

THE WILD WOOD TAROT





THE WILD WOOD TAROT

Wherein wisdom resides

MARK RYAN and JOHN MATTHEWS

With card illustrations by Will Worthington



STERLING ETHOS
An imprint of Sterling Publishing Co., Inc.

New York / London
www.sterlingpublishing.com



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*Once again, to Richard Carpenter for Robin of Sherwood,
and all who tread the path of the Wildwood.*

M.R. AND J.M.

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9 11 13 14 12 10

Published by Sterling Publishing Co., Inc.
1166 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10036

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Illustration copyright © Will Worthington 2011

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Distributed in Canada by Sterling Publishing
c/o Canadian Manda Group, 664 Annette Street
Toronto, Ontario, Canada M6S 2C8

Printed in China
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ISBN 978-1-4027-8106-3

For information about custom editions, special sales, premium and
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RETURN TO THE GREEN

Preface by Mark Ryan



IT'S BEEN SEVENTEEN YEARS since research began on the original concept of *The Greenwood Tarot* and fifteen years since its first publication by Harper Collins in 1996. Since then, the everyday use of the deck, and the much-appreciated respect it has been granted by aficionados of Tarot all over the world, has grown steadily and loyally.

The wisdom and insights of the Greenwood otherworld have been nurtured, personalized and applied to practical life by thousands of people. They have interacted with both the esoteric archetypes that inhabit the Wildwood and the Wheel of the Year system. They have also gained more cultural and spiritual awareness of our relationship to the inner landscape of our mind and renewed the potency and reverence of its legacy. This, then, is the real and evolving contribution of *The Greenwood Tarot* to an ancient, nature-based mythos, and I'm humbled that it has played a role, however modest, in the growth of this vast and enduring otherworld.

Over the years, and with the numerous readings I have conducted for people, the flexibility of this Tarot has repeatedly astonished me with its responsiveness, and with the profound and yet practical applications that can be drawn from a sincere and clear 'Grail Question'. I recently used the deck to seek an answer to a young person's query. I was once again pleasantly astonished at how consistent and relevant the cards were, even though I had no idea what the question was, or the decision-making process actively being applied to the situation at that very time.

After three different readings on the same basic issue, and the same cards stoically returning to various places on The Bow spread to give their gentle but firm insights, three times, the enquirer asked me what I thought the core issue was. She was quite surprised when I told her the actual nature of her question, and what she had already decided to do. All she needed was the confirmation and confidence to manage the unfolding events and view the changes as a positive transition. The issue was about viewing a major life-change and relocation as an opportunity, not a negative or backward step. The cards reflected her inner process and dilemma, and refused to be represented or manipulated in any other way. The Bow Spread





functioned once more with deep relevance and with insight and accuracy. The advice was clear and practical for the enquirer to reflect upon. This remains the ultimate purpose of the deck.

However, *The Greenwood Tarot* has been unobtainable for some years now and during this period I have received many requests for information about a possible reprint. It appears the deck had reached cult collector status on the internet, and unopened packs were fetching remarkably high prices, and still do to this day. I felt it was time to make the system once more available to a wider audience and when the idea to rework the system was presented to me by my friend John Matthews, I jumped at the chance. By adding to the mix the powerful and breathtaking artwork of Will Worthington, and using the Greenwood ethos as a foundation for redefining and evolving the concepts, we have created *The Wildwood Tarot*. This is an exciting new deck with familiar and accessible themes, but with added mature and clear insights and imagery that will stir the soul and sing the song.

It is interesting to reflect that over the same intervening seventeen years, anthropologists have peered more deeply, and with more scientific detail, into our human origins, back to the primal evolution of mankind. New discoveries have been made that push our ancestors' first steps further back into prehistory than previously believed. These discoveries bring new theories as to why we began to walk upright, and how this development irreversibly changed the path of our own unique evolution. The appearance of *Ardipithecus ramidus*, a hominid species that lived in an Ethiopian woodland environment 4.4 million years ago (a million years before 'Lucy' *Australopithecus afarensis*) has provoked new and fierce discussion about a common human ancestor. The almost complete skeleton of 'Ardi' and the partial remains of more than a hundred other such individuals raises new questions about human evolution in the ancient forest environment, probably inhabited by Ardi millennia ago. All of this means that our profound emotional relationship with the primal forest may be far older and more physically and psychologically important to our evolutionary path than previously understood.

Recent scientific research has also brought new concerns about the ecological changes that human existence has imposed on our shared ecosystem in the last 150 years. Global warming and the ability of industrial nations to fundamentally affect changes in the way the planet works have become a source of real and practical concern. New phrases like 'carbon footprint' and 'renewable energy' are no longer concepts to be ridiculed, but have become paths to new employment and



business opportunities. Green is in, and now, at last, we have become aware of our place in the ecosystem that supports us, and perhaps also of our deep-rooted but hitherto forgotten connection with the once universal Green- or Wildwood.

I have spent much time over the last few years with various Native American tribes and have become intrigued and surprised by the many correlations between the Wheel of the Year system and the ancient native Medicine Wheel. Although not a direct match, many remarkable features and concepts are inherent to both systems. Discussion still continues about the origins of the tribes of North America and, although DNA results have pointed to Siberia and Asia as the source of the migration, new theories of ocean-born exploration via Tasmania and South America have also gained ground.

I am also aware of the mysterious discovery of ancient stone circles, round buildings and burial chambers in parts of New England and Massachusetts. Some of these monolithic stones (estimated to weigh forty-five tonnes or more) are aligned to the solstices and equinoxes as well as sunrises and sunsets. The dating of these monuments ranges from 1900 to 2400 BCE and some appear to have had a European or Celtic influence. Could it be that our own ancient traditions were carried across the Atlantic long before most historians thought it possible? Is it feasible that the concept of a living planet and an interconnected life-matrix that sees us as part of the world's ecosystem, and not masters of it, migrated across the globe only to be erased by organized religion?

One striking facet is the similarity between the Native American Sacred Hoop concept and the European use of four elements, totem animals and colours. Although not exactly consistent, even among the tribes themselves, the links are quite profound and this provokes the question, which came first? Or did the system arise simultaneously across the collective human psyches of our ancient cultural forefathers?

During the last seventeen years my career has involved me in choreographing and coaching sword techniques and archery to a new generation of actors and actresses in the movie *King Arthur*; revisiting the wild and eerie desolation of the haunted Brontë moors of my Yorkshire roots, composing tracks for the musical adaptation of *Wuthering Heights*; and delving into the murky labyrinth of military intelligence and the uses of psychic and occult warfare in the graphic novel *The Pilgrim*. I've also regularly disguised myself as a transforming alien robot or two, and discussed the nature of the sentient alien soul within the bio-mechanical enti-





ties Bumblebee and Jetfire in all three of the hugely successful *Transformers* movies.

But in all this time I have never forgotten the sustaining power of the Green- or Wildwood, which continues to inform and surround my life on many levels, and to which I return for renewal and healing on a regular basis, here in my adopted homeland of California. I am convinced that archetypal connections and shamanic concepts continue to resonate and dance in the eternal imagination of the human spirit, and live forever in our most primal collective dreams. For this reason alone I am delighted to present to a new generation of readers a unique, fresh and re-energized version of *The Greenwood Tarot*, now *The Wildwood Tarot*.

Finally, my sincere and grateful acknowledgement must go to Chesca Potter for her truly magical relationship with the Greenwood denizens that produced the visionary artwork for the original pack. Her contribution to this evolving work was vital and inspired. Wherever and whatever your situation, Chesca, I wish you safe, happy and fulfilled by your faith.

MARK RYAN *Los Angeles, 2010*



THE WILDWOOD SONG

Preface by John Matthews



FORESTS AND WOODLANDS HAVE fascinated me since I was a boy and their song has filled my ears for as long as I can remember. The essential secrecy of woodland places with associations of darkness and impenetrability filled me with delight then, and ever since has been a central aspect of my inner landscape, influencing everything I have written.

Everywhere in the early literature of the West, the forests are thronged with curious mythological creatures: the leaf-clad Wildmen, seen as more animal than human during the Middle Ages; the Green Man and Green Woman, the oldest known images of the interaction between humanity and nature; the Wodwose, a troll-like being of great strength and fierceness who guards the deepest layers of the forest; and, of course, the legion of faery beings, monsters and powerful creatures that also dwell there. Many of these you will encounter in *The Wildwood Tarot*.

The original *Greenwood Tarot* has always been a personal favourite. Indeed I was consulted by both creators of the pack at various times, and though of course the vision was wholly theirs, I felt a bit like a grandfather hovering in the background watching while the youngsters got on with the business of creation. So I was especially delighted to be asked by Mark Ryan to add my own thoughts and ideas to those he had expressed in the original version of this deck. In its new form, the vision is still mostly Mark's, but here and there we have worked together to enhance the imagery and meanings of the cards, added substantially to the Minor Arcana, and generally made what was already a dynamic Tarot into something new, to reflect the most ancient worlds of the forest and those who dwell within them.

Working with the artist Will Worthington again was, as ever, a delight. He has brought his own wisdom and an unparalleled understanding of the natural world to the project, making a rich and powerful visual evocation of the Wildwood.

I join Mark in acknowledging the contribution of Chesca Potter to the original *Greenwood Tarot* from which *The Wildwood Tarot* has grown. Chesca, we hope you like this new envisioning of the Great Wood.

JOHN MATTHEWS *Oxford, 2010*





PART ONE
INTO THE GREEN
An Introduction by Mark Ryan



*The best advice I ever got about Tarot was:
'Read the book, meditate with the cards, then put the book away
and do your own thing!'*





AS A BOY GROWING up in Yorkshire in Northern England, I spent many happy, sunny Sunday afternoons playing in Clumber Park in Sherwood Forest, an old family haunt and a popular local recreational area. Many times my brother, sister and I played in and around the huge, ancient hollow tree known as The Major Oak. Legend had it that the great tree was a hiding place and meeting point for Robin Hood and his merry band and they often stored food and treasure in the trunk for safe keeping. It was a place of great excitement and mystery and still is to children of all ages, even today.

Some years ago I was sickened and saddened to read that vandals had set fire to the inside of the tree, very nearly killing off this sprawling, friendly, knotty old giant. This single act of thoughtless stupidity somehow symbolized what we have done both to this living world that we all share and the inner landscape of the human spirit.

Now the oak is protected by an iron fence, and people are no longer allowed to venture near it, let alone play in its heart. Our children have been exiled from this ancient place of natural wonder and mystery. That is a tragedy to me. To many the tree was a gateway to another place, the world of Robin Hood, Maid Marian, the Merry Men and the whole mythology of the forest. We cannot allow it to become damaged and weakened again by individuals bent on careless and wanton destruction. Somehow, in our fast, modern world, we have become exiled from the heart of our spiritual Major Oak and the vandal's fire is killing the roots. A still, quiet voice is calling a warning and beckoning us to listen.

Whatever faith or philosophy one adheres to, many people now feel that the human spirit has sadly become detached from the need for meaning and understanding of human existence. All the material gain of the twentieth century has failed to fulfil this basic spiritual requirement and has left many people hungry for knowledge and peace. We need to find a way back to the forest path that sees us safely through the dark and primal wildwood of life. The Major Oak isn't old enough to have been used as a hiding place by any of the proposed historical figures that may have borrowed the mantle 'Robin Hood', but as a symbol of the enduring nature of forest lore, it has survived like the legend of Robin himself, bloodied but unbowed. It is this lore that we must learn to reclaim and respect.

Thankfully, the imagination of the child that played in that ancient oak all those years ago was encouraged to hold the emotional core of those legends close to his heart and to listen and learn from them. The Robin Hood mythos, just like



the Arthurian Cycle, speaks through our daydreams and emotions on a level that is little understood, even today. These characters and myths bypass our rational and logical minds and speak to our inner child, our own private wanderer, still full of wonder at the shining world and longing to join the great game. They beckon us to follow beyond the narrow spiritual bounds of our technocratic, mechanized world perceptions and peer into the quiet, patient, soothing sanctuary of the forest, a place of wisdom and adventure, of solitude and safety, and rich with the fruit that feeds both the soul and the imagination.

In my own small way, I did get a chance to add another dimension to the Wildwood mysteries, thanks to the 1980s television series, *Robin of Sherwood*. If ever an actor wanted to be remembered for a portrayal, then I am happy with the niche that the lost and silent Saracen Nasir has now claimed in the legend. There are plenty of historical precedents for the assassin in the legend but 'the stranger from a foreign land' appears throughout legendary tradition, so I believe Nasir has filled a vacant seat at Robin's great feast, and for that I am extremely grateful and well nourished. It's actually very humbling to know that there has been a Moorish or Arab character (even a female one) in just about every production based on the legend since *Robin of Sherwood* began airing in 1984. Not many actors get to claim their immortality by portraying an archetype added to a 900-year-old legend. But such is the nature of mythic storytelling!

Throughout my entertainment career, both in front of and behind the camera, as well as in print, myth and legend have remained philosophical anchor points. From helping to coach swordsmanship to the principal actors in the film *First Knight*, a reworking of the Arthurian legends (1995), to becoming Swordmaster and Fight Director on *King Arthur* (2004), the otherworld has always been accessible and prescient for me, pointing the way to the next life adventure. From Merry Man to coaching the Knights of the Round Table in swordplay, it seems that mysteries and legends still manage to speak to us with clarity and wisdom, just as applicable and relevant today as they ever were.

As for the archetypes of the forest, the people and creatures of the Wildwood may once have been deities, although others have now become reluctant angels, like the Green Man, quietly slipping into the lofty window of Fountains Abbey in Yorkshire with an ironic smile across his bearded lips. Others have become daemons, striking blind terror into the same irrational hearts that burned thousands of innocent souls at the stake and even now hold that all esoteric knowledge is a





dangerous evil. There is only one truly dangerous spiritual evil in this twenty-first-century world and that is intolerance – whichever quarter or faith it arises from.

Whether deity or daemon, angel or heroic legend, nowadays we call them archetypes and totem beasts and cover them in all manner of symbolic artefacts. In *The Wildwood Tarot* we have attempted to restore these archetypes and place them into a framework that is accessible and practical and to demystify some of the more obscure and redundant political and religious dogma that has been heaped upon a simple and natural map of the external and internal human universe.

So, when you have grappled with the Wheel of the Year and the Wildwood archetypes and you still don't know what it's all about, put the book away and listen to the still, quiet voice. Better still, go to The Major Oak (wherever yours may be) and listen for the sound of children playing. Sooner or later your exile will be over and you will stand in the heart of the ancient oak. Everyone has a seat reserved at the table of the great forest feast and the denizens of the Wildwood invite you to eat, drink and be merry.

*The Forest Deep*s

The Tarot is something that lives within us all on a very primal level and speaks to each of us in an individual way. It is not the aim of this book to go over its many and varied historic and philosophical aspects. Rather, it is to give a backdrop to the Wheel of the Year, which was the basis of pre-Christian mythology, medieval Christian theology and Renaissance classicism from which the Tarot developed. But before delving into the mythos of the Wildwood and the Wheel of the Year, we thought it would be useful to give a brief explanation of the research and philosophy that led to the creation of *The Wildwood Tarot*.

BEGINNINGS We both have a deep love of the forest and the peace and quiet that can be found there. Whether it is the vast tracts of the Cascade Mountains in the American Northwest or the cool green pines of the Brecon Beacons in Wales, the forest offers a place of reflection and sanctuary from the stresses and strains of modern living. The forest is both a metaphor for life and for the unknown and sometimes shadowy aspects of it. Its sanctity and mystery are as old as man; its symbolism used in every religion and philosophy from the Cistercian monks to the Brothers Grimm and their fairy tales. Within the forest mythos, every human trait and condition is stored and cherished for future explorers to wander along



the path, absorb, study and meditate upon as they choose. What better basis is there than this for a modern Tarot pack?

We believe the Tarot represents an accurate map of the human psyche that can be manipulated to absorb new cultural and ideological archetypes (it has indeed done so in the past). *The Wildwood Tarot* seeks to strip back these archetypes to their basic form and remove some of the many attributes prompted by political and sexual principles through the ages. It also attempts to demystify some of the esoteric code of the Tarot by utilizing the Wheel of the Year. This nature-based cycle of prehistoric origin follows the seasons and landmarks of the human spirit and the natural flow of winter, spring, summer and autumn.

ARCHETYPES AND GENDER *The Wildwood Tarot* is a journey, not a hierarchy, and to this end we have, where fitting, made the human aspects in the Major Arcana androgynous so as not to deny anyone access to these archetypes. Since there are men with feminine qualities and women with masculine ones, it seemed unwise to narrow these parameters by trying to fit them into our modern concept of gender. Where the primal aspect of the archetype is conceptually masculine or feminine, we have worked with them as they rested most comfortably with us. For example, after much meditation on the basic archetypes and the feminine principle of lunar esoteric lore, we settled on a feminine concept for the Moon on Water card. In the same way, the Sun of Life is represented as primarily male – though we are aware that some traditions reverse these polarities. This doesn't mean that there are no lunar men or primal sun women; the archetypes just fitted with this system and the natural flow of male/female as the journey progresses around the Wheel of the Year.

BLINDED BY SCIENCE? We make no apology for spreading the net of references as wide as possible in an attempt to create contact points for the reader. Theories and ideas are ever-changing attempts to know more about the universe, and while some try to measure, in basic mechanistic terms, the ways in which the universe functions, others fail to take account of the one factor that affects all our human perceptions: the human condition itself.

As a species, we see things in a particular way because that is the only way we *can* see them. This may not always have been the case. We believe our ancestors saw things differently – or, at least, that they perceived the world in a different context. They believed human beings to be guests of the Earth, dependent on her and





interwoven with her fabric. Now we are her masters, and she – and the rest of living creation – is here for our use. But is this the reality or just the way we perceive it in the twenty-first century? Has the vision of our collective human ego been 'blinded by science'?

We now know that the bridge between matter and energy is ever-shifting. Particles of light fluctuate between one state of being and another, billions of times per second. The very act of measuring a particle changes it. Reality is a sea of ever-moving atoms with probability being the only measuring post. The motto of the ancient cult of the Assassins, whose name is derived from the word *Hashishim*, and their use of drugs to see visions of heaven before battle, was: 'Nothing is real. All is permissible.' Has science brought us full circle?

With our ever-increasing dependence on technical and engineering advances, our natural need for wholeness and balance with the world has been abandoned and forgotten. So, with our spiritual life, the pomp and theory of so much of organized religion has severed the basic link between what is most sacred and divine in individual humankind and replaced it with a human mediator. We are exiled from our own spiritual link with the gods. This is especially true in the industrial western world.

And yet there is a move towards the rebalancing of nature and mankind. Many people are returning to a more holistic view of the planet. In our short tenure here we have done such severe damage to the ecosystem that we are in danger of poisoning both it and ourselves. This fear has been strongly manifested in the upsurge of ecological research and green politics.

Put into context, the dinosaurs ruled the Earth for 160 million years and died out 60 million years ago. Mankind has been here, in one form or another, a little over three million years and had some form of discernible civilization for approximately 25,000 years, a mere blink of the world's eye. If we vanished tomorrow in a nuclear inferno, in a million years we would be as much history as the fossils we find on the beach. The Earth has plenty of time to clean up and start again. We need her. She can well do without us.

The Earth may well dispossess her inventive but troublesome offspring. Maybe this rediscovery of a holistic view of humankind and nature is her final warning cry to us. Maybe we hear it with the part of our spirit that is still inherently linked to the primal consciousness of the planet itself, not just on an individual level but as a species.



OUR LINK TO NATURE It is a pity we live in our own 'penny packets' of consciousness, never able to hear beyond the voice of our inner fears and desires. If, for some golden moment in our evolution, we could get a glimmer of the universal mind and its possibilities, it would change the human race forever. Perhaps, once, we did have a more acute awareness of our link to nature. Certainly the older religions hold nature and respect for the ebb and flow of the seasons as the cornerstone of spiritual fulfilment.

It is possible that we all, in fact, have the natural physical capability to reach beyond the present semi-dormant senses and be aware on a much more acute level. The fight or flight reactions of the body's adrenalin system, so often reported by people who live at the edge of danger, give speed and strength you would never believe you possessed, as well as aiding vision, hearing and sense of smell. There is nothing miraculous about this. Nature gave us these defences in a time when they would save our lives. Nowadays, when the nearest we get to hunting is to trot down to the supermarket for a packet of peas, we don't use these special adrenalin 'turbo boosters', but they are still there, however dormant.

We are, in effect, out of practice with the use of our survival instincts. The same could be said of our spiritual instincts. We know there is more to be connected to and be aware of, but the 'psychic muscles' have become weak from lack of use. It has been discovered that human DNA contains not just our human blueprint but also a vast array of physical history shared with every other living creature that has ever walked, or crawled, on the Earth. We truly are a solitary universe in the midst of creation. Within our DNA we hold common chemical elements for a dinosaur or a dormouse. The same forces that flow through the heart of the sun bind our cells together and make our human reality constant.

Over the last twenty years or so, science and magic have grown closer and closer in their overall view of the universe. Morphic resonance, Jungian psychology, holographic consciousness and noetic science are but a few of the theories that have been developed to explain the reality of the human condition. The pool of universal consciousness is rich with archetypal figures. The oldest and the most satisfying to explore are the denizens of the Wildwood and we are all capable of tuning in to them. That is why the Tarot is a natural and accessible map of the human condition. The twenty-two cards or archetypes of the Major Arcana are psychological gateways to our own inner universe. We are all Wanderers, Blasted Oaks and Forest Lovers at various times of the day, let alone in a lifetime. It is





learning how to live with our sometimes troublesome aspects that gives most people problems in the twenty-first century.

A wise man once said, 'We always hate in others what we fear most in ourselves.' If we ignore our own Guardian or Green Woman, they live 'exiled', like poltergeists, rejected and troublesome around our own psychological World Tree. To be truly 'whole', we must welcome them into ourselves, embrace them and learn from them, for they are part of us, not just as individuals, but also as a race.

If the Major Arcana archetypes also have an objective reality all of their own, outside the collective human psyche, they serve us well as guides and mediators to the 'otherworld'. Through contact with them we can find our way into the multi-layered universe of esoteric lore and tradition. Perhaps we can catch a glimpse of what we have forgotten and abandoned. Perhaps we can reawaken relationships with them that our ancestors understood intimately and treasured beyond material worth. If this were so, the Earth would be a happier, cleaner and safer place.

*We need wilderness and extravagance.
Whatever shuts a human being away from the waterfall
and the tiger will kill him.*

ROBERT BLY

Through the Wildwood

There are many bridges to our subconscious. Whether it is reading the tea leaves or meditating, the actual activity itself has no special magical power; it only acts as a focus for the subconscious to allow the inner voice to have its say. The Tarot is more specific because it contacts archetypes that are within us all and invites a very particular type of response.

There are many different 'people' within us, and the Tarot represents the major human personality traits and emotional conditions found in the inner universe. For certain people, some of these aspects or conditions get 'cut off' from the core personality and so hold a particular fear or phobia. During the development of *The Wildwood Tarot*, many long meditations on various images were conducted. It was interesting to note that some individuals, who had problems with forming relationships going back to a childhood trauma, couldn't see any clear image of the Forest Lovers. Others had a deep-rooted fear of the Guardian, or a problem with personal insecurity showed itself through a difficulty in visualizing the Woodward. We all



have aspects of our personality that we fear or dislike, but by patient meditation on these images and their subsequent acceptance, we become strong and whole.



CONFRONTING OUR WARRIORS When we begin to walk the path through the forest we need all the guile, courage and strength of our inner warriors and guardians as well as the patience, honesty and creative energy of the kinder angels of the human spirit. Some of these protectors are fierce and forbidding, but we need them to be that way. Without them we lack the will to endure and defend ourselves on the journey. The forest is full of dark shadows where unblinking eyes stare out of the gloom, waiting to find an opening, a weakness. These 'creatures' are almost always the product of our own fear. They may be to do with childhood neglect or abuse. They may be wounds given by abandoned lovers or rejected dogmas. Whatever they are, it is essential to be able to bring our own spiritual warriors to bear on these scavengers, imaginary or real, and deal with them with courage.

The inner warriors and sentinels that give us the steel to stare into the night and look the unknown in the eye are there for everyone to call upon. They must be used to control and temper our aggression with respect and honour. The consequences of failing to deal with these aspects of human nature in our western culture are all too apparent.

Much needed and brilliant work has been done on the gentle, patient and nurturing aspects of our natures, but we are deluding ourselves if we believe we can operate in the Wildwood without dealing with the Green Man and Green Woman. We have to understand their natural ferociousness and have a good relationship with them. Then we can marshal them to our defence and absorb them into our inner universe with love and confidence.

ACCEPT THYSELF Work still needs to be done on dealing with this aspect of initiation. Robert Bly's *Iron John* was a pointer on the path to the future for many 'lost boys' of our modern civilized society, and many other men, inspired by this, have gone on to establish a new vision of maleness; but there is still a great deal of work to do.

Many people use the Tarot cards for divination only. This is a shame. The use of *The Wildwood Tarot* as a meditation tool can provide major healing and evoke untapped layers of wisdom. Understanding and respect must replace fear and dogma. Just as love and justice are part of the cycle, both pity and terror play a part in the flow





of life experience. Dealing with the dark 'winter' aspects of life was a natural challenge for the denizens of the Wildwood. Being able to look into the dark shadows of the forest without judgement or obsession and seeing the pitfalls and dangers within is the sign of the emotionally secure and profound spiritual hunter. As the ancient knowledge states: 'Know Thyself.' We would add: 'Accept Thyself.'

*How do you know,
But that every bird that cuts the airy way
Is an immense whole world of delight,
Closed by your senses five.*

WILLIAM BLAKE

Asking Questions

There are three elements to asking questions of the Tarot:

- The formulation of the question
- The impartial layout of the cards
- The interpretation of the layout

There is a huge element of synchronicity in laying the Tarot cards and getting a meaningful result. The first step is to ask the initial question. This is the most overlooked part of any kind of divinatory system. We usually have a good idea what answer we would like and have built a framework to support or reject any reading that comes up, but the act of asking focuses the mind. The desired answer or even the real question itself may be buried so deep in our own subconscious that we need the help of the Tarot to reflect our own unknowable truth.

WHAT IS UNKNOWABLE TRUTH? Sometimes in our lives we cannot see what is obvious to everyone else. It may be an unfulfilled and improbable yearning to be a great concert pianist or the simple burden of loneliness or loss that has built barriers between us and the rest of the world. The subject may well be aware of such problems but cannot deal with them or formulate a course of action, because the problem is too close, too personal. It is easier to bury it and forget.

So, we need a third party, an unbiased reflecting tool that can give us insights and practical routes through the forest. The Tarot is just such a tool. It is unbiased,



unblinking and impartial. Synchronicity will always ensure its relevance. Even if we do not get the answer we want, some truth is usually there that was unseen or unpalatable before. In any event it makes us react to the question on a purely instinctive level.

The interpretation of these answers is the key to the process of working with the Tarot. We may need to be reminded that we have a side of our own individual nature called the Wanderer, the Archer or the Guardian, who is adept at dealing with difficult or sensitive queries. We may need their energy or their insight, their defensiveness or their courage. We may have forgotten how to be wise or foolish, cunning or vulnerable, stoical or patient. We may have forgotten how to ask, or how to imagine, or how to grieve. The seemingly random pattern of cards in a layout will often lead us to look more closely at these inner elements.

FINDING SPIRITUALITY In his ground-breaking book, Robert Bly used an old folktale to put forward the observation that men have become divorced from a spiritual 'rite of passage' by modern society. This is, of course, true for women as well, and the many who think Bly is attacking women's rights have misunderstood the book. This is not the case, of course, and his work catches a very important stream of thought that needs to be examined and dealt with in a broader context, not confused with sexual politics.

We have all, in some sense, become divorced from 'rites of passage' in the technocratic western world. No matter how many dishwashers, videos or pairs of shoes people have, they still feel cheated, unfulfilled. How many times have you heard, 'There has to be more to life than this'?

People are right to ask this very fundamental question, because there *is* more to life than this. We have both been criticized by some of the more formalized pagan or craft groups for defending the more superficial and faddish types of spiritual or esoteric practice. But the truth is simple: it doesn't matter how people start looking for greater spiritual meaning, awareness or fulfilment, only that they do. Let nature guide them to their own path. As a wise person said to us many years ago, speaking of all esoteric systems or practices: 'If it works, use it!'

QUESTIONING THE TAROT First, those in search of answers need to ask their own Grail question. In the Arthurian legends, various Round Table knights attempt to find the Grail. In some texts Peredur or Percival is the Grail winner and





mediates between the otherworld and the physical world. In others it is Galahad who appears to die after looking into the Grail. But central to the mythos is the asking of the Grail question: 'Whom does the Grail serve?' This relates to the basic questions at the heart of human existence: 'Who am I?', 'What does my life mean?' 'What is the nature of reality?'

When asking a question of the Tarot, it is essential to frame the enquiry in such a way that the system can give a practical reflection. It is no good asking whether you should go ahead buying your next house and where you will find the money; you should be asking what kind of aspect or quality is required in your home to bring harmony and security to your life.

