GEOLOGY OF DEVONIAN LIMESTONES IN NORTHEAST ALBERTA

Prepared for Canada-Alberta MDA Project M92-04-14

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and

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Introduction

This study of the Devonian rocks in northeast Alberta grew out of a broader MDA project, to evaluate the resource potential of limestones in Alberta for industrial use. Northeast Alberta is the only area in the province outside the Rocky Mountains belt where limestone rocks are found in outcrop. These rocks are part of a Devonian sedimentary succession which onlaps crystalline rocks of the Precambrian Shield to the northeast. The Devonian rocks include variably argillaceous limestones and dolomites that crop out extensively in the valleys of the major rivers and their tributaries draining the area. Evaporites and redbed clastics also comprise part of the succession in the deeper subsurface, but do not crop out in the study area.

Although most of the Devonian outcrops have been mapped and described by previous workers, no 3-dimensional framework existed into which the outcrop data could be referenced. Devonian geology had been viewed simply as a wedge of carbonate and evaporite strata resting undisturbed on Precambrian crystalline basement. However, a more complex picture was becoming apparent from scattered evidence of fault tectonics, salt collapse structures, and widespread karstification. A better model of the structural and stratigraphic framework was needed to evaluate the resource potential for these Devonian rocks.

The resource focus initially was on industrial mineral aspects of limestone. During the course of the work, some anomalous assay results for precious metals in the Devonian rocks were reported, suggesting a much broader resource potential that included the potential for hosting metalliferous deposits.

Purpose and Scope of Study

The objective of this study was to map the subsurface distribution and structure of major Devonian stratigraphic units in northeast Alberta. This included detailed

stratigraphic analysis of the Waterways Formation - the Devonian unit that directly underlies the Cretaceous cover in most of the area - and mapping of its member subdivisions, with specific attention given to the main limestone-bearing members. The study is based on data from exploratory drilling (much of it during the past 25 years) and from outcrops.

The initial phase involved extraction of the well data from AGSWDB, an Alberta Geological Survey data base which houses select elements of drillhole data covering western Canada and NWT. For this study area, approximately 160 wells exist that have penetrated the Devonian section either completely or to a significant depth. A much larger array of well data was available for mapping the Devonian erosion surface (sub-Cretaceous unconformity). From these well data, log picks were obtained for the main mappable horizons in the Devonian subsurface, the picks determined by reference to a grid of standardized correlation sections constructed for the study area. Lithologic identities of the map units were established through detailed logging of available core from five wells that cored a major part of the Devonian section. Detailed lithology logs for these wells are presented in the Appendix.

Based on these well data, a suite of preliminary subsurface maps was constructed with the aid of a computer mapping software package. The maps included isopach, structure, and depth contours for each of the map units. From these data the subcrop boundaries on the Devonian erosion surface were derived.

The next phase of the study involved field examination of outcrops. All the main outcrop sections in the area were logged and sampled in detail. Karst trends and anomalous structural features also were noted. The outcrop data were integrated with the subsurface data and the maps revised and refined accordingly for presentation in this report.

Outcrop samples, along with selected samples from core, were subjected to whole rock chemical analyses and/or ICP geochemical (30 element) analyses. The analytical data will be presented in subsequent MDA reports on limestone and precious metal resource evaluations for the area.

Previous Investigations

Devonian rocks in northeast Alberta have been subjected to many investigations that go back to the days of early explorers during the 1800's. Interest in these rocks stemmed largely from their juxtaposition with the overlying oil sands, which are the dominant outcrop feature of the area. A historical summary of those early works is given in Norris (1963), whose report presents the most detailed mapping available of the Devonian outcrops in this region. Another key reference is Carrigy (1959), who provides a comprehensive geological analyses of the region, including a breakdown of the Paleozoic (Devonian) geology.

The above references summarize the results from previous Devonian studies, most of which were directed toward stratigraphic definition of the succession. At the time, drill hole information for the area was quite limited, making it impossible to do any detailed subsurface mapping of the Devonian. It wasn't until the 1970's that exploratory drilling began on a sustained basis, to give rise to the level of subsurface coverage existing for the current study.

Acknowledgments

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Preparation of various graphic elements of the report was assisted by Tim Berezniuk, Campbell Kidston, Jim Matthie, and Dan Magee, all of AGS.

Geographic and Geologic Setting

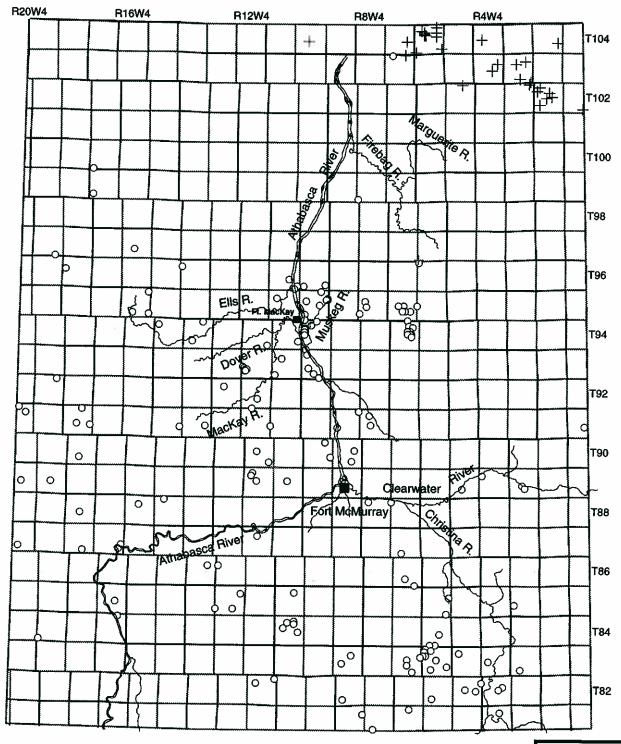
The northeast Alberta study area encompasses townships 81 to 104, ranges 1 through 19 west of the 4th meridian (Figure 1). The area, commonly called the Athabasca region, can be divided into three geographic sectors based upon bedrock geology and prominent topographic features (Figure 2). These include the Canadian Shield, the lowlands juxtaposed to the major drainage systems, and the dissected highlands that ascend from the adjoining plains to the west, south, and east of the drainage basin (Hamilton and Mellon, 1973).

Precambrian rocks of the Canadian Shield, upon which Devonian and Cretaceous sedimentary successions onlap, are exposed in the northeast corner of the study area. Although glacial and recent deltaic deposits conceal most of the Shield, exposures of granite, quartz monzonite, and derived cataclastic rocks are present within this sector (Godfrey, 1970). The bedrock geology within the remaining region consists of Cretaceous and Devonian strata (Figure 3).

Lowlands next to the Athabasca River progressively broaden to the north and are most commonly floored by resistant Devonian carbonates of the Elk Point and Beaverhill Lake groups (Figure 2). Exposures of Devonian and Cretaceous strata are confined to the valleys of the Athabasca and Clearwater Rivers and the lower reaches of tributaries that feed them. These valleys often expose a regional sub-Cretaceous unconformity, at which oil sands of the Lower Cretaceous McMurray Formation rest directly upon dipping Devonian strata.

The Athabasca and Clearwater valleys are incised as deeply as 150 m below the surrounding plains. Bedrock in the plains region is generally covered by a veneer of





Study Area

Control Point Data

Drainage Network

Devonian Northeast Alberta

(40 km) Figure 1. Date:1/16/95 1250000

Figure 1.	Northeast Albe	erta study area.
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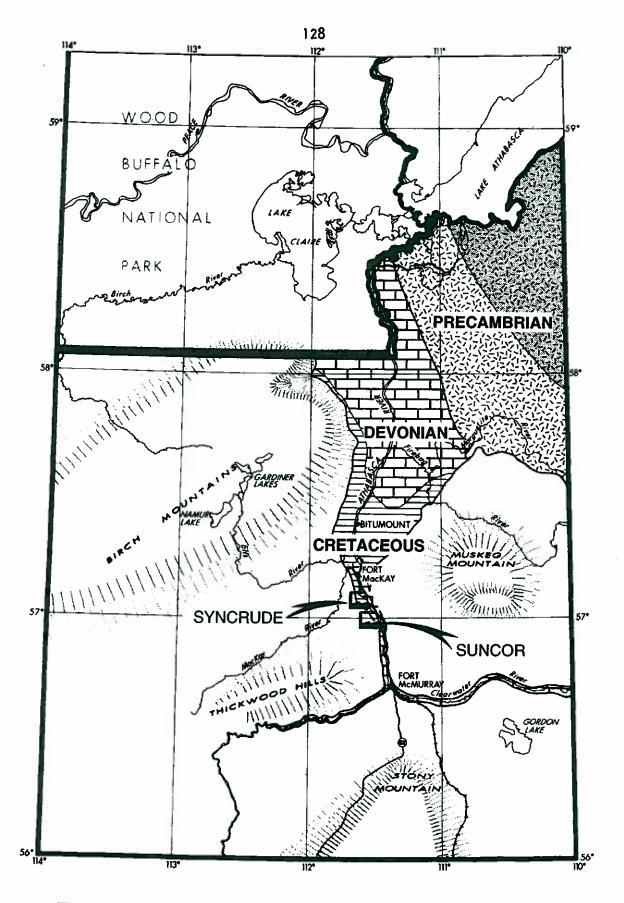


Figure: 2. Physiography and general geology of the Northeast Alberta.

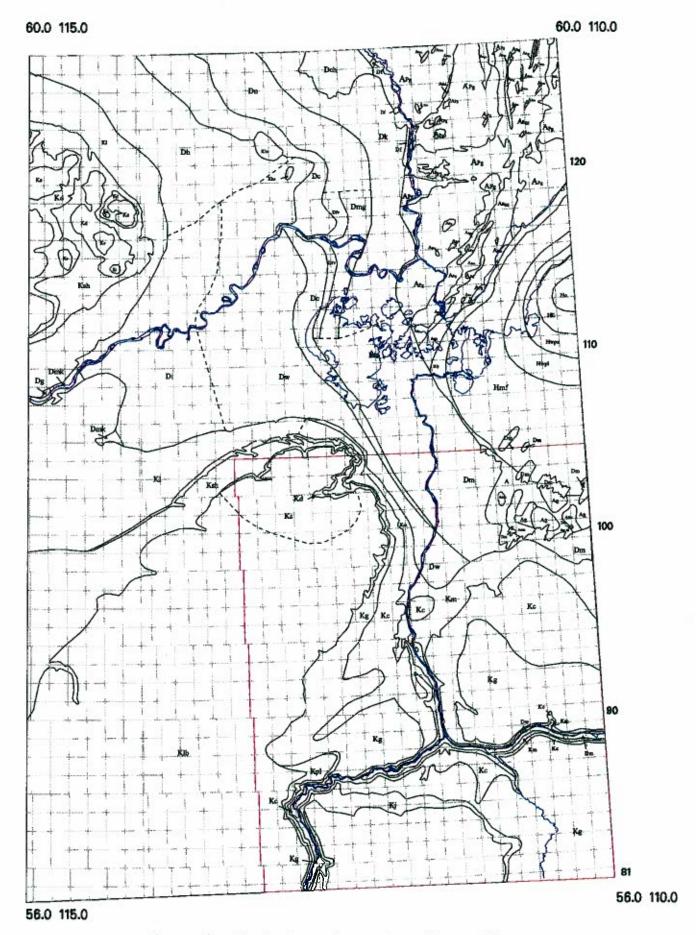


Figure 3. Bedrock geology of northeast Alberta.

