

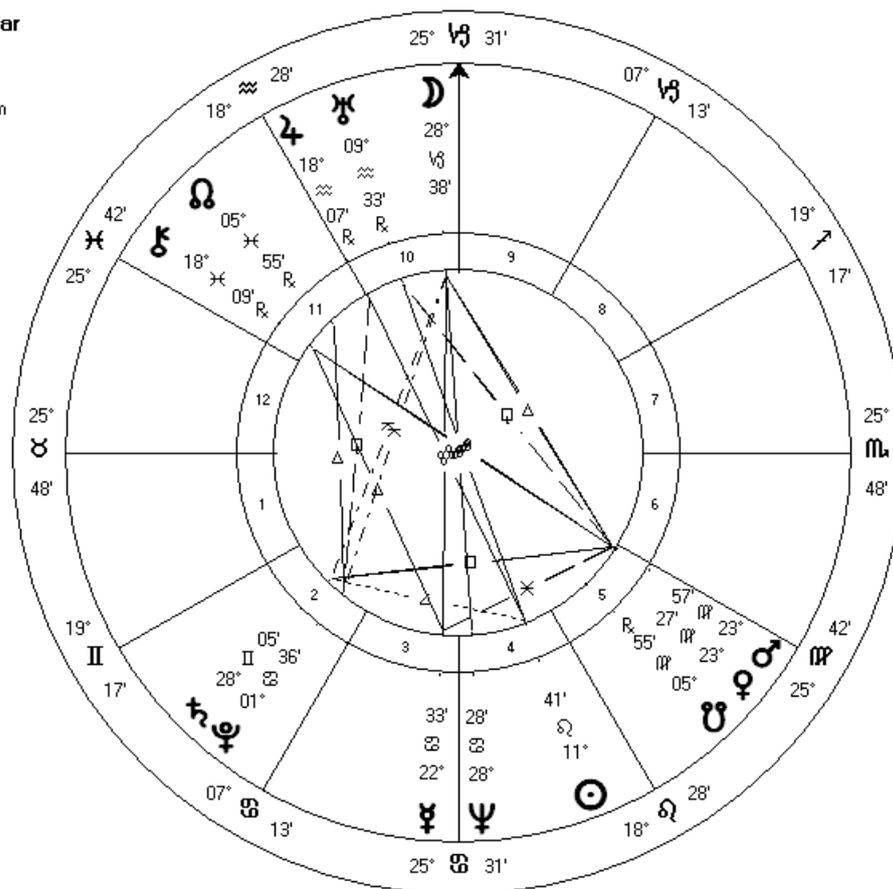
WORLD WAR I AND THE BRITISH NATIONAL HOROSCOPES

by Simon Bentley

Although much has been said and written about the astrological indicators of the two world wars and the various battles within them, a look at the original declaration of war for the 'Great War' seems appropriate at this time, not only because it is the centenary of that event but also to see what spiritual insight we may gain into the conflict. It is an axiom of spiritual law that every happening, 'good' or 'bad', is used to the greatest possible purpose. As humanity evolves, gradually the occurrence of conflicts will be reduced and eventually cease altogether, but now, while they still take place, what can we learn about the purpose to which humanity's wartime experience has been put?

The actual time of the British declaration of war was 11 pm (23.00) on the evening of 4 August 1914. The chart is printed below. Its ascendant immediately rings warning bells as it is the zodiacal degree of the great fixed star Algol, always regarded as a dire influence – it is indeed highly appropriate for the occasion.

**Declaration of War
Natal Chart (2)**
4 Aug 1914
23:00 UT +0:00
London, United Kingdom
51°N30' 000°W10'
*Geocentric
Tropical
Topocentric
True Node*



Apart from the Algol link, one's eye is drawn very quickly to the (albeit dissociate) Saturn-Pluto conjunction, which closed for the first time a few weeks later. A more potentially destructive and transformative combination would be hard to find, but what marks it out as so important in this context is the configuration with the Moon

and Neptune. Saturn semisextile Neptune lasts a number of days, but the exact intervention of the Moon, from Capricorn and the tenth, quincunx Saturn and opposite Neptune, was only exact for an hour or two around that time, so pinpoints the declaration in the late evening rather nicely. This configuration shows perfectly the initial idealism, the 'noble cause' side of it, while the aspect with Saturn, in its turn applying to the extraordinarily powerful conjunction with Pluto, shows the uncompromising reality of what subsequently took place, the destruction of so many lives, homes and families (Pluto in Cancer; Neptune in Cancer in the fourth) in what seemed at the time an interminable conflict (Saturn again). Note too that the conjunction is in the second house.