It is often said that people argue over whether a loved one has left the top off the toothpaste when the real issue is often a more basic question, such as: 'Do you still love me?' or 'Are you seeing someone else?' In asking questions of *The Wildwood Tarot*, go within yourself, get to the heart of the question and ask it in a simple and profound manner.

This process may take some time to learn and is in itself part of the whole journey of discovery around the Wheel of the Year. But, in the end, if mastered with honesty, this sincere seeking of answers to deeper, sometimes difficult emotional questions will bring its own rich and wise counsel.

Fate and the Tarot

The Tarot cannot predict the future. The future is a splintered hologram of possibilities and probabilities that we decide to accept or change every second of our conscious and sometimes unconscious lives. In the final analysis, we are masters of our own destiny, and the Tarot shows us some of the inner and outer states and how we might best deal with a problem, avoid making a wrong move, build a new lifestyle or find a partner.

Asking a conscious question crystallizes the inner, unconscious threads at the heart of any matter, but more than that, it sets in motion a whole new set of possibilities and probabilities because somewhere in yourself you already have the answer. You know what you *could* do. You know what you *might* do. But only the inner voice knows what you *will* do. The Tarot can give that voice a fair hearing, but you alone give it will.

Quantum mechanics has successfully predicted the discovery of phenomena at both the subatomic and galactic level but, like life itself, it has only gone on to



prove that the more we think we know, the more we realize we don't know. But even in particle physics, a belief has been put forward that the very act of trying to observe or measure a particle changes it, changes its very state, fluctuating somewhere between solid matter and ghostly waveform. There is even the suggestion that some particles are connected beyond the faster-than-light barrier and can move backwards and forwards in time.

What chance has simple esoteric doctrine when science has moved into the realm of the unknowable and had to invent its own mythical creatures like Schrödinger's Cat to explain itself? Physics has posed more tangled and insolvable equations about the nature of reality, time and space than we at present are equipped to deal with. As Deepak Chopra put it: 'Not only is quantum mechanics stranger than we think, it is stranger than we *can* think!'

The moment we ask a question, a whole range of possibilities arises and our inner self quietly prepares to react to any given answer. We usually load the dice in our favour.

Having researched and explored many different Tarot systems over the years, it is evident that one of the best ways to get a quick handle on a situation is to simply focus on the core issue through an emotional relation to it and then cut the pack, allowing you to discover for yourself what card comes up. Sometimes synchronicity throws a profoundly relevant card into the equation, which helps you to see the elements more clearly, sometimes a 'wild card' that provokes a change of tack and approaches the dilemma in a new way. Instinct, synchronicity and will are all functioning but, in the end, the act of asking the question is as important as the question you ask. The process of learning and questing is an ever-turning cycle and, for each of us, the Grail question is different. Then again, meditation on the archetypes often leaves the enquirer with more fundamental questions about the nature of human experience than they started off with! Which is how it should be.

*Theoretical considerations of cause and effect often look pale
and dusty in comparison to the results of chance.*

CARL JUNG

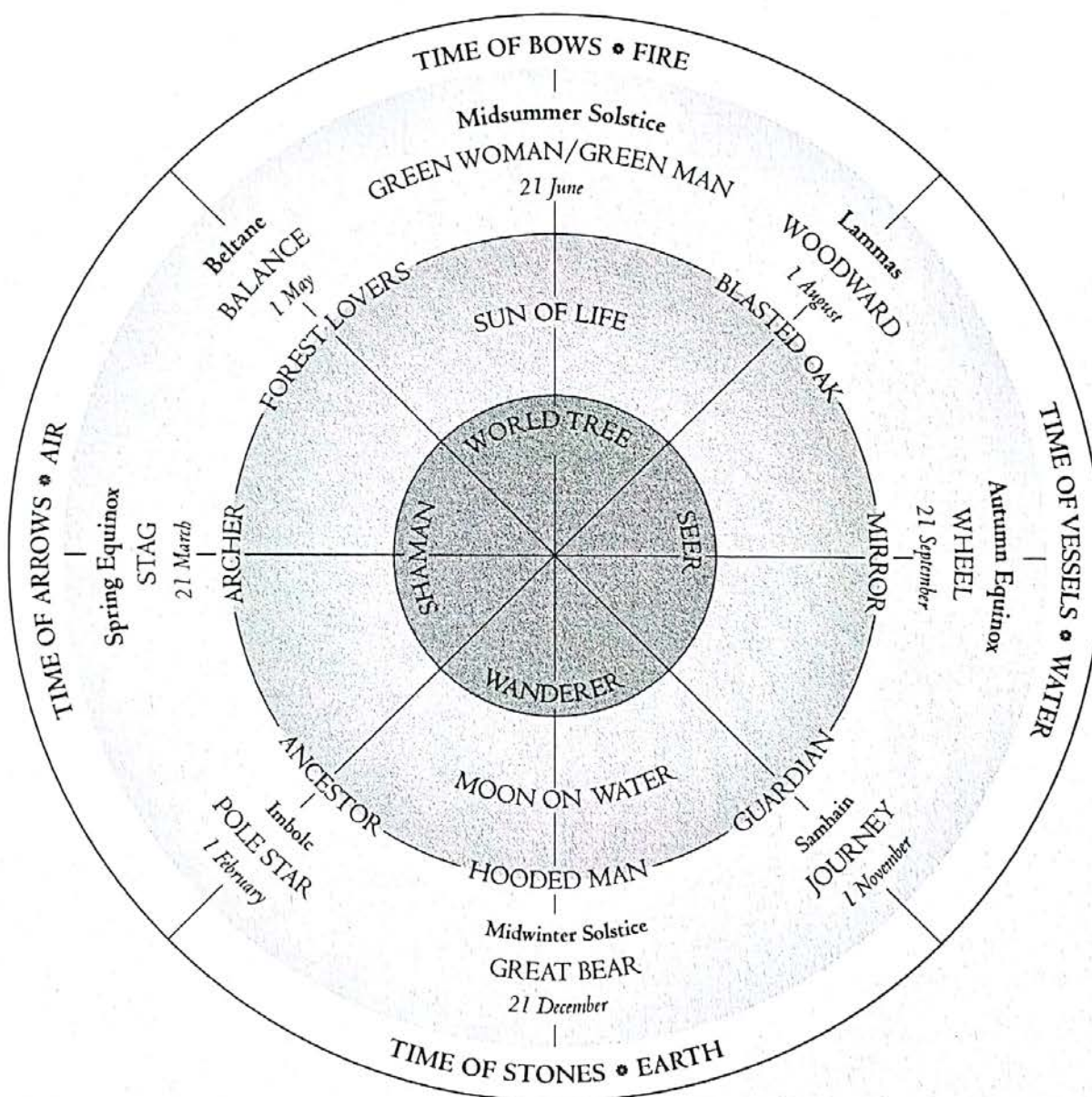




The Wheel of the Year

The Wheel of the Year underlies the Wildwood Tarot system, reflecting the natural turning of the seasons, the movement and migration of animals, and the physical effects the elements and environmental conditions had on the practical and spiritual lives of those living in pre-Christian times, and which can still empower us today.

As a meditation exercise, it is suggested that the reader takes a few hours to acquaint themselves with the archetypes found at each equinox and cross quarter



THE MAJOR ARCANA ON THE WHEEL OF THE YEAR



HEART OF THE WOOD



INNER HUMAN LEVEL



OUTER CONSCIOUS LEVEL



day, and to follow the path laid down in the diagram and the text that follows. Often the most vivid and clear insights come from following the natural current of the Wheel in this way. The archetypal denizens found there do their own unique work, each one bringing its own particular essence to the journeyer. This may not necessarily follow the 'usual' pattern of the Tarot, but if you follow it you may discover some interesting new correspondences.

The Wanderer may not be an appropriate significator for everyone, but as you begin your first journey into the Wildwood, it is advisable to enter through this archetype as it is already attuned to the whole ethos of the system and, for most people, will act as a natural host through the cycle.

The diagram shown here represents **The Wheel** as three circles, which can be seen as standing for different levels of consciousness and gateways to the inner worlds. The inner 'hub' is inhabited by **The Wanderer**, **The Shaman**, **The Seer** and **The World Tree**. These are the inner guardians at the Heart of the Forest. Around them revolve **The Sun of Life**, linked to the Midsummer Solstice, and **The Moon on Water**, linked to Midwinter. On the two outer circles of the Wheel, at the quarter and cross quarter points, stand the archetypes of the Major Arcana, representing an inner Earth/human level and an outer universal/collective-conscious level.

TIME OF ARROWS We begin the journey around the Wheel at Imbolc, 1 February, at the time of the new moon. This is a time of new beginnings after a long hard winter. Days are beginning to lengthen and the first signs of the returning spring begin to show themselves. Bulbs begin to sprout shoots after their 'death' during the frozen months and the ice begins to melt. So it is appropriate that the first archetype of the Wildwood that we encounter is **The Ancestor**. Acting as the primal voice of the spirit of the totem beasts, the Ancestor is both a guardian and guide, and welcomes **The Wanderer** through the world with warmth and wisdom, helping the visitor who approaches with respect and an open heart to find their way through the tangled forest landscape as a welcome guest. Here we are in the time of Arrows, moving from Imbolc to Beltane.

At this same point, on the outer conscious level, **The Pole Star** remains fixed in the sky, reminding the traveller to hold their true purpose and direction in their heart and providing a constant point on which to fix their compass. It also acts as a discreet signpost and signifies the traveller's intrinsic link to the Universal Mind.





As we move to the Spring Equinox, around 21 March, we encounter **The Archer**. This is a time of Air, the illumination of sunrise and the rising of the sap. New life emerges with unbounded energy from the almost unconscious state of **The Wanderer** to the dawning of intellect within **The Archer**.

Here we need to understand the process involved in the evolution of willpower and the techniques required to focus our desires and aims. This is the time to let the creative flow of the Wheel of the Year move through you and free your own 'arrows of desire' with purpose and integrity.

On the outer conscious level, **The Stag** reminds us of the responsibility involved in our actions. Right action and just reward are inherently linked and no uncontrolled or ill-conceived concept should be released without **The Archer** being aware of the consequences.

TIME OF BOWS We then move to Beltane, on 1 May. There are many surviving traditions that are related to this time of year, including the May games, Morris dancing and many fertility rites related to Maid Marian and Robin Hood. This is also a time of fertility for the animals of the forest, in order that their young will be born during the summer and be strong and hardy enough to survive the autumn. Here we move from the time of Arrows into the time of Bows.

Now we encounter **The Forest Lovers**. Here we see the true union of two energies coming together to create a third – not just the simple act of creating new life within the human species, but the more subtle merging of the lovers' conscious energies creating a third entity which becomes their relationship. This is an act where whole beings come together to form a third force. A true polaric union is not interdependent or cloying, but a constantly fluxing entity, entered into willingly by two polar energies. Therefore, on the outer level we encounter **Balance**, the symbol of intertwining and yet independent forces. The subtle harmonics of nature are finely balanced and before reaching the state of equilibrium within life, both on a personal level and as a partner, balance is all-important. This is not a still point, but an evolving, flowing interchange of life force. Change is a natural element within true balance.

From here we move on to the Midsummer Solstice around 21 June and the heart of the time of Bows in the element of Fire. Here we meet, resplendent and all-powerful, **The Green Man** and **The Green Woman** as lord and lady of the forest. They stand together at this point, representing both inner and outer levels.



The Sun of Life is at its full height in the sky and its life-giving rays fill the world. The Green Man and The Green Woman represent the human species at the height of its power and security within this celebration of abundant nature. The soil is rich and fertile and the joy of the world is generous and all-pervasive. Crops grow and food is plentiful for the creatures of the forest.



TIME OF VESSELS Now we move to Lammas on 1 August, the harvest and the full moon. The first loaves are ripened wheat (Lammas: Loaf-mass), the oak summer grown and many woodland creatures are giving birth to their young. It is a time of summer storms and lightning. It is also a time for preparation, where we move from the time of Bows to the time of Vessels. Because of a confusion surrounding the rites of Lammas and human sacrifice as a way of ensuring the plentiful return of crops in the following year, much damage has been done to the simpler images related to this natural process of realignment. Symbolism related to loss, the breaking down of order and the destruction of power has been heaped upon this concept because of beliefs related to the threefold death, revenge of the lightning Gods and other, much later mythology related to pride and the misuse of power.

But the process encountered within the Wildwood is the beginning of a natural flow of withdrawal of energy and the beginning of initiation through endurance. The difference is very subtle on many levels and unforeseen or drastic change is still a part of this concept, but preparation and maturity are the major elements within these archetypes and they should not be confused with negative attributes related to sacrifice. To this end we have encapsulated elements of The Hanged Man and The Tower into a single card: The Blasted Oak.

The Blasted Oak does relate to the summer storms that can strike a bolt that shatters the security of a well-ordered but infertile lifestyle. But here the bonds that held us in this position are also burned away by the process, freeing us from the branch that has been our transitory home. To feel alive again within the cycle, a burning off of old bonds and a cleansing of our souls is required to keep our awareness sharp and ready to evolve beyond the limitations of human vision. Just as we are comfortably numb with the richness of power, the cycle reminds us, sometimes in a profound and awesome manner, that we are on a journey, and that all things must evolve or perish. In this process of loss, some wounding may be incurred, either of the ego or of the spirit, but this is absolutely necessary to gain wisdom.





So, at a time of great physical comfort and fecundity, we are required to be aware of and prepared for the coming autumn and sudden unforeseen challenge. Also to this end, behind this process of gaining wisdom through endurance, is *The Woodward*. This card represents the understated strength and resilience of nature itself, the deep-rooted stoicism of the oak and the patient silence of the mountain. The Woodward represents strength, the ability to harness the unforeseen and wildly unpredictable, to channel lightning itself. It is grounded in maturity, wisdom and endurance gained through quiet contemplation and timeless understanding.

As we move to the Autumn Equinox around 21 September, and into the time of Vessels and the element of Water, we begin to see the sunset and the inescapable turning of the regenerative cycle once again towards the time of Stones. This is a period of inner reflection and the inner sojourn to your own soul's ancestral home. After the shock of *The Blasted Oak*, a time of contemplation and rest is needed for healing and learning, and it is only right that the Dark Woman reveals our reflection to show us our true situation in *The Mirror*.

This journey is often taken in a state of emotional limbo as you relinquish feelings of anger or frustration. Your inner conscious being seeks to commune with the mysteries at the heart of human existence itself, rather than analyse every facet of your nature. This is a process of being drawn to an emotional, meditative state rather than a decision to withdraw for contemplation. If the wounding received at *The Blasted Oak* is severe, the shock of loss of power may render the spirit incapable of resisting the urge to fall into a deep sleep and travel to the sacred isle for healing. Trust and surrender of the will is called for, and it is time to don the garment of fate itself and accept what the Wheel has held in store for us.

At this time of year the salmon struggle upstream to their place of birth to lay their eggs and then die. This is a time of thanksgiving for the richness and fertility of the summer months and the food stored for winter. It is also a time to look at the mechanics of fate and the weaving of your own personal thread within its cloak. This is what Bly calls 'the Time of the Wound', and we gain both wisdom and healing from the trance-like sleep of our sojourn.

TIME OF STONES On 1 November we move towards Samhain and the time of the silent Earth. This is a time of dealing with the darker elements of our nature and recognizing and embracing the qualities and strengths that these archetypes offer. It



is the time of Halloween and All Souls' Night, of Mischief Night and bonfires, the time of the waning moon. It is also a time to honour and prepare for Death.

First, the much-maligned figure of **The Guardian** (known as the Devil in more traditional packs) greets us, bringing dark riddles, challenges and a mocking, sardonic humour. Some readers may find the concept of humour within this feared and demonized archetype to be out of place, but it is one of the many facets of **The Guardian**, and failing to grapple with the quicksilver, shape-shifting essence that **The Guardian** represents would be to allow the knowledge and wisdom he offers to be avoided. The concept of evil horned creatures haunting the night to steal our souls is completely out of place here and is the product of hysterical fear, prejudice and plain ignorance. But, like **Pan**, **The Guardian** represents the wildness of our own nature, and just as the autumn wind strips the leaves from the branches, so **The Guardian** strips us of our comfortable perceptions of ourselves.

The Guardian also acts as a protector and champion of nature. He prepared the way for our encounter with **The Journey**. In the end, all creatures come to this point, returning to the womb of the dark Earth and the knowledge that awaits there. All things must pass and be born again through the cyclic turning of the seasons. That is nature's way. Just as we must nurture and feed our lighter side, we require – and therefore must embrace – our shadows or be incomplete. The ultimate truth of this is death itself, the great leap in the dark that all human beings face, whether rich or poor, victim or wise man.

Dealing with these archetypes prepares us for the time of rest and renewal that must surely come as we enter the winter and the time of the dark sun.

As we approach the Midwinter Solstice on 21 December, let us do so with a calm, thankful heart. Let us embrace the time of **The Hooded Man** and withdraw to the healing silence of the forest with quiet joy and the inner light of wisdom. It is time to be patient, to endure, to listen to the silence and await the new sun. Here the heartbeat of the world itself seems to slow, water turns to stone and time itself loses its relevance. But even as we rest, life is everywhere. The holly endures and some forest creatures survive the harshest of climates, reminding us that even here nature provides sustenance and hope.

Judgement, in the form of **The Great Bear**, also awaits us here – not the politicized, compromised and narrow representative of laws conceived within humankind's subjective ideas of right or wrong, but the judgement of the cycle of life. We shall reap what we have sown. Each person faces that ultimate reckoning





alone, both on an inner psychological level and as a part of a species.

Now we move back into the inner sanctum of the Wheel of the Year. In the quadrant of Earth is **The Moon on Water**, relating to the reflective, intuitive, hidden nature of initiation and enlightenment, the primal swamps of latent potential and the source of regeneration. The dark of the moon is also associated with the emotional and sexual aspects of our psyche. Its cycles are linked with the feminine principle, not only because of the menstrual cycle, but also because of the effect it has on the tides and the sea, again related to the intuitive and emotional spheres. These principles are not gender based, but polaric frequencies of the human psyche and not to be confused with sexual politics.

In the quadrant of Fire we find **The Sun of Life**, relating to principles of fertility and regenerative power. Much esoteric lore surrounds deities such as Belenos and Apollo and the principle of guardianship, or in the stories of sacred kingship, all of which lie within the solar aspects of midsummer and the championship of Sovereignty. So the male principle tends to be linked with this aspect of the sun, although some aspects of the feminine still survive through The Green Woman and Rhiannon, the solar horse goddess of the Celts. The sun also relates to the higher or divine self and the illuminated, energized aspect of The Shaman that deals with the ability to use energy from this primal source for healing and growth within humanity.

Now we come to The Shaman and The Seer. As with The Sun of Life and The Moon on Water, the polaric energies of these two archetypes are not gender based, but offer a subtly different set of facets and aspects from which to learn and to embrace within ourselves. **The Shaman**, in the quadrant of Air, is related to the first warming enlightenment of spiritual sunrise felt in the heart. The Shaman deals with the magic and mystery of life. Arrows of intellect and desire are his tools and he understands and mediates justice within the natural cycle. He is a master of the bow and the wand and holds both these skills as sacred and yet practical. He has the cunning of the Fox, the tenacity of the Stoat, the speed of the Hare and, like the Adder, an intrinsic connection to the magical nervous system of the Earth.

The Seer lives in the visceral realm of emotion and intuition. She waits for the sunset and mediates the shining silver path of The Moon on Water. She is the shadow that comes with shimmering, reflective insights. She offers the cup of learning and forgetting, and she bids you welcome the coming velvet darkness.



The Seer is patient, passionate and wise. She awaits the turning of the Wheel of the Year and the inevitable coming of night that brings dreams and hidden desires to the surface of consciousness. She instinctively understands the mechanisms of fate and the subtly woven texture of the universal mind. The Seer has the ability of the Eel to seek the source of the unknown. She has the wisdom of the Salmon, the patience of the Heron and the Otter's ability to move at will between the worlds.

An understanding and intimate relationship with both The Shaman and The Seer opens the final gateway, which leads through the maze to **The World Tree** itself, and to the soul of the Earth. Entering the heart of the tree, we are connected to both the inner universal mind and the outer reaches of the cosmic mysteries. Once the sacred inner divinity within you is whole and functioning, you will see how the universe folds eternally upon itself, both internally and externally, and is ever rolling and turning beyond simple human comprehension. You will see the divinity in all life and the sacredness of universal creation, and understand your unique connection to it.

You have come full circle and completed the course of the Wheel's turning in the Wildwood's heart.





PART TWO
THE PATH THROUGH THE FOREST
The Cards and their Meanings



*I have come to . . .
The unfathomable deep
Forest where all must lose
Their way, however straight
Or winding: soon or late . . .*

EDWARD THOMAS: Lights Out





0 The Wanderer

0 THE WANDERER

Position on the Wheel

The Wanderer stands at the heart of the human cycle, in the innermost circle of the Wheel, poised between the beginning and the end. This figure waits for guidance across the abyss of awareness and into the realm of archetypal consciousness.



DESCRIPTION Poised on the edge of a white chalk cliff, the Wanderer prepares to step across the abyss and into the Wildwood beyond. Ahead lies the faint suggestion of a rainbow arch, onto which the Wanderer must step. This leap across the void is greeted with open arms and a deep trust that the wings of imagination and honesty will carry the figure onto the lush green turf of a new path.

Clothed in bark and the soft green mosses and foliage that symbolize the protective and healing essence of nature, The Wanderer is neither strongly male nor female, both genders combining in the slender body. The figure's naked feet tread lightly on the sweet warm grass at the cliff edge and, across the divide, deep shadowed trees stand ready to receive this newcomer to the Wildwood. Amid the leaves of the tangled wood is the merest suggestion of a face — perhaps the spirit of the wood.

MEANING At this moment the burdens of the past are set aside — either for the Wanderer to pick up and take along, or to leave behind if the weight is too great. The Wheel of the Year is beginning its great cycle, bringing a new range of possibilities and challenges. The Wanderer is ready to make the leap into the unknown — all that is required is faith.

The Wanderer represents the wisdom or courage to let go, to step into the void of the possible. Something within you may have already begun this unconscious,



instinctive leap across the abyss; you know it is time to move on. Sometimes the fear of loss or failure may make you doubt the validity of change. You may want to wait or hesitate at the critical moment because of the comfort of security, but the momentum of the Great Wheel has already sent the true heart of the Wanderer into the future, leaping across the gap with courage and joy. Now the figure must leave the burdens that have been carried for so long and trust to the wings of imagination.

The Wanderer is both an end and a beginning. One journey has already come full circle and, as you distil your life experience into sacred memory and put the past and its burdens to rest, the future waits patiently for you to make the first move.

Remember that your wisdom, strength and whatever personal experiences and skills you have may not help you now. The honest spirit of human inquisitiveness leads you beyond yourself and into a new life. This unconscious energy creates a Rainbow Bridge that rises and greets your foot. It will carry you over the void, as you step, trusting and empowered, into the unknown.

READING POINTS You have come to a junction or turning point in your life. It may be an unconscious state in which you feel the tide has turned or sense something is going to happen. In a way it already has. Your spirit must move on and the desire to leap into the unknown beckons. This may mean leaving behind or giving up some baggage or burden that you have carried with you from the past. Now is the time to be clear and not let fear of falling or sad disillusion with the universe hold you back. Let your imagination carry you into a new set of possibilities. It is a time to travel hopefully and open your arms to new and challenging aspects of the universe.

Roots and Branches

- *Blind faith* • *A blank slate* • *The Inner Child* • *The leap in the dark* • *Following your heart*
- *The seeker after knowledge or truth* • *The primal impulse* • *A vision of illumination that pulls you forward*





1 The Shaman

I THE SHAMAN

Position on the Wheel

The Shaman is in the hub of the Wheel, opposite the Seer. He is located in the quarter representing Air and embodies aspects of magic, protection and insight.

DESCRIPTION The Shaman looks from the card with eyes that are both clear and open and yet there is something ancient and profound within his steady gaze. He is wrapped in a bearskin that is adorned with Palaeolithic paintings of animal spirits taken from La Caverne des Trois Freres, in the Ariege. In one, a human form is wearing a bison skin and is playing a bow, appearing to dance to the music; in the other, an antlered, owl-headed creature looks out from the image.

On the ground before him are laid objects that represent the four elements of the world: a roebuck skull rattle (Air), a stone knife (Earth), a smoking bundle (Fire) and a hollow antler-tine cup (Water). He stands opposite the Seer on the personal inner hub of the Wheel and mediates the element of Air, representing energies and levels of consciousness that defy human rationalization and are therefore deemed to be magic.

MEANING The view of the universe possessed by these ancient artists was of a place where human elements and skills were intimately interwoven with the qualities and prowess of wild creatures. Human spiritual welfare was dependent on an empathic exchange and respect for the sacred ancestral memory of all life, and mediation of the totem guardians and deities was a prime spiritual function of the shaman.

This is a gateway card, offering illumination to the labyrinth of the inner universe and the otherworld of the universal mind. The Shaman's unique quality is



the ability to enter and commune with all levels of sentient life on the Earth. It is he who shudders with the wisdom and joy contained in the haunting music of whale-song or whose skin prickles with arousal at the howling of timber wolves. His soul reverberates with the unheard sonorous call of the mountains and smiles with pure joy at the laughter of the waterfall.

The Shaman applies his magic with intent. He studies the habits of wild creatures; he understands the weather patterns that bring good harvests or dry summers. He knows the healing plants from the deadly fungi and can travel through the dark by watching the ritual dance of the magical beings that populate the night sky. He gives thanks to the trees that supply warmth and light in the winter and gathers the young around the fire to tell stories of great adventure and courage to delight and educate those who would listen.

Through inner working and meditation, the Shaman will bring insight and understanding of your true place in the world. Then practical application and the manifestation of wisdom and willpower into your physical world is possible. This requires dedication, patience and commitment, but it is the nature of real magic.

READING POINTS You may hear the beat of a drum or the song of the wind. It may be the dancing of light on water or the midnight barking of the fox, but whatever awakens your desire to return to the wild, the Shaman within you is ready for initiation into the mysteries. This may manifest itself in the form of a desire to study an esoteric science or philosophy and apply what you learn to the world. It may involve travel for the sake of gaining confidence and experience. But however the desire to begin a new spiritual chapter emerges, you are now in an emotional and intellectual position to bring forth real change in your life for the benefit of everyone. This process of focusing, mediating and applying wisdom from the otherworld to everyday reality is the true work of the Shaman.

Roots and Branches

- *The Wild Man of the Woods* • *Merlin as teacher and adept* • *Ancestral memory of wild animals*
- *Walker between worlds* • *The rituals and functions of the medicine man*





2 The Seer

2 THE SEER

Position on the Wheel

The Seer is at the hub of the Wheel in the quarter related to Water and the emotions and linked to the mysteries of the Moon and the Earth. She is partnered with the Shaman and acts as a guide to the World Tree.



DESCRIPTION The Seer is wrapped in the owl's cloak of wisdom, decorated with totem animals of power and shamanic spirits. She stands before the World Tree, drawing wisdom from the roots that are deeply embedded in the earth. Close around her are the symbols of the four elements that she mediates: the cup, staff, arrowhead and stone. From the head of her staff hang the crane bag and a set of runes. She may be masked and her face may only be glimpsed or seen in half-light. Her voice may be hushed and she may speak in riddles, but if you listen, she can point you to new, wiser beginnings.

MEANING Placed at the heart of the Wheel and the Wildwood in the quadrant of Water, the Seer represents insight that is gained from the stillness and inwardness of the sojourn with the Hooded Man. She stands at the heart of an inner personal universe and can mediate that knowledge and help to externalize this energy into power, wisdom or creative endeavour in the material world.

The Seer acts as an oracular mediator of the feminine intuitive and imaginative principle, but her mediation is based on grounded energy and skill. This is symbolized by her feathered cloak, which represents the flight of thought and intellect, matured and stabilized through her deep-rooted power, grounded in the memory of the conscious Earth.

The Seer stands at the centre both of the Wheel and of the individual inner



world, facing the Shaman. She acts not only as a guide to the soul but as a catalyst for the manifestation of creative and artistic work. Ideas may be filtered through the shadowy realm of dreams and trancelike states, but the inner archetypal mediator that forms these ideas into works of literature, song or dance is the Seer. It is she who inspires the emotional link to a book or piece of music or brings a tear to the eye at the end of an emotional film or laughter at a funny story.

With her inherent ability to balance emotion, intellect and willpower, she spurs us to create change in our material world and is a skilled mediator of all the elemental forces found within the Wildwood. She fosters the positive exercise of will, manifested by emotion and commitment and resulting in outer material effect. This is one of the purest and most blessed forms of Earth magic.

READING POINTS The time has come to focus your power and let it flow through you. Many dreams or desires related to the creative emotional process are ready to be applied in your day-to-day life and you must now give vent to those hidden or suppressed longings. This may also relate to healing, sexual relationships or partnerships. Now the manifestation of inner spiritual or esoteric insights into your practical and physical daily life will bring profound rewards and results. It is a sign of maturity. The Seer also relates to creative impulses such as art, mechanical skills and crafts, and the joy of bringing pleasure and knowledge to others.