LEGEND FOR FIGURE 3

NORTH CENTRAL ALBERTA		NORTHEASTERN ALBERTA	
Kwt	CRETACEOUS Wapiti Formation	CRETA	CEOUS
Ks Smoky Group Kd Dunvegan Form Ksh Shaftesbury Fo	Dunvegan Formation	Klb	Labiche Formation
	Snartesbury Formation	Kpl Kj Kac	Pelican Formation Joli Fou Formation Alice Creek Tongue, Grand Rapids Formation
KI	Loon River Formation	Kg Kc	Grand Rapids Formation Clearwater Formation
Kb	Basal Cretaceous?	Km	McMurray Formation
Dg Dmk	DEVONIAN Grosmont Formation Mikkwa Formation		DEVONIAN
Di Di Dw	Ireton Formation	Dh	Hay River Formation
Dc Car Slav	Waterways Formation Caribou Member Slave Point Formation Nyarling Formation	Dc	Caribou Member
		Dfv	Fort Vermilion Member, Slave Point Formation
		Dmg	Muskeg Formation
		Dk Dch	Keg River Formation
		Df	Chinchaga Formation Fitzgerald Formation
			HELIKIAN
		Но	Otherside Formation
		HII Hwpu	Locker Lake Formation Upper Wolverine Point Formation
		Hwpl	Lower Wolverine Point Formation
		Hmf	Manitou Falls Formation
		Hfp	Fair Point Formation APHEBIAN
		APm APg	Low Grade Metasedimentary Rocks Granitoids
		Amx	APHEBIAN/ARCHEAN - Undivided Mylonitic Rocks
		Ag A	Granitoids Undifferentiated
		ARg	ARCHEAN Charles Lake Granitoids
		ARm ARgg	High Grade Metasedimentary Rocks Granite Gneisses

glacial deposits and muskeg. However, in parts of the region a network of Pleistocene drainage channels are incised deeply into Cretaceous sands and shales (Petroleum Geology and Basin Analysis Group, 1992, Horne and Seve, 1991).

The lowlands and plains coalesce with a series of dissected highlands which rim the Athabasca drainage basin to the west, south and east. The Birch, Stony, and Muskeg mountains and the Thickwood Hills (Figure 2) attain elevations of up to 450 m above the adjacent plains. In the west, tributaries of the Athabasca River, namely the MacKay, Dover and Ells rivers, originate within and dissect the Birch Mountains and Thickwood Hills. In the east, the Firebag River drains a region at the foot of Muskeg Mountain. These highlands (with the possible exception of Muskeg Mountain) are remnants of a thick, siliciclastic succession of Cretaceous strata worn down by periods of post-Cretaceous erosion, the last significant event being Pleistocene glaciation.

Stratigraphy

The sedimentary succession in northeast Alberta comprises a lithologically diverse Devonian sequence of carbonates, evaporites and clastics, overlain unconformably by Cretaceous siliciclastics. Devonian and Cretaceous sediments are separated by a major erosional unconformity. Devonian strata exceed 900 m in the southwest and taper to zero along the onlap margin of the Canadian Shield in the northeast. Cretaceous sands and shales, which attain thicknesses of over 500 m, also thin to a zero edge against the onlapping Devonian strata along the Shield margin (Petroleum Geology and Basin Analysis Group, 1991). Cretaceous sediments are variable in thickness due to post-Cretaceous erosional events. Today the drainage network downcuts through the siliciclastic succession in many places, bottoming out in resistive Devonian carbonates.

The Devonian succession comprises strata from the Elk Point, Beaverhill Lake, and Woodbend groups. The eastward tapering wedge of sediment is bounded

unconformably at the base by the Precambrian basement and at the top by a regional sub-Cretaceous unconformity.

Elk Point Group

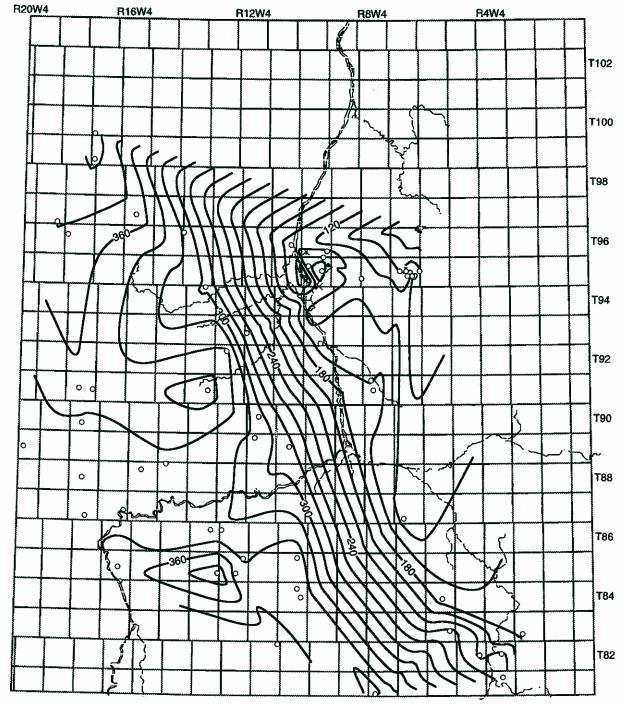
McGehee (1949) first introduced the name Elk Point Formation for a series of evaporites, dolomites and shales bound between the Waterways Formation and Cambrian strata in east-central Alberta. Belyea (1952) later raised the Elk Point sequence to group status in north-central Alberta.

In northeast Alberta, Lower and Middle Devonian formations of the Elk Point Group consist of, in ascending order: Granite Wash, Lotsberg, Ernestina Lake, Cold Lake, Contact Rapids, Winnipegosis, Prairie Evaporite, and Watt Mountain. The succession attains a thickness of over 400 m in the west and thins uniformly to the east along a northwest trend (Figure 4). Elk Point strata has been further subdivided (Sherwin, 1962) into lower and upper subgroups. The contact between the two subgroups is placed at the base of the Winnipegosis Formation (Figure 5).

A thin regolith comprised of coarse to pebbly, arkosic sandstone of the so-called Granite Wash (La Loche Formation of Norris, 1963) marks the base of the Elk Point Group. Overlying successions of Lotsberg, Ernestina Lake, and Cold Lake formations, where present, consist of evaporites (primarily salt) with minor shales, limestones, and dolomites. These three units are absent in most of the Fort McMurray area, although they may be seen in the deeper subsurface to the southwest and northwest.

The Contact Rapids Formation is made up of dolomite, dolomitic siltstone and variably sandy shales, with minor anhydrite and gypsum. This lithologically diverse unit varies considerably in thickness throughout the area. Anomalously thick successions (greater than 100 m) are confined to regions in the south and northwest. In the central region the unit averages about 50 m thick.





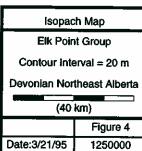


Figure 4. Isopach of the Elk Point Group.

Pan Am A-1 Algar River 4-13-87-17W4 KB = 1666.9ft

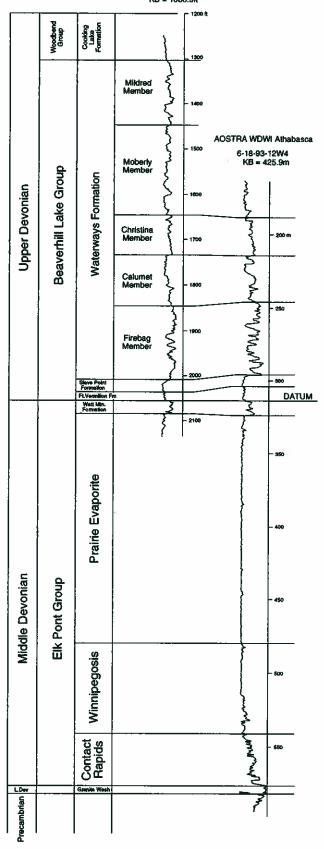


Figure 5. Reference wells for the Devonian succession (4-13-87-17W4 modified after Keith 1992)

The Contact Rapids Formation is conformably overlain by the Winnipegosis Formation. Sediments of the Winnipegosis succession comprise reef and non-reef carbonates of variable thickness. Off reef regions average about 55 m thick (Figure 6). Reefal successions along the eastern margin and in the northwest exceed 90 m in places. A reef buildup of over 100 m in the extreme southeast corresponds to a structural high on the underlying Contact Rapids Formation. Lithologies include clean, often porous, dolomites at the top that become increasingly argillaceous toward the base.

The Prairie Evaporite Formation, overlying Winnipegosis dolomites, consists of an eastward thinning wedge of salt and anhydrite with thin interbeds of carbonate and shale. This evaporitic unit is greater than 200 m thick in the west and thins dramatically eastward along a north-northwest linear trend that marks the location of the present day salt dissolution edge (Figure 4).

Distinctive, dolomitic shales of the Watt Mountain Formation disconformably blanket the Prairie Evaporite Formation, averaging about 9 m thick throughout the region. The Watt Mountain Formation is conformably overlain by strata of the Upper Devonian Beaverhill Lake Group.

The basal Contact Rapids and the uppermost Watt Mountain formations of the Elk Point Group serve as useful stratigraphic datums in the area. Both are laterally extensive and easily identified on logs.

Beaverhill Lake Group

Formations within the Beaverhill Lake Group consist of, in ascending order: Fort Vermilion, Slave Point, and Waterways (Figure 5). The Waterways Formation has been further subdivided into the Firebag, Calumet, Christina, Moberly and Mildred members. The Beaverhill Lake Group attains a thickness of over 250 m in the west





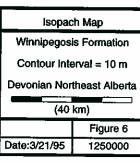


Figure 6. Isopach of the Winnipegosis Formation

and progressively thins to the east (Petroleum Geology and Basin Analysis Group, 1991), due mainly to pre-Cretaceous erosion (Figures 7 and 8).

Fort Vermilion Formation

Lithologies of the Fort Vermilion Formation consist of white to bluish white anhydrite, dolostone, and minor lime mudstone. Anhydrite and dolostone are sometimes delicately interlaminated. The unit thins uniformly from northwest to southeast (Figure 8).

Slave Point Formation

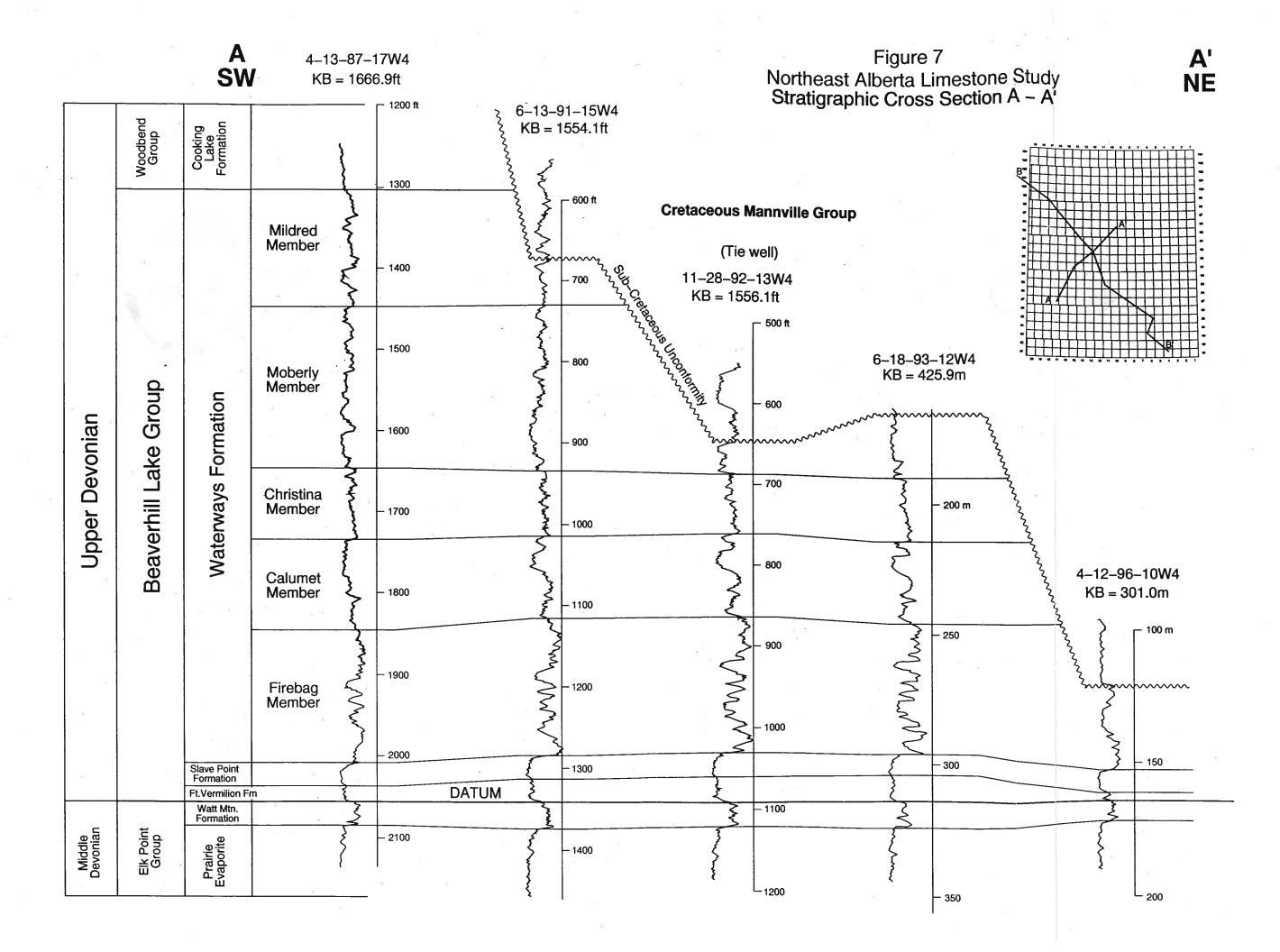
Conformably overlying the Fort Vermilion succession is the Slave Point Formation. Pale brown to light brownish grey, skeletal wackestones and argillaceous lime mudstones with intermixed dark brown shale laminations characterize this unit. The Slave Point Formation is generally less than 15 m thick within the study area, thinning from northwest to southeast similar to, but to a lesser degree than the underlying Fort Vermilion Formation.

