. At this time in early February the Sun in Aquarius helps towards an offbeat nature which is on a par with Halloween in the sense that both are solar parallels or antiscion points. Its 'tricky' nature reflects the similarly tricky spirits abroad on the night of All Hallows.

So we might suggest the keywords of "Death and Regeneration" for the declination area of 14-16° South, and the grinning mask of the Halloween Jester for any planet or body situated there.

It is important to remember the solar similarities between Halloween and Imbolc, the hours of daylight are the same for both, planetary hours would have the same length. But the main difference is that one anticipates the darkness of winter (Halloween) while the other anticipates the lightness of spring (Imbolc). They are both concerned with light and shadows. Their midpoint is the winter solstice, renowned as both the heart of darkness and the birth of light.

Today neither Halloween nor Imbolc takes place at its true solar date. The festivals were meshed with the calendar to be fixed on convenient first-of-the-month dates somewhen in the past, and so these two special days are not exactly halfway between an equinox and a solstice on a count of days nor do they exactly correspond by zodiac antiscia. If we fix Halloween as the night of October 31st, the Sun is usually around 9 degrees of Scorpio. The antiscion point of this would be 21 degrees Aquarius, but the Sun does not reach this zodiac degree until about the 10th of February. Imbolc or Groundhog Day would be better placed at this time. Alternatively if you take the halfway point between equinoxes and solstices (or halfway between zero Cardinals) as 15 degrees of the Fixed signs, then Halloween should be celebrated around November 7th and Imbolc around February 4th.

Others may argue that the true strength of the celebrations each year depends on the Moon, and that they should be fluid enough in calendar date to allow for an appropriate lunar phase. That may be so but the truth is that these are solar festivals, determined by the changing declination of the Sun (or the changing tilt of the Earth as it orbits the Sun). Surviving through the centuries as quaint customs to appease the world of faerie on the eve of solar festivals was the knowledge that the Sun's power had an animating effect across the Earth at these special times.

The Definition of the Babylonian Zodiac - Robert Powell

Robert Powell was awarded a PhD at the Polish Academy of Science (Institute for the History of Science) in Warsaw on December 20th, 2004. This is a summary of his PhD thesis, entitled "The Definition of the Babylonian Zodiac and the Influence of Babylonian Astronomy on the Subsequent Defining of the Zodiac".

This thesis on the definition and transmission of the zodiac is concerned with the original specification of the zodiac, i.e. the first scientific definition of the zodiac.

According to this original definition the zodiac is defined by the two first magnitude stars Aldebaran and Antares in such a way that each is located exactly at the midpoint (15°) of their respective sign, Taurus and Scorpio. Thereby these two stars define the central axis of the zodiac, which was the primary zodiacal reference axis for all other stars. On the basis of observation and measurement in relation to this reference axis, the brighter stars near the ecliptic belonging to the twelve zodiacal constellations were assigned longitudes in the zodiac, for example the stars Alpha and Beta Librae were assigned the longitudes 20° and 25° Libra. Thus the first astronomical coordinate system came into being, through which the positions of the stars and planets along the ecliptic could be determined between 0° and 30° within the twelve zodiacal signs.

This coordinate system of twelve zodiacal signs, i.e. twelve equal-length zodiacal constellations each 30° long, emerged in Babylonian astronomy during the fifth century B.C. and was transmitted from Babylon to Greece, Hellenistic Egypt, Rome, and India. It had a forerunner in the schematic solar calendar of MUL.APIN (seventh century B.C.), which comprised a division of the year into twelve solar months relating to the sun's movement in declination**(1)**. This solar calendar was possibly the forerunner of that of the Greek astronomer Euctemon (fifth century B.C.). Euctemon's solar calendar went through a metamorphosis - probably through Hipparchus (second century B.C.) - to become the tropical zodiac, one of the standard coordinate systems of astronomy**(2)**.

