

Title

Rider-Waite-Smith Tarot Reading Practice in the United Kingdom

Submitted in

English

I would like to provide a translation of the element in an additional language

No

Which language are you submitting in?

-

Contact

Finbarre Snarey <mail@tarotinterviews.com>

Organisation

Tarot Interviews

How are you connected to this living heritage practice?

Practitioner / knowledge bearer

Academic / researcher

Other - Coordinator of the community consultation and documentation process for Rider-Waite-Smith tarot reading practice in the UK.

Secondary contact

Nicola Snarey <nicola@snarey.co.uk>

Secondary contact - Organisation

Open University; Co-producer of Tarot Interviews

Secondary contact - Connection

Practitioner / knowledge bearer

Academic / researcher

Other - Coordinator of the community consultation and documentation process for Rider-Waite-Smith tarot reading practice in the UK.

Which inventory(ies) do you want to submit your element to?

UK Wide

Short description

Across the UK, people use the Rider-Waite-Smith tarot cards to think about their lives, read for others and learn the cards. People of all backgrounds share their knowledge through groups, workshops, events, bookshops and online communities.

Please tell us more information about your element

People across the UK practise tarot reading using the Rider-Waite-Smith tarot deck. The community includes tarot readers, teachers, artists, writers, researchers, event organisers and people who practise informally with friends and family. Knowledge bearers include experienced readers who teach workshops, run study groups and share their skills with newer learners, helping pass on knowledge of the cards between generations.

The practice takes place across the UK in homes, study circles, workshops, bookshops, conferences, festivals and online communities. Practitioners are connected through events, teaching groups and online discussions, and the UK tarot community also exchanges ideas with practitioners internationally. Tarot reading and its cultural history are also discussed in academic settings, including talks and conferences exploring tarot as a cultural practice.

Tarot reading is practised regularly. Many people read cards daily or weekly for personal reflection, while others organise group study sessions, readings or workshops.

Associated objects include tarot decks, guidebooks, notebooks or journals used for study, and reading cloths or tables used when laying out cards during readings.

Some practitioners offer readings, workshops or courses for payment. These activities usually support individual readers, teachers and community spaces where learning takes place.

Do you consider the element to be endangered, e.g. likely to die out?

No - your element is currently viable (it is in a healthy state and the skills / know-how are being passed to the next generation)

Please outline information relating to your element's safeguarding

The Rider-Waite-Smith tarot deck was first published in 1909 and has been used in Britain for more than a century. Knowledge of tarot reading has historically been transmitted through books, mentoring, informal teaching and community study groups.

Today the practice continues through reading circles, workshops, conferences, online communities and peer learning. Many practitioners begin through self-study before developing their practice through community groups, teaching events and collaborative learning environments.

Community consultation conducted for this submission identified active practitioners across the UK who organise study groups, workshops and public talks. Long-standing gatherings such as the UK Tarot Conference demonstrate the ongoing importance of shared spaces where practitioners exchange knowledge and support new learners.

Respondents also identified pressures affecting the practice. These include stigma or misunderstanding about tarot, loss of community meeting spaces, misinformation online and automated or fraudulent readings that misrepresent the practice.

Safeguarding is supported through documentation, education and community activity. Interviews with practitioners, conferences, study groups and archival initiatives such as the British Tarot Archive contribute to preserving knowledge of Rider-Waite-Smith tarot reading practice and supporting its continued transmission.

Please outline how you have gathered free, prior and informed consent from the community in more detail

Community participation for this submission was gathered through open consultation and direct engagement with practitioners. A dedicated website, riderwaitesmith.co.uk, was created to explain the purpose of the proposed heritage submission and the documentation process so that participants could understand how their contributions would be used. Public calls for participation were shared on social media on 18 January and 13 February 2026, inviting people to give consent and contribute statements through an online form.

Respondents from across the UK provided statements describing their involvement in Rider-Waite-Smith tarot reading practice. Participants included readers, teachers, researchers, and event organisers based in locations including Edinburgh, Cornwall, Manchester, Kent and Sussex. Their responses helped inform the description of the practice included in this submission.

Additional consent has been obtained through discussion with practitioners and organisations including staff at Treadwell's bookshop in London, tarot author Alice Grist, tarot scholar Kim Arnold, volunteers involved in the British Tarot Archive and participants in the Tarot DMs interview project.

A spokesperson for Theatre Deli in London confirmed that consent for participation in this submission was given on behalf of the 55 artists involved in their collaborative Rider-Waite-Smith reinterpretation project.

No objections to the submission were raised during consultation.

Would you like to provide links to any sources of further information?

Further examples of community practice, documentation, teaching and discussion relating to tarot reading in the UK can be found at the following sources:

<https://tarotdms.com>

<https://riderwaitesmith.co.uk>

<https://britishtarotarchive.org>

<http://tarotconference.co.uk/>

<https://www.treadwells-london.com/>

<https://warburg.sas.ac.uk/news-events/events/tarot-origins-afterlives>

<https://bads.gold.ac.uk/tarotcultures>

<https://crescentarts.org/workshops/learn-to-read-tarot-cards>

<https://tabi.org.uk/>

These sources include examples of practitioner interviews, documentation initiatives, conferences, workshops and organisations supporting tarot readers and study groups in the UK. The Tarot Association of the British Isles, founded in 2001, provides resources, networking and training opportunities for tarot readers.

Is there any additional information you would like to provide?

Community responses show that Rider-Waite-Smith tarot reading is used in many different ways. For

some people it is a spiritual practice, while others use the cards for reflection, personal insight or creative inspiration. Some practitioners use tarot to support storytelling, writing or artistic work. The Rider-Waite-Smith tarot was first published in London in 1909 and continues to be widely used in the UK today, more than a century later.

Element Category(ies)

Social practices

Nature, land and spirituality

Tags

Tarot, tarot reading, Rider-Waite-Smith tarot, divination, card reading, cartomancy, individual practice, Small groups, reflection, Storytelling, Educational workshops, Festivals, online community, historical, Booksellers, daily practice, Mentorship, United Kingdom, Traditional knowledge, cultural practice, folk spirituality

Location

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Image



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Finbarre Snarey

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