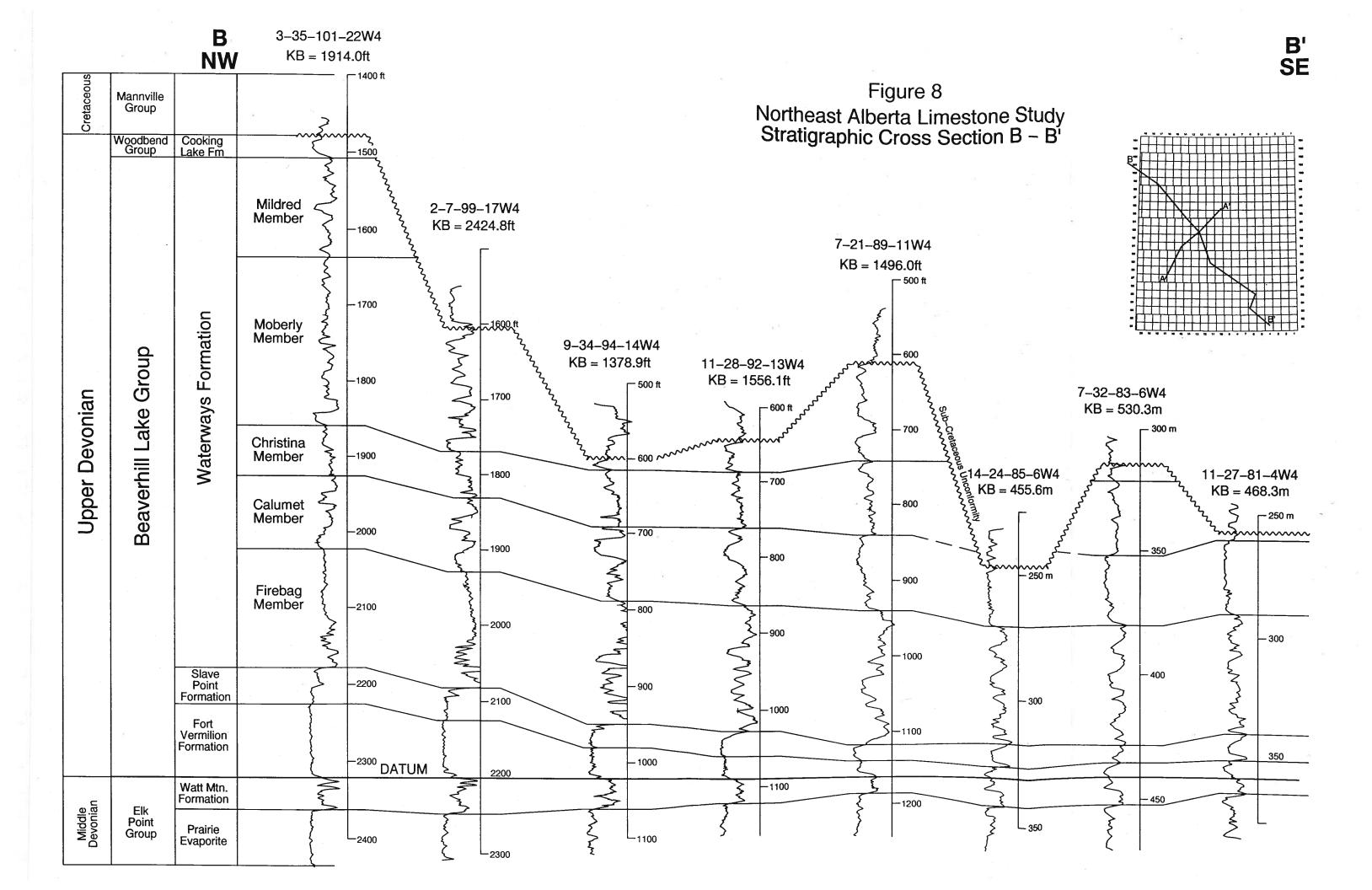
Waterways Formation

The Waterways Formation was introduced by Warren (1933) for a series of Devonian strata capping an evaporitic succession in the lower Athabasca River area. The formation was later subdivided by Crickmay (1957) into five mappable members as shown in Figure 5.

Firebag Member

The Firebag, the basal member of the Waterways Formation, disconformably overlies the Slave Point Formation. Two lithologic units characterize the Firebag Member: a lower unit consisting of variably argillaceous, lenticular to nodular bedded lime





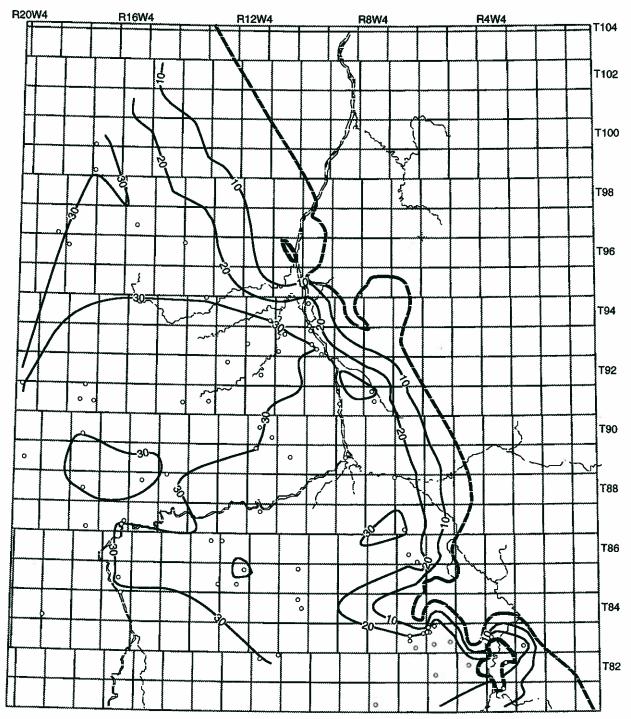
mudstones alternating with dark greenish grey calcareous shale; and an upper unit consisting of greyish green to greenish grey, faintly laminated calcareous shale, containing thin, brachiopod-rich beds (Figure 7). The Firebag Member maintains a uniform thickness of about 50 m throughout the study area. Norris (1963) describes sections along the Athabasca and Clearwater rivers where Firebag strata crop out.

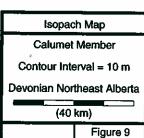
Calumet Member

The Firebag Member is overlain by the Calumet Member, a dominantly limestone bearing unit within the Waterways succession. Although the Calumet Member is remarkably uniform in thickness throughout the region, lithologies are variable. They consist of variably argillaceous, skeletal, nodular lime mudstones and wackestones interbedded with greyish green calcareous shales. Calumet strata become increasingly argillaceous from southeast to northwest (Figure 8). The thickest and cleanest limestones occur south of township 90. West of the erosional subcrop belt the Calumet Member maintains its 30 m thickness, but within the confines of the subcrop belt it thins to a zero edge along a northwest trend (Figure 9). Fossiliferous limestones of the member crop out in several places along a stretch of the Clearwater River, and at one location on the Athabasca River (Norris, 1973).

Christina Member

Greenish grey to greyish green calcareous shales of the Christina Member conformably overlie the Calumet Member. The upper section contains minor interbeds of argillaceous lime mudstone and occasional thin, skeletal wackestone and packstone beds. Several hardground surfaces, commonly littered with blackened clasts and skeletal remains, are found within this unit, some of which can be correlated over lengthy distances. The Christina succession is about 25 m thick throughout the study area. Portions of the Christina Member are exposed on the banks of the Christina and Athabasca rivers (Norris, 1973).





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Figure 9. Isopach of the Calumet Member

Moberly Member

The Moberly Member conformably overlies the Christina Member. Lithologies consist of variably argillaceous, nodular to lenticular bedded lime mudstones, skeletal wackestones, and shale, with some thin, skeletal packstone interbeds. A prominent zone, unique to the Waterways strata within the study area, consists of stromatoporoid rudstones, bindstones and floatstones. The zone is found within a clean, blocky carbonate unit situated at the base of the Moberly Member (Figure 8). Several pronounced hardground surfaces, correlatable throughout the area, can be used to subdivide Moberly strata into smaller mappable units. These discontinuities are sharp, commonly blackened and highlighted by different sediment types above and below. The Moberly Member is about 60 m thick and thins to a zero edge along its northwest-trending subcrop belt in the central region (Figure 10). The succession crops out at numerous locations along the Athabasca, Clearwater, MacKay, and Muskeg rivers (Norris, 1973).

Mildred Member

The Moberly Member is conformably overlain by the Mildred, the uppermost member of the Waterways Formation. Variably argillaceous, nodular lime mudstones and calcareous shales characterize this unit. West of the Mildred subcrop belt the succession maintains a uniform thickness of 40 to 45 m. In the western part of the map area, the Mildred Member is conformably overlain by the Upper Devonian Cooking Lake Formation.

Woodbend Group

Strata of the Woodbend Group conformably overly the Beaverhill Lake Group in northeast Alberta. Thick, clean, limestones of the Cooking Lake Formation overly the Waterways Formation in the west. The Cooking Lake Formation, in turn, is overlain by shales and limestones of the Ireton Formation. The Grosmont Formation, consisting of limestones, dolomites and minor anhydrite, cap Ireton strata.