A list of 17 constellations, some of whose stars lie within the moon's path on or close to the ecliptic, is also given in MUL.APIN. This too, since all twelve zodiacal constellations are named in this list, was a forerunner of the zodiac.

Between the fifth and the third centuries B.C. a development occurred from the early MUL.APIN level of Babylonian astronomy to the highly developed mathematical astronomy of Systems A and B based on computations using the ecliptic coordinate system of the sidereal zodiac as defined above in relation to the stars.**(3)** This new level of astronomy relied on the one hand on the ecliptic coordinate system of the Babylonian sidereal zodiac and on the other hand on the availability of records of astronomical observations collected over an extended period of time.

It is unknown through whom the innovation leading to the introduction of the zodiacal coordinate system into Babylonian astronomy took place. It was made possible by the observation of the heavens as a systematic program carried out over hundreds of years, and it is an astonishing fact of the history of science that this systematic observation of the night sky was executed by Babylonian astronomers over many centuries.

In the last analysis this thesis pays tribute to those early astronomers who kept records of their observations and were able on this basis to arrive at the innovation of the ecliptic coordinate system of the zodiac, which was central to the whole subsequent development of astronomy as a science.

The original contribution of this thesis to the history of astronomy is the uncovering of the intrinsic definition of the Babylonian sidereal zodiac. This definition is intrinsic, because it

is nowhere explicitly stated in the available cuneiform sources. Nevertheless the placing of Aldebaran at 15° Taurus and Antares at 15° Scorpio is the foundation for the definition of the zodiac.

Observation of the starry heavens reveals that the twelve zodiacal constellations (with the exception of Libra) are distributed such that their centers lie approximately 30 degrees from one another, and in the case of the constellations of Taurus and Scorpio their centers are marked by the bright stars Aldebaran and Antares. That which I have called the intrinsic definition of the zodiac, comprising the central content of this thesis, probably derives from the simple observation of the distribution of the circle of the twelve zodiacal constellations (as a division into twelve 30° -sectors or signs) around the celestial sphere.

This original definition of the zodiac of the Babylonians in the fifth century B.C. was a significant event in the history of astronomy as it heralded the beginning of the development of mathematical astronomy. Babylonian mathematical astronomy reached a highpoint during the Seleucid era (third and second centuries B.C.). However, although the Greek astronomer Hipparchus adopted some Babylonian astronomical parameters, he effectively redefined the zodiac when, rather than utilizing the Babylonian sidereal zodiac, he used instead the tropical zodiac, if indeed he really did utilize the tropical zodiac. **(4)** Although the sidereal zodiac was transmitted from Babylon to Greece, Hellenistic Egypt, Rome, and India, it was replaced in Greek astronomy by the tropical zodiac. Thus the tropical zodiac is the standard astronomical coordinate system used in the second century A.D. by Ptolemy in the *Almagest*.

In addition to exploring in detail the original definition of the zodiac, a second original contribution of this thesis is the uncovering of the line of descent from the schematic solar calendar of the Babylonians from MUL.APIN to the tropical zodiac of Greek astronomy (Hipparchus and Ptolemy) via the solar calendar of Euctemon. Essential to understanding this line of descent is the insight that the Babylonian solar calendar and Euctemon's solar calendar are both an expression of the sun's movement in declination.

The tropical zodiac, as a spatial projection of Euctemon's solar calendar, is thus actually based on the sun's movement in declination, which is intrinsically independent of the sun's motion in longitude through the sidereal zodiac. Thus midsummer always occurs when the sun attains its maximum declination. However, the midsummer sun for Meton and Euctemon (432 B.C.) was in the constellation of Cancer (Meton specified it to be at 8° Cancer whereas it was actually at 9° Cancer in the Babylonian sidereal zodiac at that time). At the present time, however, on account of precession the midsummer sun is located in the constellation of Gemini (currently at 5° Gemini in the Babylonian sidereal zodiac). From this it is readily apparent that the two coordinate systems - that of the Babylonians (the sidereal zodiac) and the one favored in Greek astronomy (the tropical zodiac) - are intrinsically independent. To what extent this was grasped by Ptolemy - in particular regarding the long-term consequence of adopting the tropical zodiac as the standard astronomical frame of reference, thus signifying the gradual spatial displacement between the tropical and sidereal zodiacs on account of precession - is unknown. Although Ptolemy lacked the conceptual framework and the vantage point of modern astronomy, it was theoretically possible for him to anticipate the future spatial dislocation of the tropical zodiac in relation to the background of the stellar constellations that is apparent now that the vernal point is located in the region of the Western Fish of the constellation of Pisces, i.e. now that the displacement between the tropical and sidereal zodiacs amounts to some 25° (almost one complete zodiacal sign).