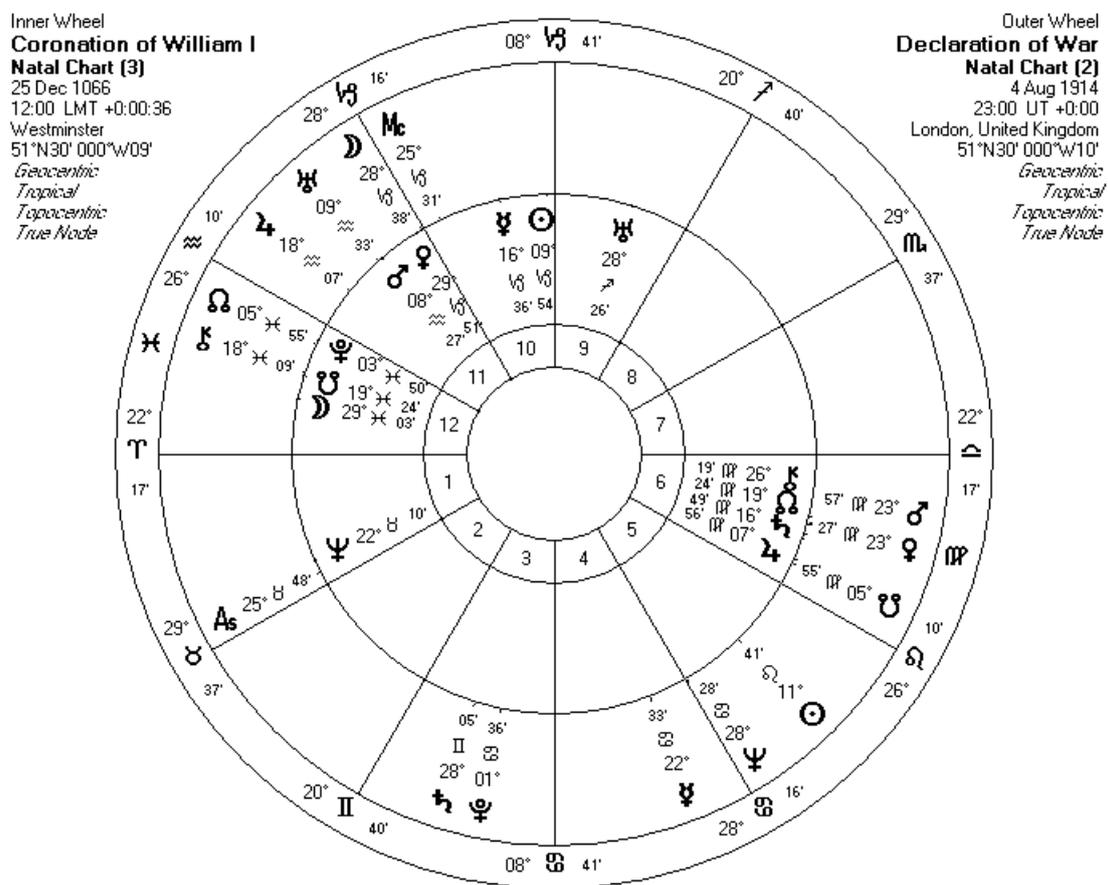
Quite rightly, war is much deplored by most of us, but when it does take place, we need to look beyond the carnage and seeming pointlessness of it all to see what positive things might come out of it; many would argue that there were and are no positive results, but at the spiritual level and sometimes in other ways too, experience suggests that there are 'benefits' of a sort. In the case of this particular conflict, the most important result for many people was that war could never again be glamorized. Alice Bailey, writing a few years later, stated that the greatest spiritual result was the considerable reduction of world glamour that the war brought about. Many already abhorred war, but many more abhorred it by the end of this war, which brought humanity face to face with the reality of armed conflict.

