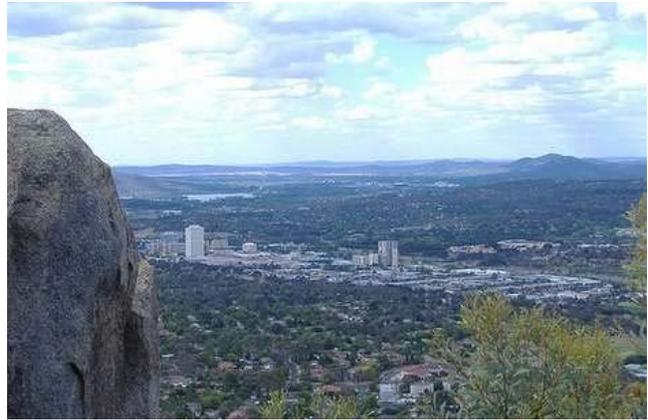


The Odinic Rite of Australia

Many people who were not part of any structured Odinist community emigrated from Britain to Australia in the 19th and early 20th centuries, bringing with them personal Odinist values. One of the most famous was Dr James Fitzgerald Murray (1/1/1805-24/6/1856), a graduate of Trinity College, Dublin, and the Edinburgh College of Surgeons, who emigrated in 1828. Prior to his retirement in about 1837, he had settled on 2500 acres near what is now the centre of the capital city of Australia. Planning to live out his life as a landed proprietor dedicated to learning, he named his property “Woden” — after the Anglo-Saxon god of wisdom and inspiration.¹ As a result, Woden is now the name of one of the most desirable suburbs of Canberra.



Woden today — the heart of a nation

By the 1920s Australia had a very significant heathen cultural movement, particularly in the arts. These artists were called “paganists” or “heroic vitalists”, and their elder statesman was the artist and author Norman Lindsay (1879-1969). Several artists in this movement were overt Odinists.²

In the 1930s Australia’s Odinists began to come together in a semi-formal way. In Melbourne, Alexander Rud Mills founded the Anglecyn Church of Odin. According to one historian³, by about 1934 “up to 120 members [i.e. Odinists] used to ... every Thursday evening ... hold Odinist ceremonies on Mills’ land at Croydon”.

Rud Mills was joined by many other Australian Odinist pioneers, who agreed that the general 1930s obsession with politics was meaningless. What was needed, they believed, was a spiritual revolution. The most prominent Odinists of that decade are depicted below:



Rud Mills (1885-1964)



Evelyn Price (1878-1973)



Annie Lennon (1905-1992)

In 1942, several Australian Odinists were arrested as a result of agitation by two members of parliament, Abram Landa and S. M. Falstein. The Odinists were imprisoned in very grim concentration camps. Mills was sent to Loveday in outback South Australia, which was essentially a square of desert surrounded by barbed wire and machine-gun turrets. Not a single Odinist was ever charged with any offence of any kind. They were all eventually released, without any conviction to their names.

The Odinist movement in Australia then went underground. No-one wanted to be persecuted for their religious views, so they celebrated them quietly within their families. Some interviews with people of that generation have been recorded and one has been made publicly available.⁴

By 1972 a young female student at the University of Melbourne wrote to the then Attorney-General of Australia, seeking assurance that Odinists would not be persecuted if they established an open religious organisation. On 15 September 1972 Ivor J. Greenwood replied: "I can unhesitatingly say that there are no constitutional aspects of the matter that would in any way impede your proposal". An informal Odinist organization was accordingly formed, mainly comprising university students. In 1976 one of the Australians, by then studying in England, was Professed as an Odinist by Stubba, the chairman of the Odinist Committee — which in 1980 became the Odinic Rite, with Stubba as Director. On her return to Australia she Professed others, who in turn did the same for the next generation of Odinists. Because of this historical curiosity all duly Professed Odinists in Australia can trace the line of their Profession back to Stubba.

Midwinter festivals with bonfires were held in the mid-1980s in the lake country near Colac, Victoria. At the beginning of 1994 it was decided to place Australian Odinism on a more formal footing. We then wrote to Stubba, explaining that the Australians wanted to have an independent organisation, but would be grateful for any advice that might be offered. Stubba made two proposals: that the Australians should seek whatever form of recognition was available from the Australian government, and that it might be easier for us to set up as a "Mark" of the UK's Odinic Rite, but "this would be completely autonomous". That proposal was declined in favour of total independence.