Roots and Branches

- *Inspiration and wisdom* • *Oracular prophecy* • *Inner vision* • *Shamanic flight* • *Soul healing*
- *Empathy with nature*





3 THE GREEN WOMAN

Position on the Wheel

The Green Woman stands at the Midsummer Solstice on 21 June. Its element is Fire and it is associated with Noon. She is the earthly manifestation of female solar energy.



DESCRIPTION The Green Woman, disgorged of nature, crowned with ferns and wild roses, breathes the divine word of life. Her calm, serene expression is steady and full of graceful sovereignty. Around her neck is the golden Celtic gorget representing the sun throughout the year. The golden amber cup before her has within it the milk of love and nurturing and the sheela-na-gig on its side represents the life force of all women. The Green Woman symbolizes the forest at midsummer. Here, amid the luxuriant foliage, small animals and birds of the Wildwood live and build their homes, creating a whole ecosystem within the branches and a safe haven for the innocent and vulnerable beneath its roots.

MEANING The Green Woman encompasses the female archetype of wildness and green energy. Her presence balances that of the wild man and represents the earthly manifestation of female solar energy and the rich bounty of the Great Mother. She also represents the goddess of the land, sometimes expressed as Sovereignty, who challenges all comers to brave her tests and to offer to those who succeed the gifts of inner kingship and love and a deepening bond to the riches of the Earth. From her pours the glorious light of the midsummer sun, blessing everything it touches with life and boundless energy.

This figure is complex and subtle but highly dynamic in her interaction with anyone who seeks to understand the nature of the Wildwood mythos. She



mediates the sacred blessing of earthly fertility, and the beasts that inhabit it, and forms a deep bond with the seeker who wishes to attune to the rhythm of the Wheel of the Year.

In the Arthurian tradition she validates the kingship of Arthur by bringing him the sacred sword, and establishes him as guardian of the Hallows of Britain, sometimes appearing as the Lady of the Lake, who fosters both Arthur himself as well as the young hero Lancelot. In other stories she manifests as the Flower Bride, sought after by more than one of Arthur's great knights and offering the deep bonds of matrimony and joy to those with whom she shares her bounty. At its heart her sacred role is the initiator of the human individual into the realm of the Wildwood.

READING POINTS Appearing at a time of rich nurturing and protection, of learning and initiation, when loving and fertile relationships, both human and universal, abound, the Green Woman mediates the sacred sovereignty of the Earth's soul and can show the path to understanding and communion with nature. But with this blessing comes responsibility. Remember that this glorious, magnanimous and generous spirit can live through you, radiated by the sacred breath of life and given to others who need guidance and healing. Learn from the abundant and joyous spirit of the Earth and be at one with the world and your true self.

Roots and Branches

- *The Universal Mother* • *Guinevere* • *Isis* • *The womb of nature* • *The Flower Bride*
- *Maid Marian* • *Mistress of the Animals* • *The Wild Woman*





4 THE GREEN MAN

Position on the Wheel

The Green Man stands with the Green Woman at the Midsummer Solstice. This is the time of greatest warmth with the sun at its highest point in the sky. Fire is the element associated with this time.

DESCRIPTION The face of the Green Man gazes from this card with a challenging and blazing stare. Golden summer sunlight radiates from the leaves that burst abundantly across his glowing face and reach across the heart of the sacred land. In front of him is the cauldron of thriving and regenerating nature, which is both a preserver and storehouse of the vital energy of creation and stability. It represents the throne of kingship, currently empty, and the Green Man guards it with the spear of power and the horn of plenty, ready for the king who will take his place and stand as defender of the land.

MEANING The Green Man is a symbol of the flourishing heart of the male aspect of nature. One of the most ancient images of the connection between mankind and nature, his face has looked out from the stones of temples and churches for centuries. Even in the dim and chilly heights of Christian cathedrals he looks down, often sardonically, on the people far below. Constantly returning in thinly disguised ciphers such as the Green Knight, Jack in the Green and Robin Hood, his face, disgorging leaves, peers out from the rich, dark, fertile heart of the forest and challenges you to respect and revel in the joys of the natural world. His aspect can be fearsome and frightening as he protects the wild beasts of the forest. They know his voice and his presence well, for he is as much one of them as he is the conscious spirit of the land, and the interaction between nature and beast is constant and intertwined.



The fecund cauldron is under his ever-watchful eye and the joyful exultation of creation and fertility are seen in the Cerne Abbas giant, proud both in his manhood and his protective power. He is a giant figure indeed, mature in his power and patient in his resolution.

The Green Man is ever vigilant and unerringly stoical in his guardianship of the sacred land. His warning to respect the laws of nature and the beasts of the forest are best heeded, as his challenge to those who abuse his generosity can be fierce and severe indeed. Yet his heart is great and his spirit is warm and full of primal joy. His face is not hidden from those who can see through the thickly tangled fronds that encompass and enfold the Earth. His bounty is rich and nutritious and soaked in the golden rays of a fertile summer sun.

READING POINTS The Green Man is generous in his bestowal of creative, fertile energy and he will move you to a new level of confident and assertive dynamism. This is a time for both giving and receiving the natural flow of life both inwardly and outwardly. Be prepared to find a new and thriving drive to begin projects, relationships and even new ways of living your life and fulfilling your world. Now is the time to experience being at the apex of the cycle of life. Enjoy it!

Roots and Branches

- *The Great Father* • *The patriarch of nature* • *The king and the land are one*
- *The Dark Man of the Sacred Oak* • *The heart of the Pendragon* • *The Dagda*





5 THE ANCESTOR

Position on the Wheel

Placed at the nexus point between the passing winter and the coming spring, the Ancestor stands at Imbolc, which falls on 1 February. She is associated with the new moon and the elements of Air and Earth.

DESCRIPTION The antlered figure of the Ancestor is clad in reindeer skins and evergreen leaves and stands at the gateway to the Wildwood, framed by silver birch trees, coloured the bone white of winter. These trees grew during the Ice Age and are one of the first to regenerate in the spring. The reindeer once roamed vast tracts of forest, the true ancestors of our post-Ice Age oak woodlands, and it is known that they used the same trackways through the landscape. Thus Ice Age hunters would follow their paths year upon year, hunting their major source of food, marking time by their regular and predictable migration. When reindeer retreated north with the melting ice, the white hart, glimpsed in the forest, replaced their older mythology.

The Ancestor's tracks also lead into the Wildwood. The morning is clear and frosty with the first glimmer of dawn shimmering on the horizon where the new moon hangs with the morning star, representing a new day and a reawakened soul.

MEANING The Ancestor greets you as you walk up the path that leads to the forest. She is a creature of myth, half-animal, half-human, but carries the wand of wisdom and the drum that summons all who can hear to gather and watch the sun rise. The Ancestor is blessed by the land, and by the divine knowledge that flows from the stars. Her coat is of white winter fur and evergreen leaves.



The gateway formed by the silver birch trees either side of the path marks the beginning of a new commitment and a point from which you cannot turn back. The trees act as a reminder to follow the path and know you are on a journey with a beginning and an end. The path is marked with the tracks that lead you onward. The new moon signifies both an end and a beginning as Venus, the bright morning star, shows the new dawn of hope.

The Ancestor is linked to the part of our soul that is most ancient and most closely related to the archetypes that represent nature. She is a guardian of the sacred heart of the land and summons you by beating the drum to the heartbeat of the Earth. It is the part of you that unconsciously heard the drum and stirred the first desire to walk the path that is at work here. It is the overpowering strength and patience of nature, it is the awesome and relentless turning of the cycle that brings spring and warmth, an end to hibernation and the reawakening of abundant life.

The Ancestor stands before the gateway of nature that leads into the far forest. This is another beginning. Once you pass through the gateway you must strive to stay on the path and see the journey through to the end.

READING POINTS You have made the leap and started a new cycle. Your instinctive spirit has felt it necessary to lead you to the gateway and a new path. You may have been reluctant or concerned at first, but whether you realize it or not a shift has occurred. You may feel wary of the unknown denizens that await you in the forest, but the ancient Ancestor within you will guide and reassure you as you relearn and greet new experiences on the path. Trust your inner voice. Listen to your own instinctive and inquisitive nature. Your own inner Ancestor is strong, patient and wise. Let them lead you into the forest with new eyes and a joyful heart.

Roots and Branches

- *Ancient memory* • *The pathfinder guide* • *Elen of the Ways*
- *The spirit of nature in the subconscious human psyche* • *The call of the wild*





6 The Forest Lovers

6 THE FOREST LOVERS

Position on the Wheel

The Forest Lovers are placed at Beltane, 1 May, the festival of the rites of spring and the gateway to summer. In this position they balance the suits of Bows and Arrows and the elements of Fire and Air, and represent the willing interchange of energy that creates the fertile consciousness.



DESCRIPTION A man and woman stand side by side, clothed in the green and brown of the Wildwood. They are Robin and Marian, the Forest Lovers, reborn time and again in the heart of the woods, sometimes known as Robin Hood and Maid Marian, at other times by different names. Between them stands a maypole, generated by their exchange of energy and symbolized here by a living birch tree. Spiralling around this are green garlands, reaching up towards the sky and representing the ascending Earth energies which meet the descending energies of the sky. The Forest Lovers create a spark of life that generates a third force or energy. Arum lilies, or 'lords and ladies' as they are also known, are in flower in this period of Beltane. They symbolize the male and female union at this time of year and the generative energies that bring fruitfulness and harmony within the cycle of the year.

MEANING The Forest Lovers represent both balance in relationships and the sexual union between two polarized individuals. This in itself encompasses the love of all nature, both human and ecological as well as that of individuals. We are each holographic fractions of the universe, containing the whole of creation and the archetypes of the Major Arcana within us to greater or lesser degree. As we enter the great forest of life itself we seek emotional richness and harmony at the deepest level. From this, love blossoms, entwining us ever more deeply into a state



of being where differences vanish and the dross of greed and possessiveness is burned away in the sweet fires of life.



True love comes from the joining of two polar energies to create a third force or consciousness. It is an interchange of energy and passion, not the surrender or domination of either but a voluntary exchange of willpower and respect. We must learn to embrace and befriend all the states of our personality, male and female, light and the dark, to be truly whole. This process allows the natural flow of the cycle of seasons within our own persona. If we fail to welcome all the archetypes into our own house, they become disowned and troublesome, like mental poltergeists gently tapping on the window, seeking to be acknowledged.

There are no gender politics here. We find balance for our personality through our relationships as we move on. Some men are creative and sensitive and are balanced by a strong 'huntress'. Some women are nurturing and artistic and are balanced by a self-motivating male. The physical gender may vary, but the polarity will function or fail.

To truly love, we must be truly whole. We must accept every aspect of our individual personality as well as accepting this same wholeness in another person. The polarity may vary from day to day, moment to moment, but the truly whole person has seen all the fractured elements of their own personality and can deal with them in another. The joy of union is seamless and easy. Love is its own reward.

READING POINTS On a personal level, love is a universal gift to the generous heart, and the seeker will find balance through inner harmony and healing. Polarity is the key element in the natural ebb and flow of emotional commitment. The Forest Lovers represent a positive spiritual force of creative emotional energy and a universal desire for harmony. The inhabitants of the Greenwood revere and respect the rites of love as the force that ensures the unfolding cycle of creation and emotional stability. Always bring the light of love with you; allow it to illuminate the darkest corners of your world and support you through whatever you set out to do.

Roots and Branches

- *Blessed union* • *Friendship* • *The rites of spring* • *The polar balance of souls* • *Desire*
- *The Arthurian white hart* • *Eternal love* • *The sacred vow*





7 THE ARCHER

Position on the Wheel

The Archer stands at the Spring Equinox, on 21 March, at the place of the sunrise, the element of Air, creative energy and inspiration. Here is the dawn of new life and the coming of a fertile and fulfilling season.



DESCRIPTION The Archer holds the broad longbow poised in the act of release. The bow is of the Meare Heath design, the fletchings are of goose feather, taken from the right wing, and the arrowhead is flint. The Archer's gaze is focused and steady as she looks beyond the arrow into the sky, holding the tension between the bow and the sinew bowstring with controlled and relaxed intent. She wears a simple amulet and appears serene and confident yet full of purpose. By her side wait two great hunting dogs, messengers of the power she holds within herself.

MEANING The bow's importance for most of early mankind, both as a tool for survival and for defence, cannot be underestimated. It is for this reason, perhaps, that it has also become a spiritual symbol, and that the drawing and releasing of an arrow is sometimes seen as a ritualistic practice in its own right. For many, the bow is a powerful link to our past, and the patience required to master it connects the Archer with ancient life-or-death experience.

The Celts placed written spells on their arrows and Sioux Indian 'medicine' arrows were painted with geometric designs and held special ritual significance, so that from early times the use of the bow took on a role in the harnessing and transmission of the will. Stringing the bow gives the wood a potential for the release of energy, drawing the bow controls and harnesses that energy, and releasing the arrow with intent finally sends the archer's will through the air to its target.



Just as spells and curses were loosed through the air by hunters and shamans, so we must ourselves tune in to this ancient process and become archers with quivers full of ideas and desires, capable of forming and focusing our aim in the steady drawing of our will and then loosing our creative and intellectual drive in a controlled and effective way.

The key to a smooth and accurate release of the arrow is a steady and relaxed state, both physically and mentally. As hunters in the forest we need patience and cunning, as well as an intimate knowledge of the Wildwood, to move with stealth towards the quarry. Then, with a cool and deliberate aim, the arrow must be released, itself containing something of our will and of our spirit on its flight towards its goal.

READING POINTS The dawn of a new adventure, folded in the web of universal potential, waits for you to string the bow of your imagination and loose the arrows of creativity. This is a time to be bold and commit to the hunting of new life and a better relationship with the world, as well as the fulfilment of wholesome ambition. Take a moment to gather your tools and steady your state of mind. Take careful stock of what you want to achieve, why, and how you will go about it. Then harness your potential by filling your quiver with all the talents, knowledge and cunning you possess and string the 'bow of burning gold' with the 'arrows of desire'. Take a deep breath and be calm. It is time to let your soul take flight.

Roots and Branches

- *The flaming arrow of the intellect* • *Artemis* • *The spirit of the Hooded Man* • *Orion*
- *Intuition, inspiration and imagination* • *Passing on great wisdom*





8 THE STAG

Position on the Wheel

The Stag shares the Spring Equinox, 21 March, with the Archer. He is associated with sunrise and the element of Air. This is the position of universal lore, where the energy of creative life enlivens the soul.

DESCRIPTION The Stag, forest king and guardian, half human and half animal and verdant with greenery, looks out from the card with a steady and calm gaze. He holds a polished hafted axe and shield. His horns reach into the sky and are mirrored in the branches of the tree, before which he stands as a reminder of our cosmic connection to the universe and its manifestation in all organic life on the planet. The polished axe head is a manifestation of the human will to change the environment – and not always for the better, so a weighing-up of action and responsibility is necessary. The shield, which bears the image of the symbolic Major Oak, reminds us that we must preserve and protect our natural resources.

MEANING The concepts of forgiveness and reward are not appropriate here. They are human ideas which have no reality in natural lore. One reaps what one has sown. Just as right or generous action brings fulfilment and peace, greed and vengeful desire bring bitter loneliness and disillusion. Balance will be maintained by the planet's ecosystem. The justice it dispenses is longstanding, and it is both merciful and irrevocable in its final conclusions.

We are guests of the Earth, not its masters. And, like ill-mannered children at a banquet offered freely by a generous and forgiving host, we have behaved badly and are in danger of spoiling the gathering for everyone else. Our thoughtless greed and selfishness have seriously disturbed the ecosystem. The fine balance and





interdependent connection between nature and humans is pivotal; if the balance is disturbed by any inappropriate or thoughtless action there will surely be a natural reaction and the balance will have to be reset.

On an individual level, this may involve haunting guilt over a wrong action or a subconscious feeling of bitterness because of an unfair situation. It signifies the karmic wheel of justice that rules our basic concepts of right and wrong, and the inescapable faith that justice will always be done.

On a global level, it may mean that the thoughtless rape of the rainforest will one day severely affect the weather patterns, and the polluted seas will one day produce poisoned fish that will be inedible. One day, in the not too distant future, our host, the Earth, may have no option but to give notice that the pendulum of justice has swung away from us and we will no longer be welcome at the banquet.

Both on an individual level and as a civilization, we are responsible for our actions and must be aware of their consequences.

READING POINTS On a personal level, some kind of adjustment or interaction has taken place. The keyword here is 'responsibility'. We must, as individuals, constantly observe the rules and regulations of society, and these can fluctuate as the views and knowledge of civilization change. Whether on a political or moral level, we subconsciously know when a realignment of our perceptions is due. This is a time to welcome the justice that has arrived with the coming of spring and the fire of creation. Face the coming season with honesty and integrity and trust to right and appropriate action.

Roots and Branches

- *The Sovereignty of the Land* • *Universal balance* • *The land and the king are one*
- *Divine intervention* • *Universal lore* • *Judgement*





9 The Hooded Man

9 THE HOODED MAN

Position on the Wheel

The Hooded Man stands at the Midwinter Solstice on 21 December. Associated with Earth and the dark sun, this is the time of solitude and contemplation. It is the gateway of the dead and rebirth, the womb of the Earth.



DESCRIPTION A lone hooded figure stands before an ancient oak. It is midwinter. Thick snow covers the ground and the branches of the tree. The Hooded Man is dressed in an evergreen holly and berry cloak. He holds a stout staff in one hand and a lantern to light the pathway in the other. In the great tree is a battered and moss-covered wooden doorway. Through the swollen timbers a warm light spills into the evening gloom. The inside of the great tree appears inviting, a haven from the chilling air. Above the doorway is a wheel-like wreath of holly and evergreen foliage. On a cold stone rising from the frozen earth a wren watches and waits.

MEANING After the trials and tribulations of dealing with the primal forces that confront you on the Wheel of the Year, a space is needed for stillness and contemplation. For the spiritual warrior or seeker looking for esoteric knowledge, the complex matrix of symbolism and insight may confuse the intellect and shake the reality. The Hooded Man (also known as the Hermit, or sometimes as Robin-i-the-Hood, the deeper archetype of the Outlaw of Sherwood Forest) offers a steadfast light in the midwinter world and a steady staff on which to lean and gather your mental resources. His shining lamp illuminates the darkest recesses of fear and incomprehension and guides the way to the doorway that leads into the heart of the great tree. He knows that knowledge is light and is sometimes only earned with sacrifice and stoicism. Such things offer admittance to the great



mystery of the woodland and show the seekers how they may find the wisdom to advance through the wilder reaches of the forest. The great tree itself is one of the most powerful symbols of the forest. Within its ancient heart lie locked countless secrets, and the profoundest treasures of wisdom.

The Hooded Man survives even in the cold empty winter landscape because of his wisdom and his will. He is at one with the harshness of the climate because he draws upon the strength of the evergreen holly that even the winter cannot turn to dust and has stored spiritual nourishment to sustain him. He has absorbed the lessons and knowledge that his journey has afforded him; and to those who have followed his path, and now are tired and in need of solace, he waits to pass on his wisdom, comfort and guidance.

On a small rock nearby is the wren, the sacred bird of kings, revered as an oracle and a keeper of secret wisdom. The wren is an ancient totem bird that flew highest of all creatures by riding on the back of the great eagle, thus earning itself the title of King of All Birds. It serves as a reminder that the smallest of the Earth's creatures is capable of soaring to the greatest heights and seeing beyond the furthest horizon.

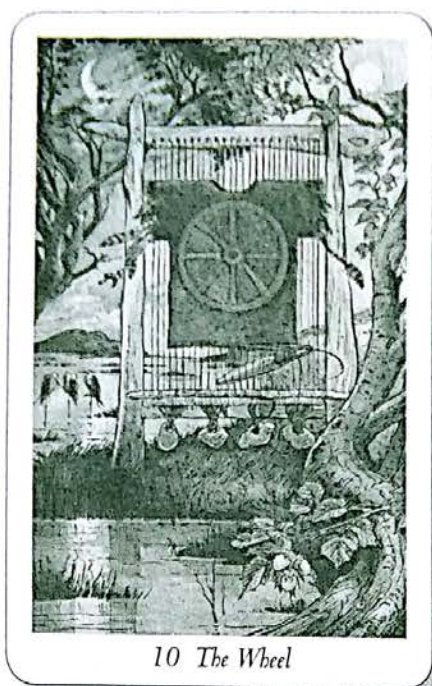
This time of rebirth is both inward and mystical, and yet outward and universal, beyond the narrow boundaries of human civilization and moral codes.

READING POINTS The time of the Hooded Man is here. Whether he appears in the guise of an inner guide and mentor or simply as a state of mind, you will understand that now is a time to withdraw and rest. After a long journey through the Wildwood, many emotions and experiences need to be absorbed. This is the beginning of understanding – not just of yourself, but of the universe. The hermit-like Hooded Man appears differently for everyone. Whether through meditation or solitude in the mountains, through prayer or holidaying in a secluded place, his light will illuminate the way to the heart of the endless cycle of being.

Roots and Branches

- *The path of solitude* • *The final truth* • *The still, small voice of calm*
- *Meditation and communion with the self* • *The light of knowledge* • *Inner depth*





10 THE WHEEL

Position on the Wheel

The Wheel is placed at the Autumn Equinox, 21 September, with the element of Water and the sunset. The setting sun gives warning that the days are shortening as winter approaches.



DESCRIPTION An Iron Age loom hangs between two hazel trees above a pool of still water. On the loom is an unfinished robe of ever-changing variety, woven with images representing the cycles of fate and nature. The Wheel of the Year is represented, and attached to the sleeves are feathers from the Hawk, Wren, Swan and Kingfisher, sacred creatures of the Wildwood. Above the robe we catch a glimpse of the sun and moon in the sky together. Three herons stand at the margin of the pool like hooded men, representing the fates and awaiting the completion of the robe and the coming of its owner. The loom waits for the skilful hand of the unseen weaver to complete the pattern of possibilities and potential that constitutes fate and chance.

MEANING The Wheel traditionally represents the cycles of eternal law and evolution that all living creatures are governed by. Change is unavoidable and necessary if the cycles of nature are to remain alive and regenerative. But on the human level we are the weavers of our own destiny. Consciously or unconsciously, we make the patterns and possibilities that mark our path through fate. We wear our fate around us like a cloak, carrying with us all the potential and possibilities that the universe has to offer and, although the seemingly random, chaotic nature of the universe always has the final word, we can affect our own life and that of the world by taking control of our destiny. Many believe that fate is set, that all things



are predestined no matter what we do in this human reality, but the weaver of the cloak can affect this ever-shifting matrix of potential just by recognizing the pattern and making timely decisions. We can grasp the web of fate and weave in our own special, personal pattern.

Although the jigsaw puzzle of probability and possibility holds the universe together in a loose web of predictable events, nothing is set in stone. The very act of asking a question creates a whole new set of possible outcomes. But be aware! With this ability to weave our own destiny comes responsibility. Our actions are not without risk. If things are out of balance with the universe, the Wheel will bring change in order to restore natural harmony to the web of fate.

READING POINTS The Wheel has turned; change is at hand. In all nature there is a time and tide. The cyclic laws of birth, death and rebirth are ever revolving and, without change, all things stagnate. How you deal with this change is the issue here. Within the tangled and tightly woven fabric of chance you have the power to make a difference. By your own actions you can change your life. You are not a prisoner of fate, but an integral part of it. Remember, this is not a dress rehearsal! Life is what happens to you while you are waiting for it to begin. Whether on the surface the change appears to be for better or for worse, welcome it, be at peace with it and take control of your actions within it. All things must pass.

Roots and Branches

- *The Wheel of Fortune* • *Reincarnation* • *Karma and the laws of the cosmos* • *The cycle of life*
- *Arianrhod of the Silver Wheel* • *The Weaver of Fate*





11 The Woodward

II THE WOODWARD

Position on the Wheel

The Woodward stands at Lammas, 1 August, which falls as the summer wanes, between the elements of Fire and Water. He is associated with the full moon, where Bows become Vessels.



DESCRIPTION A human hunter wearing a mountain lion mask holds a bloodied spear in one hand and the cup of giving, intoxication and compassion in the other. From the crossbar of the spearshaft hangs an ivory statuette of the oldest anthropomorphic figure found in Europe, a lion-headed human thought to be thirty thousand years old. A lynx sits at the figure's side and an eagle swoops over his right shoulder. In the background, Silbury Hill symbolizes the harvest aligned to the sunrise at Lammas. The summer sun rises behind the Woodward, its rays painting the world gold.

MEANING The classical Tarot image of strength is a beautiful, mature woman controlling or holding a lion. The inherent balance of this image shows the calm beauty of patience and love countering the unbridled emotions of anger and hate. The Woodward, an ancient guardian of the Wildwood, symbolizes the inner power that comes from facing fear and understanding the nature of darkness. The inner strength that comes from this awareness gives the individual the emotional body language and the humility that says, 'I am not a victim. Treat me with respect. Do not mistake my passivity for weakness.'

Within *The Wildwood Tarot*, the Woodward is a hunter whose prey is solutions to moments of crisis. He acts as an emotional backstop when fate, or the destructive energy in a situation, faces us with seemingly irrational or overwhelming disaster.



When the individual is removed from a place of seeming security, they are stripped of the emotional baggage that holds them in a state of limbo. During this stripping away of illusory power, individuals find within themselves their true inner strength. A person who has learned from the experience of the journey around the Wheel of the Year gains vital wisdom about the nature of patience and resolution.

However, neither of these qualities is enough on its own to give the spiritual hunter courage to forage in the wilderness again. A certain fierceness is needed. The hunter must be as strong or cunning as the creature they are tracking and as dedicated to their goal as the lioness is to protecting and feeding her cubs. This is not mindless, irrational aggression, but the tempered stoicism of a cool and resolute passion. The strength of the Woodward is both a balance and a dichotomy between the energy of the hunter or the guardian, and the grounded inspiration found within the ecstasy of drumming and war dancing. These energies honour the qualities that provide protection and inspiration.

READING POINTS Through adversity or the process of rebalancing in life, we find courage within ourselves that flows from an unknown source. Sometimes that courage has to do with facing unavoidable truth or dealing with a person or problem that no amount of physical confrontation or emotional bravery will resolve. The Woodward's strength, drawn from nature's inherent power to renew and overcome, is needed if we are to foresee what is to come and wait upon the turning of the seasons. Sometimes, when faced with a challenging situation, we must find our own inner backstop, the point from which we will not retreat or from which we can move forward with quiet confidence. The Wildwood ethos has much to teach humanity about calm, resolute strength.

Roots and Branches

- *Lughnasadh* • *Llew or Lugh, guardian of the sacred spear also known as 'Many Skills'*
- *Durga* • *Blessed compassion* • *The noble instinct of protection* • *Mercy*
- *Maturity of the will and emotional direction* • *Sekhmet* • *Freya*





I2 THE MIRROR

Position on the Wheel

The Mirror is placed at the Autumn Equinox on 21 September, at the gateway to the setting sun. The element is Water. The dark midnight sea lies before the soul that must make the journey to the mysterious island for healing.

DESCRIPTION A dark, serpentine figure rises from the water, holding a golden mirror to her breast. Her curling tail vanishes into the water. With her left hand she holds a crystal ball, the orb of seeing held by the Dark Woman of Knowledge, a figure from humanity's most ancient past. A heron stands motionless at the water's edge. A small wooden boat, which is still tethered, floats in the river current. In it lies an ethereal figure, a sleeping soul awaiting its journey to the island.

MEANING In many traditions the initiator into hidden knowledge is a female figure that reveals insights and wisdom to those on a spiritual sojourn. In the ancient Arthurian cycles this is Morgan, who takes Arthur on his journey into limbo and healing on the Isle of Avalon. The Lady of the Lake is another such primal figure who also acts as a holder and guardian of the sword Excalibur and as an arbiter of Arthur's actions. Both these archetypes represent the unconscious journey of the soul into deeper awareness and wisdom. No act of will can make the soul take this journey; it can only happen after much searching and questing. It is also a precondition of this experience that some kind of wounding has taken place. It is through the pain and endurance of the wounding that wisdom comes, at which point the individual can cross the lake to the island of healing and protection. It is a natural state of surrender that allows the inner self to travel across the emotional sea to the otherworld.



The mysterious figure holds the mirror that aids our inner reflections and the orb of seeing that helps illuminate the shadows of our inner life. The heron stands both as a keeper of the mysteries and a guardian of the otherworld. In some legends, three cranes or herons were seen at the gates of this magical realm and croaked warnings to the unprepared or uninitiated visitor. The cauldron represents the vessel of hidden knowledge and inspiration. From it, the bright flame of insight and revelation illuminates the dark landscape. This is the card that in the traditional Tarot is known as The Hanged Man. We have chosen to amalgamate aspects of this into The Blasted Oak, while the reflecting Mirror offers the same dizzy change from one state of being to another. As the Hanged Man sees life from another angle, so those who look into the Mirror see things reflected as they truly are.