As the tropical zodiac is still used as a coordinate system in modern astronomy, the uncovering of the line of descent from the solar calendar of the Babylonians to the tropical zodiac reveals the indebtedness of modern astronomy to its origins in Babylonian astronomy. Even if Euctemon arrived at his solar calendar (underlying the tropical zodiac) independently of the Babylonian solar calendar, the line of descent as a principle in the history of astronomical ideas is nevertheless apparent, i.e. that Babylonian astronomers were the first to conceive of expressing the sun's yearly motion in declination in the form of a solar calendar. We shall probably never know if Euctemon derived his solar calendar from that of the Babylonians, but we can at least honor the achievement of Babylonian astronomers as being the first to conceive of such a solar calendar, just as this thesis honors their great achievement in defining the original zodiac: the sidereal zodiac.

FOOTNOTES:

(1) MUL.APIN, a series of astronomical texts on two tablets, means "the plow star" - named according to the initial words on the first tablet. MUL.APIN stems from the seventh century B.C. but contains observations that were made much earlier. The solar calendar of MUL.APIN consists of a schematic year of twelve months, each 30 days long, such that the equinoxes and solstices fall on the 15th day of the months I, IV, VII, and X. A correspondence is evident between the solar calendar and the zodiac: the zodiac consists of twelve signs each 30° long, corresponding to the solar calendar of twelve months each 30 days in length.

(2) In the MUL.APIN solar calendar the equinoxes are placed on the 15th day of the months I and VII and the solstices on the 15th day of the months IV and X, whereas in Euctemon's solar calendar the equinoxes are located on the first day of the months I and VII and the solstices on the first day of the months IV and X. This is a new principle in relation to the Babylonian solar calendar. This new calendar principle introduced by Euctemon is mirrored in the definition of the tropical zodiac, in which the vernal and autumnal points are placed at 0° Aries and 0° Libra and the summer and winter solstitial points are located at 0° Cancer and 0° Capricorn. As discussed in footnote 4, it was probably Hipparchus (second century B.C.) who brought about the transformation of Euctemon's temporal solar calendar into the spatial coordinate system of the tropical zodiac. In contrast, according to Hipparchus the Greek astronomer Eudoxus (fourth century B.C.) defined the vernal and autumnal points to be at 15° Aries and 15° Libra and the summer and winter solstitial points to be at 15° Cancer and 15° Capricorn. This definition by Eudoxus corresponds exactly to the solar calendar from MUL.APIN (see footnote 3).

(3) The ecliptic is the apparent path of the sun through the center of the zodiac. The original zodiac with twelve signs, each 30° long, specified by the Babylonians - in which Aldebaran is located at 15° Taurus and Antares at 15° Scorpio - is called the sidereal zodiac, since it is defined in relation to the stars (sidereal means "of the stars"), in order to distinguish it from the tropical zodiac, which is defined in relation to the vernal point. The sidereal zodiac and the tropical zodiac both comprise the same ecliptic coordinate system of twelve signs, each 30° long. However, whereas the sidereal zodiac is defined in relation to the stars, the tropical zodiac is defined in relation to the vernal point, which is equated with 0° Aries as the zero point of the tropical zodiac. Note that if there was a perfect correspondence between MUL.APIN's solar calendar and the zodiac (see footnote 1), the vernal point would have to be located at 15° Aries, since Aries as the first sign of the zodiac corresponds to month I and in the Babylonian solar calendar the vernal equinox was placed on the 15th day of month I (as with Eudoxus' definition, see footnote 2). However, in System A of Babylonian astronomy the vernal point was located at 10° Aries and in System B at 8° Aries. From this some researchers concluded that the Babylonians already knew about the slow movement of the vernal point ("precession of the equinoxes") backwards through the constellations - one sign (30°) in 2160 years, i.e. 1° in 72 years - and that they observed the position of the vernal point in the constellation of Aries and thus determined its location at that time to be 10° Aries (System A) or 8° Aries (System B).