Structural Geology

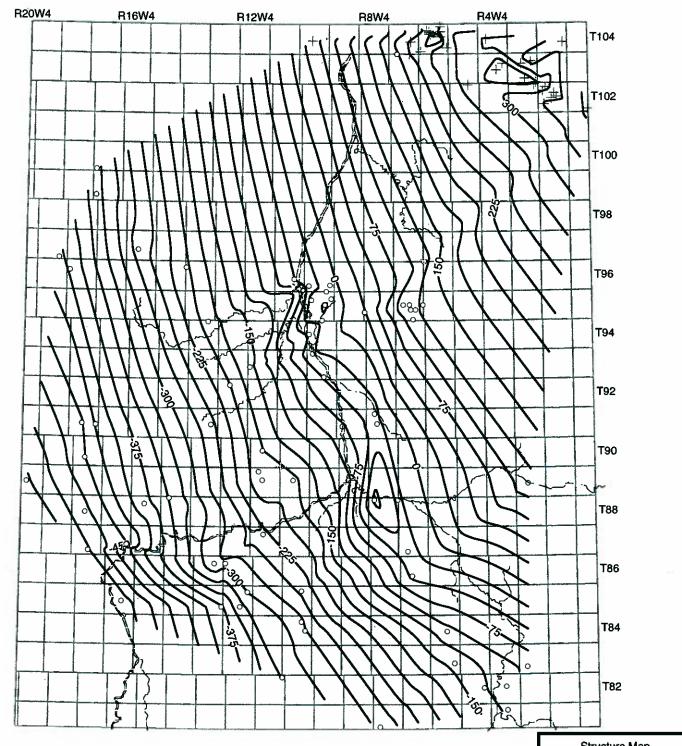
Devonian and Cretaceous sedimentary sequences form two eastwardly converging sedimentary wedges. The Devonian wedge rests on the Precambrian cratonic platform. A Cretaceous sedimentary wedge caps the Devonian succession. Devonian strata thus are bounded by two regional unconformities; at the base by the Precambrian basement surface, and at the top by the sub-Cretaceous unconformity (Figures 11 and 12). The Precambrian basement served as a platform onto which Paleozoic sediments onlapped. The upper bounding unconformity is formed on an erosionally bevelled block of west dipping Middle to Upper Devonian strata, resulting in a series of northwest trending subcrop belts that increase in age to the east (Figure 13). Structural features specific to the Devonian succession include regional tilting, unconformities, salt collapse, karsting, faulting and folding. These features are often reflected within the architecture of the overlying Cretaceous units, especially features related to tectonic events that remained active during the Cretaceous period.

Basement

The Precambrian basement surface in northeast Alberta dips to the southwest at 4-5 m/km (Petroleum Geology and Basin Analysis Group, 1991). Localized irregularities on the basement surface interrupt an otherwise uniform regional dip (Figure 11). Although sparse, basement control in the central and northeast areas suggests the presence of regional, northeast trending lineament sets. Undoubtedly, other locally elevated and depressed regions exist but remain hidden due to poor subsurface control.

Elk Point Group

The resultant structural features within the Elk Point Group are due to a combination of tectonic, depositional, and post-depositional solution processes. Structure on the lowermost Contact Rapids Formation generally mimics the Precambrian basement



Structure Map

Top Precambrian basement

Contour Interval = 25 m

Devonian Northeast Alberta

(40 km)

Figure 11. Structure on the Precambrian basement

(40 Kill)		
	Figure 11	
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(Figure 14). Two highs apparent on the basement surface in the south-central region are also reflected on the top of the Contact Rapids Formation. A localized structural high in the southeast likely influenced carbonate deposition within the overlying Winnipegosis Formation.

Structure on top of the Winnipegosis Formation is more variable than the preceding surfaces (Figure 15). Depositional processes within the formation reflect structural deviations from the underlying Contact Rapids Formation. Significant structural highs exist in the north-central and southeast region. These elevated highs along with other more subtle paleotopographic relief commonly reflect biohermal buildups within the area. A north-south reef trend borders the eastern margin of the study area. Other localized buildups occur west of the main reef trend.

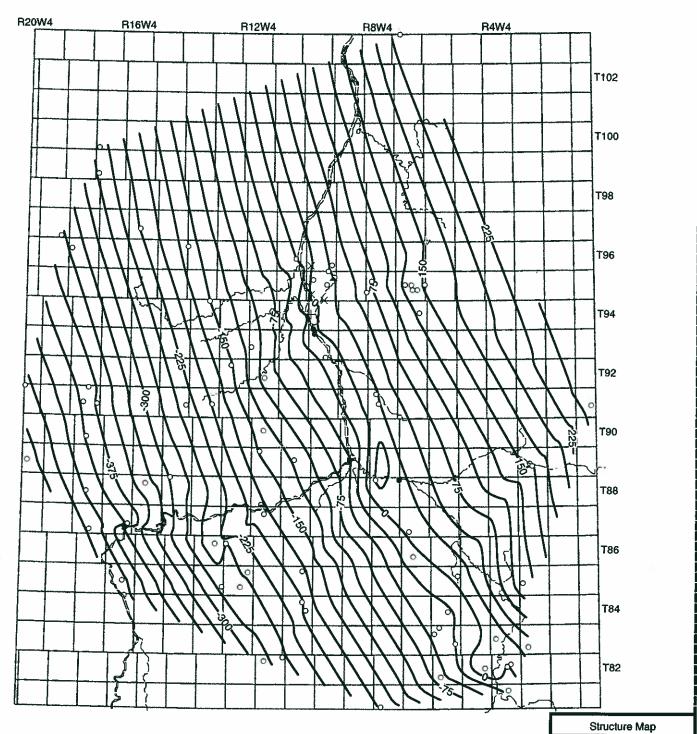
The top of the Elk Point Group is marked by the thin, latterly extensive Watt Mountain Formation. Structure on the Watt Mountain surface shows a uniform dip from the central region to the southwest, with a northwest-southeast strike coincident with underlying Elk Point units (Figure 16). In the central region the surface flattens and drops, then continues updip to the northeast at a rate similar to the southwest. Structural flattening in the central region defines the salt dissolution subcrop belt within the Prairie Formation. A southwest migration of the salt dissolution front resulted in tectonic downwarping and often collapse of the overlying Beaverhill Lake Group.

Beaverhill Lake Group

Calumet Member, Waterways Formation

Structure on the Calumet Member depicts a homoclinal surface that rises uniformly from southwest to northeast until the central region of the study area, where elevations flatten, reverse, then continue to rise to the subcrop edge (Figure 17). The structural rollover defines the western edge of the salt solution subcrop. Depth to the top of the





Top Contact Rapids Fm.

Contour Interval = 25 m

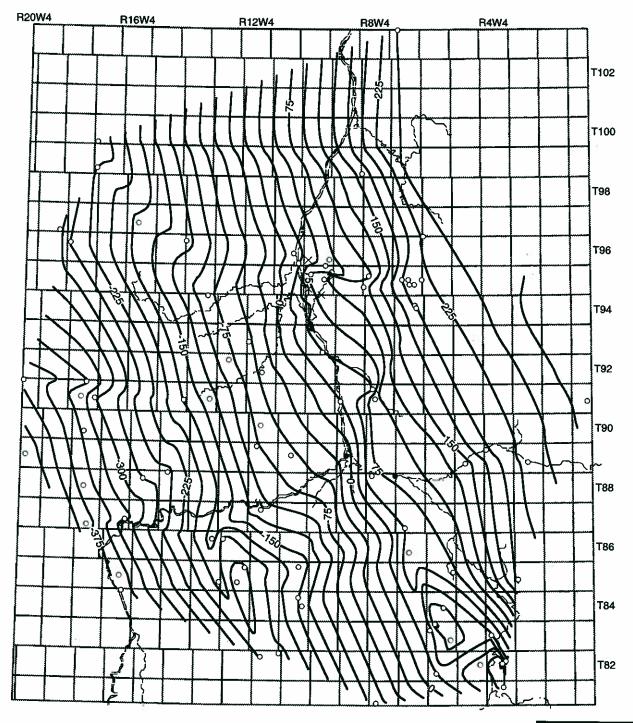
Devonian Northeast Alberta

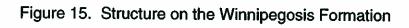
Devoluti Notificast Alberta

(40 km)

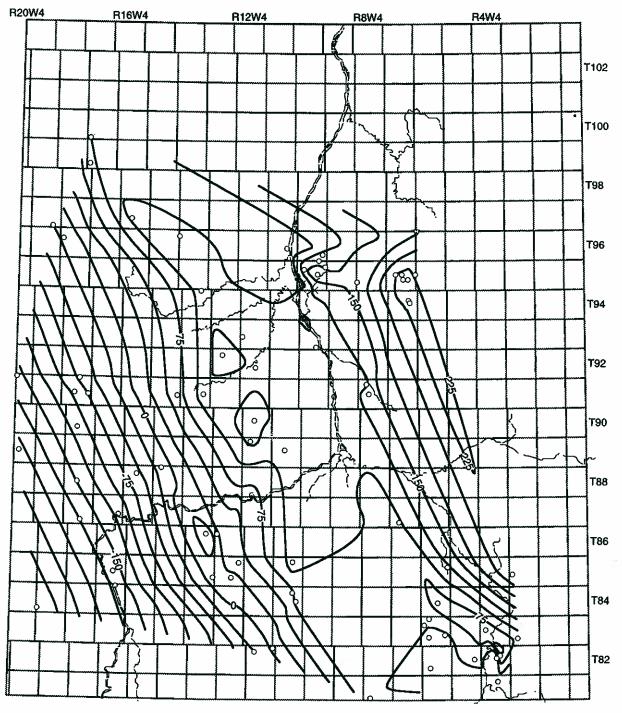
Figure 14 3/21/95 1250000

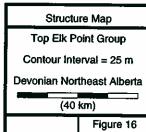
Figure 14. Structure on the Contact Rapids Formation





Structure Map	
Top Winnipegosis Formation	
Contour Interval = 25 m	
Devonian Northeast Alberta	
(40 km)	
	Figure 15
Date:3/21/95	1250000

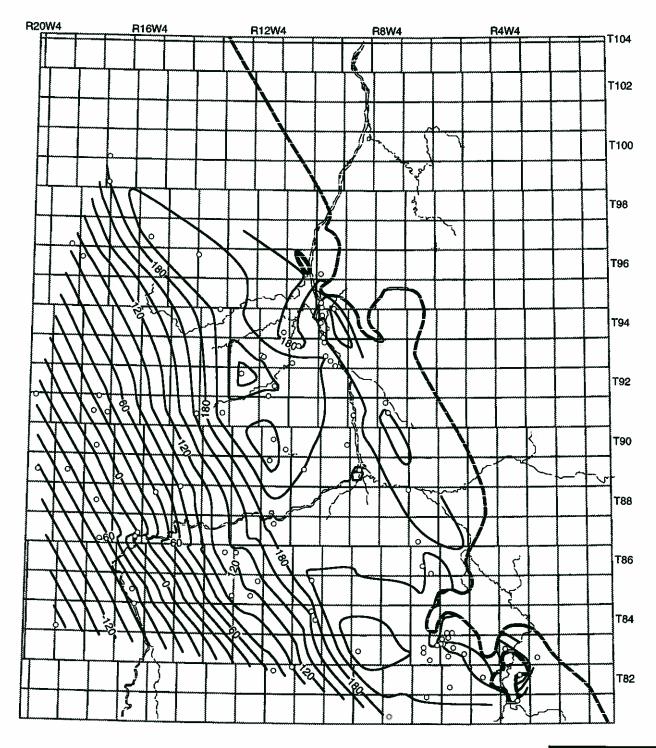


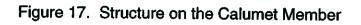


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Figure 16. Structure on the Elk Point Group





Structure Map	
Top Calumet Mbr	
Contour Interval = 20 m	
Devonian Northeast Alberta	
(40 km)	
. `	Figure 17
Date:3/21/95	1250000

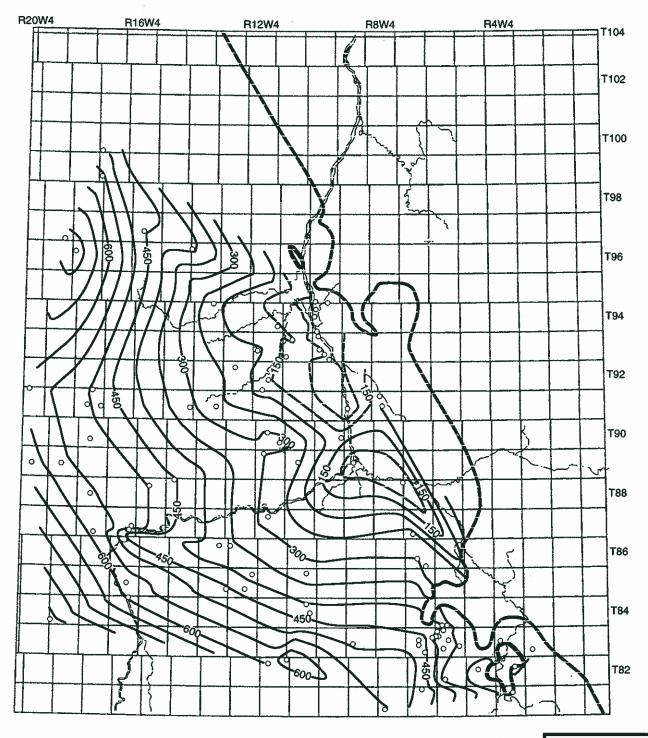
Calumet Member ranges from greater than 800 m in the southwest to surficial exposures along the Athabasca and Clearwater rivers (Figure 18).