READING POINTS Patience and prudence are the keywords here, although trust plays a large part in the process of crossing to the island where insights into our own unconscious workings may be revealed. This process differs from the journey of the Hooded Man, who makes a conscious decision to withdraw and contemplate the universe. In the Mirror, a surrender of will is required. Insights may come from dreams and meditations, but now is not the time to force the pace or drive on with a plan or desire until you have heard what your soul has to say, and your bruised and wounded spirit has been healed. Be patient. Let the journey commence and awaken afresh and full of energy, ready to deal with the world and the challenges it raises.

Roots and Branches

- *The inner journey* • *Psychism* • *The Lady of the Lake* • *Morgan as the healer and initiator of Arthur* • *The Fisher King* • *The long dark night of the soul* • *The Dark Woman of Knowledge* • *The crane bag of secrets* • *Ceridwen's cauldron* • *Selkies* • *Mermaids*
- *The Three Muses/Fates* • *Goddesses of sexual energy and healing*





13 THE JOURNEY

Position on the Wheel

The Journey is placed at Samhain, which falls on 1 November, All Hallows or Halloween. It is associated with the waning moon and the elements of Water and Earth. It is the time of the dead.



DESCRIPTION The solitary horned skull of a reindeer lies in the forest, picked clean to the bone by a circling flock of ravens. The tattered remains of fur and flesh cling to the bright bone and here and there traces of the living blood of life remind us that all flesh returns to the earth from whence it came. One great raven sits beside it, the flesh of the reindeer in its beak. As both guardian and guide, its unblinking eye is all-seeing and unafraid. In many traditions the raven is a guardian of the spirits of the dead. At the Tower of London, ravens once guarded the head of Bran the Blessed, buried on the White Mount to keep Britain's enemies at bay. So too the raven watches over the souls of those who fall in battle.

MEANING Many misinterpretations of this card have been made over the years in an attempt to avoid dealing with the essence and inevitability of death. On one level, death does translate to a simple expression of change but, however profound, extreme and cleansing that change may be, that reading simply does not deal with the core experience and meaning of this card. Much taboo and fear surrounds death, particularly in the West, mainly instilled by the Christian Church's use of concepts such as eternal damnation, judgement and repentance. Faint echoes of the celebration of a life successfully reaching the end of its journey are still found, however, in the concept of the wake, where people drink and sing in joyous revelry at the passing of a friend or loved one.



Once the dead were not feared. They were seen as guardians, holy ancestors and holders of wisdom. Burial chambers were built with loving precision to align with the rising sun and clans were buried together in sacred places that remained holy for thousands of years. Death was a part of life, part of the cycle of nature. Like the sun itself, many plants and animals 'died' in the winter but were 'reborn' in the spring. The sense of loss was tempered with the joy of release and the promise of regeneration. Death acts as a reminder to us of the transient nature of life. Every moment is precious and every living thing sacred.

As a metaphor for cyclic change, the Journey is a required experience on the passage around the Wheel. It may mean the death of old ideas or concepts that have outlived their usefulness. It may be that it is time to strip to the bare bone the essentials of your nature so that fears and neuroses can be faced and cleansed. There may be some 'laying to rest' with love and joy of a long-dead relationship or an old and bitter grievance. But the Journey is not to be feared. It is an inevitable and natural part of life to be celebrated and accepted.

READING POINTS It is time to face the inevitable, to let the bones be laid bare and acknowledge the deepest aspects of your fears and desires. Do not fear change, because this is also a time of purification and realignment. This change may seem extreme and destructive, but old crops must be cleared for new growth to thrive and static or sterile modes and concepts must perish. A celebration of the past or an acknowledgement of the passing of one part of life may be required. Let the threads of the old slip from your fingers with joyful remembrance and enter this time of withdrawal and renewal with patience and calm.

Roots and Branches

- *The leap in the dark* • *The funeral of illusion* • *Wayland Smith* • *The dance of death*
- *The Washer at the Ford and the Dark Mother* • *Defleshing the corpse* • *Purification by fire*



I4 BALANCE

Position on the Wheel

The Balance card is placed at Beltane, which falls on 1 May. It is associated with the half moon and universal lore. At the gateway of life, Balance is linked with the elements of Air and Fire.



14 Balance

DESCRIPTION The polarized energies of the land interweave and intertwine around the staff of the heavens, generating the pulse of life. Red and white serpents coil around a great tree – the heart of the Wildwood. Red and white energies represent the basic colours of a primal world: red for blood, fire and iron; white for milk, ash and bone. These colours are particularly relevant to Beltane as it lies at the junction on the Wheel between Air (white) and Fire (red), and from this interaction come creative impulses. The ancient symbol of the caduceus echoes the double helix of human DNA, the building blocks of life, where each strand contains the information of the whole. The human face of the Wildwood has both a light and a dark side, shown here in the face of the wooden mask carved into the tree itself. Both are natural and necessary components of the human condition.

MEANING The balance between humanity and nature is vital. The intricate mechanisms that are the arteries and nervous system of the Earth are as sensitive and complex as that of any living organism and we have succeeded in shifting this delicate balance from one of finely tuned interactions to a malignant and polluted environment. The ancient peoples of the Earth long ago recognized their dependence on the ecosystem of the planet to sustain and renew their children. Modern society has become completely detached from that reality and believes the planet is here only for our selfish and greedy consumption. The renewal is taken for



granted, yet we have poured toxic waste into the seas and landscape so that our offspring will be facing death a thousand years from now. Our abuse of the natural world has annihilated whole species of creatures and rent a hole in the very fabric of the atmosphere that makes life on this planet possible. This is a crime beyond comprehension and humankind will be paying the price for generations to come.

Temperance is the traditional name of this card, and it represents a state of inner strength and tranquillity from which deeper knowledge of the self and the universe can be absorbed and contemplated. It is the key to the higher self. Both on the personal level and as a species, we must strive to find a balance.

READING POINTS You must be balanced and patient. The time is right to rest and contemplate all the facets of your existence. To continue now you must be still and calm. Finding the inner balance that will enable you to see beyond the present state is a process of trust and confidence in your own strengths. These facets may include the parts of your psyche that you would rather not deal with, but no amount of denial will rid you of the need to absorb and reclaim them. Balance is absolutely necessary to free the inner self from the fears and self-doubts that keep us spiritually deaf, dumb and blind. Once the natural state of balance is achieved, the plateau that will give you access to the higher self will be open before you.

Roots and Branches

- *Caduceus • Inner harmony • Balance of powers • Fusion of ideas*
- *Blending or merging the inner world with the higher consciousness*
- *Polaric relationship of nature*





15 The Guardian

15 THE GUARDIAN

Position on the Wheel

The Guardian stands at Samhain, on 1 November, at the gateway of the Dead. He stands between the elements of Water and Earth and is associated with the waning moon.

DESCRIPTION The bleached white skeleton of a great cave bear stands sentinel in the night, guarding the entrance to a cave. The guardian spirit of the beast challenges those who would enter the cave of ancestral memory without understanding the nature of their own darkness. Within the cave's open maw, filled with jagged and sharp stalactites, is an unknown and untrodden path. Its destination is shrouded in gloom. No inner light burns to show a way through. Before the path may be followed, the Guardian must be faced and mastery of one's own fears achieved.

MEANING Over the centuries, there has been much cynical manipulation of the concept of 'the Devil' for political, religious and doctrinal purposes, leading to the demonizing of this complex, pagan nature spirit. Yet the prime role of such archetypes is one of protection and initiation and is the human link to wilderness, nature and fertility, sometimes manifested as fierceness, ecstasy and sexuality. However, the fear engendered by the warping of this archetype will be with us for a long time to come.

The Guardian stirs irrational fears from the muddy bottom of the human subconscious and fills the timid soul with foreboding. He is charged with an inhuman and unseen sentience, feeding off fear and panic with a malevolent joy. But within this sardonic and chaotic energy lie wisdom, courage and strength. The human



survival instinct was geared for fight or flight, yet we have learned to rationalize our darkest fears and deal with unknown dangers with intellectual insight. As we have evolved our understanding of the unknown, we have learned that no diabolical or supernatural force in the universe is as frightening as the human imagination.

If the Guardian is frightening, it is because we are frightened by our own reflection, our own dark shadow, and it is this element of ourselves we must master. Within this process is the stripping away of conditioning and the distilling of absolute essentials within ourselves. Much can be gained by facing our most deeply hidden and suppressed fears, which usually stem from our own deepest instincts and desires. Once this truth has been absorbed and utilized for our own defence, the darkest of places and the most challenging of forest guardians can be looked in the eye without fear.

READING POINTS A challenge has arrived in your life. The situation may be very complex. It may even have profound implications for your life and how you deal with the world. It may manifest itself in the form of a profound inner realignment or the facing of some physical outer predicament. Whether from the labyrinth that is the human mind or from some external source, the challenge that presents itself now must be seen for what it is: an opportunity. If something has been hidden or repressed, if a situation has been left to decay or become unhealthy, now is the time to take control of your fears and deal with the insecurity with courage and integrity. Always be aware that however threatening or difficult this situation is, you can only become stronger and more resilient from the experience of understanding and accepting inner darkness.

Roots and Branches

- *Trickster* • *The Dark Angel* • *Herne the Hunter* • *The Dark Man of the Sacred Oak*
- *Lord of the Underworld* • *Oberon* • *Sentinel of the Threshold* • *Pan*





16 THE BLASTED OAK

Position on the Wheel

The Blasted Oak is placed at Lammas, on 1 August, and beside the Woodward on the inner circle of the Wheel. This card is associated with the full moon, the elements of Fire and Water and the concept of sacrifice.



DESCRIPTION A figure falls from a severed branch of the lightning-struck oak. Flames dance around the falling figure, turning the hair to flame and burning the bonds that appear to have tied the person to the branch. As the figure falls, attached to neither tree nor earth, the powerful lightning energy charges the very air with dancing fingers of light and seeks to earth itself by passing through the figure and shooting from the outstretched fingers that seem to be reaching for the ground.

MEANING Just as the universe has the power to create, so it also has the power to destroy. The sudden catabolic power of natural catastrophe and disaster is almost unimaginable. With a sideways flick of its tail the hurricane can uproot a bridge, just as a shudder in the Earth's crust can reduce whole cities to rubble and send tidal shock waves around the world. On the human level we build our seemingly indestructible edifices of theory, technical endeavour and civilization, believing they are immovable and eternal. We wrap ourselves in the trappings of power and position, but in the end we own nothing; we only borrow for the time we are here. All we truly have is what we have learned.

This image combines two of the traditional Tarot cards: the Hanged Man and the Tower. Here the great forest oak is shattered by the power of the storm. For those who have climbed the tree and lashed themselves to a branch, the fall may be long. So too the arrogance and pretension of material life may be torn apart by a



single act of nature or fate. But the fire that blasts the limb also burns the bonds that have held us in a position of false security. Just as the Hanged Man is caught in a state of divine sacrifice and linked to the threefold death, here in the Blasted Oak, the tree itself is shaken and scarred. Likewise, the tower is shattered by the storm and believing in the illusion of material power can only end in spiritual isolation, stagnation and collapse.

But even as we fall, the power that floods our senses with pain also cleanses and burns away the illusions and falsehoods. As our hands reach for the stable Earth, the power grounds itself through us. Our senses are alive with the heat of life. Our emotions are ablaze with passion. Perhaps we had forgotten the intensity of desire, the need to keep struggling for understanding. The essence of true strength and enduring spirit cannot be bought with gold or position or grandiose esoteric theory. It is found in the ashes and flames of nature's own 'wild' card.

READING POINTS What appears to be a random dissolution or destruction of your beliefs and relationships is timely and natural. The sea swallows what was built on shifting sand and you are liberated from being a powerless victim. Now you have a base on which your inner strength can adapt and evolve. This may happen suddenly, with shocking speed. The trauma may leave you stunned and confused, but the fiery blast that sent you falling to Earth has also jolted you from a state of trance that allowed you to avoid dealing with profound and fundamental issues. Don't be angry or bitter at this passing, for whatever has gone never really belonged to you. Be patient, wait and learn from the process of loss.

Roots and Branches

- *Primal force* • *Curative destruction* • *The bolt from the blue* • *The flash of spiritual illumination* • *Clean break* • *The fire of creation* • *Breaking the mould* • *Rising from the ashes of destruction*





17 THE POLE STAR

Position on the Wheel

The Pole Star is placed at Imbolc, on 1 February. It is associated with the new moon and universal lore and stands between the elements of Earth and Air.

DESCRIPTION The pure white light of the Pole Star illuminates the dark void of the universe and casts its radiance upon the Earth. The stars represent the remotest power in the celestial sky and the interaction and fusion of particles that produce light and heat. Stars rise above the Earth, beckoning our searching minds to reach beyond our own solar system and grasp the vastness of space. The swirling clouds of stellar dust that formed the heart of the stars spiral outward into infinity and turn with the cycle of the universe. The blessing of the Pole Star radiates to the Earth across the abyss and reminds us that the same stuff of creation that fuels and binds these mighty sentinels of the night sky burns within us. Latest research shows that stars are initially formed as a sphere within a ring or circle of matter, echoing the cup and ring symbols found carved on the stones of prehistory that may represent the seed of manifestation and the source of creation itself. The blessing of the stellar world bathes the Earth and the human spirit with healing and regenerative energy.

MEANING The Pole Star symbolizes universal law, higher spiritual knowledge and power. The first breath of creation formed the stars and binds them together as constants within the visible universe. Our own star, the sun, reminds us of the awesome power that burns at the heart of these stellar giants and yet that they are only the sentinels of our own visible reality. The Pole Star reminds us that there is



a greater, unseen power in the universe, one that can manifest and balance the enormous gravity, light and energy that form the heart of a star and yet also weaves the subtle interactions between the subatomic particles that exist in multi-dimensional states that we can only theorize about.

Since the dawn of time, stars have been revered and studied as they traversed the sky. For the first travellers, the Pole Star offered a constant navigation aid as the star fields wheeled around its fixed position. Long-range calendar predictions and mathematical equations also developed from these first attempts at astronomy. Research suggests that the pyramids were laid out in the shape of the constellation of Orion and ancient peoples saw mythical beasts, gods and history laid out pictorially in the twinkling star patterns of the night sky. Like the sun and moon, the stars moved through the heavens in a regular, predictable cycle, some vanishing beneath the horizon during the summer and reappearing during winter. Mythical stories of great hunters and slain warriors honoured by the gods and placed forever in the night sky were handed down through time and developed into ancient religious practices.

READING POINTS The power of universal lore is at work here, either within the individual or permeating a web of circumstance that will bring profound change and new spiritual hope. The Pole Star of prophetic guidance and inspirational knowledge has risen and will guide you on your forthcoming journey through the forest. If you hold this ancient and basic truth near the core of your being and navigate by it you cannot go far wrong; it is there as a talisman as well as a symbol of the universal cycle of nature. Whenever you are feeling lost in the dark labyrinth of life, remember that the same laws and primal matter that bind the Pole Star and fuel its giant heart also formed you.

Roots and Branches

- *Universal lore* • *The star of destiny* • *Stellar consciousness* • *The bright and morning star*
- *The prophecy of renewal* • *The sign of a new era or cycle* • *Astral consciousness*
- *The inner sun*





18 The Moon on Water

18 THE MOON ON WATER

Position on the Wheel

The Moon on Water is placed at the womb of the Wheel, the Midwinter Solstice on 21 December and the dark sun. Its element is Earth and it is at the gateway of the soul. It is the mystic still point where ideas and desires change from pure thought to objective reality.

DESCRIPTION A full moon rising above primal swampland illuminates a dark winter sky. The fallow landscape is dotted with the hardy marsh reeds that survive and thrive in the peat-enriched water. A primal egg lies submerged in the nutrient-rich swamp full of potential energy and creative power. The bare trees reach up towards the sky and await the return of spring as a flight of crows and a heron circle above. A lone aurochs moves across the mysterious landscape.

The moon is the nearest companion to us in the solar system and it physically affects the tides and cycles of life on the Earth, but its power goes far beyond that. In the primal world of the Wildwood, the moon also becomes the sacred and mysterious light that illuminates the darkness of the utter void. It is therefore a symbol of all the unconscious or unrealized insights into human reality.

MEANING In the image of the Moon on Water there is no visible pathway for the traveller, and yet its reflective light illuminates the whole landscape. We stand at the edge of the watery marsh, representing the primordial emotional state that holds all potential and creative energy within the human psyche, and are drawn to the horizon where moon meets Earth beyond the barren trees. Beyond the flight of the sacred heron lies the fusion of our ancestral soul with the soul of the Earth.

Before us is the primal egg, submerged in the amniotic fluid of the world, waiting for the creative impulse that begins the process of life. The aurochs' horns



represent fertility as well as the horns of the waxing and waning moon. The shape of the horns and the head resemble the womb and fallopian tubes. In Mithraic and Druidic tradition, the bull or ox also had a sacrificial role at midwinter, representing the coming of new life from the 'death' of winter. The heron is a sacred totem bird of fertility and is also known in Ireland as *siothlagh a bhoga*, meaning 'sheelagh of the boglands', a euphemism for a promiscuous woman, although in the form of a stork the bird takes over the mysteries of reincarnation, offering powerful insights into the mystery of life itself.

The Moon on Water signifies the first steps beyond earthy awareness across the primal emotional void of creation. She also encompasses the dark-moon aspects of fertility, sexuality and initiation as well as the irrational fear of the creatures that are associated with the night such as faeries and demons and other hidden or unseen shapes of ancestral memory.

READING POINTS The Moon on Water heralds a time of inner transformation, initiation or awareness. This may take the form of a seemingly random situation based in the emotional or spiritual spheres, but your inner voice may have been whispering for some time and gone unheeded. Now your soul brings into your physical world the symbolic keys to the collective human subconscious. This may take the form of a desire to investigate or study a doctrine, philosophy or esoteric pursuit, or the wish to explore untapped sexual energy and experience a tighter spiritual bond with a partner through honesty and the expression of your hidden desires. From here, you can begin to wrestle with the concept that consciousness is not within you, but that you are within the consciousness of the universe.

Roots and Branches

- *The dark of the moon* • *Rebirth* • *The still point of potential* • *The path of the moon on the water* • *The gateway of the soul* • *The tides of emotion and consciousness*
- *The primal source of intuition and initiation*





19 THE SUN OF LIFE

Position on the Wheel

The Sun of Life card is connected to the Green Man and Green Woman, all three representing the concept of fertility. It is associated with the element of Fire, the period of noon and the gateway of the mind. The sun sends down energy and light that provides a source of life-enriching power to the cycle of human endeavour.



DESCRIPTION A glorious golden sphere, glowing white-hot and filled with the churning matter of creation, rises over the landscape, filling the air with the power of our nearest star. Before it stands a figure with arms outstretched. The blessing of ancient sunlight shines within the figure's heart. Around the image, flowers burst into blossom, energized by the healing rays of the sun.

MEANING Viewed as if from the centre of the summer Wildwood, the Sun of Life is surrounded by fecundity and growth. The power and importance of the sun cannot be overstated as the bringer of life, warmth and light into the human world. Many Stone Age sites were created to mark the rising of the sun, especially at Midwinter. This was done not only out of respect for the various solar deities but because the sun meant the coming of plentiful food and the return of life after the death of winter. It was a very real and practical salute to the source of primal power that meant survival and comfort during the warm months of the year and to the ever-renewable promise of the sun's return after its sojourn below the horizon during the winter months. Without the light of the sun on our world, life would never have begun, let alone evolved into the vast, complex and varied sprawl of fertility we now see across the face of the globe.

On a more complex level of human consciousness, the Sun of Life represents the next step into awareness of the universal mind. After the initial movement



from the potential still point of the moon, the sun beckons us beyond the Earth—Lunar relationship to an awareness of concepts on a solar level. At the heart of the sun is the secret process of nuclear fusion from which everything we perceive and comprehend on a physical, galactic level was created – and will one day return to. The figure at the heart of this process reminds us that we really are made of the matter of the universe. Our physical bodies were created from the waste matter of the cooling and turning of the sun. We are truly at one with the cosmos and the same interactions between matter and energy that bind the sun together, work both within and through us, moment-by-moment.



READING POINTS A powerful symbol of light and fertility, the Sun of Life heralds a season blessed with joyous enlightenment, robust health and emotional harmony. As the glorious rays of cleansing sunlight spill into the shadows of your heart and life, so the warmth reaches into your very bones and energizes your spirit. It is time to let the inner sun at the core of your being shine for all to see, bringing warmth, light and harmony to others, and by doing so to connect with the consciousness of the universal mind. The Sun of Life also beckons you to see beyond the noise and clatter of human reality and become aware of the vastness and generosity of the cosmic soul.

Roots and Branches

- *The creative fire* • *Light of the land* • *The furnace of potential* • *The inner sun*
- *The primal melting pot of matter and energy* • *The heart of eternal life*



20 THE GREAT BEAR

Position on the Wheel

The Great Bear is placed at the Winter Solstice on 21 December. Its element is Earth and it is associated with the dark sun, the gateway of the dead and their rebirth, and the still point of renewal and healing.



20 The Great Bear



DESCRIPTION Between two yew trees lies an ancient burial mound of the kind known as a passage grave. Upon this a polar bear crouches, keeping watch. The initiate has been laid to rest, covered by earth and stone, and now waits to be reborn, guarded by the shamanic sentinel of the mound. The traditional religious and political concepts of right and wrong, guilt and innocence, have no place here, for the judgement that takes place during the time of rebirth is both inward and mystical, and yet outward and universal, reaching far beyond the narrow confines of human civilization and conventions. The constellation of the Great Bear stands out in the sky, indicating the entrance to the otherworld to which the seeker proceeds.

MEANING Fear of death and damnation have mutated into a distorted view of the card known traditionally as Judgement, as a calling of righteous souls from their graves by an angel on Judgement Day. But the universe is much simpler than religious theologies would have it. The laws of evolution and cause and effect have more to do with divine judgement than human morals. If, on a personal level, life is squandered in the pursuit of vainglories and pretentious ambition, the painful void left within an individual's soul will make itself known through despair and frustration. On the earthly or universal sphere, if we abuse the ecosystem and lay waste to world resources, nature will find a way to redress the balance by its own evolutionary means. Nature is not vindictive, just practical. By the same token, if



time is spent educating and understanding ourselves, this investment in wisdom will help us live our lives with a deeper respect for all humanity and nature. Life will be enriched by the joy and beauty of the universe.

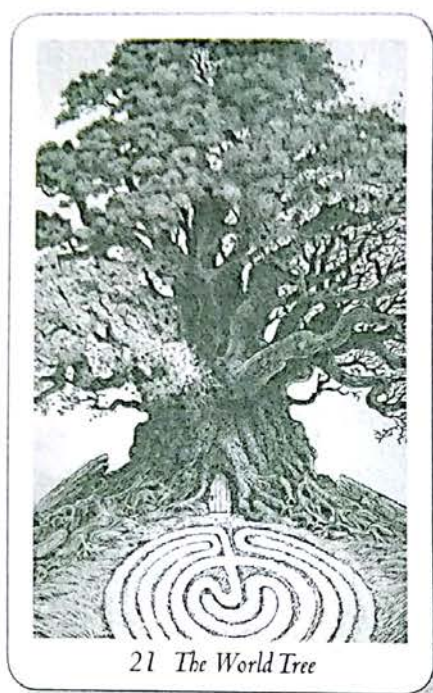
The Great Bear is the guardian of the forest ways, and holds the power of life and death over those who transgress its laws. After experiencing the stages of being stripped and laid bare, the initiate experiences renewed strength and wisdom and is reborn into a place of quiet stillness, peace and rest that allows the healing process to be completed. The new, whole, reconstituted person lies hibernating, full of potential, ready to meet the coming spring with energy and joy.

READING POINTS The only thing in life that is assured is that, if you wait long enough, it will change. How you survive that change and who you are after it is up to you. The major element in this process is judgement of yourself and others. This may relate to an assessment regarding a personal matter or situation, and could be linked to the process of forgiving. It may also relate to a group or social decision. In the process of judgement, both as an individual and on the universal level, honesty is the key. Be honest, be forgiving, be patient, but most of all, be assured change is at hand. Remember, the universe has a long memory. Nothing is ever forgotten.

Roots and Branches

- *Renewal* • *Universal mind* • *Inescapable truth* • *The even hand* • *Cosmic law*
- *Reincarnation* • *The sleep of the just* • *Karma* • *Nothing is forgotten* • *The cage of guilt* • *Reaping what has been sown* • *The divinity of forgiving*





21 THE WORLD TREE

Position on the Wheel

The World Tree sits at the heart of the cycle, in the quadrant of Fire. It encompasses all the different aspects of the Wheel and the human aspects of the Major Arcana.

 **DESCRIPTION** The great World Tree marks the end of the Wanderer's journey. All four seasons are represented in the branches of the tree and at its base is a labyrinth of the kind found in many parts of the world and dating back to prehistoric times.

MEANING As the symbol of the conscious bridge between the living macrocosm and the inner universe of the human psyche, the World Tree marks the end of one journey for the Wanderer and the beginning of another. The Wanderer began the journey around the Wheel with an innocent and childlike curiosity, but the subtle growing process experienced on the way has brought inner gifts of wisdom and awareness. The final step is to follow the path through the living maze and enter the heart of the World Tree to become one with the wholeness of the universal mind.

Nothing is hidden and no misleading or cunning diversions are set to lead the unwary off the path, but to gain access to the tree one must walk the path and complete the journey. The unicursal labyrinth has no dead ends or false routes but leads on one wandering pathway from the entrance, inexorably to the centre. Perhaps symbolizing the passage of the sun or guarding the souls of dead ancestors and spirits in their place of repose, it remains a pathway to the core of the mysteries and an easily recognized image of the human journey. Though the doorway at the base of the tree is clearly visible and nothing stops the traveller from



directly approaching it, walking the labyrinthine pathway is a ritual requiring patience and insight and enabling contemplation and meditation on the meaning of the journey.



What may be found beyond the door is both individual and universal, for encompassed within the branches of the World Tree are the four seasons of the cycle of life. Through the restful healing of winter to the fertile freshness of spring, the power and joy of summer and the wisdom and maturity of autumn, the cosmic light of universal understanding shines from the heart of the tree, creating a bridge to the source of all consciousness and life.

The World Tree represents all individual life and all knowledge in one holographic field of consciousness and, paradoxically, remains as one entity, whole and complete. This complex concept is not only stranger than we think; it is stranger than we can think!

READING POINTS The universe and all its blessings are available to everyone who seeks knowledge and wisdom with a sincere heart. On every level, the cosmos has a generous bounty and gives freely of its rich nourishment and fulfilment. No matter how long the journey of life may be, however many twists and turns the maze may offer us, in the end, if we persevere, we will reach the point of fulfilment. This may relate to material gain and wealth or to spiritual happiness and emotional security, but after the long process of learning, responsibility and rebirth, it is now time to bathe in the light of renewal, attainment and personal triumph. Breathe in the rich air, drink of the sweet water and rejoice in the warming fire of the universal life force.

Roots and Branches

- *The universal mind* • *Recognition* • *The primal source of creation* • *The collective human consciousness* • *Natural balance* • *Just reward and material wealth from creative labour*
- *The Tree of Life and Death*



SUIT OF ARROWS

The intuitive mind is a sacred gift and the rational mind is a faithful servant. We have created a society that honours the servant and has forgotten the gift.

ALBERT EINSTEIN

POSITION ON THE WHEEL

The period of spring moving from Imbolc, through the Spring Equinox, towards Beltane

ELEMENT

AIR

ASSOCIATIONS

*Creative intellect • Conceptual dreams • Strategy • Projected wishes
• Communication • Ambition • Cunning • Being of the mind*



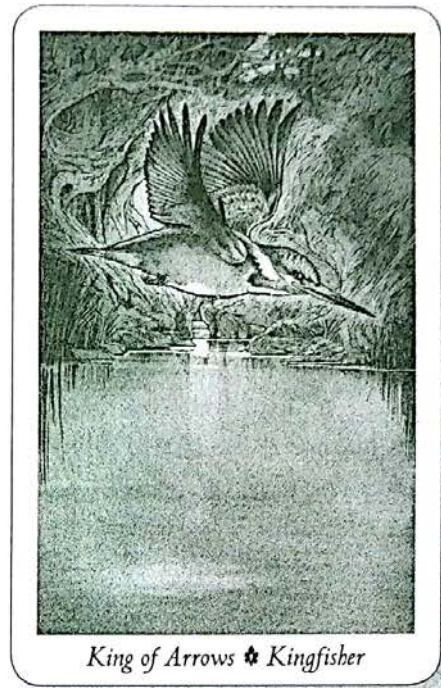
KING OF ARROWS

Kingfisher

Position on the Wheel

Departing Imbolc towards the Spring Equinox

MEANING This tiny bird, both sexes covered with the colours of the rainbow, is equally at home in the air or in the water. With its remarkable ability to dive into the water and catch fish, the Kingfisher has been symbolic of ancient wisdom and lore for centuries.