(4) It is generally assumed that Hipparchus was the first to use the tropical zodiac. In his Commentary on the Phaenomena of Aratus and Eudoxus Hipparchus used a variety of coordinate systems, but he did not use the ecliptic coordinate system of the tropical zodiac in this work. The evidence that Hipparchus used the tropical zodiac as a coordinate system is inconclusive. The most important evidence is provided by Ptolemy's remarks in Almagest VII, 2 concerning Hipparchus' measurements of the longitudes of the stars Regulus and Spica. However, the possibility has to be considered that Ptolemy himself converted Hipparchus' measurements into the ecliptic coordinate system of the tropical zodiac. There is also the statement by Columella (first century A.D.) in De re rustica IX, 14 that Hipparchus placed the solstices and equinoxes in the first degrees (that is, at 0°) of the signs of the zodiac, i.e. that he placed the vernal point at 0° Aries, which defines the tropical zodiac. It is an assumption based on such remarks made by Ptolemy and Columella, rather than evidence from Hipparchus himself, that he, after having discovered the precession of the equinoxes, realized the importance of the ecliptic as a coordinate system and then compiled a star catalog using the ecliptic coordinate system of the tropical zodiac - presumably in the (no longer extant) star catalog said to have been compiled by Hipparchus as mentioned by Pliny in Natural History II, 95 and attested indirectly by Ptolemy in the Almagest with his references to Hipparchus' interest in observing the positions of the fixed stars. It would seem that Hipparchus probably introduced the tropical zodiac into Greek astronomy. What is definitely known about the tropical zodiac is that it is the standard ecliptic coordinate system that was used by Ptolemy in the second century A.D. and which - following Ptolemy's example - was used in astronomy thereafter.

OLD GROUCH READS THE STARS

Presenting an exciting New Astrological Column for Saturnians everywhere!

Are you fed up with all those cheerful soft-soaping forecasts, where nothing worse than a minor 'challenge' ever rears its head? Have you had enough of their sweet-talking nonsense and crave to wallow in the reality of the misery that's truly in store? Now you can enjoy both the confirmation of what a diabolical birth chart you were born with and how it is only going to get even worse in the coming months, with our 'through-the-signs' reference. (Written back to front to make it harder for you to find yours).

PISCES: Cigarettes, drugs, alcohol and working in shoe shops will all be banned, and you wont be allowed to go to prison either.

AQUARIUS: You are required to take a course on 'Being Normal', (a written course with no social interaction). In the unlikely event that you pass it you are given a job as an accountant.

CAPRICORN: The goals you are set are impossible, nothing goes your way, everything is delayed, work is hard, no one does you a favour. So it's a fairly average week really.

SAGITTARIUS: You wont win anything, you wont find anything, and you cant travel anywhere. Worse still, you wont think it's funny.

SCORPIO: You will soon be featured on This Is Your Life. Working out who is in on the secret and who will say what, will drive you crazy.

LIBRA: You have to go to an important social event unpartnered and wearing clothes from a jumble sale. More agonising still is trying to decide whether or not to go, and how to do it without offending anybody.

VIRGO: You gain employment in a grimy kitchen at the back of a seedy strip joint. Worse than that, you have to eat there.