Moberly Member, Waterways Formation

Similar to the Calumet Member, the structure on the Moberly Member depicts a surface elevation rising uniformly to an elevation of 240 m, where the surface is intersected by the sub-Cretaceous unconformity. The eroded Moberly Member surface continues to rise to over 300 m elevation, then rolls over and becomes structurally complex to the erosional subcrop edge. (Figure 19). Drill depth to the Moberly Member ranges from greater than 700 m to surface exposures near the subcrop edge (Figure 20). Moberly outcrops commonly display low amplitude, anticlinal folding along the Clearwater, MacKay, Dover, and Muskeg rivers and the north-south stretch of the Athabasca River below Fort McMurray. This folding is believed to be due to salt solution. Along the east-west stretch of the Athabasca River above Fort McMurray (west of the salt solution limit), the Moberly outcrops show none of this folding.

Sub-Cretaceous Unconformity

Several pronounced topographic features exist on the sub-Cretaceous unconformity. These include the Grosmont High in the west, a high on Beaverhill Lake strata in the central region, and an extensive valley complex in the east (Figure 12). These structural anomalies have a general northward trend and are primarily the result of differential erosion of variably argillaceous carbonate units and tectonic movement resulting from Elk Point salt dissolution. The Grosmont High is a regional, northwest trending set of ridges formed of resistive carbonates of the Grosmont Formation. The ridges are in the extreme western portion of the study area and beyond. East of the Grosmont High another topographic high, formed of Beaverhill Lake strata, borders a large north-northwest trending valley system (Figure 12). The linear depression can also be viewed more subtly from the structure on top of the Watt Mountain Formation



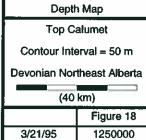
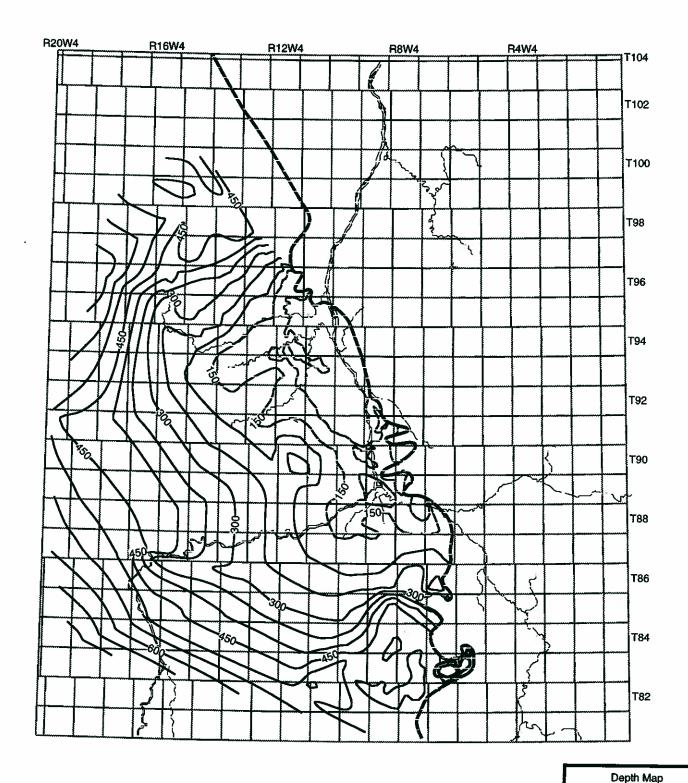
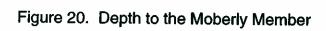


Figure 18.	Depth to	the Calumet	Member
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- opur map	
Top Moberly Member	
Contour Interval = 50 m	
Devonian Northeast Alberta	
(40 km)	
	Figure 20
Date:3/21/95	1250000

(top of the Elk Point Group, Figure 16). Valley incision, in places, cuts deeply into strata of the Beaverhill Lake Group. Leaching of salt due to mobile, subsurface fluids resulted in the downwarping and collapse of overlying members of the Waterways Formation. The eastern limit of the Athabasca River valley generally coincides with the present day salt solution edge of the Prairie Formation. Another salt solution edge, situated farther north (Hamilton, 1971), stems from the removal of salt from the underlying Cold Lake Formation (Figure 13).

Topography on the sub-Cretaceous unconformity is best defined by a residual map (Figure 21). The residual map is a product derived from trend surface analysis of the sub-Cretaceous unconformity surface. Trend surfaces are simplified representations of complex surfaces expressed algebraically in equation form. Trend surface analysis separates map data into a regional component and a local component. The regional component consists of large scale fluctuations and the local component of small scale variables. In northeast Alberta the regional component includes broad structural features such as the regional dip of the basin. Superimposed over the regional component are localized positive and negative anomalies (topographic highs and lows) often called residuals. The residuals are derived by subtracting the regional component from the actual sub-Cretaceous unconformity data. Areas of karst development within and proximal to the valley system are also mappable features.

Karsting

Active karsting in northeast Alberta is often reflected at surface by sinkholes, saline lakes and larger scale depressed regions. Karst development likely progressed coevally with the southwest migration of the Prairie Formation salt solution edge. Surficial mapping by Bayrock (1971) and Bayrock and Reimchen (1974) have identified regions containing sinkholes and locally depressed areas paralleling the two salt solution edges. The sinkholes often appear as small, circular ponds and may occur as single holes or in swarms. Occasionally, drill holes intersect these sinkholes,

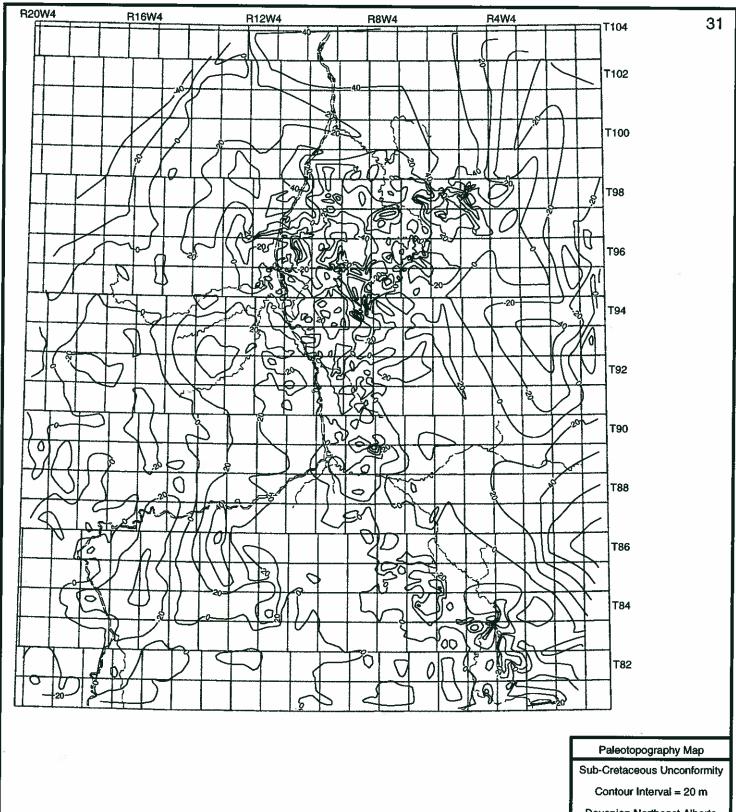


Figure 21. Paleotopography on the sub-Cretaceous unconformity

Devonian Nor	theast Alberta	
(50 km)		
	Figure 21	
3/21/95	1250000	

some of which contain brecciated limestone intermixed with oil sand from the overlying McMurray Formation (Tckarsky, pers. comm.). A detailed log of one drill hole that cored through a sinkhole is included in the Appendix (Shell Eatha EV 12-6-99-8W4), describing the lithologies and karst features encountered in the Devonian section.

Faults

Four postulated fault zones, two on the Precambrian basement and two within the Devonian succession, are described in the literature. Hackbarth and Nastasa (1973) hypothesized two fault zones on the Precambrian basement, a minor one in the southwest and a more extensive lineament coinciding with the Prairie Evaporite salt scarp (Figure 22). The fault in the southwest, is based solely upon a noticeable offset along the structural trend. Evidence for the larger fault is based upon vertical relief, gravity maps, and proposed faulting within overlying units along the same trend. Carrigy (1959) suggests post-Beaverhill Lake activity along a northwest trending fault that tangentially approaches the Prairie Evaporite salt solution edge in the north. Vertical movement of about 60 m along the fault is proposed. The fault movement combined with a post-Cretaceous collapse of a further 60 m is thought to account for the deep trough known as the Bitumount basin (Figure 21). Carrigy (1959) also suggests an alternative explanation, by which the Prairie Evaporite thickens by 60 m northeast of the proposed fault. Martin and Jamin (1963) describe a fourth, northeast trending, strike-slip fault zone of Devonian age that traverses the entire study area. Both the previously described ridges comprising Grosmont and Beaverhill Lake strata are thought to be laterally offset by the fault. Martin and Jamin (1963) also suggest that several valley trends, particularly those with very steep sides, may be related to localized faulting and fracture systems.

Additional faults are postulated in this report based on the subsurface mapping data. Structure contouring on some of the map units reveal a number of anomalous linear features that appear to be due to structural offsets or discontinuities. The features are

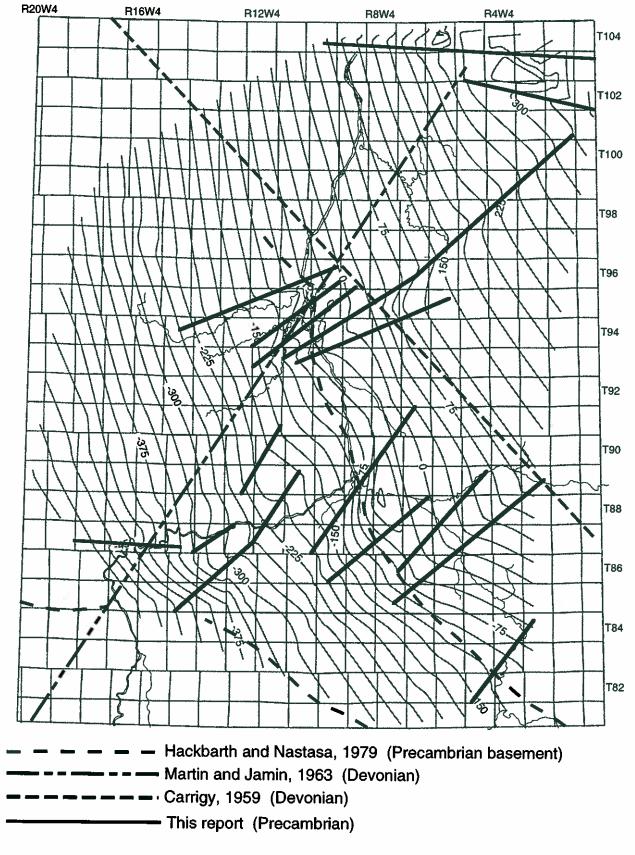


Figure 22. Structure on the Precambrian basement, with postulated fault lineaments superimposed.

seen most distinctly on the Precambrian basement surface (Figure 22), but some are visible on overlying map units as well, at least up to the Contact Rapids surface, and are most readily explained by faulting. Above the Contact Rapids, irregularities on the surfaces caused by biohermal reef growth (Winnipegosis Formation, Figure 15) or by salt dissolution (Watt Mountain Formation, Figure 16) would tend to mask the effects of faulting even if it extended up into these horizons. Thus, if the features seen on Figure 22 are indeed faults, the age of the faulting is difficult to establish. At least some are Devonian in age, possibly reactivations of basement faults that existed prior to Devonian sedimentation.