Other spiritual teachers and writers have also put a more positive slant on the war than might be expected. White Eagle said, in so many words, that the war was a wake-up call to humanity, who had become too complacent and comfortable with a status quo that was stultifying and stifling humanity's growth. Another look at the chart and we see the bold opposition between Uranus and the Sun, certainly an aspect of awakening! It is exceptionally strong too, both bodies being in their own signs, and is revolutionary in every sense of the word. This was of course reflected in the way that the map of Europe was redrawn in so many ways by the war, which also marked the end of the road for a number of crowned heads in Europe, a process that continued during and after the 1939-45 war.

We need also to remember the role of national and individual karma, and hand in hand with that, the opportunities that the state of war afforded to bring out the best as well as the worst in humanity both collectively and individually. Stories of particular instances of great heroism, kindness, self-sacrifice are legion – without the war, these might never have had a chance to happen. In this context it is worth noting the position of the Moon's north node in Pisces, which seems singularly appropriate, especially being in the eleventh house; it denotes a kind of 'world sacrifice', which the war certainly was in many respects. This nodal position is very significant in relation to the two main British national horoscopes, as we shall see. Chiron is also in the same sign and house, denoting perhaps the healing that needed to take place on a grand scale, but also the need to move forward from the old Piscean attitudes towards the vigour of the new Aquarian ideals – note that Jupiter, traditional ruler of Pisces, is not only in Aquarius but also on the eleventh cusp and

exactly semisextile to Chiron, clearly showing the opportunity to make that change of consciousness and outlook.

Mercury's position, with Neptune straddling the fourth cusp, shows well the unreal expectations at the beginning of the war and the collective illusions everyone was under: it is, in this context, a classic 'head in the sand' influence. It also shows the fragility of the pre-war way of life, as if it had no underpinning in reality. The Venus-Mars conjunction in Virgo forms an interesting nexus in the chart, being strongly aspected by the Moon, Mercury-Neptune, Uranus, Chiron and Saturn. The significance of this is perhaps not immediately apparent, but one thing it certainly shows is the great effort made, the devotion to working for the cause, and above all perhaps the way in which the war required everyone to detach from personal emotion in order to play their part in that effort. It also indicates the medical issues of war and, at an inner level, the transmutation that took place within so many individual personalities, and nationally.



Most readers will already be aware of the main British national horoscopes; let us now look at the interactions between them and the declaration chart. Even a brief glance at the biwheel which puts together the 1066 national chart and the declaration chart reveals several very significant interactions. First, students of the 1066 chart will be well aware of the crucial importance of the close Moon-Uranus square in the final degrees of Pisces and Sagittarius respectively. Charles Carter noted many years

ago in his INTRODUCTION TO POLITICAL ASTROLOGY that this was stimulated at the time of the conflict with the Spanish Armada in the late sixteenth century. This Moon-Uranus square is once again stimulated by the Moon-Saturn-Neptune configuration in the declaration chart; the solar eclipse which took place less than three weeks after the declaration, on 21 August (see also Carole Wood's article in this issue) between 27 and 28 degrees of Leo, stimulates it yet again. Both in 1588 and in 1914 Britain was in a state of war. It seems that this Moon-Uranus square in some way brings out the need to change, to break out and adapt to new circumstances, and war has this effect – with Aries rising in the 1066 map it is perhaps hardly surprising that the manifestation of these changes is so often through military conflict.

We know, of course, how both conflicts, 1588 and 1914, ended, and if we wonder why Britain seemed to come out of both of them – technically at least – on the winning side, note Venus's position in the 1066 map, mediating the square. In national events and especially times of war, Venus is said to denote victory. The lunar position in the declaration chart is conjunct Venus 1066; it is interesting to note that Venus is in the final degree of Capricorn, the Moon not far behind. So much about the Great War seemed to be about last-ditch stands, last chances to achieve certain goals. Perhaps this is also symbolic of a final outworking of some important piece of national karma.