READING POINTS You may need to exercise judgement, power, force of will. The king is impartial and helps you to see clearly what you no longer need to hold onto. Use your strength to cut yourself free of what weighs you down.

As a person in your life Articulate and just, this is someone who is a moral leader who upholds standards. Impartiality and justice are his/her trademark. His knowledge and research are of the highest quality. His highly principled discernment sees to the heart of things. A friend who gives you perspective. Someone who can quantify or assess a situation precisely.

As an aspect or process Finding a way through chaos by calm clarity. Being watchful. The need for good counsel. Discerning the truth of a situation. Finding an impartial standpoint. Being fair/unfair. An urge to buck the system.

As an event/happening Advice or counsel. A court case or dispute needing arbitration. Precise information. A disciplined approach. An unrelenting, harsh situation.

Questions What must you focus upon clearly? Who can give you good advice? What wise words will help this situation? What is your duty to society?

Tracks and Pathways

Intelligence • Strength • Watchfulness • Counselling • The ability to judge true from false





Queen of Arrows ★ Swan

QUEEN OF ARROWS

Swan

Position on the Wheel

Entering the Spring Equinox

MEANING This graceful and powerful bird has long been associated with myth and legend. From the Greek Leda, transformed into a swan after mating with Zeus in this form, to Elsa of Brabant in the stories of the Grail Knight Lohengrin, the Swan is a strong and regal protector.



READING POINTS A state of separation may exist, bringing with it sorrow, privation and misfortune. You may need to break old bonds and find new rivers in which to swim if you are to move beyond this place of darkness and loss.

As a person in your life A person of honesty, integrity, and pure focus who is astute and difficult to trick. A career woman/man. Direct and sometimes outspoken, she can figure out what's going on quickly. Intelligence and independence bring the ability to overcome events and carry on despite stress.

As an aspect or process Facing unpleasant truths. Not bearing fools gladly. Sorrow from loss. Assessing things astutely. Rational explanation or scientific view. Going to the heart of things. Sadness lingers.

As an event/happening Truth needs to be spoken to avoid misunderstanding. Setting the ground rules clearly. Separation, break-up or absence. Finding freedoms in the midst of restraint. Ideals turn sour.

Questions What help do you need to accept or ask for? What straightforward approach is needed here? How do you cut through the tangle?

Tracks and Pathways

Purity • Loss • Change • Suffering • Song • Absence • Scarcity • Freedom after strife



KNIGHT OF ARROWS

Hawk

Position on the Wheel

Departing Imbolc towards the Spring Equinox

MEANING Quick, graceful and a master of the element of Air, the Hawk is symbolic of vision and power. The ability to fly and nest at high altitude and see prey and hunt from a great height brings a special reverence to this majestic and fearless creature.



Knight of Arrows ♦ Hawk

READING POINTS A quicksilver messenger of fate, the Hawk can help and support you to see through layers of doubt and uncertainty to the problem at the heart of the matter. Be swift and subtle and use your common sense to progress.

As a person in your life Knight of Arrows is a champion who rides to defend and uphold beliefs, for himself and on behalf of others. He/she has clear views and opinions and makes a good advocate for those who have no voice. He is a friend who is never downhearted but always energetic and spontaneous.

As an aspect or process Vigilance as you go through the process. Impulsiveness. Heroism. Struggling with ideological compliance or revolt. Using subtlety as a way through. Holding a grudge. Festering anger.

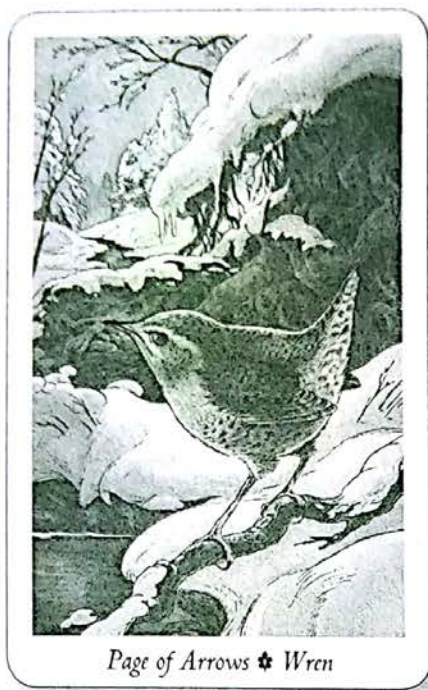
As an event/happening A cause that you espouse. A speedy turn of events. A decision that needs to be made. A meeting of like-minded people. A revolutionary inspiration. A violent kick-back or reaction. An ideological persecution.

Questions In the depths of doubt, what do you hold to strongly? What do you need to stand up for? Where might you be wrongly informed?

Tracks and Pathways

*Heroism • Disputation • Subtlety • Clear-sightedness • Impetuosity • Anger
• Holding a grudge • Valour*





PAGE OF ARROWS

Wren

Position on the Wheel

Moving from the Spring Equinox towards Beltane

MEANING The colours of the goldcrest – red, white, green and black – were once held to be sacred and the common wren was considered a guardian of the winter mysteries. Druids kept wrens as totem animals of augury and prophecy and ritually sacrificed them on St Stephen's Day (26 December).



READING POINTS Study and application brings wisdom and understanding which can be applied to most situations. Your youth and determination will carry you forward and your nascent skills bring you to a dynamic realization.

As a person in your life The Page of Arrows is a good companion to see you through trials and challenges, because s/he doesn't easily give up. She is known as an observant overseer whose honesty is valued, but she could equally turn those skills to spying or curious snooping. She learns things easily because of her eye for detail. She is dextrous and cunning in a tight place.

As an aspect or process Having fortitude through difficulties. Daring and agility. Determination. Thinking the whole plan through. Sitting on the fence.

As an event/happening A new skill or idea. Challenges, negotiations or contracts that need close attention. Examinations, auditions, tests. Gossip.

Questions How can you engage flexibly with the situation? What gives you the necessary bravado to face this challenge? What do you need to learn to overcome? What is the mystery at the heart of the matter?

Tracks and Pathways

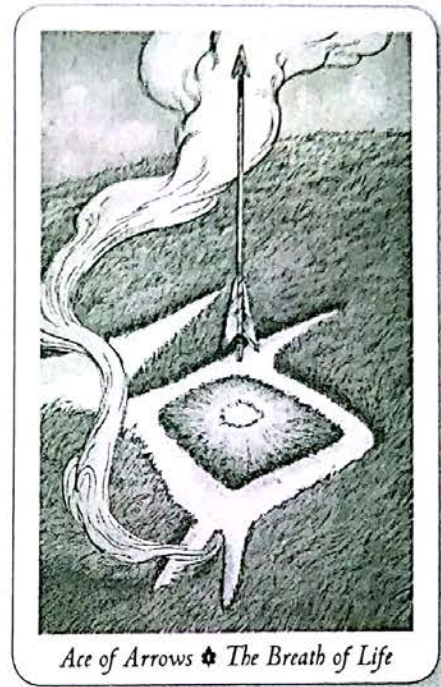
Watchfulness • Mystery • Determination • Work • Scholarship • Wisdom • A vigilant guardian



ACE OF ARROWS

The Breath of Life

DESCRIPTION The head of the Uffington White Horse, outlined on the green grass of the downs, stares out at us from the card. An arrow hangs above the eye, pointing outward to all possible futures. Spiralling wisps of energy issue from its mouth. The eye of the horse shines with energy.



MEANING The Uffington chalk hill figure breaths the vitality of life – a renewal of vitality combined with knowledge of where you wish to be and how to get there. It is believed that if you stand on the eye of the Uffington White Horse and make a wish, you will gain wisdom and your wish will come true.

READING POINTS By breathing life into a thought and pursuing it to its material creation in the real world, we engage in an ancient and unique relationship with the universe and the divine. Our minds are linked to a greater consciousness, its power and effectiveness waiting only for the question. As the first formation of an idea or concept crystallizes in your mind, the primal creative energy connects you to the Breath of Life. This energy can be summoned and applied to achieve your conscious desire. Clarity of purpose is the key. Sometimes an unconscious impulse or drive makes you aware of a hidden issue or need. Such issues may appear in dreams, often signalling their presence in this way because of a lack of attention paid to them, or a lack of confidence in our own processes and abilities. Our unique connection with the universe ensures that those issues are brought into our everyday awareness.





TWO OF ARROWS

Injustice

DESCRIPTION The enthroned and faceless figure of Justice sits like a statue, her feet resting on an ancient wooden longbow. Her eyes are bound and she wears a simple white gown. Above her head are the uneven scales, one plate bearing a feather, the other a few coins. She holds two arrows in her arms.

MEANING The scales of natural justice have been skewed by false judgements, ignorance or arrogance. Sitting in judgement with unbalanced scales to an untrue premise, however ardently or sincerely, will not prevail. The bow is broken and useless through prejudice and misuse.

READING POINTS False conclusions and unjust decisions, based on disinformation, motivated by fear, greed and prejudice, can cause innumerable problems. Either mistakenly or deliberately distributed to pervert the course of natural justice and the revelation of the facts by those who fear the truth and wish to manipulate the situation for personal control or gain, this propaganda will not survive honest, wise and impartial scrutiny. In many worldly situations the truth becomes hijacked and twisted to become a false message, designed to confuse and instil fear in those seeking clear insight. The wise seeker questions and tests false messages and discerns the validity of a harmful accusation. Perversions of the truth will always bring frustration and bitterness to the individual or group that deploys such dishonourable tactics. The perpetrator of lies and falsehoods will always be judged as an unreliable source, bent on mischief and destructive interference. For the victim of injustice, the best defence of the truth is always more truth.



THREE OF ARROWS

Jealousy

DESCRIPTION A great heart-shaped form hangs at the centre of the picture. It is pierced by three arrows. Drops of blood fall from it, watering the earth below.



MEANING A tension of emotions creating fear, jealousy or envy between people. Competing passions or feelings of resentment that are ultimately destructive. Resentment or negative attitudes towards family, friends or business associates born of emotional insecurity or social prejudice.

READING POINTS The origins of jealousy can be infinitely varied, uniquely subjective and deeply rooted in socio-economic or psychological soil, but whether born of a broken heart, a broken dream or a broken economic system, beware of surrendering humility and forgiveness to feelings of envy or jealousy. The most commonly associated emotional drive linked to jealousy is loss. However perceived by the individual, it behoves both the 'victim' of jealousy and the subject suffering feelings of envy to look deeply into the nature of their own motives and responsibilities. For the jealous or possessive, there is also sometimes a feeling of 'entitlement' attached to the issue. This can be attributed to concepts of social or familial expectations born of ill-conceived peer guidance, or the failure to enforce social responsibilities and parameters. As we mature, we discover that there will always be some who seem to have more, or are gifted with copious good fortune. The healing balm for envy is humility, acceptance and forgiveness, even in the face of bitter rivalry and anger, just as the constant refocusing of your energy into a positive and creative momentum in your own life is the best healer for the effects of jealousy.





FOUR OF ARROWS

Rest

DESCRIPTION On the ground lies a figure with closed eyes. There are four arrows driven into the earth, two at the head and two at the knees. Rising above is a great multicoloured butterfly from which rays of energy pour in all directions, bathing the figure in light.



MEANING Recharging after a period of stressful activity, work or emotional trauma. Allow time for the imagination to sojourn into the otherworld to renew and rejuvenate vitality.

READING POINTS In this stressful and demanding world, we sometimes forget that rest is a necessary part of a healthy lifestyle and sleep a vital part of recuperation and the healing process. This primal mechanism is not just for the well-being of the body but the mind and imagination as well. Muscles need time to repair and rebuild after strenuous exertion, and the functions of the human psyche need dreams and deep sleep to aid the process, bringing order to what sometimes seems the chaos and random machinations of daily life. Sometimes, inspiration and insight can also come through restful meditation and lucid dreaming. Welcome these insights joyfully and take note of what your subconscious is saying to you. One of the first human instincts when confronted with a survival situation in any wild environment is to find or build a shelter to provide protection from the elements and act as a safe place to rest and sleep in safety. Without that basic human security requirement, survivors often become disorientated, make poor decisions and become unable to physically complete simple and necessary tasks, eventually losing hope. Rest and sleep are vital to restore stamina and vitality.



FIVE OF ARROWS

Frustration

DESCRIPTION A goat with long curving horns and wildly tangled coat leaps upward into the sky. Around it are four arrows, none of which strike it. Below stands a hunter, clad in leather and bark. His bow is strung with a fifth arrow as he aims at the elusive prey.



Five of Arrows ♦ Frustration

MEANING Unfocused energy or anger that leads to the archer releasing inaccurate arrows or lashing out in an uncontrolled manner and missing the target, wasting valuable resources and energy.

READING POINTS Frustration is the enemy of any pursuit that requires self-control and stillness. It can be frustrating to hear rumours or lies spread but the cool and level-headed hunter will not be distracted by such trivia. It may take some practice to understand that anything that takes emotional focus away from achieving a real and deserved goal is just that: a distraction. If others are attempting to cause such distractions, you will only feed their ego and help their cause by reacting and acknowledging their efforts. Take a deep breath and steady your mind and see clearly what the goal is. Sometimes, humour can defuse and deflect the effects of frustration. Take a moment to laugh at yourself and see the irony in situations that cause such distractions. See the futility of games played against you to frustrate your efforts and coolly go about your business with a mature and steady intention. Frustration is ungrounded energy that works against you and is better deployed in resolving your own challenges. Take time to steady your aim and ignore your detractors. Stay on target and loose your arrows at your goals with a cool and purposeful precision.





SIX OF ARROWS

Transition

DESCRIPTION A stylized wooden boat with a swan prow floats on a still pool of water. A single white sail on which a six-pointed star is outlined by six arrows drives it. In the prow of the boat stands a lone, cloaked figure.

 **MEANING** Movement towards new possibilities, or cycles, within your own personality or thought processes. A subconscious impulse to travel beyond your present horizons that have become static. Possibly an anxious or testing time of uncertainty, but harnessing positive energies and drives will add purposeful momentum to the coming changes.

READING POINTS The primal impulse here is to move beyond old boundaries and personal thought processes and deploy new methods of reasoning to resolve important issues. Some obstacle may challenge older methods, and new, more dynamic responses are required to adapt to a new set of paradigms. This can be an exciting process. The journey may be scary, since letting go of old and previously effective processes can be unsettling, but the unseen tides that drive the need to evolve are already pulling you to new experiences and places. Trusting in your own instincts and skills to absorb change is essential to overcome new situations. Take advantage of your subconscious forward momentum and ride the new wave with an open heart and a positive mental attitude. Welcome any new process with confidence and apply your skills to effect healing renewal. Embrace well-tried experiences also, as the Wheel inevitably turns, and enter into these personal changes with stoical enthusiasm.



SEVEN OF ARROWS

Insecurity

DESCRIPTION At the centre stands a Green Woman clad in leaves and with hair that seems to grow from her head like vines. Her arms are raised in blessing, but arrows pierce her flesh and fly towards her.



Seven of Arrows ♦ Insecurity

MEANING Ungrounded fears and confusion lead to instability and panic, self-torture through guilt or delusion and the need to deal with fragmented or rejected aspects of personality.

READING POINTS Some of our greatest fears and self-destructive drives are born of emotional insecurity or lack of self-discipline, crippling an individual's ability to make timely decisions or responsible action. Sometimes, these dark, ungrounded fears are the product of panic or guilt planted by inappropriate parenting or the lack of ethical education. Unreasonable emotional expectations and feelings of abandonment can also fuel a lack of emotional stability and stable grounding in practical life. Finding one's feet in this environment takes serious inner work and real self-appraisal to reveal the true nature of the undermining issue at the heart of your fear. We may not be able to change the past, but we can learn to evolve strategies from the lessons of life and apply them to future scenarios. This process may also involve forgiveness for past failures, either of other individuals, belief systems or, more importantly, oneself. Forgiveness of oneself is a vital healing mechanism to deal with self-inflicted wounds associated with the burdens of guilt and self-recrimination. Understanding and acknowledging the motivations behind past mistakes stimulates the process of establishing a secure and healthy emotional foundation from which new beginnings can arise.





Eight of Arrows ♦ Struggle

EIGHT OF ARROWS

Struggle

DESCRIPTION A lone figure struggles across a bleak landscape, leaning heavily on a staff. Closely wrapped in a cloak and thick garments, she fights her way through a blizzard that whirls around her. In the ground amid the whirling snowflakes we see eight bent, broken and wasted arrows, weathered and tattered by the elements.



MEANING In the darkness of failure, the burning torch of hope remains lit in the human soul and encourages struggle. Courage is needed to survive the storm.

READING POINTS However much we wish that divisive and conflicting issues and moral dilemmas didn't exist in our lives, sometimes they are an unavoidable part of the journey. If we are lucky, we have the support and sympathy of friends and loved ones to help us deal with the struggle, but not always. Sometimes, because of the very personal nature of the problem, we are alone, dealing with a thorny dilemma that only the individual at the centre of the issue can negotiate. The choices can be painful and stark. The path may appear fraught with unfamiliar obstacles and pitfalls, and with no obvious remedy. All these elements may strain our core beliefs, causing us to doubt the validity of previous choices. Such profound personal struggles require calm, decisive and resolute action. Reach down into the very core of your being and summon all the reserves of your courage and wisdom. See honestly what the issue will require for you to resolve it and present those who might be a party to the problem with an implacable and unyielding dedication. View this necessary sojourn with clear eyes and a resolute heart, for to overcome these tests of life makes us stronger.



NINE OF ARROWS

Dedication

DESCRIPTION A figure clad in skin robes decorated with patterns of leaves, stands in a clearing amid the Wildwood. She is holding a bow as though it were an instrument, the black of the bow crafted in her arms and an arrow held against the string as if it were the bow on a fiddle. Around her, repulsed by an invisible shield, are another eight arrows.



Nine of Arrows ♦ Dedication

MEANING The spiritual warrior dedicates their arrows of inspiration by playing the bow as an instrument of summoning. The inner oath helps keep one on a balanced footing by dedicating skills to a greater good.

READING POINTS To heed the calling to dedicate one's life to any skill, spiritual path, belief system or philosophy requires sincerity, self-discipline and hard work. It is a sacred summoning that requires time and effort. For those who hear the calling and become spiritual warriors and protectors of the land, responsibility and sacrifice are also required. To deny that the human species has had a negative effect on the planet's climate and atmosphere seems totally redundant. The growing awareness of our individual impact on the ecosystem may take on greater significance in the future. We cannot predict what effect our avarice and rapacious exploitation of the land will eventually produce, but the dedicated defender of the soil must protect the living legacy we leave for our children. To teach by example the value of respecting other's beliefs and philosophies in honouring the land is immensely important. Sometimes a simple daily ritual reminds us of the oath we have taken to conserve and protect the environment. Dedicate yourself to the task of preserving the land and be a part of making the difference.





TEN OF ARROWS

Instruction

DESCRIPTION A man teaches his son how to hold and shoot a small bow and arrows. In the background is an abstract design of a wheel in which the spokes are nine arrows. The tenth is nocked to the child's bow.



MEANING A parent passes on skills, wisdom and ancestral ways with love and tolerance. Instruction and communication are required between the generations to help use old skills in new ways.

READING POINTS As our young people absorb and apply ever more complex technologies with bewildering speed and uncanny ease, the gap between the generations appears to get wider every year. When we interact with the young today, we must make a conscious effort to pass on traditional wisdom and skills and make the relationship with those disciplines as vital as ever. With the coming of the industrial revolution, the traditional relationship between father and son broke down. Shared bonding experiences like hunting, fishing and the tending of herds and fields were slowly eroded. Also, for girls, the 'women's mysteries' have faded as traditional societal roles have evolved and changed and personal instructional relationships, even among women across the age gap, grow rarer. All generations lose out if the divide becomes too wide and skills, wisdom and arts are lost. Just as no child will ever forget the first fish he catches or the first touchdown she scores, coached and encouraged by grandpa, the pride in achievement and responsibility present in good parenting is anchored in the gift of instruction. We lose these gifts of shared experience and patience, taught through the interaction of instruction, at society's peril.



SUIT OF BOWS

*Destiny is not a matter of chance, it is a matter of choice;
it is not a thing to be waited for, it is a thing to be achieved.*

WILLIAM JENNINGS BRYANT

POSITION ON THE WHEEL

*The season of summer, moving from Beltane through
Midsummer to Lammas*

ELEMENT FIRE

ASSOCIATIONS

*Creativity • Development • Enterprise • Science • Philosophical
and esoteric pursuits • Skilful ability fuelled by will*





King of Bows ♦ Adder

KING OF BOWS

Adder

Position on the Wheel

Moving away from Beltane

MEANING At this time of year, the Adder represents serpentine Earth energies rising from the ground into the air and intertwining, as male adders struggle for dominance. (Sometimes this is mistaken for a mating ritual.) They also represent magical power, balance and the healing arts.



READING POINTS Maturity, strength of resolve, energy and wisdom. The genius and individuality of the seeker is enhanced and rewarded at every turn. Your leadership is unchallenged, your path direct, your goals realized.

As a person in your life An honourable and magnanimous person who stands out from the crowd and takes command. A friend who takes charge when no clear leader is present. An attractive partner, full of charisma. Someone who needs to brand everything with their mark.

As an aspect or process Setting a distinctive/creative stamp on things. Shirking away from a position of leadership. Being assertive or enthusiastic. Dominating a situation. Self-righteousness. Bullying.

As an event/happening Benevolence. Establishing sovereignty or position. Seeking an opportunity or reachable goal. Developing an enterprise. A copyright or intellectual property dispute. An aggressive takeover bid.

Questions Where do you need to take charge? Where is your enthusiasm leading you? What helps bolster your self-esteem?

Tracks and Pathways

*Seriousness • Honesty • Talent • Good intentions • Integrity • A married man
• A good father • Education and wisdom*



QUEEN OF BOWS

Hare

Position on the Wheel
Moving towards Midsummer

MEANING Hares have been linked to the spring (Eostre, the Saxon hare goddess) and sexuality since Celtic times, when it was considered taboo to kill them. Prolific breeders, they represent fertility and potential. The Hare is also famous for the 'boxing' ritual that takes place during March.



Queen of Bows ♦ Hare

READING POINTS A companion through life, sympathetic and understanding, leading you to a deeper awareness of what is needed to bring success to your every enterprise. Wise and witty, gentle and kindly, the Queen supports you and strengthens your resolve.

As a person in your life The Queen of Bows is a popular and dedicated person who has great self-assurance. As a friend, s/he is committed and kind, quick to defend or take your side in any eventuality.

As an aspect or process Outgoing warmth. Jealousy and rivalry. Unpredictability. Retaliation. Sympathy and empathy.

As an event/happening Offering courteous understanding. Using your ambition creatively. Harboursing slights or insults and undermining the plans of others. A party or social gathering. A business opportunity. A peace offering, confrontation or burnout. Sorcery or petty spellcraft.

Questions How do you influence those around you? How can your plans be best fostered now? Where do you need to be more courteous or understanding?

Tracks and Pathways

*Kindness and responsibility • An offering of peace and love • Helpfulness, courtesy, understanding
• Enchantment • Success in business*





Knight of Bows ★ Fox

KNIGHT OF BOWS

Fox

Position on the Wheel

Passing through Midsummer

MEANING The qualities of cunning and stalking combined with great alertness and curiosity make the Fox a stealthy night hunter. Often seen at dawn, the Fox retains a beguiling mixture of wisdom and playfulness.



READING POINTS Determination leads you to success but sometimes at personal cost. Your life may change or enter a different path at any moment. Native wit and cleverness guide your steps towards fulfilment, as does your gift of anticipating the future.

As a person in your life Someone impulsive and dynamic whose flamboyant style leads to admiration. He/she leaps in boldly where others fear to tread. A fashion-leader or motivator. Can be competitive, a dabbler or a show-off. As a rebel without a cause, he can upset and unsettle others.

As an aspect or process Quick wit or cleverness. Leaving old ways behind, innovating creatively, improvising a way forward. Recklessness and being overly competitive.

As an event/happening Travel is implied. Impatience and a chance to change things. Plans that flare up only to die back. Separation by distance. Even gang violence may be signified by this card.

Questions Which opportunity are you seizing in this situation? Where do you need to make haste more slowly? What details are you ignoring?

Tracks and Pathways

*Departing • Moving house • Emigration • Leaving old ways behind • Separation by distance
• Changing direction*



PAGE OF BOWS

Stoat

Position on the Wheel

Moving away from Midsummer towards Lammas

MEANING With a fierce hunting instinct and its ability to live underground, combined with the changing colour of its fur from white to red and its black tail (the three sacred colours of the ancient world), the Stoat has strong mystical links to the sovereignty of the land.



Page of Bows ♦ Stoat

READING POINTS Often, you are seen as an emissary and, as such, your gifts are widely recognized and honoured. Your ability to perceive the truth in almost any matter is vastly helpful and your freedom of spirit marks you out as an original and unique personality.

As a person in your life A charming and adventurous individual who may act as an ambassador. S/he can sometimes be overzealous. As a stranger who moves through your life, she may act as a catalyst for change. As a friend, she can be a go-between who represents your interests. She can also be hasty and gullible.

As an aspect or process Working your way up the ladder. Learning to engage with life. Devotion to an interest or hobby. Being indiscriminate and jumping into the thick of things.

As an event/happening Unexpected news. Help from out of the blue. An opportunity to shine. A dream or vision. Strange, unsettling news.

Questions Who is offering you an opportunity? What is the advantage of staying where you are? How would things change if you engaged with this?

Tracks and Pathways

*Secrecy • Anonymity • Extraordinariness • A prodigy • Strange tidings • A free spirit • Dreams
• Vision • The appearance of a stranger*





ACE OF BOWS

Spark of Life

DESCRIPTION Against a shimmering background of leaves and branches, a stout, rough-hewn hunting bow shimmers with the fire of life itself. The tip of an arrow rests on a heap of kindling chaff, and curled bark is bursting into flame as the tip flashes with brilliant incandescent light.



MEANING As the turning of the cosmic axis generates the spark of life, so the kindling of a flame sparks the necessary light and warmth in our lives. The drill-bow suggests the human element, our partnership with the environment in which we live and the mastery of its gifts.

READING POINTS By shaping, directing and persevering with the tool that both hunts and nurtures fire, we kindle the spark that starts the process of creation and empowerment. This takes skill, effort, commitment and persistence, but the universe always responds with enlightenment, challenge and opportunity. This is the nature of the human relationship with creation, and leads to a deeper awareness of the part we must play in the great scheme of things. Harnessing the energy inherent in the bow, and the skill and endurance needed to loose the hunter's arrows accurately and efficiently, are as primal and ancient as human existence itself. Every native tribe on Earth developed the bow as a tool, and choosing, shaping and tuning the bow stave and the arrows is a time-consuming and demanding craft that hones our skills and widens our knowledge of all the materials required in this ancient art. This also includes the habits and patterns of nature associated with the prey the hunter seeks and may infuse the archer with a new respect and reverence for the creatures that inhabit the Wildwood. Be prepared to learn new skills, adapt to a changing environment and focus and tune your instincts to the task at hand.



TWO OF BOWS

Decision

DESCRIPTION A figure stands on a hilltop at night against a backdrop of stars. Around his head blazes a corona of flames, the fires of decision. In each hand he holds a tall, unfinished bow stave that extends above his head. From the bow staves burst flames, an expression of his vigour and strength.



Two of Bows ♦ Decision

MEANING The subconscious senses related to the desire to resolve decisions are awakened. The gateway stands open before the individual prepared to take positive action.

READING POINTS The bow represents not just the potential energy latent within any situation, but the need to direct and manage that energy to achieve your goals. This can mean the first movement towards reinvigorating and reforming the relationship with life. It requires the decisive will to step across a threshold and take control in a positive and proactive manner. Sometimes this may require a reclaiming and remaking of the mental and emotional tools and energies that are required to move on in life. By preparing to step up and through the gateway and make a choice to allow forward momentum to flow naturally, the fashioning of a new mental discipline or processes, or the reawakening of a previously effective but abandoned one, may be required. By summoning and directing the powerful, healing energies available to you, the rough-hewn bow stave can be grasped and the process of shaping and crafting your destiny can begin. You stand at a crucial crossroads from which you can now move forward with confidence. Once the decision to take control of these elements and harness and direct your power is made, a new paradigm of possibilities is released. These energies will need skilful harnessing and responsible management to reach their full and effective potential.





THREE OF BOWS

Fulfilment

DESCRIPTION A robed figure stands at the junction of two ways, one hand raised in blessing, the other holding a bow. Two bow staves, made from freshly cut branches, trimmed but still rough hewn, stand planted in the earth on either side of the road, forming a gateway through which the figure offers welcome to the approaching traveller.



MEANING Nourishment from a spiritual source gives inner security and joy. Goals and desires are reached, making life rich with emotional scrutiny and a sense of completion.