The contour pattern shows a distinct linearity to the features, in directions consistent with fault patterns observed for the Peace River Arch structure (O'Connell et al, 1990). The pattern suggests a series of horst-graben features in a general northeast-southwest alignment, with fault boundaries extending 50 km or more in length. This also is consistent with interpretations of the Peace River Arch, the structural axis of which aligns with the study area. Any faults that may exist perpendicular to those indicated (i.e., faults running northwest-southeast) would not show up in the contour pattern because of being parallel to the regional strike.

Precise mapping of faulting in northeast Alberta is prohibited by the sparse well control. The evidence strongly indicates the existence of faults, but until additional drilling data become available and are coupled with new and advanced geophysical data, the exact locations and nature of the faults will remain speculative.

Folding

Folding in the form of small scale domes and basins within strata of the Waterways Formation can be observed in many places along the Athabasca and Clearwater rivers. These small scale flexures have amplitudes of 15 to 30 m and lengths of 100 m up to 1600 m (Norris, 1963, Carrigy, 1959). As stated previously, the folds are believed to be caused by salt solution along the regional solution front of the Prairie Evaporite salt.

Summary

The overall structure for the area reflects a regional bulging upward. This is best displayed on the Precambrian basement surface (Figure 22) but is seen also on higher Devonian horizons (Figures 14, 15). The bulging is apparent from the convex, arcuate pattern of the structure contours, which in a basinal configuration (i.e., during Devonian deposition) would be expected to be straighter or even concaved slightly. The bulging involved some differential uplift in a series of horst-like features, with the bulk of the uplift occurring sometime after Devonian deposition.

Outcrop work

The present day river network of northeast Alberta incises deeply into Cretaceous strata, and in places downcuts to the underlying sub-Cretaceous unconformity. As a result, several localized exposures of Middle and Upper Devonian strata crop out along the Athabasca drainage system. Due to limited subsurface control below the sub-Cretaceous unconformity these exposures become an important addition when resolving the stratigraphic architecture of the Devonian succession.

Most of the Devonian strata that crop out in northeast Alberta have been well documented by Norris (1963, 1983) and Carrigy (1959). Surface exposures confined to the current study area include sections within Winnipegosis and Waterways formations. The Winnipegosis Formation crops out along the Clearwater River near the Saskatchewan border and on the lower reaches of the Marguerite and Firebag rivers. Members of the Waterways Formation crop out along the Athabasca, Clearwater, MacKay, Muskeg, Steepbank and Dover rivers.

In all, seventy-two Devonian outcrops were described in northeast Alberta. Many sections were sampled for limestone quality assessment and for geochemical characterization. Most of the accessible sections consist of limestones from the Moberly Member of the Waterways Formation. The Moberly Member is best exposed

along the MacKay and Muskeg rivers. The Waterways and Winnipegosis formations are exposed in sequence (top to bottom) from the west along the Athabasca River (west of Fort McMurray) to the east along the Clearwater River.

Some of the main outcrop sections are presented graphically in Figures 23 and 24 (in pockets), showing their spatial and stratigraphic relationships to the geologic column as defined in selected wells nearby. These wells are any of the five reference wells logged in detail for this study and included in the Appendix (along with one well that intersected a sinkhole).

Conclusions and Economic Considerations

The economic mineral interest behind this study initially was industrial limestone. Quality assessment of the limestones was not part of this study and will be presented in another MDA report. However, from a stratigraphic approach the study establishes that the best limestone potential for the area lies primarily with the Moberly Member, and secondarily with the Calumet Member, of the Waterways Formation. Although both members have significant argillaceous sections, they include several relatively clean limestone beds. Both members have limited surface exposure with few prospective sites for quarrying, although the Moberly Member has a decided advantage in that regard.

Limestone potential for this area in the future may be considered from the standpoint of underground mining recovery in the shallow subsurface. The high-purity limestone beds could be mined selectively underground as nearly flat-lying deposits having virtually unlimited extent. Figures 17 and 20 are depth contour maps of the Calumet and Moberly members respectively and can serve as limestone resource maps for this area.

The potential of Devonian limestones in northeast Alberta for hosting metallic mineral deposits was under active exploration at the time of writing. This exploration was predicated initially on assays, reported by industry, of anomalous gold and other

precious metals in limestone samples from the area, indicating possible mineralization (Dufresne et al, 1994). Subsequently, analytical results were published that confirmed the presence of gold and assorted metal alloys in Devonian limestones and other rocks of the area, although in minute quantities (Feng and Abercrombie, 1994). With continuing exploration, an integral part of the effort has involved seeking an explanation for emplacement of the metals. The models being promulgated generally cite faulting as a major factor, the faults serving as conduits for mineralizing fluids invading the sediments. If this should prove to be correct, then the precise mapping of the faults referred to in a previous section becomes an important requirement of future studies.

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APPENDIX

Core Logs for Selected Wells

- 1. DDH 1R RICHARDSON 6-94-10W4
- 2. BC03 AOSTRA UTF 1-18-93-12W4
- 3. SYNCRUDE 05-26-9-1 AB6-9-93-10W4
- 4. BEAR RODEO 1 8-20-89-9W4
- 5. BEAR BILTMORE 1 7-11-87-17W4
- 6. SHELL EATHA EX 12-6-99-8W4

DDH-1R Richardson Property 6-94-10w4

Date logged: December 8, 1993

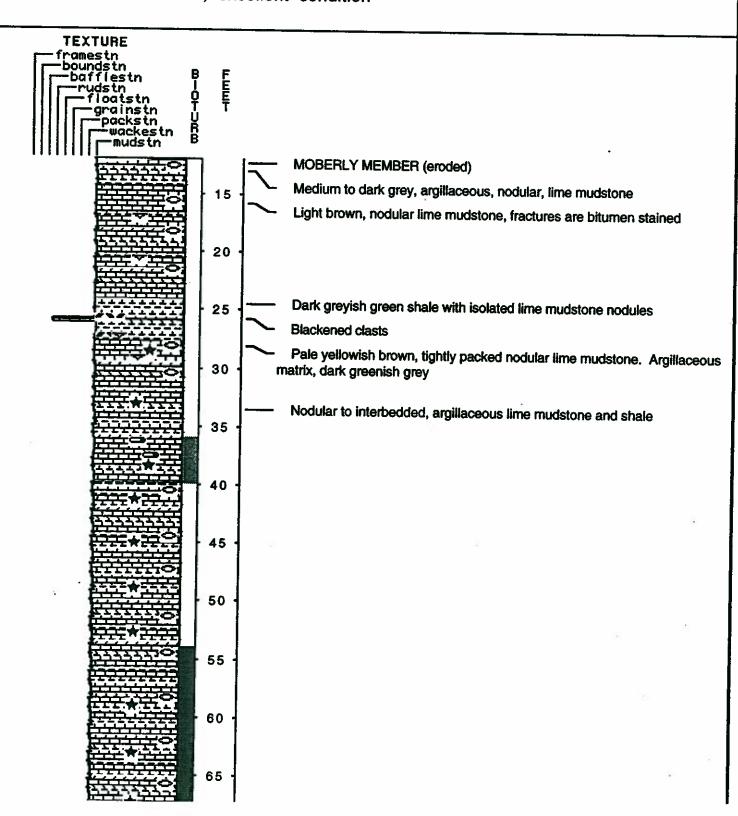
Logged by: D. K. Cotterill (Alberta Geological Survey)

Ground: 843.00 ft KB: 0.00 ft

Remarks: Cored Succesion: Moberly Member to Precambrian basement

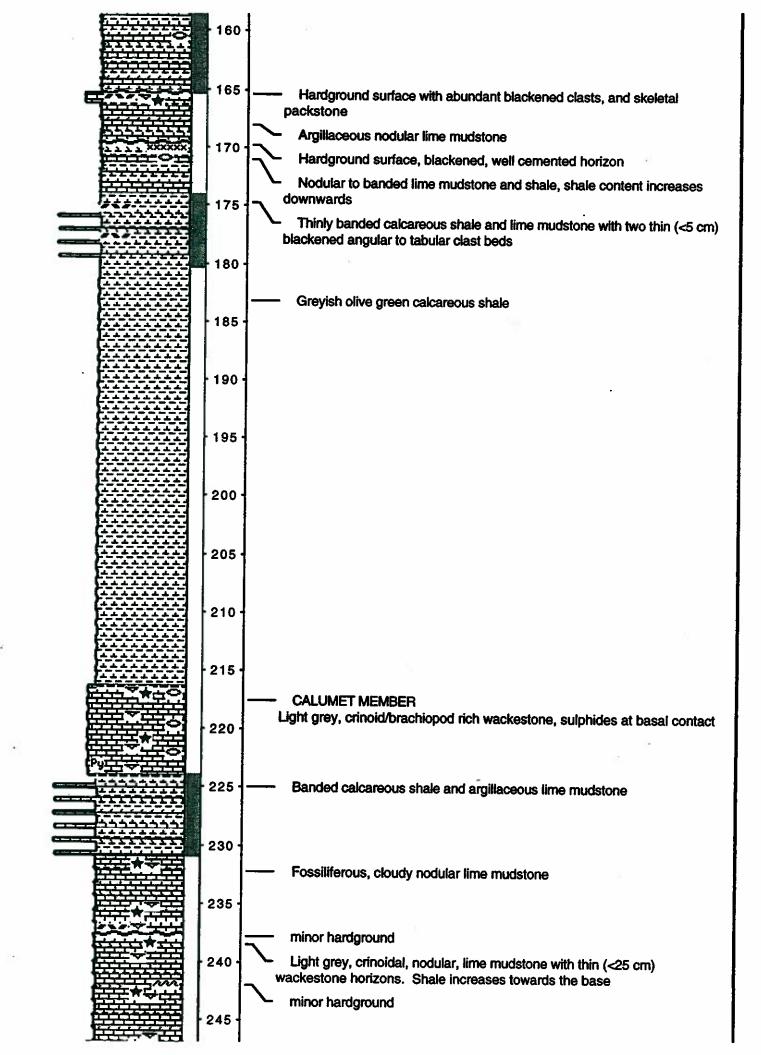
Logged Interval: Moberly Member to Precambrian basement