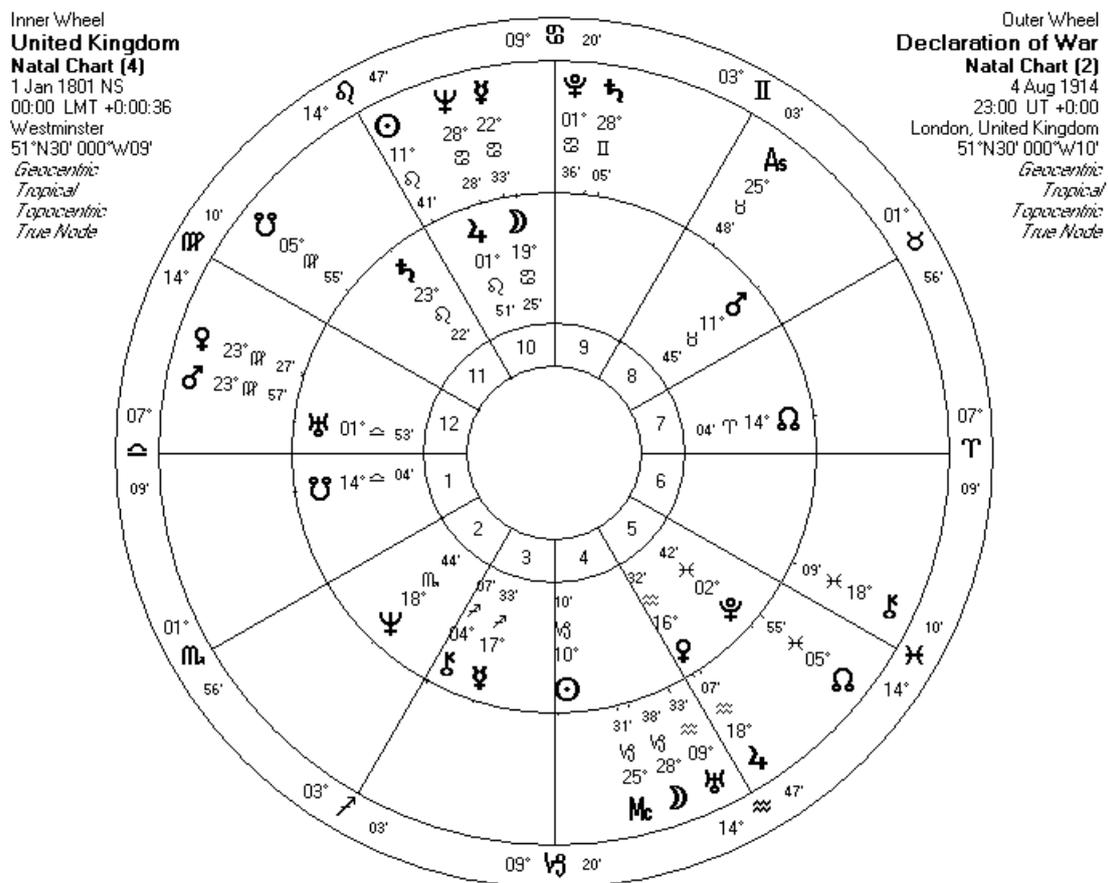
Uranus in the declaration chart is conjunct Mars in the 1066 map – not only does Mars symbolize war in the public imagination, but it is also the ruler; it is also in the eleventh house, so has an idealistic dimension too.

Of particular interest are the interactions involving the nodes. Chiron (decl) is on the south node (1066) and opposite (1066) Saturn (on the north node). Bearing in mind that Saturn is in Virgo and the sixth, this has a strongly wounding and healing dimension to it. Apart from the obvious connotations here, one does wonder again what issues from the past may be resurfacing.