READING POINTS The archer must be at one with the bow to fully direct its potential energy, and just as the arrow passes through the bow, propelling it to its target with effortless grace, the questing heart and seeker of knowledge allows the energy to flow through him. This combination of balanced energy and intellectual focus enables the mastering of any situation and allows the enrichment of success by being both at one with the environment and its inhabitants. Reaching this inner stronghold of strength and peace can only be achieved by constant reappraisal, vigilance and commitment to your goals; but the act of letting the power flow through you and having the trust to allow your arrows to fly completes an unseen, universal circuit. The inner stillness and focus thus produced is easily apparent and observable to others, and builds a sense of trust, confidence and security in those for whom you are responsible. This inner shining energy will inspire others to start out on their own path of discovery and sojourn to fulfilment.



FOUR OF BOWS

Celebration

DESCRIPTION Four finished but unstrung longbows are held by joyous figures dancing in celebration of the bounty of the season. There is a blazing log fire in the centre of a clearing, deep in the heart of the forest. The fire radiates heat and light and sends shards of the warm orange glow deep into the darkest corners of the Wildwood.

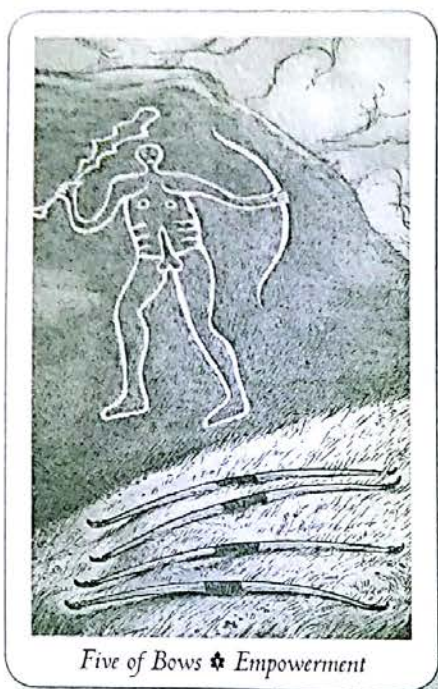


Four of Bows ♦ Celebration

MEANING A celebration of health, wealth and security and a time to relax and enjoy the bounty of good fortune or labour. A holiday or festival at a time of plentiful fertility and creativity.

READING POINTS While focus, effort and dedication are inherent in the mastery of any skill that requires patience and practice, a time for relaxation and thankful celebration is also valuable. Without the timely and earned reward of indulgence, pleasure and friendship we become detached and isolated from those with whom we share a kinship and a common moral code and bond. To be able to relax and share in the bounty is a part of the human spirit's healing process and is how we refresh and nourish our soul. Whether the celebration is a traditional festival or the marking of a personal achievement, to allow the empowering energy of carefree celebration and laughter to revitalize our resolve and rekindle our desire is a gift from which reflection on the beauty, generosity and natural wonder becomes available. To share and exchange the bounty of good fortune with those we love and respect is the most rewarding celebration in which we can indulge ourselves.





FIVE OF BOWS

Empowerment

DESCRIPTION Four unfletched bow staves lie like offerings before the mighty figure of the Cerne Abbas Giant who holds a fifth in his hand. An ancient emblem of fertility, he has long been seen as an opener of the ways.



MEANING By facing and defeating our greatest fears, we empower ourselves and grow more resilient and effective against adversity. This leads to the individual's belief that they are no longer simply powerless. The empowered individual ultimately has the capability to influence and affect the outcome of events and change perceptions.

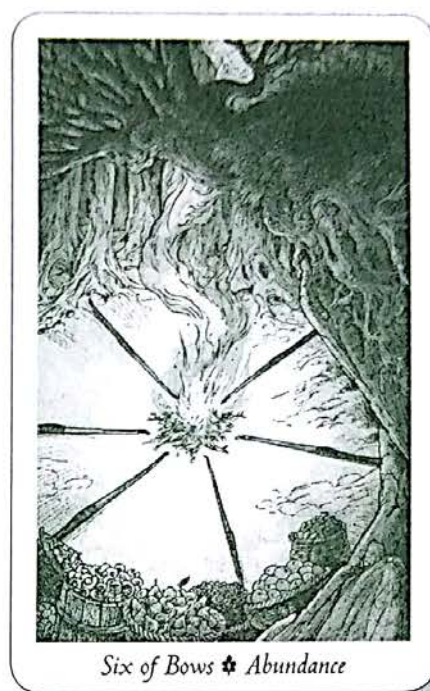
READING POINTS The mastery of any skill or discipline enables empowerment for clear and decisive mental processes, and the arrows of one's desires and wishes can be loosed at destiny with positive effect. The time of self-empowerment by seizing the initiative is here. By channelling primal, fertile and protective energies, the individual can evolve a grounded and assertive mind-set and utilize this for effective growth and change. This is true not only for the individual but also for society. It is the meaning of achieving one's destiny as a matter of choice, not chance. The act of observing the particle changes the particle and this raw, dynamic life force can be focused and deployed to influence situations in the practical world. Empowerment enables the individual to overcome negative self-images or destructive emotional addictions and increases confidence by overcoming stigma or social handicaps. Empowerment is the key to the attainment of one's destiny and the feeling of spiritual fulfilment through a proactive and positive attitude to life.



SIX OF BOWS

Abundance

DESCRIPTION In the heart of a forest clearing is a six-spoked, star-shaped log fire, formed from trimmed but unfletched bow staves. It radiates light and heat and forms the pattern of the seasons. The fire is surrounded with representations of all manner of natural forest riches from the summer season.



MEANING A time to reap the benefits of summer abundance and to accept the rewards and blessings that are a result of endurance. By patiently attending to what you have sown, the blessings of the new growth will be bountiful and rich. We humbly share the plenty of the ripening year with those less fortunate than ourselves.

READING POINTS The Wheel turns and the time to enjoy the fruits and rewards of the summer season has arrived. Patience acknowledges the plentiful bounty which delivers the gifts and rewards for your efforts. Now is the time to allow this generous feeling of well-being to flow freely through and around you, and to enjoy the pleasures and sustenance these healing and revitalizing gifts can offer. Sometimes, after a period of stress and hard struggle, the process of healthy relaxation is vital to re-arm and re-energize the spirit in preparation for the challenges of the coming winter. The joy of sharing and gifting your own abundance with others is also a natural part of the process and brings its own inner peace and satisfaction. Your generous gifts to others will bring solace during the coming seasons and remind everyone that the Wheel continues to turn on its inevitable and stoical journey. Give thanks and accept the blessings of the changes that occur in life at this time. We share the bounty of the forest and commune with the Wildwood denizens in our everyday life.





Seven of Bows ♦ Clearance

SEVEN OF BOWS

Clearance

DESCRIPTION A worn, broken and splintered bow rests on the ground. Six half-prepared bow staves stand to one side. A bonfire burns off timber waste. The smoke curls through the trees and up towards the sky, but the flames are bright and small showers of sparks light the evening sky.



MEANING A time to make decisions and choose priorities. Focus on what you really need in your life and what it is time to dispose of and cut away, especially if it is worn out and broken or no longer meets your needs on the journey of life.

READING POINTS All things must change and evolve, and however well prepared or carefully constructed your tools and skills, new challenges and obstacles may require rethinking and relearning. Bows wear out and eventually fracture under constant use, stress and tension. Arrows warp through damp and strenuous flexing and lose their strength and accuracy. Change is a natural part of the process of renewal and although it can be painful (pain brings change and change brings pain), it must be seen as a positive turn of the Wheel and necessary for new life to begin. Welcoming the clearing of the old and worn and preparing the ground for new growth is vital. New shoots and spring saplings will be starved of light and nutrients in the soil if the ground is not cleared. Old boughs and stumps should be removed to ease the process of saying goodbye to a tool or concept that has outlived its practical life. By allowing the passing of the old and the clearing of the ground to take place with an element of welcoming and acceptance of change, the feelings of relief and poignancy may aid the healing process, giving comfort.



EIGHT OF BOWS

Hearthfire

DESCRIPTION On the edge of a sparse, winter forest camp, lit with the warm, dancing flames of a large log fire, we see eight figures gathered around a roaring hearthfire. The merry band raise goblets, shake hands and laugh, bathing in the shared bond of fellowship and harmony created by the true loyalty of lifelong friends.



Eight of Bows ♦ Hearthfire

MEANING A hearthfire gives warmth and light in the deep midwinter. Warmth of life, love and friendship are shared generously. There is a sincere desire for celebration, security and harmony shared with companions and kindred spirits. This also leads to the attainment of innermost peace and the feelings of personal well-being and achievement.

READING POINTS Hope leads to the attainment of innermost dreams, desires and security, fuelling your soul with belief in yourself, your values and natural justice. To commune with a close fellowship of friends and family, tested and loyal to a common moral code, belief or way of life, brings a blessing. A gathering of friends and family around a place of common emotional significance, symbolism and safety is a powerful experience. It acknowledges the shared consciousness of the human spirit and the bonding experiences that evolve and grow with comrades and family, whether blood relatives or those that life has randomly thrown together. We celebrate the fact that we endure, survive, thrive and grow with the support and companionship of our chosen tribe. It is a time to be thankful and to express and receive love. It is also an emotional state of being that says: 'I revere the fire that forged these relationships and I give thanks for the love that endures through life.'





Nine of Bows ☆ Respect

NINE OF BOWS

Respect

DESCRIPTION The wild and fearsome Wodwose of the forest crosses your path, brandishing a rough-hewn bow. The Wodwose is linked to many ancient worldwide legends of large and hairy wildmen of the forest. He challenges our dedication and courage to continue along a chosen path.



MEANING When nearing the heart of a sacred quest, motivation and integrity of human desires are challenged. Ancient wisdom demands the seeker be humble and forgiving. Respect for others and for the environment is required to proceed along the path to enlightenment. There is no completion without overcoming the challenge.

READING POINTS To follow the path through the Wildwood is not without its challenges and demands. When entering any such environment, one must be prepared to face the dangers and natural perils that abide there. Having empathy for the environment and being ready to deal with it respectfully and in a practical manner is to learn another lesson and take away fresh insight. If we look deeper for meaning in the forces blocking our way, we often see how we have contributed to the problem and how we attracted these negative energies through lack of self-discipline, or mistakes made in the past. The sign of an evolved spirit is someone who can acknowledge past failures or defeats without bitterness and self-torment and move forward through life with a positive outlook and wisdom gathered through struggle. The Wodwose reminds us to treat the challenges of the Wildwood with patience and compassion, marking each scar or wound suffered during the struggle as a badge of honour, earned and overcome by inner courage, dedication and faith in the lore of natural justice.



TEN OF BOWS

Responsibility

DESCRIPTION A lone figure carries ten unfinished longbow staves over his shoulder. He struggles stoically and determinedly with the heavy burden, towards a woodland encampment of hunters and warriors. Fires burn as the figure toils up the dark, winding forest pathway towards the reassuring glow of security and companionship.



Ten of Bows ♦ Responsibility

MEANING The challenge of dealing with responsibility brings a need for inner fortitude, stamina and determination. The weight of the burden may be heavy and cumbersome but the task that has been handed to you may be vital for the greater good, not just for yourself but also for your family or chosen tribe.

READING POINTS Whether you volunteered for the task or it is thrust upon you by unforeseen circumstances, it is a time to accept responsibility. Do so with good humour and a stoical resolve and welcome any daunting challenge with humility and enthusiasm. Although the timing may be unfortunate or inconvenient, the issues of dealing with responsibility are often a matter of simple self-confidence. The learning curve may be steep and appear insurmountable, but once the task is fully understood and effort is expended, many valuable life-lessons can be learned. The effect of taking responsibility in your family or close tribal group can also have far-reaching effects beyond your personal sphere. By leading from the front and taking responsibility for any past failures or inappropriate actions, you disarm and neutralize self-doubt or feelings of inadequacy. It is an honour and a sign of respect that your peers trust you to complete this task and handle the responsibility, knowing you will fully commit to this quest until completion. This understanding should support and enhance both your sense of self-worth and self-respect.



SUIT OF VESSELS

Even now

I know that I have savoured the hot taste of life

Lifting green cups and gold at the great feast.

Just for a small and a forgotten time

I have had full in my eyes from off my girl

The whitest pouring of eternal light.

BILHANA

POSITION ON THE WHEEL

The period from Lammás, through the Autumn Equinox, to Samhain

ELEMENT

WATER

ASSOCIATIONS

Emotions • Relationships • Romance • Compassion • Forgiveness

• Instinct • Joy • Faith • Mourning • Being of the heart



KING OF VESSELS

Heron

Position on the Wheel

Departing from Lammás

MEANING Greeting the dawn, often alone, the Heron is reputed to be gifted with psychic perception and reflection. The guardian of many esoteric secrets, it is said to stand at the gateway between life and death and to act as mediator on the soul's journey to the Celtic otherworld and reincarnation.



King of Vessels ♦ Heron

READING POINTS A deep belief in fairness, honesty and honour colours everything you do. The profound depths of your character, once stirred into action, carry all before it. However, your admiration of self-control can sometimes make you appear too rigid.

As a person in your life This may be a way-shower and mentor whose tolerance gives him/her a peaceful demeanour. Very often he is the catalyst that helps groups to gel, for he gives a place to each individual. His consideration for others derives from an innate compassion. Can also be weak or ineffectual or inclined to milk situations for pity.

As an aspect or process Exercising diplomacy. Keeping a broad-minded perspective. Promoting equality. Offering support, as a sponsor or godparent.

As an event/happening An exhibition, art show or creative display. A support-network or helpline. A scandal or *cause célèbre*. General dependency.

Questions Where is tolerance needed? Who is depending upon your support? What is your loving duty here?

Tracks and Pathways

*Artistic ability • Honesty and integrity • Purposeful equality • Responsibility
• Consideration of others • Affection • Support and companionship*





Queen of Vessels ★ Salmon

QUEEN OF VESSELS

Salmon

Position on the Wheel

Approaching the Autumn Equinox

MEANING Sacred in most shamanic systems, the Salmon's ability to swim upstream to its birthplace and spawn is one of its most remarkable feats. The journey leaves the Salmon exhausted and most die in the attempt; thus, they represent self-sacrifice. Salmon were said to swim in pools overhung by hazel trees and to eat the nuts of wisdom that fell in autumn.



READING POINTS Deeply caring and kind, the Queen's spirit draws upon the great honesty, generosity and self-sacrifice which she sees in you. She brings joy to the darkest places and addresses the most difficult problems with grace and civility.

As a person in your life Someone tender-hearted and kind, sensitive and intuitive, with a wide romantic streak. S/he has a psychic or empathetic ability that can see into your condition, making you feel comfortable or maybe unsettling you. As a friend, she makes the best confidante, resonating with your emotions, for her words are guided by the heart. She may leave herself open to other people's needs or abuse.

As an aspect or process Proceeding virtuously. Being emotionally mature. Captivated by illusion or being impressionable. Taking on or beaming out projections.

As an event/happening Comfort. Psychic perspectives, dreams or visions. Security issues. Intrigue. Unworldliness. Self-sacrifice or over-sensitivity.

Questions Where are you leaving yourself open or unguarded? What is enchanting you? What do you need to devote yourself to?

Tracks and Pathways

*Virtue • Kindness • Simplicity and devotion • A caring individual • To cherish or pamper
• Joyfulness and recovery • Security*



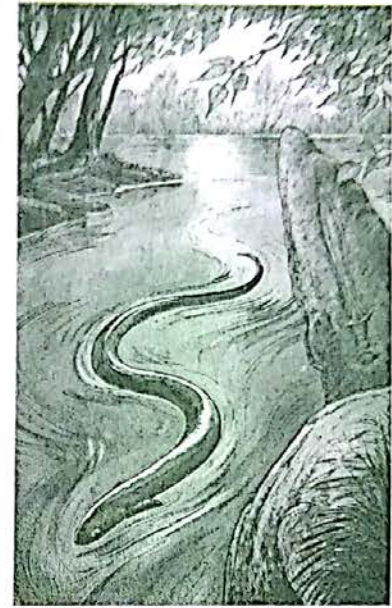
KNIGHT OF VESSELS

Eel

Position on the Wheel

Passing through the Autumn Equinox

MEANING The Eel is a wise protector. According to Irish myth, certain eels could turn into weapons when wielded by a warrior. Cuchulainn's famous spear, the *Gae Bolga*, derives its name from the Eel, and the war goddess the Morrigan assumed that form in battle. The Eel swims where weeds and cresses drift.



Knight of Vessels ★ Eel

READING POINTS With purity of intent, your destiny defined, you are able to bring wisdom and maturity to your tasks. Embarking on a quest of personal revelation, your vision leads you onward. Your deep feelings are expressed at every turn.

As a person in your life A charming, cultured and gallant person. Sensitive and imaginative, he/she takes dreams seriously. He runs on a high emotional current. As a friend or lover, he is attractive and congenial to be with, exploring the shores of love and friendship imaginatively. He can be a seductive, smooth-talker who plays the field, or an addictive personality who plumbs the depths of his own fantasies.

As an aspect or process Emotional cogency. Discovering how to merge with a concept or find accord with a person. Promoting harmony. Cheating on someone. Exploiting an emotional situation.

As an event/happening A reception or welcoming. Compliance or accord. A quest, a union or a merger. Fantasy and introspection.

Questions What is the nature of your contract? Where are emotions running high? What needs to be expressed sensitively?

Tracks and Pathways

*Attraction • Conquest • Seduction • A welcoming • Compliance • Agreement • Induction
• Coming together • Union • Arrival*





PAGE OF VESSELS

Otter

Position on the Wheel

Approaching the season of Samhain

MEANING Equally at home on land or in water, the Otter's ability to move between these spheres, perceived as the way between worlds, made it especially sacred to the Celts. It is also sometimes listed as one of the oldest animals in the story of the rescue of the child god, Mabon.



READING POINTS As a dreamer and a visionary, you weave a spell that few can resist. Your loyalty, devotion and sense of fair play mark you out as an individual whose will is tempered by a profound understanding of the otherworld.

As a person in your life A good sharer who applies her/himself to matters with deep intuition. She is reflective and joyful by turn, making her a delight to be with. As a mediator, she can help facilitate resolutions. A loyal friend who is both cooperative and supportive, she can be emotionally vulnerable, easily swayed or selfishly absorbed in her own troubles.

As an aspect or process Contemplating things with a considerate heart. Learning trust. Serving with love. Refusing to listen. Living only in the imagination.

As an event/happening Meditation. Forgiveness. A blessing. Stories that support the soul. Conflict resolution, fair play, jealousy or flattery.

Questions Where do you need to let your feelings show? Who is getting closer to you? What deeper trust is being asked of you?

Tracks and Pathways

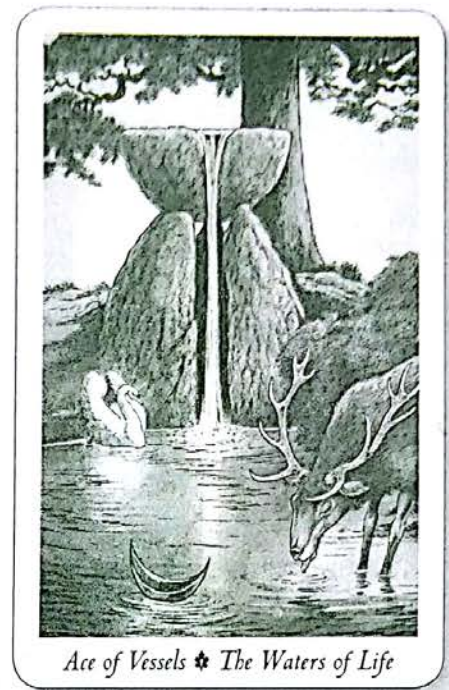
*Loyalty • Devotion • Study • Willingness to serve • Vision and contemplation
• Co-operation • Perceptiveness*



ACE OF VESSELS

The Waters of Life

DESCRIPTION A horned forest deer lowers its regal head to drink from a stream on which floats a swan, together with a tiny boat shaped like a new moon. The flow of water from the great stone cauldron enters the stream, which supports both the swan and the moon-cup and feeds the deer.



Ace of Vessels ♦ The Waters of Life

MEANING The waters of life retain the ancient wisdom ready for reawakening. The moonlit pool of the universal soul retains all memory, ready to renew the inspired quest.

READING POINTS The suit of Vessels represents the primal mystery of human emotions, and the Ace focuses on the very essence of these powerful, yet elusive, traits. Since prehistory, emotions have been represented by the element of Water and, however far we have evolved, we are still largely ruled by our emotions and instincts. Our powers of reason, intellect and science have given us mastery of the oceans and skies, but what propels the drive to explore, invent and build is still human desire and curiosity. Biologists would argue that our emotions are simply a manifestation of the ancient evolutionary process and are governed by the limbic system or mammalian brain. What influence the ancient reptilian brain (on which the mammalian brain sits) has on our emotional reactions is still a mystery. Our emotions need to be harnessed for positive ends, and suppressing our basic emotional needs will lead us to rebel and become detached. Gather your emotional energies and keep them in balance for healthy, creative and loving interaction with all of nature, including the sometimes irrational and destructive energies of humankind.



TWO OF VESSELS

Attraction*Two of Vessels ★ Attraction*

DESCRIPTION Two anthropomorphic figures, a horse-headed female and a stag-headed male, face each other with one hand raised and one lowered. Their arms form a diamond shape, and in the centre is an enflamed heart. From their two lowered hands flow streams of water, falling into two cups which sit upon a low hill beneath them.



MEANING The initial attraction and exploration of potential. The beginning of a possible relationship or friendship and the precursor to an interchange of polaric energies. Opposition and attraction in life.

READING POINTS The first shared spark of attraction between two human beings can appear simple and uncomplicated on the surface, but the underlying psychological chemistry and the subtle interplay that ignites that magical first exchange is usually complex and eclectic. As human beings, we absorb millions of subliminal signals and messages from those around us, and we unconsciously process these stimuli and react to them every second of every day. We subconsciously absorb body language, scent and non-vocal communication and react to them emotionally with impulses and decision-making instincts developed over millennia. Taking an instantaneous dislike to someone is governed by the same set of prehistoric sensory drives developed by human beings when we roamed freely across the African savannah; 'love at first sight' is as valid today as it was then. Our perceptions and signals are shared, acknowledged and reciprocated, breaking through the protective barriers and forming the initial polaric bond that is the foundation of deep and lasting attraction.



THREE OF VESSELS

Joy

DESCRIPTION Three white cranes dance with each other, forming a triangle with their bodies and wings – two stand facing, heads raised, and the third rises above them with spread wings. In the spaces between their legs are three vessels: one golden, one green, one white.



Three of Vessels ♦ Joy

MEANING Celebration within a communal group or family, welcoming the coming of new life or good fortune. The successful return after migration or travel by a tribe or grouping.

READING POINTS The ability to connect directly to joy allows the healing and empowering energies to flow through you and is a gift from the universe. Being able to be joyful and celebrate life fully in gratitude for the amazing gifts we share is a uniquely individual blessing but is also recognized by those who feel its warmth radiating from us. To be able to embrace love, life's achievements and the fulfilment that comes with selfless dedication to a shared cause or belief is to be the conduit from which the unseen breath of the divine flows. One of the most common reasons why people lose the ability to feel authentic joy in their lives is the fear associated with loss or grief at the passing of the emotion. Sometimes we need to give ourselves permission to be completely fulfilled and to experience joy again and be strong and stoical enough to understand that all of life's trials and tribulations, as well as the blessings and gifts, are cyclical by nature.





Four of Vessels ♦ Boredom

FOUR OF VESSELS

Boredom

DESCRIPTION A female figure sits at the mouth of a cave in a typical pose of boredom, staring at nothing. Beside the cave entrance are two vessels, from which sprout a vine-like plant which curls up over the rock to form a tangled arch. Caught in the thicket are two more vessels from which streams of water issue.



MEANING Lethargy or laziness, locking an individual in a cycle of wasted energy, while all around is the source of inspiration waiting there for the taking. The sickness of the soul.

READING POINTS The universe responds favourably to a decisive, forward momentum, while boredom leaves a person in a state of inaction. There are many reasons for feeling disenchanted or trapped in life. The causes of the malaise and the feeling of being weathered by routine or beaten down by conflict are common, but in the end it is from ourselves that the first sparks of momentum must emanate. Emotionally frozen or disconnected people become 'black holes' of despair, into which all light and positive energy fall, and fail to return. However, the keys required to allow energy to flow and enlighten the individual again are almost always present, even though they may remain unseen. But if you ask a question of the universe, the universe will answer. It has no choice. Nature abhors a vacuum and it will throw so many opportunities into your path that your head will spin. All you have to do is recognize and acknowledge the proffered doorways, and step through them. Challenge should not be feared; opportunity should be grasped and utilized to its natural limit.



FIVE OF VESSELS

Ecstasy

DESCRIPTION A female figure dances ecstatically against a starry sky, within a pentangle drawn in the earth. In one hand is a thyrsus, in the other a leather-headed rattle on which is a stylized face. A necklace of animal teeth swings from her neck. At the points of the pentangle are five vessels, each one giving forth light as though it held a burning candle.



Five of Vessels ♦ Ecstasy

MEANING The beat of the universal drum is heard in the soul and it is healthy to surrender for a time and to join in the dance. Energy is renewed by bathing in the cosmic life force of exultant and sincere ecstasy.

READING POINTS Many avenues are open to the Wanderer to commune intimately and ecstatically with great beauty or to be intoxicated by an intensely personal connection with the divine. Music, meditation, art, love, dancing or a profound sexual experience can inspire and induce the sacred trance of enlightening ecstasy. This powerful and euphoric awareness is utterly natural and a well-established aspect of shamanic traditions. States of ecstatic trance can sometimes be triggered by extreme physical exertion or the quiescence of the superficial consciousness, so as to gain access to a deeper and more profound comprehension of everything. Sadly, the concept of spiritual ecstasy has been damaged by the common use of drugs that imitate (for a short time) the endorphin rush of an authentic and natural ecstasy. The ecstatic trance has been described as a delightful possession or a mysterious union with a timeless exuberance. The fusing of the spiritual being with a profound and loving universal mind elevates the soul to the space between spaces, where poetry breathes through you and exultation and stillness effortlessly coexist.





SIX OF VESSELS

Reunion

DESCRIPTION A green mound is crowned by a grove of trees. In the face of the mound is an entrance framed with upright slabs of stone. Water gushes from the mouth of the mound and spreads out to form a pool of still water. On the water float six small vessels, each one filled with light. Two otters regard the scene.



MEANING There may be affection and love in a situation that could take time to resolve. Recognition of ancestral and reincarnation memory. Polaric love between soul mates.

READING POINTS An emotional reunion can sometimes refer to the mystical Karmic cycles that bring lovers back through time, space and lifetimes. The purpose of this 'soul reunion' may be manifold but it can be to complete unfinished business or to teach new lessons from old actions or wrong choices. It can also refer to the coming together of a band of comrades, tribal or clan members or a brotherhood of loyal friends, gathering for the acknowledgement of their shared bond. It may also refer to the reunion of the individual with their own true nature, in terms of a forgotten or rejected history or experience. By meditating on a past issue with new wisdom and insight and an acceptance of personal responsibility and forgiveness, reclamation may take place. A spiritual re-amalgamation of a facet of the individual's personality, for the purposes of clearing and self-empowerment, may be possible, and a healthy union in the soul the result. Reassurance is gained from a reunion of this nature, revealing whether the correct path was taken and your decisions were based on valid and honest instincts and motivations.



SEVEN OF VESSELS

Mourning

DESCRIPTION A human skull painted with an array of designs including spirals, zig-zags and wavy lines, lies at the foot of a tree. Around it are scattered typical grave goods: five cups, an oil lamp and an offering bowl.

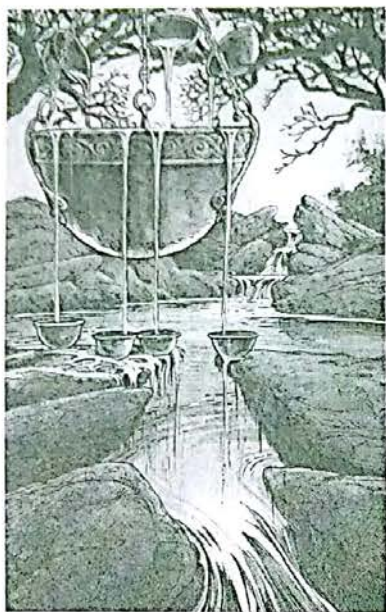


Seven of Vessels ♦ Mourning

MEANING This is a time to honour what is dead and mourn for what has gone. Learn the lesson of letting go by offering thanks for cherished memories and being at peace with the past.

READING POINTS Mourning begins the process of recovery after failure or bereavement. This process may even be unconscious, for we often do not realize what things were significant to us until they are gone. Mourning serves to ritualize the process of being at peace with loss and honour the passing of what is important and significant in a personal relationship. It allows the tidal flow of emotions to rise and fall naturally through the psyche, and bring a sense of closure or completion and peace. This may take time, of course, and some losses are felt more acutely than others as mourning is a very personal and individual process, sometimes taking years to complete. In Ireland, the wake exemplifies one way of processing and dealing with loss by turning the ritual into a celebration of life and achievement. The celebration of the completed journey and the beginning of a new one has been a part of the human mourning process since the dawn of time. Whatever the loss, whoever the wake is being held for, let them go with love, and honour their passing with fond memories. Hold the golden, beautiful moments of life close and let their passing not go without a note of reverence for a life fully lived.