The only form of Australian governmental recognition of a religious body at the time was tax exemption. Since the British OR had already been recognised by the Charity Commissioners, Stubba recommended that the Australians deal with the OR's then Director, Ingvar, who was legally responsible to the Charity Commissioners. Ingvar in turn offered very courteous, helpful and practical advice on how to deal with the authorities, and on 22 November 1995 the Australian Tax Office confirmed that the Odinic Rite of Australia (henceforth ORA) was exempt from tax under section 23 (e) of the Income Tax Assessment Act 1936.

Meanwhile, it had been decided that Australian Odinism should have its own publication. With the persecutions of 1942 still fresh in the minds of the oldest

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The Odinic Rite of AUSTRALIA

OVER THE LAST YEAR OR SO there have been stirrings in Australia of a revived Odinism, which is of course the ancestral religion of the great majority of that country's population. The leading figure in this movement is Osred, based at Melbourne University, who has now announced the decision of the Australian Odinist community to constitute itself as **The Odinic Rite of Australia**. This decision was taken after thorough consultation with the Court of Gothar here in Great Britain and with its full consent.

It is rather like announcing the birth of a baby; it creates a sense of achievement and pride mingled with hope for the future. However, it would be more appropriate to refer to the Odinic Rite of Australia as a sister society of ours, rather than as a daughter body; and the British Court of Gothar has been quite clear from the start that the Australian branch of the Rite must operate with total functional and constitutional independence.

Australia is not of course virgin territory for the practice of the faith. On the contrary, the first organised form of restored Odinism in the English-speaking world is attributable to an Englishman settled in Tasmania: Alexander Rudd Mills (1885-1964), who took the name in religion of Tasman Forth, and whose contribution to the restoration of the elder faith is far from insignificant.

Little is known of his life, although it is believed he was a teacher for a short while in early life, and later practised law as a barrister; it is also known that he owned large sheep-runs on King Island, which lies in the Bass Strait between Tasmania and Victoria. A notable publication of his was **The Call of our Ancient Nordic Religion**, which appears to have been published

How "Odinism Today" announced the Odinic Rite of Australia

Australian Odinists, a decision was made that this publication should be legally separate from the ORA. Osred therefore took responsibility for it. Although our quarterly, *Renewal*, has been freely available in major Australian collecting libraries since Midwinter 1994, no legal problems have arisen, which presumably reflects the change in religious climate since 1942.

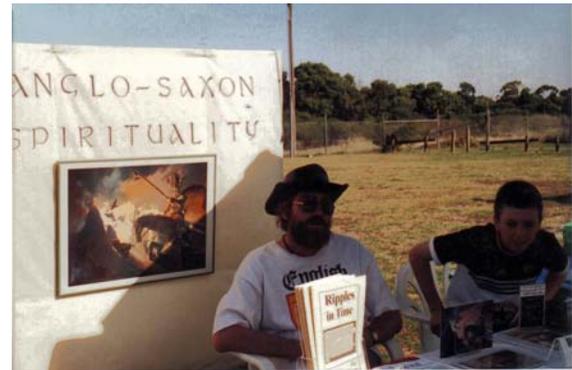
On 12 June 2010 the ORA formally asked the Attorney-General's Department to proclaim Odinism a "recognised denomination under section 26 of the Marriage Act 1961". This would enable the ORA to nominate its own religious celebrants for heathen weddings. The Department then requested further information about the ORA, its Constitution, etc., and this was supplied. The Department's guidelines are currently under review, and they have promised to keep us advised. Since the last review was in 2006, this could take a while!

Other ORA initiatives

* The ORA has maintained a website for almost as long as the print publication *Renewal*. Its current address is: <http://odinicriteofaustralia.wordpress.com>.

* The ORA has been pleased to assist the Australian media toward a deeper understanding of heathenism in general and Odinism in particular. As recently as 2012 we were able to correct a visiting English academic who falsely told ABC radio that all forms of paganism in Australia were developed from Wicca. The Professor claimed he had never heard of Rud Mills, but would remember Mills in future.