Meanwhile, the nodal axis (decl) is placed exactly on the Pluto-Jupiter opposition (1066), the south node on Jupiter, north node on Pluto. This interaction speaks volumes and may give us a glimpse of that past that came back to haunt us in 1914 (even though nobody may have known it for what it was) and give us some further insight into the national karma and destiny. Jupiter in Virgo in the sixth on the declaration south node seems to me to represent very well the past way of life in which large numbers of working people created and supported, almost entirely without recognition, the power and wealth of the nation (trine from Virgo planets to Capricorn planets in 1066 chart). Most of those same working people left their obscure and not so pleasant, even if secure, jobs, to go to fight for their country: the state of war took them, if you like, from the south node-Jupiter-Virgo-sixth house to the hell and annihilation of the battlefields, north node-Pluto-Pisces-twelfth house. For individuals and for the nation this was terrible, but the astrology suggests that it was an important forward step in the 'soul growth' of the nation, whatever the national and individual karmas involved. To embrace Pluto like that takes enormous courage; not just a few but millions displayed that courage in World War I. If Britain

'won' that war, it was not the government or the powers that be that won it for the nation, but those millions of ordinary people – denoted by Moon in Pisces in the twelfth, yes, but square Uranus: they could not resist rising to the challenge.

This is also indicated in its way in the 1707 map for the union of England and Scotland. There are nothing like the numerous bold interactions of the 1066 chart, but the one really telling one is between the Moon-Saturn-Neptune (decl) and the Moon (1707) in 28 degrees Virgo in the eighth house – a painfully obvious indication that millions of ordinary Scots, as well as English and others, served and died in the conflict.



When we come to more recent United Kingdom horoscope (1801) we can see some resonances with the 1066 interactions but most of them are not as bold. The Moon-Saturn-Neptune (decl) configuration doesn't feature. Mercury (decl) is close to the Moon (1801) and Jupiter (decl) is close to Venus (1801 ruler). Pluto (decl) makes a tight semisextile with 1801 Jupiter, stimulating a natal quincunx between them. There is more than one way of interpreting this, but it does suggest the tension between those in charge (Jupiter in Leo in the tenth) and the masses who actually had to go to fight (Pluto in Pisces), or between national pride and the risk of annihilation.

However, the most important interaction is the identical one shown in 1066 – Pluto is aspected by the nodal axis of the declaration chart. The one difference is that whereas in 1066 Pluto was opposed by Jupiter, here it is squared by Chiron, but again, the symbolism is obvious.

In examining these charts it has become very clear that the 1066 one is the most significant by far; the 1801 map, far less the 1707, really do not show anything like the number of powerful interchanges with the declaration chart. We may perhaps hazard from this that most of the national karma which gave rise to Britain's participation in World War I is old – far older than the 1707 and 1801 maps but shown in some way in the 1066 map. The remarkable repeat of Pluto's zodiacal position from 1066 to 1801 suggests an echo in the UK horoscope of that karma hidden in the 1066 map.

The 1066 map presents Britain, or at least England, as the very warlike, first-ray nation it undoubtedly was, but we have to go a lot farther back than that to see why this might have been so. White Eagle gave the clue when he said, years ago, that many people now incarnate in Britain were once Romans. The Roman was probably the most famous first-ray civilization in recorded history, and we all know how they fought and governed. It would seem that in World War I certainly, and perhaps also in the 1939-45 conflict, Britain was meeting its Roman past, learning what it felt like to be on the receiving end of brutal military conflict. At the same time, though, one could also say that Britain's tendency to fight was ingrained in them by their need to resist the Roman occupation all those centuries ago. Having been invaded themselves by the Romans, and others subsequently, they got into the habit of turning the tables, as it were, and going out to fight, so the karma is not about 'good' and 'bad' so much as it is about simple consequences and the lessons that can be learned from them. The consequences of Britain's own warlike past were that they had to reap where they had sown, but the consequences of their ability to hold their own and resist the Roman (and other, later) occupations were that they were able to 'win', albeit at great cost. How appropriate this is for a nation with a first-ray personality – but it was the second ray soul, the unifying force of love of country and each other, that pulled Britain through and enabled it to learn some harsh lessons and move forward from a hard and complex past.