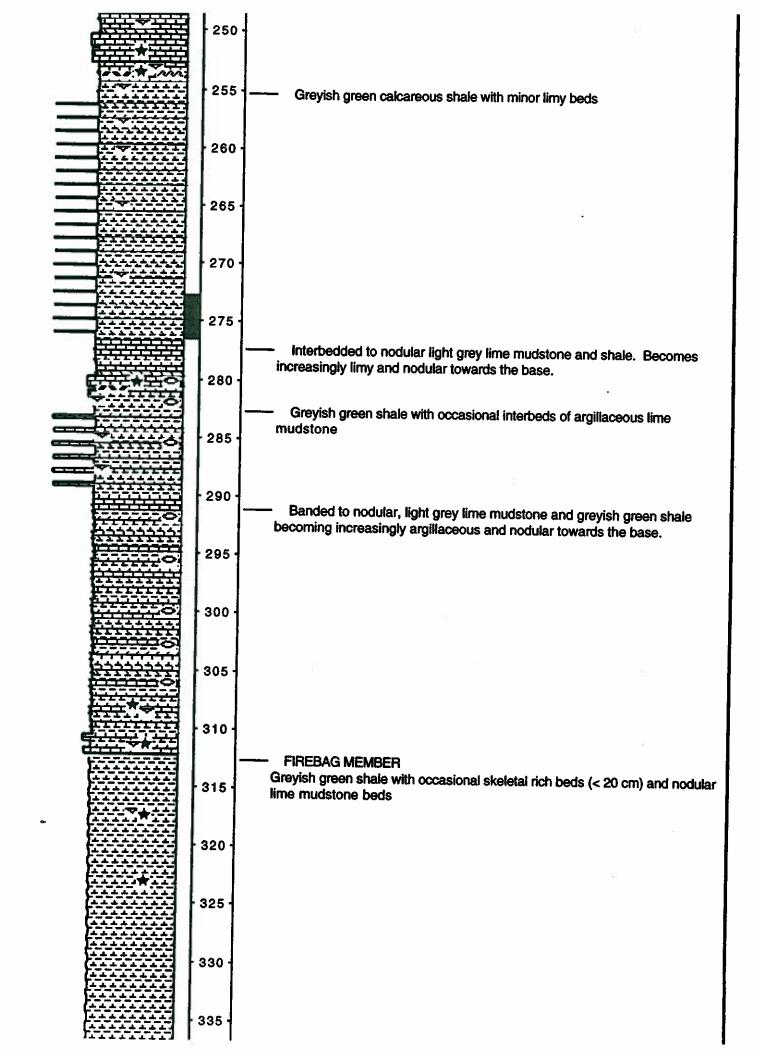
Core Location: MCRF Edmonton 2 1/2 inch core, excellent condition

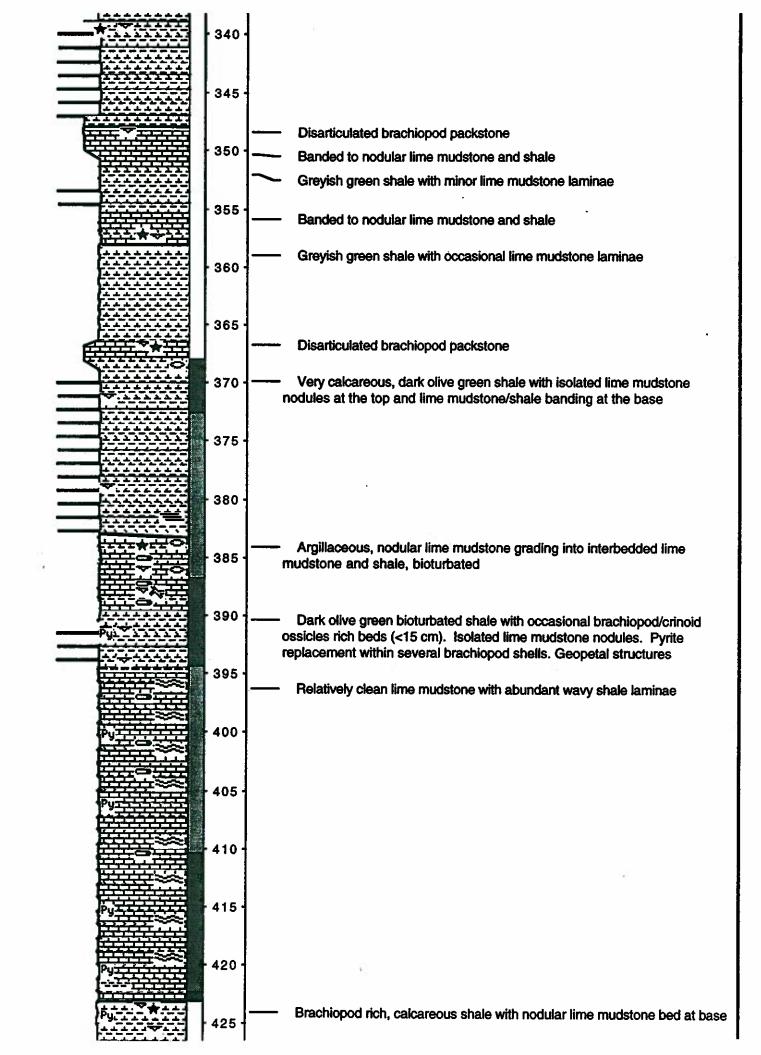


	70	
	1	Clean, pinkish grey, tightly packed, nodular wackestone
V:#2222	75	Hardground surface, razor sharp, abundat blackened clasts, and skeletal remains Brachiopod/crinoidal packstone
****	80	Dark brown, fossiliferous shale containing isolated lime mudstone nodules and two thin (< 20 cm) limestone beds
	85	*
	90	Light brown, nodular lime mudstone, becomes increasingly argillaceous
	95	towards the base Clean, pinkish grey, tightly packed nodular lime mudstone with occasional brachiopod wackestone beds
	100	•
	105	Hardground surface, blackened lime mudstone and clasts
	110	Very argillaceous, medium grey, nodular lime mudstone, less argillaceous at base Clean, yellowish grey, nodular lime mudstone
	115	
	120 -	Inclined hardground surface, abundant blackened grains and crinoid ossicles
	125 -	Dark olive green shale CHRISTINA MEMBER Hardground surface, blackened clasts and grains within brachiopod
****	130	packstone Tightly packed, light grey nodular lime mudstone, argillaceous matrix light olive green
	135 -	Hardground surface Crinoidal wackestone/packstone
	140 -	Hardground surface, large blackened clasts Greyish green calcareous shale with cloudy lime mudstone nodules, becomes increasingly limy towards base
	145	Argillaceous, crinoidal packstone, minor hardgrounds within, entire unit blackened
	150	Hardground surface Banded, light grey lime mudstone and medium green shale, with isolated lenses of (< 15 cm) of blackened clasts and nodular lime mudstone
	155	

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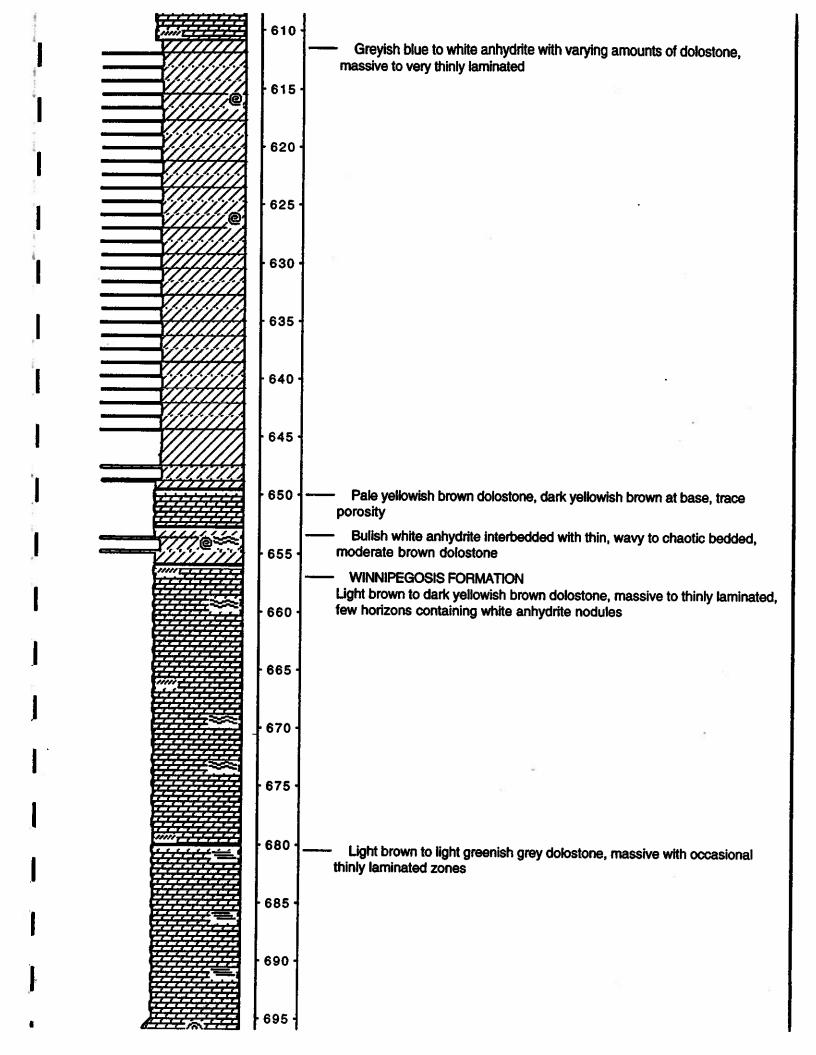