Eight of Vessels ♦ Rebirth

EIGHT OF VESSELS

Rebirth

DESCRIPTION From the middle of a fast-flowing stream we see an ancient cauldron hanging from a great chain. In the trees above it are three smaller cauldrons. Water and energy flow from them, filling the great cauldron, which in turn overflows and fills four more, which sit on the rocks below and overflow into the stream.



MEANING By looking at the past, acknowledging our mistakes and learning from them, we grow and attain new wisdom. The future waits to be unfolded by our positive action as we become 'The Eighth Vessel' and receive powerful rejuvenating energies of rebirth.

READING POINTS Rejoice! A time of renewal and potential is here. The cycle of rebirth and healing brings inner peace and confidence. Once you accept that all the blessings and gifts of life can be yours or, indeed, already belong to you, the fear of asking is gone. It is time to shed the skin of the past and accept and utilize the overflowing potential of the present that is freely available to you. Do not be afraid to make mistakes. Do not be afraid to ask: 'Why not me?' See potential where others only see barriers. See challenge as others see impossible odds. Apply all that you have learned through experience and toil to any problem and you will not fail. You have striven to survive and absorb insight; you have endured loss to retain your integrity. All of these trials have made you stronger, wiser and more effective. Drink of this new fountain of opportunity and renew your life objectives. You have endured the past, its gifts were hard won; now the challenge of the future unfolds. Grasp it and shape it in your hands as you would have it manifest in your life.



NINE OF VESSELS

Generosity

DESCRIPTION A cross-legged figure sits with his arms spread as if in blessing. Energy flows from him in all directions: downwards into three vessels below him; upwards into three vessels above him; outwards into two vessels on either side of him. The ninth vessel sits in the hollow formed by his legs. It glows with light and energy rising from the base chakra.



MEANING Nature's open-hearted, spiritual cauldron has a welcome for those who approach the waters of knowledge with compassion. They are blessed by regeneration.

READING POINTS It can be easy to forget, when we reach the pinnacle of our prowess, power and security, that life is cyclical and what we enjoy during the times of plenty are the products of previous toil and effort. Just like the wise farmer, we must manage good fortune by planting seeds for the future and by helping those facing hard times. This generosity will always come back to you a thousandfold if it is gifted with selfless goodwill and a common humanity. To recognize and acknowledge that you are merely a conduit for this abundant enriching blessing, and to let it flow through you and into others' lives, allows your good fortune to circulate and your positive momentum to carry others with you. By freely giving of your time, support and energy, the blessing of the divine surrounds you. In this cynical and material world, such things may seem to have little value, but those who have experienced the process in their own lives understand that, in the words of Theodore Rubin: 'Kindness is more important than wisdom, and the recognition of this is the beginning of wisdom.'





Ten of Vessels ♦ Happiness

TEN OF VESSELS

Happiness

DESCRIPTION A waterfall foams over rocks from a low cliff decked with trees. The cascade creates dozens of separate water flows, which fall into a river below. Near the bottom of the waterfall, ten vessels are arranged, and the water fills them to overflowing.



MEANING Generous fulfilment of desires from a source that is pure and cleansing. Reward for patience and love given selflessly. True emotional stability and freedom.

READING POINTS With the deep and profound calm of true and lasting happiness flowing through your life, a sense of homecoming, safety and beauty shines from an individual that lights others' lives and is infectious to everyone. Healing rays of affection and warmth radiate from your inner core. For those in love, the joy is in the sharing of tender and intimate support and understanding. Giving love and seeing that love reflected in the eyes of the one you care for is the most powerful and healing magic known to mankind. For those who thrive on happiness derived from the fulfilment of ambitions and life-goals, happiness is fuelled by a sense of affirmation of self-worth and ideals. Being effective and productive in the practical world brings a sense of stability which can be shared and used as a vehicle to motivate and inspire others. No greater act of humanity can be achieved than by showing the way and opening a person's heart to the possibility of happiness. However much we love, however much we achieve, we empower ourselves to be emotionally alive by accepting that the circuit of life requires giving, as well as receiving. As we revel in the bliss of the journey, we remember with gratitude the patience, wisdom and synchronicity that brought that blessing into our lives.



SUIT OF STONES

I learned this, at least, by my experiment; that if one advances confidently in the direction of his dreams, and endeavours to live the life which he has imagined, he will meet with a success unexpected in common hours.

HENRY DAVID THOREAU

POSITION ON THE WHEEL

The period of winter moving from Samhain, through Midwinter, to Imbolc.

ELEMENT
EARTH

ASSOCIATIONS

*Achievement • Possessions • Material security • Practical skills
• Physical abilities • Worldly ambitions • Being of the world.*





King of Stones ★ Wolf

KING OF STONES

Wolf

Position on the Wheel

Departing from Samhain

MEANING Revered as a ruthless tracker and hunter, the Wolf has had a special symbolism for thousands of years and was the subject of ancient Pictish stone carvings. Comfortable in the dark and cold of winter, it was seen as a guardian of the dead on their journey through the night to the otherworld.



READING POINTS Love of the land and of the natural world guides much of what you do. You look often to the wisdom of others and to traditional values to colour your life choices. Security brings pleasure; loyalty crowns every endeavour.

As a person in your life An experienced and mature individual with a traditional mindset. Pragmatic and steadfast, he/she offers a secure and comfortable reliability to those around him/her. He is a natural businessman who understands both value and profit. As a friend, he can be relied upon to keep promises or be a good financial adviser. He can also be blunt, possessive and vulgar, given to gluttony.

As an aspect or process You may need to appreciate the good things in life. Learn to handle money. Cocoon yourself from outside influences.

As an event/happening An estate or land. Conservation or sponsorship. Good health. Financial support.

Questions Who offers you the best security or pragmatic advice? What is the intrinsic value to you or others? Where do you need to provide support? Where is life offering you its riches?

Tracks and Pathways

*Trading • Speculation • Mathematical ability • Loyalty and conservatism • Steadfastness
• Robust health • Determination*



QUEEN OF STONES

Bear

Position on the Wheel

Approaching Midwinter

MEANING The ancient ancestor of the modern bear, the cave bear hibernated in caves during the cold northern winter. Neanderthals buried their skulls here and even shared their caves during some periods. Often linked to Arthurian legend, the Bear is a symbol of the power and protection of the land.



Queen of Stones ♦ Bear

READING POINTS Richness and plenty surround you. Your bounty and welcoming nature make you popular with all. Many depend on you, and your natural sensuality makes you powerfully attractive to others. Pragmatism and generosity open doorways at every point.

As a person in your life This is a practical and welcoming person. S/he delights in prosperity and luxury, though she can also have a natural and wholesome simplicity. As a friend, she is loyal, keeping faith with you and being frank about issues needing improvement. She may be a treasurer or a curator of tradition, but she can also be a hoarder or a squanderer, as well as a demanding or timid individual.

As an aspect or process Learning to manage things wisely, preserve things of value, make things better, provide amenities. Be careful of wasting resources.

As an event/happening If you practise a craft or design, be expansive and liberal. A group or community. Putting the family first. Right or wrong. Refusing to nurture.

Questions How can you best promote well-being here? Where can you make space to care for yourself or others? What needs to be preserved?

Tracks and Pathways

*Power and generosity • Punctiliousness • A demanding individual • Confidence • Frankness
• Assurance • Prosperity*





KNIGHT OF STONES

Horse

Position on the Wheel

Passing through Midwinter

MEANING The prehistoric horse once common in Europe was often depicted in Palaeolithic cave art. The Uffington White Horse chalk figure once held a long barrow in its mouth, representing the breath of life and protection of the dead. The thirty-thousand-year-old carving of an unshod hoof is said to represent both the vulva (new life) and the primal

 footprint showing the track through the forest.

READING POINTS Healthy activity and self-sufficiency colour your path. Physical strength supports your decisions and pleasure is important. Daring, pride and a love of the Earth lead you to attempt ever more amazing feats. Let the Horse carry you.

As a person in your life A reliable and robust person who takes care of the details and will get a job done. He/she is naturally adept and has a craftsman's skill. He is a good person to have at your side as he checks all the possibilities. He can be dogged in pursuit, plodding and materialistic, and may not know when enough is enough.

As an aspect or process Checking the details. Maintaining a steady impetus. Seeing things through. Obliging others. Taking pride in your work. Giving up too easily.

As an event/happening Land-management, industry or employment. A security firm. Persistence, unemployment and poor self-worth.

Questions Where can you push on to the finish? What service is required of you? How is stubbornness holding you up?

Tracks and Pathways

*Activity • Kindness and helpfulness • Perseverance • Benefitting • A good ally • Profit
• A quick grasp of essentials*



PAGE OF STONES

Lynx

Position on the Wheel

Departing Midwinter, moving towards Imbolc

MEANING Still found in mountain woodlands in parts of Europe, the Lynx is one of the creatures at the very top of the food chain. With its speed and cunning, combined with its ability to climb trees, it is a formidable hunter as well as a fierce protector of its young.



Page of Stones ♦ Lynx

READING POINTS Pay attention to the physical realm, and be aware of the effects generated by everything you do. A strain of wildness and lack of forethought can sometimes hamper your forward passage, but careful consideration redresses the balance.

As a person in your life Someone with common sense and dedication, who enjoys learning skills that improve efficiency or that lead to prosperity and comfort. As a friend, s/he values the authentic aspects of your character. Can be an idle good-for-nothing or fall into an inertia that's hard to shift.

As an aspect or process Learning the ropes as a beginner. Keeping things down to earth or actual rather than virtual. Setting practical goals. Being busy.

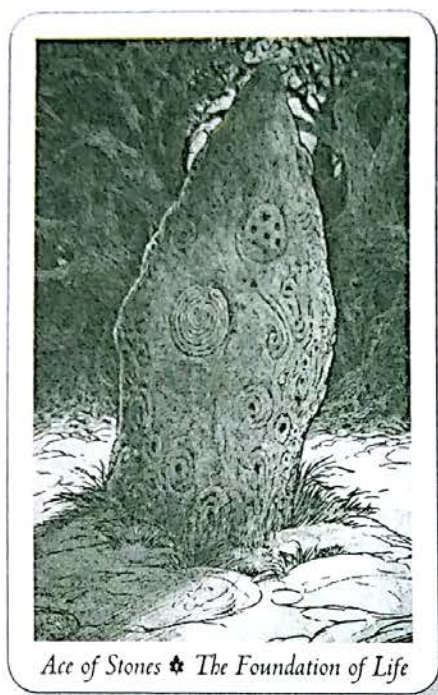
As an event/happening Mocking concepts of authority. Apprenticeship, study, schools or training programmes. Concentration. Messages of prosperity or benefit. Theft or pillage. Inertia. Public disorder.

Questions What data do you need to make a good decision? What can you learn from this situation? What needs your dedicated commitment?

Tracks and Pathways

*Study and scholarship • School • Apprenticeship • Starting out • Carefulness • Reflection
• Meditation • Observing others*





ACE OF STONES

The Foundation of Life

DESCRIPTION A tall, lichen-stained rock erupts from the earth. Shaped like an ancient spearhead, it is covered with painted cup-and-ring designs. At the centre is the familiar labyrinth design which has appeared on other cards throughout the pack. Behind it, the trees form a respectful circle.



MEANING The most potent act of the mind is to conceive of an idea and manifest it into practical, material reality. This means being able to formulate and marshal your thoughts to bring about a real-world change, or transmutation of a wish, dream or desire, making it physically happen.

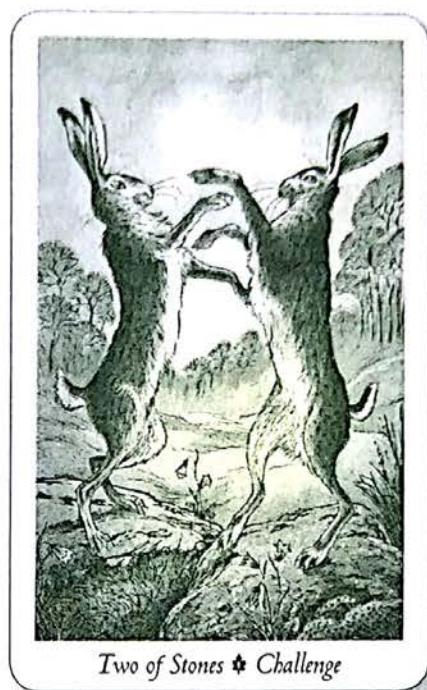
READING POINTS The concept of the material world as a solid, unchanging thing has evolved with our understanding of the cosmos. Human beings seem unique in their ability to interact with the material world and yet have a foot in the otherworld of the mind, imagination and creative will. To be connected to the Earth and the power that resides there allows us to draw from this primal source and direct the power of our minds to create changes in our world. The concept that the realms of matter and the realms of the mind are totally separate and detached is now outmoded and verifiably untrue. The primal rock is decorated with ancient cup-and-ring markings to express the emergence of creation and the cycles of energies within the universal consciousness and the still and stable point from which to plan and empower your life, fulfilling your material dreams.



TWO OF STONES

Challenge

DESCRIPTION Two low, worn stones stand side by side at the edge of the trees. On each one stands a hare. They are boxing furiously. Ripples of energy flow out from them as if their power and force were manifesting.



Two of Stones ♦ Challenge

MEANING Female hares box for domination and territorial rights to breed. After drawing on your grounded energy to reach self-empowerment, a position may be challenged or a struggle for control initiated by others. Learning to deal with rivalry or adversity in a dispassionate manner is a practical skill that can be used to advantage.

READING POINTS Many challenges or rivalries are born of insecurity and subconscious issues with peers and colleagues. Usually, it is these emotions rather than actual malice or personal ill-will that dictates a rival's mistrust or undermining of your efforts. In the modern material world, where so much emphasis is placed on a show of power or wealth, it is often a perceived position or status that enflames jealousy, rather than the reality of a situation. Holding your own ground and defending your position at such times can be achieved by keeping in touch with pure and positive motivations and holding on to personal integrity and sincerity, which is the basis for any fair and enduring material reward or advancement. Some competition and honest differences of opinion can be productive and even beneficial. Remain clear and focused on your objectives and stay firm in your ethical efforts to proceed with a plan or project.





Three of Stones ♦ Creativity

THREE OF STONES

Creativity

DESCRIPTION A huge trilithon stands amid bushes and rocks. On the left-hand pillar is a great aurochs from the painted caves of France; on the right is an ancient horse known as Przewalski. Standing between the stones, one hand on each, is a Green Woman, from whose feet roots of energy spread out as she draws upon the strength of the stones and the earth.



MEANING An artist listens to the inner voice and hears the wind song of the universe. The courage, freedom and skill that allow the artist to mediate this energy must be refined and focused for effective and meaningful achievement.

READING POINTS The practical manifestation of creative energy requires a clear and open channel to the inspirational forces and impulses of the universe. Allowing this energy to flow through you is a rich and rewarding gift in itself. Just as releasing your dreams and desires into the universal consciousness always brings a response, so the releasing of creative energy invites into the artist the healing and enriching fuel from which further insight and visionary stimulus flows. This emotional and spiritual relationship with divine inspiration allows the subconscious mind to delve deeply and summons the intuitively creative power that actualizes work. Artistic beauty takes many forms and presents itself in a variety of ways, but the relationship with the subconscious formative energy, whether through music, painting, sculpture or poetry, reminds us of the personal and intimate connection we all should share with the universal consciousness.



FOUR OF STONES

Protection

DESCRIPTION A newborn fawn shelters beneath a dolmen as the midsummer sun rises, filling the land with energy. Fiery rays stream out into a dark-blue sky where stars shine. On each of the stones is painted a symbol from one of the ancient Bronze Age barrows – a diamond shape, a sun circle and a forked lightning flash.



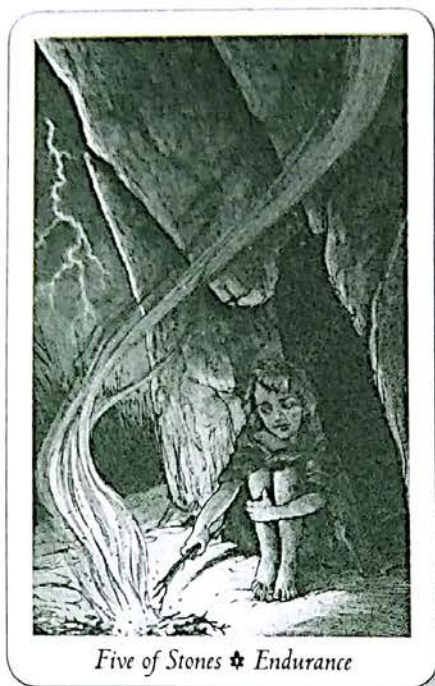
Four of Stones ♦ Protection

MEANING The newly risen sun brings hope and renewed vitality to the vulnerable. Shelter and protection for the weak or the spiritually wounded is the responsibility of us all.



READING POINTS Many trials and tribulations surface during our lifetime, and being able to endure such times is the sign of a strong heart and healthy spirit. Finding a personal place of emotional safety may require patience and a stoical dedication to the quest, but for those who have weathered adversity and known loss, the light of life and love will always burn brightly within them. By building on a foundation of ethical beliefs, boundaries and skills, we can be assured that when the test comes we are secure in our self-knowledge and confidence. The human ability to recognize and feel compassion for those who need help is just as important. However the storm may tear at our own inner place of protection, we must keep the faith that the sun will rise again for all those in peril and offer fresh opportunities and spiritual rewards. Such is the law of karma, that each act of selfless protection and mercy for those in need revitalizes the spiritual warrior with a sense of peace and divinity rarely found in common practice.





FIVE OF STONES

Endurance

DESCRIPTION A child dressed in simple skin clothing sits in the entrance of a cave, looking out at a dark sky split by lightning. A small fire burns before him and, by its light, we see that four deep cracks have split the walls of the cave entrance into five massive blocks of stone.



MEANING It takes inner strength and courage to protect yourself and survive the challenges of life. This may mean withdrawing from trauma to focus on emotional resilience.

READING POINTS Of all the qualities a spiritual warrior or seeker on the journey of life must possess, the spirit and will to endure is most important. In the words of one screen Swordmaster, Bob Anderson: 'Nobody said it was fair.' There will be trials, and there will be harsh challenges. Life is a contact sport and there will be bruises. The desire and willpower to survive and recover from setbacks is vital and necessary. Legend has it that in 1306 Robert the Bruce took shelter in a cave for three winter months, while being hunted by soldiers of King Edward I in Scotland. This was the lowest point in his life, having suffered defeat in battle, seen his brothers executed and his sister captured. The Bruce's only companion in the cave was a spider that attempted to spin its web repeatedly across the mouth of the windy cave. Repeatedly, the wind tore the web apart. But at last the spider succeeded in its quest and the web weathered the storm. Maintaining a resilient mind and retaining a sense of humour are most important to our health, along with the knowledge that the sun will rise on another day filled with opportunities.



SIX OF STONES

Exploitation

DESCRIPTION Two ragged and distraught figures, an old man and a girl, stand by a row of damaged and abandoned beehives holding empty bowls. Broken and unused farming tools lie on the ground nearby. Through the leafless trees we see the surrounding fields, barren and desolate. In the distance, smoke rises from burning piles of spoiled crops.

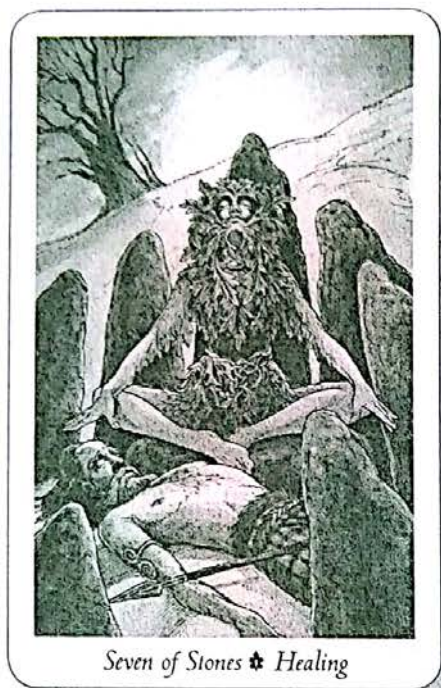


Six of Stones ♦ Exploitation

MEANING Selfish or foolish overuse of non-sustainable resources implies imbalance in work or business that is damaging to yourself or the environment.

READING POINTS The human race's capacity to exploit planetary resources to our own detriment is motivated by a flawed belief that we have the right to do so. As we begin to come to terms with the profound effects of global climate change and the irreversible effects this will have on our children's lives, the human race still struggles to deal with the unresolved issues of how to feed the billions of new human beings born every year. How we will resource the education, health and social service requirements of entire generations to come seems like a question too painful even to think about. With world financial systems and safeguards breaking down, and faith in any government's ability to tell the truth and act with integrity severely damaged, our social moral codes and once-familiar cultural 'norms' appear under enormous stain. We all need to be aware of the price our children will pay for our exploitation of the planet's resources.





SEVEN OF STONES

Healing

DESCRIPTION A Green Woman sits cross-legged at the centre of a circle of seven low and weathered stones. In front of her on the ground lies a man dressed in the garb of a hunter. The Green Woman holds out her hands, palms down, over the body, streams of energy shooting along her fingers.



MEANING After physical or emotional sickness or injury, a time of inner rest and rejuvenation is required. Patient and peaceful healing comes from a spiritual source. Wholeness and recovery will follow a serious physical or emotional wounding.

READING POINTS One of the deepest stages of healing and recovery after any emotional trauma or physical injury is forgiveness. If the healing is from a relationship issue, we often hold onto the pain, mistakenly believing that it keeps us close to the source of that pain. Sometimes, we hang onto a sense of loss, loneliness and betrayal associated with the failure of the relationship. Regret can also be associated with these feelings as one questions one's own motives and actions. Yet, if you have acted with integrity and sincerity, there is no need for regret; it is a waste of energy and healing focus. If regret is present, more work may be required to understand its underlying causes. One of the elements inherent in bringing healing and closure to any situation is acceptance along with self-forgiveness. We are neither perfect nor omnipotent and, therefore, we make mistakes. The acceptance of these simple truths can bring healing to the suffering soul.



EIGHT OF STONES

Skill

DESCRIPTION A man clad in skins sits in a cave working at a stone carving. Around him on the walls and the ground are seven objects which he has created. To one side is an ancient hand print – the signature of the maker. Three rush lamps paint the scene with light and shadow.



Eight of Stones ♦ Skill

MEANING There is an ability to utilize skill for the completion of labours of practical necessity as well as love. Sometimes, intense concentration and dedication are required.

READING POINTS Since human beings first walked the Earth, we have honed and practised our skills in all manner of practical and esoteric arts. We have the awareness and self-discipline to develop new skills to meet new challenges and have overcome nature's most adverse and deadly conditions. Whether it was the life-saving and practical skills required to track and bring down sometimes dangerous game for food, or the growing and managing of crops for the good of the tribe or village, human beings have continually striven to invent new social frameworks, scientific or philosophical concepts and practical tools and equipment. Such discoveries require us to master new skills for the betterment of the tribe or society. This unique human ability requires patience, perseverance and, most of all, self-discipline. Acquiring a skill that involves imagination and artistic flair requires time spent learning and defining the nature of self-expression. The mastery of any skill requires you to call on the divine to bless the effort and energy expended in the process.





NINE OF STONES

Tradition

DESCRIPTION In front of a circle of nine tall stones sits the cross-legged, horned figure of the shaman from the Gunderstrup Cauldron, hands raised, with the serpent of wisdom in one hand and the torque of lordship in the other. Above the scene, a full moon rises.



MEANING Reverence for past wisdom and sacrifice. The ability to relate to ancient knowledge and pass on the lessons of ancestral memory and ritual.

READING POINTS Whenever we reach back into antiquity with sincere reverence and respect, seeking insight and wisdom, we commune directly with both the esoteric and practical memory of the human species. The myths, rituals and traditions of past tribes remain imprinted on the human psyche. Whether you believe this to be the effect of morphic resonance or the spiritual echo of past lives dedicated to the reverence of the otherworld, the mystical traditions have a real purpose and meaning that you can draw upon, even in our frantic modern world. Through the study of ancient mystical traditions, we see how closely linked we are with the past, and how little we have changed as a species. We are still driven by the primal needs and fears that faced the first humans. We still look at the night sky with wonder and awe. We still look at the ocean and feel the pull of the unknown. To reach back and invite past traditions to enlighten and enrich your life is to draw on ancient strengths that are freely available to those seeking wisdom, sustenance and consolation.



TEN OF STONES

Home

DESCRIPTION A great arch made up of ten weathered stones frames the picture. Through this gate we glimpse an Iron Age round house with a path leading to it. From the thatched roof of the house rises a mighty apple tree. Carved into the two lowest stones of the great arch are rough-hewn male and female figures.



Ten of Stones ♦ Home

MEANING The inner and outer community that sustains and supports the individual, not necessarily blood family but the trusted friends, comrades and lovers who offer security and affection.

READING POINTS The traditional concept of home and family has evolved and changed over the last few decades, but certain basic notions remain unchanged. In the traditional British family home, where the father went to work and the mother stayed home to manage the house and the children, home was the place we always came back to, where stability and a well-founded set of traditions and social rules applied. It was both guarded and guided by love, respect and loyalty. As children, we see home as a place of security and caring. As young adults exploring the world, it can be wherever you lay your hat or guitar case. In later life, it may become your own heart's stronghold and sanctuary. For some, the concept of home is just that: an idea, a hope, a dream, not merely a shelter from the elements or an investment in bricks and plaster. For some, it truly is where love resides and is the final destination after a colourful or arduous life journey.





PART THREE
FINDING YOUR WAY

Working with the Deck



Look at every path closely and deliberately then ask ...

this critical question: Does this path have a heart?

If it does, then the path is good.

If it doesn't, it is of no use.

CARLOS CASTANEDA





EVERYONE HAS A FAVOURITE method for laying out the cards, and though *The Wildwood Tarot* can be utilized with any of the traditional spreads, we welcome and encourage experiment. What follows are a few brief notes to help you widen your understanding of the pack and three spreads which will take you deeper into the Wildwood.

Before you start a reading, whether for yourself or another, find a quiet place where phones will not ring or other distractions disturb the mental process. If you are a beginner and have no experience of Tarot on any level, or if you are used to the traditional system and have no previous knowledge of shamanism, you may find it useful to try either the exploration of the Wildwood archetypes through the Wheel of the Year, to be found on pages 26–33, or the Hermit's Cave visualization, on pages 151–4. Even if you are familiar with the concepts of the Wildwood deck, you may find it rewarding to work with these as a way of saying hello to some old friends or being welcomed by new ones. The visualization can also be carried out in the open, especially in a forest!

For normal use, there are no hard-and-fast rules regarding the laying out of the cards. A personal favourite of ours is to lay out seven cards and then deal the rest



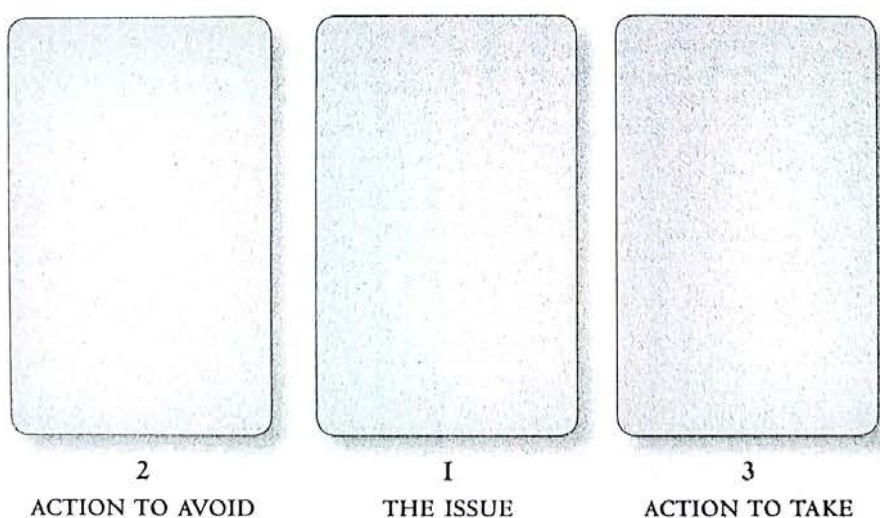
of the pack into seven separate piles to break down their order and erase any previous alignment. This is a symbolic re-creation of both the inner and outer universe and the reordering of fate in a fresh way, influenced by your personal will. This simple ritual also helps to settle the mind and begins the meditative process before beginning an inner journey through the world of the cards.

Next, a 'significator' is chosen to represent the person or situation in question. This helps to keep the psyche focused on the issue at hand and stops the mind from wandering during the session. Now shuffle the cards while visualizing the issue or question for which you need counsel, and wait until you instinctively feel the 'lock' that stops you shuffling. The best way to achieve this is to be relaxed but focused on the issue, and wait until the mind's eye has a clear picture of the situation or the question is accurately formed in words. Then you know you are ready.