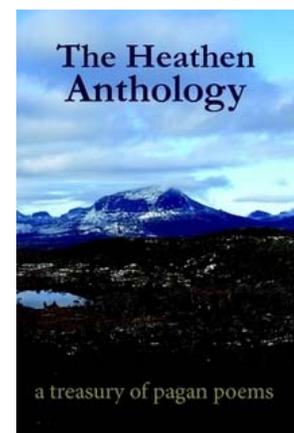
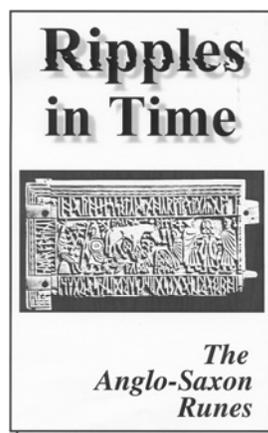
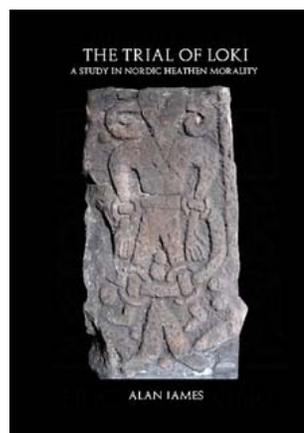
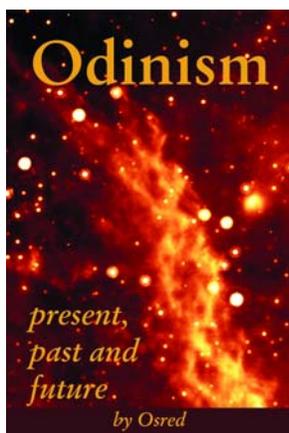
* We have represented Odinism at public venues for many years, as shown in this photo from a public event that attracted thousands of visitors.



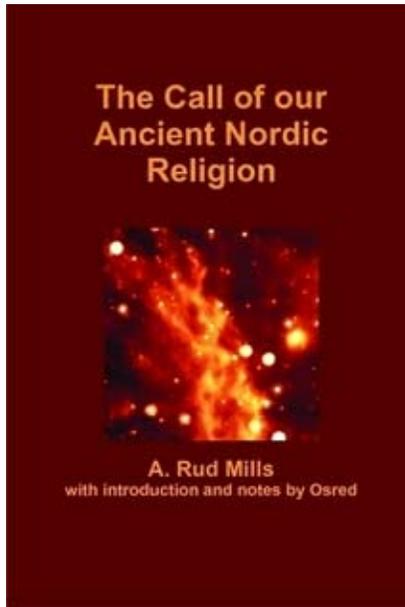
* The ORA has re-activated the old Roman Catholic procedure known as "Actus Formalis Defectionis ab Ecclesia Catholica". This process is a remedy whereby people who were forced into Catholicism as children can formally renounce that allegiance. A template for doing so is available at <http://odinicriteofaustralia.wordpress.com/preparing-for-odinist-profession/> A healthy number of Australian Odinists has followed this process; and importantly, all have received acknowledgement from representatives of the Church.

* We have provided an Odinist "creed" known as *The Melbourne Creed*, which is a brief statement of fundamental Odinist beliefs, expressed in very inclusive terms to which sincere Odinists should be able to assent. See: <http://odinicriteofaustralia.wordpress.com/an-odinist-creed>.

* In conjunction with maintaining the *Renewal* journal, we have also been responsible for some one-off publications, a sample of which is represented below:⁵



* We have taken responsibility for the heritage of Alexander Rud Mills and Evelyn Mills (nee Price) in a number of ways. For instance, we took up a community collection to re-furbish the grave of Evelyn and Rud, which was looking rather weathered. We have collected all known literary works by Rud Mills, plus some artistic works by Evelyn. By making contact with their surviving family we have acquired many unpublished photos of Rud, Evelyn and other early Australian Odinists. Through the same source we have also been given exclusive legal rights to publish all of Mills' writings. A start has been made with a completely new edition of *The Call of our Ancient Nordic Religion*, correcting many of the typographic errors in the original and including footnotes and an introduction.



Rud Mills' works are being reissued in responsible forms, correcting the mistakes of the early editions.



The Mills heritage is being recovered, as in this photo, reproduced for the first time here.



The Mills tradition of outdoor Odinist events has been resumed, as in this Odinist midwinterfest near Colac.

1. Gwendoline Wilson, *Murray of Yarralumla*, Oxford University Press, 1968
2. Osred, *Odinism: present, past and future*, Renewal Publications, 2010
3. Barbara Winter, *The Australia First Movement and the Publicist, 1936-1942*, Glass House Books, 2005
4. *Renewal*, Vol 17 No 3 — Vol 18 No 1
5. The Odinist books illustrated here can be purchased as follows: **Odinism: present, past and future**, **The Call of our Ancient Nordic Religion**, and **The Heathen Anthology** are available at <http://www.lulu.com/spotlight/osred>. **The Trial of Loki** is available at <http://whitemarshtheod.org/publications.html>. **Ripples in Time** is only available from PO Box 4333, University of Melbourne, Victoria, 3052, Australia.