

Dr. REGINALD SPRIGG AO



Geologist, Conservationist (Founder of Arkaroola Wilderness Sanctuary)

Born: Stansbury SA, 1 March 1919

Died: Glasgow Scotland 2 December 1994

Attended ATHS: 1934-36

Career

At age 17 Reg became the youngest Fellow of the Royal Society of South Australia. At the University of Adelaide, he studied under Sir Douglas Mawson who said that "Sprigg was his best ever student". He completed the requirements for his Bachelor of Science and was then graduated Master of Science in 1942

In 1940 he enlisted in the Australian Royal Engineers, and was in Munitions from 1941 to 1942. He moved to work with the soils division in CSIRO until 1943 and then with the South Australian Geological Survey. Sprigg was sent by the South Australian Government in 1946 to inspect abandoned mines in the Ediacaran Hills, to ascertain whether old mines could be profitably reworked using new technologies. During this inspection he discovered the Ediacara biota, an assemblage of some of the most ancient animal fossils known (630 million years old).

He was involved in oceanographic research and petroleum exploration through various companies which he founded. Reg helped set up Santos (an acronym for South Australia Northern Territory Oil Search), which discovered the gas deposits in the Cooper Basin, including the Moomba Gas Field. This supplies natural gas to South Australia, New South Wales and Canberra.

In 1968, he took up a derelict pastoral lease, Arkaroola and transformed it into a wild life sanctuary and wilderness reserve

Awards and Honours

In 1980, he was awarded an honorary doctorate in science by the Australian National University.

In 1982, he was the inaugural Lewis G Weeks Medallist awarded by the then Australian Petroleum Export Association.

In 1983, he was made an Officer of the Order of Australia.

In 1986, he was the recipient of the Royal Society of South Australia Verco Medal.

In 1988 he was awarded the Freedom of the City of London

In 1990, Flinders University conferred on him the honorary degree of Doctor of Science.

In 1998, the Geological Society of Australia, South Australia Branch launched the biennial Sprigg Symposium "in recognition of the contributions Dr Reginald Sprigg made towards many aspects of geology in South Australia".

In 2001, the University of Adelaide announced that it had founded the Reg Sprigg Chair in Petroleum Engineering in the (now) Australian School of Petroleum

The genus Spriggina has been named in his honour.

A mineral, Spriggite has been named in his honour.