LEO: No one takes the slightest bit of notice of you.

CANCER : All Full Moons and New Moons will be cancelled. Outsiders come in and tidy up your kitchen. You discover that none of your family are blood related.

GEMINI: You lose your voice for three weeks. Just as you recover you lose your phone.

TAURUS: Someone buys you a five-course meal but the restaurant catches fire and you have to stuff all the food down in five minutes. On the way out you lose your wallet.

ARIES: All competitive sports are banned and you have to queue up for everything. From now on, as in this list, your sign comes last.

Weather outlook (for all signs): Non stop rain for the next three months.

Political outlook: It's never been bleaker.

Health outlook: You will feel lousy.

LOCAL ASTROLOGY GROUPS

IMPORTANT: LOCAL GROUPS - PLEASE READ

From Glenda Cole:

"Following on from feedback received from the local groups meeting held during the 2004 AA conference Glenda Cole is addressing the following action points. You can see her response to each point, but as you will see each of the action points needs feedback from local groups in order to become a reality.

Point 1: The AA needs to have an up to date list of local groups, especially on the website.

Response: I am in the process of compiling an up to date list. If you would like your group to be included please email me with consent to do so. The basic information needed would be name and location of your group plus an email address and/or contact phone number.

Point 2: It was felt that it would be a good idea for local groups in the same region to make contact with each other for mutual support and perhaps to host larger events or bigger speakers.

Response: Are you already in contact with other groups in your region? If not would you like to be?

Point 3: Does the AA have a speakers list?

Response: Not at the moment but that can be remedied. However, before we contact anyone to ask them if they would like to be included on such a list we would like your recommendations, and then we will know that the list is made up of good speakers. (Especially as local groups often have excellent speakers that other groups have not heard of.) Therefore could you send me any such suggestions along with contact details so that I can get underway with assembling a speakers list.

Point 4: Local groups would like to know the names of speakers who are coming to this country for the conference.

Response: This one is easily remedied. If you go to the AA website: <http://www.astrologicalassociation.com/> and scroll down to the link for the 2005 conference details you will see a list of speakers who are expected over. We don't know their availability or if they are willing to visit local groups in the time frame they have. But if you would like to be put in contact with any of these speakers we can do that - the rest will be up to you.

Finally, if you know of any groups that you think I should also be contacting please don't hesitate to let me know."

Glenda can be contacted by email: sasastro@yahoo.co.uk or by phone 01284 768756

Are you interested in starting up an astrological group in the Nairn area? If so, contact Ian Delaney on ian.delaney@btinternet.com

There is a proposal to set up a West Sussex group - a meeting to arrange this is being held at Bosham House, near Chichester, on 28 January. Contact Jennie Scott for further details: Astrojennie@aol.com

Suffolk Astrological Society:

Tuesday 1st February: The Stone From Heaven. Speaker Evening with Tchenka (Jane) Sunderland. The Emerald Tablet states that "whatever is below is like that which is above". As Astrology is to the Above, so Alchemy is to the Below. Applying the wisdom of the latter to the symbolism of the former, a vision of Wholeness is revealed which can inspire a truly creative relationship with life's Process.

Tuesday 15th February: The Return of Mars - Discussion. As astrologers we often talk about Saturn returns or Solar and Lunar returns, but how often do we use Mars returns? Tonight Glenda will be leading a discussion on the Mars return chart.

Tuesday 1st March: October Eclipses - Discussion. Next month we have a solar eclipse on the 8th April and a Lunar eclipse on the 24th April. A discussion continuing our ongoing look both back and forwards at Saros cycles. Discussion led by Andrew.

Tuesday 15th March: The Astrology of Elections - Speaker Evening with Mark Fountain. This talk will look at the charts of some of the parties and personalities involved in springs

likely General Election and attempt to forecast the likely outcome whilst keeping in mind the difficulties in predicting winner and losers. How important are the charts of political leaders compared to the charts of political parties? Can and should Astrology make precise forecasts about the fate of nations?