Now you can lay out the cards in any form of reading that suits you. Sometimes only one card is required to gain an instant reflection of a mood or reassurance during a stressful period. But, for a fuller, more measured counsel, a more complex layout is required to give insight into the hidden or subtler aspects of the dilemma or query. To begin with, here is a basic and simplified spread which can help you arrive at a swift and direct answer.

The Pathway Spread

Begin by considering your question carefully. Shuffle the deck, then draw three cards from it, laying them face down as shown below.



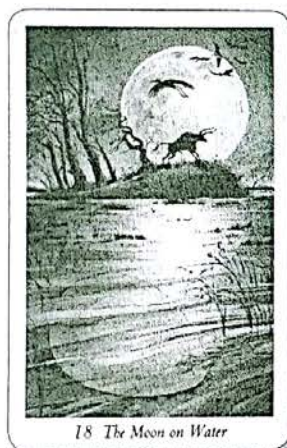


The central card represents the question or issue itself. Turn this over and study it. Does it seem to suggest the question you asked? How does it relate to the issue?

The other two cards represent action to avoid and action to take. Turn over the left-hand card (Action to avoid) and study it. What advice does it offer about things to avoid? Finally, turn over the third card (Action to take) and study that. Does it suggest a way forward or a blockage that needs to be dealt with?

Finally, consider all three cards and how they relate to each other and to the issue. Do they answer your question? If not, or if you think that the answer is either too basic or somehow unclear, you might decide to try one of the deeper spreads that follows here. These are designed to give a more considered answer and are, in addition, a way of checking the validity of the answer you got from The Pathway Spread.

First, here is a sample reading using The Pathway Spread.



2



1



3

Jim was trying to decide whether to seek new partners for his small company in addition to familiar colleagues whom he knew and who knew him. He drew three cards. At the centre was **The Stag**, which suggested that he needed to consider whether the new firm would honour him and behave honourably in its business dealings. The second card, which represented actions to avoid, was **The Moon on Water**, which suggested to Jim that he must not let emotions, fears or fantasies have too great an effect on his decision. The third card was **The Seer**, representing actions to be encouraged. Jim saw this as a sign that the new partnership would take him to a deeper and more constructive relationship both with his existing partners and the new ones, and that their collective vision would improve matters.

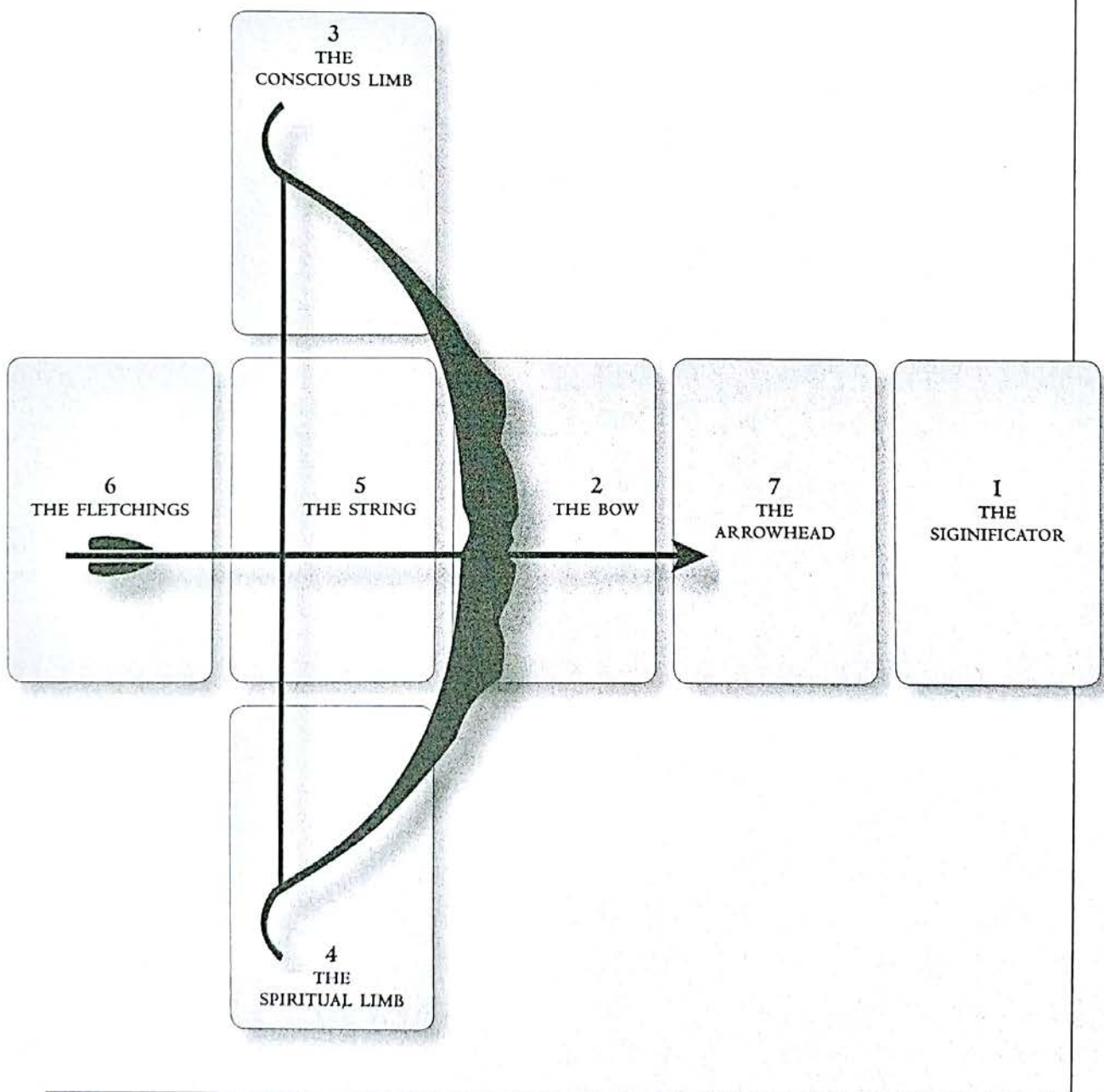


With this advice he opted to invite the new partners to join the business and the result was an immediate increase in his company's vision and productivity.



The Bow Spread

The Bow Spread is uniquely suited to bring insight to clearly defined single issues that require specific and uncomplicated action, but that are crossed by other energies or elements. It enables you to aim directly for the target – the resolution or answer you seek. In the diagram below, you will see how each element of the bow, combined with the energy of the cards, sends an arrow to the heart of the problem.





- 1 THE SIGNIFICATOR represents both the person asking the question and the issue itself. What is the issue about?
- 2 THE BOW represents the point at which the skills of the enquirer can be focused to connect with the heart of the situation. What is your focus on the issue?
- 3 THE CONSCIOUS LIMB represents the individual consciousness or analytical process at work. What do you think about the situation?
- 4 THE SPIRITUAL LIMB represents the emotional or spiritual elements present in the reading. What do you feel about the situation?
- 5 THE STRING represents the energy or momentum of the situation. What drives the issue?
- 6 THE FLETCHINGS represents the point of balance, enabling the energy of the reader to interact with the energy of the reading. What guides the solution?
- 7 THE ARROWHEAD represents the personal intent of the reader which, aimed at the problem, becomes a powerful means by which they can come to terms with the issue at hand. What is the outcome?

Here is a sample reading using The Bow Spread.

Alice was considering whether or not to take a transatlantic holiday, which she had already booked but which now seemed likely to be affected by other events. She drew the following cards:

- 1 **Page of Stones** suggested that Alice must work patiently to sort out the problem.
- 2 **Queen of Stones** forced her to consider whether her resources had been wasted and whether she should perhaps apply for a refund.
- 3 **Three of Arrows** required her to look at her own realization and she admitted that she had negative thoughts about the whole thing.
- 4 **Ten of Bows** emphasized that she was feeling burdened by the need to make a decision.
- 5 **Seven of Bows** clearly showed her that she had done a lot of preparation and that everything was in place for the holiday to proceed.
- 6 **The Guardian** stressed that there was little or no room for indecision. The necessity for making a choice was immediate and demanded a swift response.
- 7 **Five of Bows** showed her that conflict would challenge her decision. An air strike was impending, which she took to be the struggle that was about to commence. Weighing up all of these considerations, Alice decided to cancel her trip

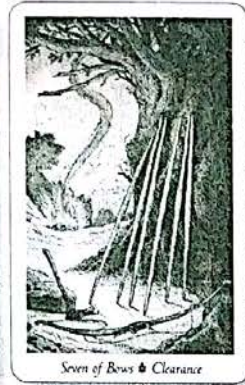




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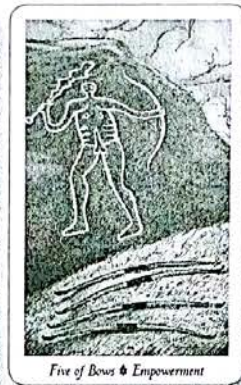
6



5



2



7



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and opt for a less-challenging holiday nearer to home. She had a wonderful time and later read of the misery experienced by those who had chosen to press ahead with their plans.

The World Tree Spread

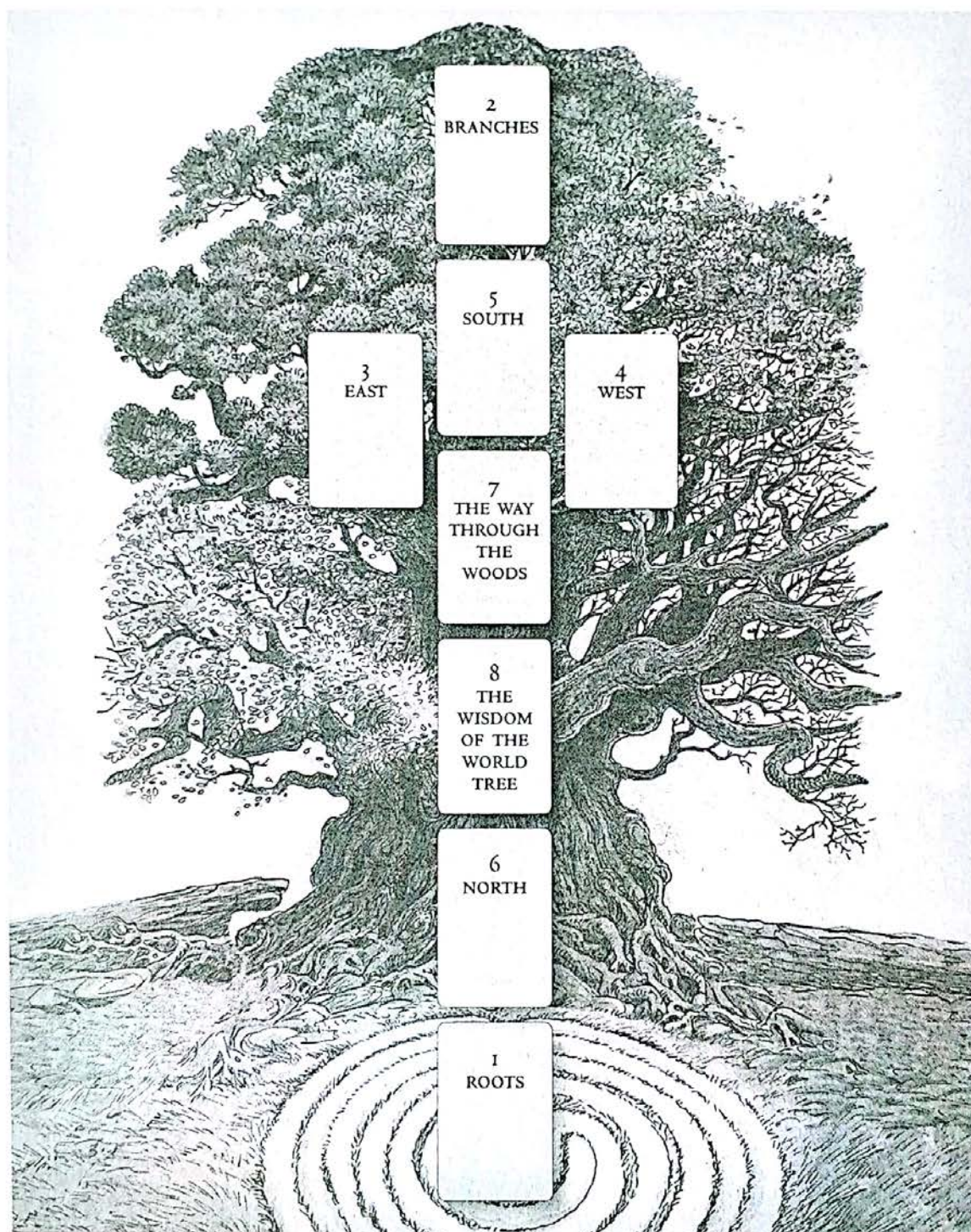
The World Tree Spread is ideal for questions of a more complex nature, or situations that require a more broad and comprehensive overview.

Shuffle the whole pack, cut and lay seven cards in the positions shown in the





diagram below. Read them, then draw one further card unseen, to place in the eighth position: The Wisdom of the World Tree. This provides the hidden wisdom or solution to the issue that you had not yet considered. Note that 'positive cards' that fall on negative positions and 'negative cards' that fall on positive positions may reveal the subtle dynamic of the issue you are asking about.



The positions represent doorways that encourage you to ask the following eight questions:



- 1 **ROOTS** What is the root of the issue?
- 2 **BRANCHES** What are the possibilities of the issue?
- 3 **EAST** What do you take with you?
- 4 **WEST** What do you leave behind you?
- 5 **SOUTH** What do you hope for?
- 6 **NORTH** What do you fear?
- 7 **THE WAY THROUGH THE WOODS** What enables you to engage with the issue?
- 8 **THE WISDOM OF THE WORLD TREE** The hidden wisdom of the issue.

Here is a sample reading using The World Tree Spread.

Jonathan felt that he had reached a crossroads in a long-term romantic relationship. He felt that he needed to move to a deeper level and was contemplating marriage. He drew the first seven cards as follows:

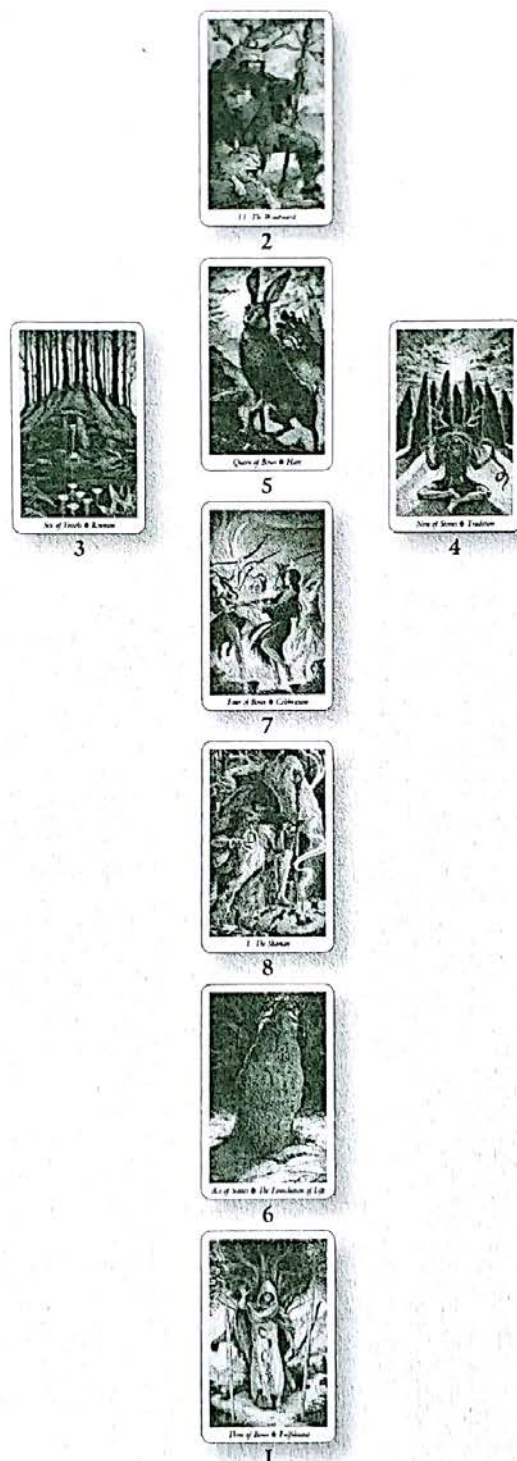
- 1 **Three of Bows** made it clear that Jonathan was looking for greater fulfilment from the relationship.
- 2 **The Woodward** suggested that he should take a balanced and patient view of the relationship. Aspects of renewal, restoration and dynamic change were also part of the meaning of this card and this gave him a feeling of encouragement.
- 3 **Six of Vessels** is all about lifetime relationships and strong ties of love. For Jonathan, it meant that what he would carry with him into the future was an already solid foundation of love.
- 4 **Nine of Stones** in this position suggested that he should look back over the years that he had already spent with his partner and consider the true value of this time. However, the fact that West encouraged him to leave these things behind suggested he take a new approach to the relationship.
- 5 **Queen of Bows** simply stated the obvious: that his relationship was one of life-long love and happiness. This was indeed what he longed for.
- 6 **Ace of Stones** told him that he must transmute the existing relationship into something new and even more wonderful that would last throughout his life.
- 7 **Four of Bows** includes the notion of holiday, of letting go and relaxing in order to enjoy oneself. Should Jonathan abandon his serious intent and simply enjoy what he already has? There was no question that all of the cards so far





endorsed his desire to set the seal upon his relationship through marriage. Now he drew the eighth card.

8 **The Shaman** is synonymous with a deepening of awareness, of a more profound understanding of the world and its multiple wonders. Here, in the depths of the Wildwood, Jonathan received the answer he sought. He proposed the next day, was joyfully accepted and, to date, hasn't once regretted his momentous decision.



A Walk through the Wildwood



Answers from any divinatory system do not always come easily or in a form that makes immediate sense. The following visualization can help both in focusing on a question and in obtaining a better understanding of the answer. The better you get to know the archetypes and what they represent, the more easily you will understand their advice.

The visualization, like the spreads shown on the preceding pages, is based on the journey around the Wheel of the Year. They are all the result of long meditation on the system as a whole, and the practical issue of drawing useful and positive council from *The Wildwood Tarot* without prolonged or demanding study. Should you choose to use this method, a reasonable period of personal time should be set aside and the guidelines for a relaxed sojourn in the Wildwood should be followed.

This gentle and energizing visualization is designed to help you to greet the archetypes found within the pack on a personal level. Not all the imagery you see will be exactly the same as that presented in *The Wildwood Tarot*, since the understanding of the individual is unique. It will, however, share many of the basic traits and qualities that are inherent in the image.

The journey is taken from the inside of the Wheel of the Year, spiralling outwards, and follows the cycle from spring to winter, then back into the heart of the system. You will also notice that the order in which the cards appear is not the same as the traditional order of the cards in the deck. This is a natural result of the randomization generated by the meditation itself.

The visualization utilizes active imagination and meditation techniques only, and is not intended to induce a deep trance or hypnogogic state. Neither is it meant to be an out-of-body experience or anything resembling esoteric practices that require separate and expert professional guidance. The meditation is for guidance only, and any or all of it can be changed or reworked to suit the individual's particular needs.

Getting ready Find a comfortable spot to lie down and relax. It may help to play some gentle music in the background; if you're indoors, a darkened room is preferable. Breathe normally, clear your mind of clutter and, if you have a problem or question, imagine wrapping it up as a bundle or pouch and putting it on your belt or over your shoulder. Now read the following description to yourself, slowly and clearly, pausing to reflect on each stage before you move on.





IMAGINE YOU ARE WALKING along a well-defined track towards a rich, deep-green forest. You may see yourself in the role of **The Wanderer**, the archetypal explorer of undefined space. As you enter the welcoming coolness of the trees, you see an ancient oak in a small clearing further along the forest path. You approach the knotty, friendly giant with a sense of safety and comfort.

At the base of the great tree stands a lone figure that you recognize as **The Ancestor**. The figure welcomes you and indicates a small doorway in the trunk of the tree. You open this doorway and enter into the heart of the hollow trunk. The Ancestor invites you to look up and see the sky. You may feel the need to reach your fingers up towards the high branches, and you may feel the soles of your feet diving down as they connect with the roots piercing deep into the rich, moist soil. Soon you feel part of the tree, feel the leaves breathe and the roots drink. You hear the wind laughing and the rich sap rising through your own inner being.

The Ancestor invites you to look up at **The Pole Star** and contemplate its light. A bright radiance bathes you from above, and a single brilliant shaft or laser-like beam focuses on your forehead. You become aware of forest birds soaring overhead, maybe catching a glimpse of a **Kingfisher**, a **Swan**, a **Hawk** or a **Wren**.

You sense **The Archer** moving stealthily towards you through the thickly entwining leaves of the trees. Without hesitation, she nocks an arrow to the string and looses it high into the air. You find yourself travelling with the arrow, feeling the rush of air past your face and seeing the forest far below. You are connected to the flight of the arrow and with it you return to Earth. The Archer is already here, waiting for you. She smiles and may offer you an arrow as a gift of luck for your journey.

Then you will notice, not far away, a powerful, antlered figure, who has been watching you quietly. **The Stag** stands unmoving and serene. No words will be spoken; there is no need. A personal and secret acknowledgement passes between you.

It's time to move on. Within a small lush copse, you encounter **The Forest Lovers**. Their warmth is pervasive and their emotional magnetism sets your heart glowing. Their bodies are alive with energy, harmony and fertility. You may recognize one or both of the lovers, or you may feel something familiar and profound pass between you. Their joy is unbounded and secure and your soul will be warmed in their presence.

Behind the lovers you may see the entwined red and white serpents of **Balance** rising from a nearby lake. A fiery energy sparks between them, and yet they remain contained and vital. The air is filled with power and you breathe in the glowing energy and feel it renewing your spirit.



After a time you become aware of The Ancestor again, and that you are still standing in the hollow trunk of the great tree. You are invited to walk on through the forest, so you step from the tree, leaving your human body safe and at one with the oak. The Pole Star stays bright and constant in the sky, watching over you.

The Ancestor beckons you deeper into the forest and you may hear music and laughter a little further on. Passing a gateway of entwined leaves and stout branches, you enter a large meadow. As you clear the trees, you see a great table laden with all manner of forest fruit. Sitting together at the centre of the feast are **The Green Man** and **The Green Woman**, laughing and singing. All manner of forest denizens dance and eat their fill and the air is filled with joy.

An **Adder** moves stealthily along the verge of a rippling stream and a swift and friendly **Hare** bounds through the grass. A cunning **Fox** watches your progress with curiosity and a young **Stoat** frolics playfully in the sunshine. The royal couple's laughter rings through the glade and you feel yourself smiling and tapping your foot to a drumbeat that sounds like the heartbeat of the world itself. You are offered food, drink and friendship, and the welcome is genuine and overwhelming. You may stay a while and feel relaxed and at home, but soon you will know it is time to travel on. As you bid your farewell to the Wildwood Court, the music rings in your ears and the laughter echoes in your soul's memory.

Now you hear the low, quiet roar of a powerful, mature creature in the distance and notice a figure clad in lion skin holding a spear. It is **The Woodward**. The roar doesn't come from the figure itself but from the very depths of the Earth. It seems to pervade the air and reverberate within your chest. The presence of the warden of the wood is monumental and you feel the hidden power behind its steady gaze.

As you wander on, the sky turns to the colour of an angry sea, dominated by dark purple, roiling clouds. You may see the fiery figure of **The Blasted Oak**, alive with the incandescent energy of change and liberation.

Soon you behold a lake amid the darkness of the trees, and rising from the depths is the serpentine figure of the goddess of **The Mirror**. She may ask you to look within and see things that are only for you. You might also see the creatures of the lake: the **Heron** waiting patiently on the bank, the **Salmon** leaping with joy from the water, the **Eel** moving sinuously and effortlessly through the current, and the **Otter**, bemusedly and tirelessly chasing a reflection on the rippling surface.

Now the goddess bids you step into a boat that is tethered to the shore and you drift towards an island. There you see the cloak from **The Wheel** hanging on its





loom, rich with colour and texture. This cloak is woven for you alone. Take it and put it on. Then return to the shoreline, thank the goddess for her kindness and travel on.

You may be surprised, now, by a daunting figure leaping from the bushes or dropping, with a flourish, from a tree! This remarkable shape-shifter is **The Guardian**. There is no need to fear him; he means no harm, for he is also a wise, if enigmatic, guardian of your journey. He may point out, with a sardonic smile, the raven watching from afar or the white bones and flesh of carrion. He may challenge you playfully with riddles or test your resolve with dark jests, but keep your nerve. The path ahead can have its darker side but **The Journey** is one we must all take, and where it leads we can seldom know. Look for the light that glows gently in the darkness a little way down the path and up a small hill, and soon you will see **The Hooded Man**. Bid **The Guardian** farewell and walk steadily towards the glowing lamp.

The fleeting shadow of a **Wolf** may flicker through the trees and a mother **Bear** may send a roar of welcome through the stillness. You may watch the **Horse** standing stoically and calmly in the cool air and suddenly become aware of the ethereal beauty of the **Lynx**, gazing unflinchingly and with intense curiosity, as you proceed steadfastly on your journey.

As you approach the dim beacon of **The Hooded Man's** lamp, you will feel **The Great Bear** watching you from a small burial mound some way off. Take a moment to meet his piercing gaze and pay silent respect to the sleepers in that quiet earth.

Now you are back at **The Great Oak** and **The Hooded Man** is showing you the way back into the hollow trunk of **The World Tree**. Within sit **The Shaman** and **The Seer**. They may be silent or speak as they think fit. You may ask questions of them if you wish and they may answer, or you may sit silently while they show you the timeless mysteries of **The Moon on Water** rising or **The Sun of Life** setting. Your relationship with **The Shaman** and **The Seer** is very personal and needs to be nurtured to become intimate. Take some time here to contemplate and be still.

As you do so, you feel again the wind brushing through the leaves and become aware of the small birds that make their homes within the entwined limbs of the tree. The soles of your feet become one with the roots that burrow deep into the moist, rich soil and anchor **The World Tree** to the heart of the universe.

Now it is time to return to the outer world. Give a salute of thanks to your guide and, as you breathe in and out, gently return to the place where you began. Acknowledge the changes that may have taken place on your journey or the insights you may have glimpsed. Take your time to write these down.



NOTES ON YOUR READINGS



*The following pages have been left blank so that you may record
any notes you have on your readings.*











Resources

Workshops based on *The Wildwood Tarot*, run by Mark Ryan and John Matthews, are planned for the future, and John Matthews offers courses in Shamanism through *The Foundation for Inspirational & Oracular Studies* (FIOS). For further information on these

and other activities, please visit our website: www.WildwoodTarot.com or John and Caitlin Matthew's website: www.Hallowquest.org or write to BCM Hallowquest, London WC1N 3XX, UK.

Further Reading

Over the years, we have both read a huge amount of literature relating to the Wildwood, the Green Man and Green Woman and Robin Hood, to name just a few of the archetypes presented here. There follows a selection of the titles we found most helpful.

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About the Authors

MARK RYAN has combined his acting, singing, writing and action-direction talents to enjoy an eclectic entertainment career, working in the international theatre, film and television industries for thirty years. He has starred in several major musicals in London's West End, as well as the cult British TV series *Robin of Sherwood*. He recently provided the voices for several characters in the *Transformers* films and has written a graphic novel, *The Pilgrim*. Mark was one of the original authors of *The Greenwood Tarot*.

JOHN MATTHEWS is a historian, folklorist and award-winning children's author. He has been involved in a number of media projects, as both an advisor and contributor. In 2003 he was the historical advisor to the Jerry Bruckheimer movie *King Arthur*, and shared a BAFTA award for his work on the accompanying educational DVD. He is working on several new projects, including a series of graphic novels on the young King Arthur and a graphic novel about the Nazi hunt for the Grail. He recently sold his first movie script and is currently developing several others.

About the Artist

WILL WORTHINGTON has worked as an illustrator for thirty years. His interest in the ancient past and in Arthurian and Celtic mythology is reflected in his paintings and drawings, and he has contributed illustrative work to *The Book of Druidry* and *The Druid Way*, in addition to creating the card artwork for *The Druid Animal Oracle*, *The Druid Plant Oracle*, *The Green Man Tree Oracle* and *The DruidCraft Tarot*.

Acknowledgements

To everyone at Eddison Sadd, especially Nick Eddison for giving us the opportunity to represent the Wildwood in this new leafy garb, and Ian Jackson for his patience and good humour. To Caitlín Matthews for allowing us to adapt her 'Doorway Spread' for use with the pack and for her fantastic work on the court cards for this edition. To Will Worthington for his dazzling and inspirational artwork. To Alison Cross for creating and administering our website www.thewildwoodtarot.com and to Dwina Murphy Gibb for her quiet and selfless support on many levels.

EDDISON•SADD EDITIONS

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