

Syd Kirkby AO, MBE, Polar Medal

Australia's Frozen Frontier

86 year old Western Australia born and educated surveyor.

First and foremost, as a student from 1951 to 1955, mentoring by my Master Surveyor, Vernon Fyfe, Surveyor General of Western Australia.

With WA Lands Department.

Engagement on major very broad acres surveys for opening of Conditional Purchase land for agricultural development. Involvement on major land classification schemes. Membership of the joint WA and Commonwealth Great Sandy Desert Expedition of 1954. Control surveys for Western Downrange (WA western deserts) and "impact area" of Woomera rocket range.

With Australian Antarctic Operations

Over-winter (16 months) surveyor with expeditions of 1956/57 and 1960/61 at a time when 85% of Antarctica, a continent almost twice the size of Australia was unexplored. Surveyor with summer expeditions in 1961/62, 1962/63 and 1964/65 during which Australia's renowned "hit and run" explorations explored all coastal regions of Australian Antarctic Territory, about one third of the compass of the globe. During these years any time I was working remote from expedition stations (most of the time) I was never at a place where any other human being had ever stood. Highlights include the first penetration of the Prince Charles Mountains, the first and only ever ground penetration of Enderby Land and about 27 coastal first landings from the beyond westernmost to beyond the easternmost limits of Australia's Antarctic Territory (about 1/3 of the continent)

Leader of the 1979/80 summer multidisciplinary regional scientific study of Kemp, Enderby, and eastern Queen Maud Lands. Station Leader at Mawson winter 1980/81.

With Division of National Mapping (the Australian national geodetic survey and topographic mapping agency)

Extensive field surveys ranging from astronomical observation to development of airborne electronic distance measuring and airborne terrain profiling surveys, in a number of positions ranging from field surveyor to Assistant Director, with responsibility for all field surveys and map compilation for the national topographic mapping programme.

Honours and Awards

Polar Medal 1958, Member of the Order of the British Empire 1966, Officer of the Order of Australia 2018, Gold Medal (Adventurer of the Year) of the Australian Geographic Society 1996, Founder's Medal of The Royal Geographical Society of Australasia (Thompson Medal) 1998