All meetings held at Friends Meeting House, St Johns Street, Bury St Edmunds. 7.45 - 9.45.

The Company Of Astrologers is holding a series of Be Your Own Astrologer evening seminars, for newcomers to astrology who wish to learn. Venue: Canterbury. £5 per seminar. Dates: 3rd February, 3rd March, 7th April.

Contact: Company of Astrologers, PO BOX 792, Canterbury, Kent CT2 8WR
admin@coa.org.uk

West Wickham Astrology Club, Bromley, is still going strong.

Their next meeting will be on 13th January 2005, at West Wickham New Church Hall (entrance via Surrey Road) 7pm.

BRISTOL AREA

A new website for astrology in Bristol and surrounding has been set up. www.bristolastrology.net gives you up to date information on astrological events in the Bristol area - as well as links to the major local astrology organisations, and a directory of local astrologers. If you are an astrologer in the area and would like a FREE listing in the directory - contact the address on the site with details. If you know of an astrology event that isn't listed, again please e-mail me. All event listings and directory entries are free of charge. Check out www.bristolastrology.net as your one-stop portal for anything astrological in the West!

Arcturus Rising, Bristol's astrology group, will be meeting on 26 January with a talk on synastry by Liz Seddon. Contact: Chris Mitchell on 0117 963 6847 or by e-mail at info@arcturus.bristolastrology.net

Aquarius Severn are hosting a FREE open day on 8 January for astrology beginners, to give a taster of their astrology course, starting later in the month. They also have a talk on healing energetic problems in homes on 20 January, and their Saturnalia Party on 22 January - for which booking is essential. Details: kris@aquariussevern.com or telephone Graham Boston on (01242) 228796, Andrew Sime on (01453) 763357 or treasurer Kris Lee on (01451) 821487

2005 sees a brand new astrology discussion group setting up in Bristol, facilitated by local astrologer Catherine Reidy. This group will meet fortnightly starting from 14 January, and there are a limited number of places. The focus of the group will be to look at the twelve houses in depth. The group will be suitable for students of astrology with a basic knowledge of astrological principles and for season astrologers alike, and will provide the opportunity to work within a supportive group while improving and deepening interpretative skills. Contact Catherine Reidy for further details - on Twelfthxhouse@hotmail.com.

Wessex Astrology Group

Wed 12th January: Transits with Paul Newman. Bring your chart on acetate for a general discussion on what 2005 may have in store for you.

Wed 9th Feb: Astrology & I Ching - Geoff Dale

Venue: Broadstone Community Centre, nr Poole, Dorset. 7.30-9.30. www.wag2000fsnet.co.uk

Centre For Psychological Astrology

23 Jan: Darby Costello - Sun and Moon and the Far Out Planets. It is rare to find a person deeply interested in astrology who does not have the sun or moon closely aspected by the outer planets. These aspects show up as profound disturbances in the natural rhythms of daily life in infancy and childhood. The child with these aspects finds themselves cut off from nature and their own tribal connections in such a way that they must develop another dimension to survive. There are often long years of internal isolation. At some point we each find something that will make sense of our lives, and this is often through perspectives that are not part of the conventions of our societies. In this seminar we will

explore the psychological, imaginal and spiritual problems and gifts of having the luminaries intimately connected with the outer planets, Uranus, Neptune and Pluto. We shall also look at Chiron in relation to this theme.

30 Jan: Alexander von Schlieffen - Love Reborn Venus/Neptune and the Inner Longing for Eternal Beauty. The inner longing for eternal beauty is the creative driving force behind the most striking works of art in music, painting, poetry, philosophy, astrology, film etc. The creative process is a transformation of the ideal into a form that itself becomes a parable for the longing. Eternal beauty gets crushed in everyday life with the sound of the vacuum cleaner which pulls the unreachable out of the heavens onto a dusty carpet and confronts us with so many necessities that we have to deal with. What is the origin of this innate vision of an overall fulfilling love relation we carry in our hearts? Why does it ruin our relationships? How can we learn to cope with mundane realities and still find a clue to the eternal beauty in love? We will look at Venus and Neptune, in the natal chart and by transit for the clues to these two realities.

5 Feb: Juliet Sharman-Burke - The Theories of Freud and Klein. This psychological background seminar will take a condensed view of the works of these two great psychoanalysts with the aim of gaining a deeper understanding of the development of the psyche. We will use their ideas to enrich our work as psychological astrologers, and observe how their theories are reflected in their charts. Diploma Students Only.

6 Feb: Karen Hamaker-Zondag - Pluto in Transit. Pluto in transit often brings us things we don't expect including good things. But we always have to pay a certain price for it, sometimes more than we thought, or a different price than expected, and Pluto confronts us with contents and situations of a specific kind. If you understand the dynamics of Pluto, you can understand why things happen and how to cope with them, and how to turn the dark side into a new talent or gift. Pluto-times are fascinating, so we'll dive in deep!

13 Feb: Liz Greene - Old Cheesefoot on the Move: The Transits of Saturn. This seminar will explore the meaning of Saturn in transit, with particular focus on its move into Leo in July 2005 and its approaching opposition to Neptune. Despite a more enlightened and less simplistic approach to this most complex of planets, we still instinctively fear the advent of Saturn - a fear which itself is Saturnian in nature. We will examine Saturn transits from mythic, psychological and astrological perspectives, in aspect to natal and progressed planets and angles and in terms of its cyclical aspects to its own place. Participants are welcome to bring their charts on an OHP transparency.

20 Feb: Lynn Bell - In the Closet and Under the Bed - Family Complexes in Astrology. Within our charts, and embedded within our psyches are the often hidden stories of earlier generations, stories which leak across the boundaries of time and the psyches of individuals. This unfinished family business reappears in our own lives, dressed in new garb, given new names, but often animated by a powerful family complex. Ignored and driven underground, complexes often bubble up as strange repetitions, emotional hauntings, fated events; but they also contain trace elements of courage and creativity. Our charts, and those of other family members, give us clues to the underground forces at work in our lives, and to our own role in these larger family myths. Bring example charts on acetate.

27 Feb: Bernadette Brady - Eclipses: Their Use in the Consulting Astrologer's Tool Kit. Some of us are born on an eclipse. Others of us have experienced an eclipse aspecting our natal charts. Eclipses are not isolated events. They occur in large cycles that take twelve hundred years to unfold, often embracing a theme of human history. At the same time a single eclipse can incorporate an individual's entire life, or just a transiting period. This workshop explores both solar and lunar eclipses and presents an insightful and practical approach to working with one of our most ancient wonders.

All one-day seminars start at 10am and finish at 5pm. Fees for one-day seminars are £45.00.

CENTRE FOR PSYCHOLOGICAL ASTROLOGY, BCM BOX 1815 LONDON WC1N 3XX. 020 87492330 www.cpalondon.com

SUBMISSIONS TO TRANSIT

All contributions to Transit are welcome. We will publish information about groups, societies and courses as well as more general news about astrology - and your opinions. If at all possible please submit your contribution by email to Transit editor at:

transit@astrologicalassociation.com

Alternatively contributions may be sent through the post to **Transit, The Astrological Association, Unit 168, Lee Valley Technopark, Tottenham Hale, London N17 9LN**, preferably on disc in .txt or .doc format. Illustrations are appreciated where possible. If sent electronically these should be in .jpg format. Otherwise please make your contribution as clear and neat as you can.

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Transit aims to publish articles of general and specific interest to all astrologers. It is published bi-monthly and available free to all members. Contributors are at liberty to express such opinions or advocate such astrological techniques as they wish. The publication of these does not imply that they are endorsed by either the editor or the Council.

The deadline for contributions to the March 2005 issue is 21st February 2005. Genuinely urgent or newsworthy items may be submitted for publication at any time.