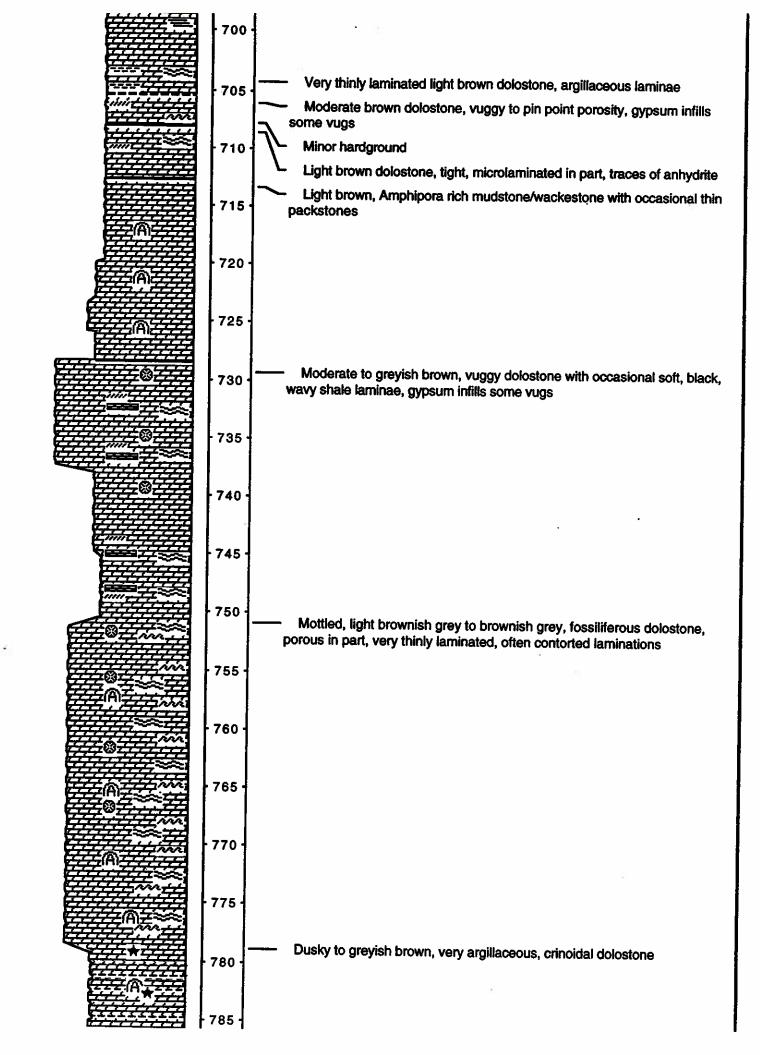


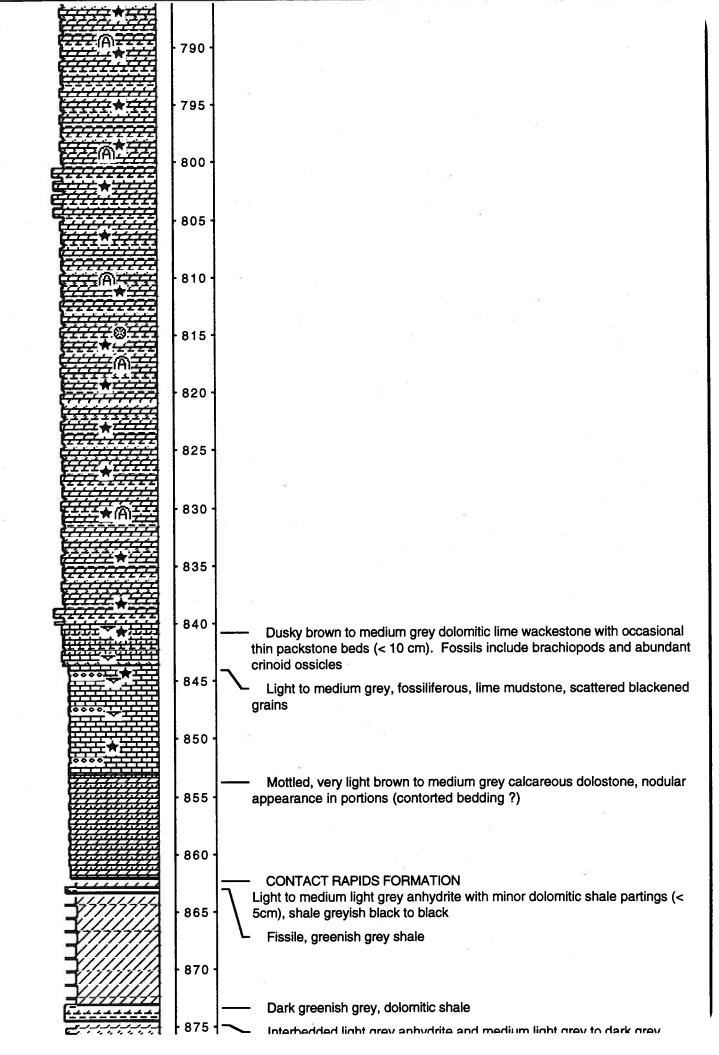


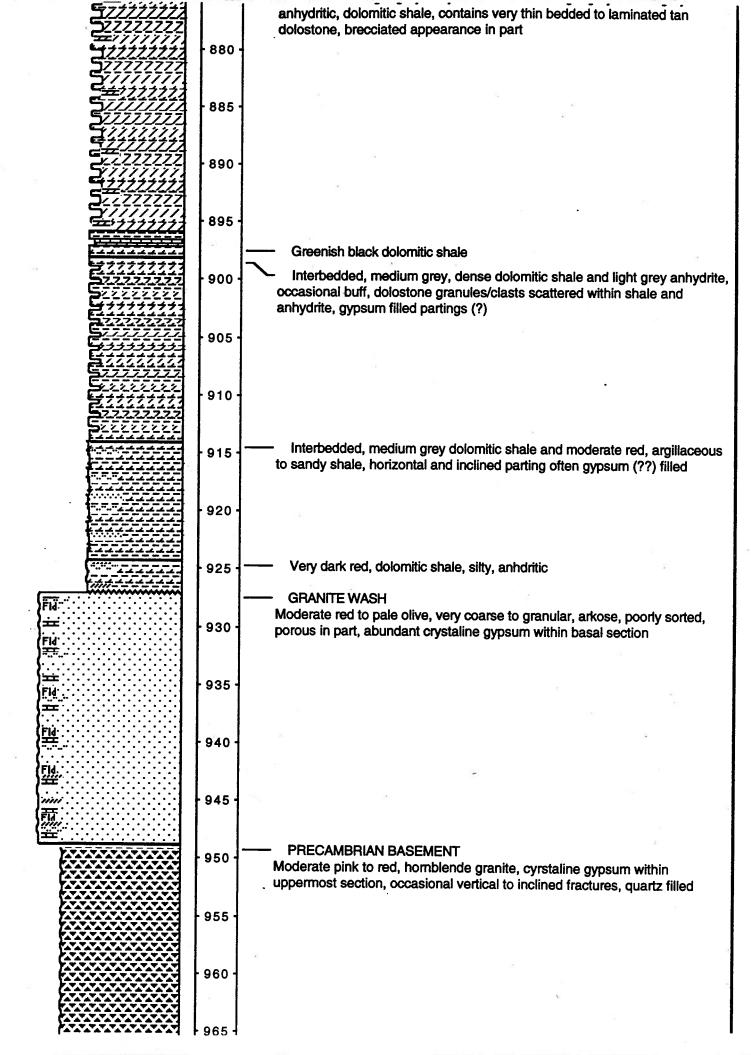
,		430	Nodular lime mudstone grading to interbedded lime mudstone and shale towards base
		405	—— Dark greenish grey, calcareous shale with occasional interbedded lime mudstone
34		435	2
		440	
		445	
		450	es .
		455	
		460	——————————————————————————————————————
		465	Shale color dark grey
		465	Dark grey, calcareous shale
		470 -	SLAVE POINT FORMATION Pale brown, brachiopod wackestone with occasional organic rich, dark brown shale
		475	Dark brown, organic rich, skeletal, slightly calcareous shale Pale brown lime mudstone, organic rich microlaminations throughout, rare gypsum crystals along vertical fractures, stylolitic
		- 480 -	Basal contactcreamy white, clean, lime mudstone overlying hardground
		485 -	containing blackened lime clasts
		403	Pale brown packstone/grainstone with creamy white lime laminations and organic rich, stylolites
		490 -	Microlaminated lime mudstone, light brown at top grading to light medium grey at the base, some vertical fractures, becomes increasingly dolomitic towards base.
		- 495 -	FORT VERMILION FORMATION Microlaminated dolostone, anhydritic, pale brown to medium grey
	(/////		Nodular to chicken wire textured, white to bluish white anhydrite with frequent shale and light brown dolostone laminations
		- 500 -	Massive whitish blue anhydrite grading downwards into fine nodular to chicken wire anhydrite and discontinuous light brown dolostone laminations
	Y!!!////	505 -	Light brown dolostone grading downwards to greyish brown, microlaminated and brecciated at top
			Bluish white to pearly white, nodular to chicken wire textured anhydrite
		510	Dark grey dolomitic shale, few anhydrite laminae Light brown and mediun grey, argillaceous dolostone, microlaminated
		- 515 -	throughout with occasional thin (< 5cm) brecciated horizons

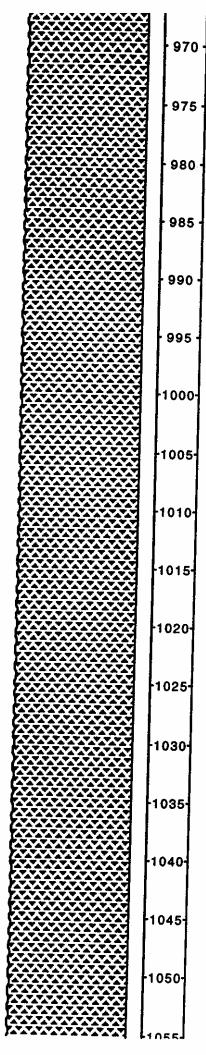
	[500]	WATT MOUNTAIN FORMATION
	520	Medium dark grey grading downwards in greyish green dolomitic shale, well lithified to soft and fissile.
	525	Argillaceous, light brown and medium grey dolostone capped by thin bed of nodular anhydrite, microlaminated, vertical fracture anhydrite filled
		Dark greyish green dolomitic shale
	.530	Pale brown dolostone with occasional dark brown shale laminae
	- 535 -	PRAIRIE EVAPORITE FORMATION Nodular to fine chicken textured, argillaceous, greenish white anhydrite grading downwards into white, nodular anhydrite intermixed with light brown dolostone
	540	
777777.@	545	Brecciated dolomitic shale, tabular to rectangular clasts, anhydrite filled vertical and sub-vertical fractures
	- 550 -	Nodular, very light grey, argillaceous, anhydrite grading downwards into cleaner, light brownish grey, high angle bedded anhydrite. Upper portion contains couple of dolomitic shale beds (< 20 cm) with fracture infilled anhydrite
	555	
**************************************	560	 Heavily brecciated, dark greenish grey, calcareous shale containing tabular to rectangular clasts of dolostone, limestone, and some nodular anhydrite, fractures anhydrite filled
527272727 57777777 57777776 57777776	565	Chaotically bedded, nodular anhydrite and dolomitic to calcareous dark greenish grey shale, abundant sub-vertical fractures infilled with anhydrite. Lower half contains abundant brecciated horizons, tabular to rectangular clasts
11111111 111111111	570	High angle bedded nodular anhydrite
7////@ /////@	575	
777777 27277777 27777777 27777777	580	
\$///77777 \$///777777 \$****/// \$*******	- 585 -	
	590	
	- 595	Very thinly laminated anhydrite and calcareous dolostone, white and very pale orange, argillaceous in part
	- 600	Massive to large, nodular, greyish blue to white anhydrite grading downwards into fine nodular to chicken wire anhydrite with increasing amounts of very thin dolostone laminae
	605	

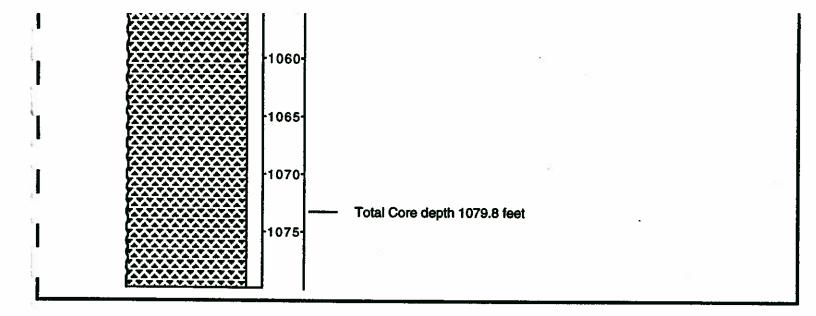












BC03 AOSTRA UTF 1-18-93-12w4

Date logged: December 6, 1993

Logged by: D. K. Cotterill (Alberta Geological Survey)

Ground: 428.02 m KB: 0.00 m

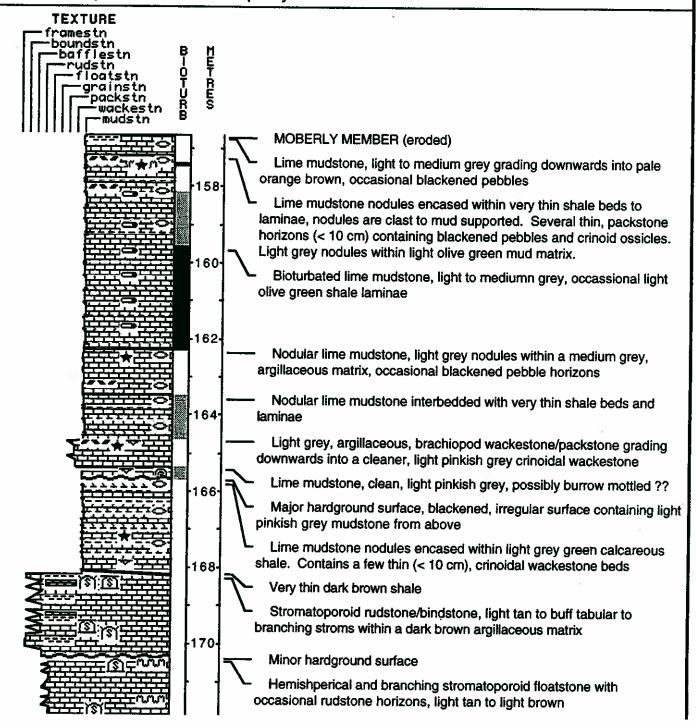
Remarks: Cored Succession: Lower Moberly to middle Calumet

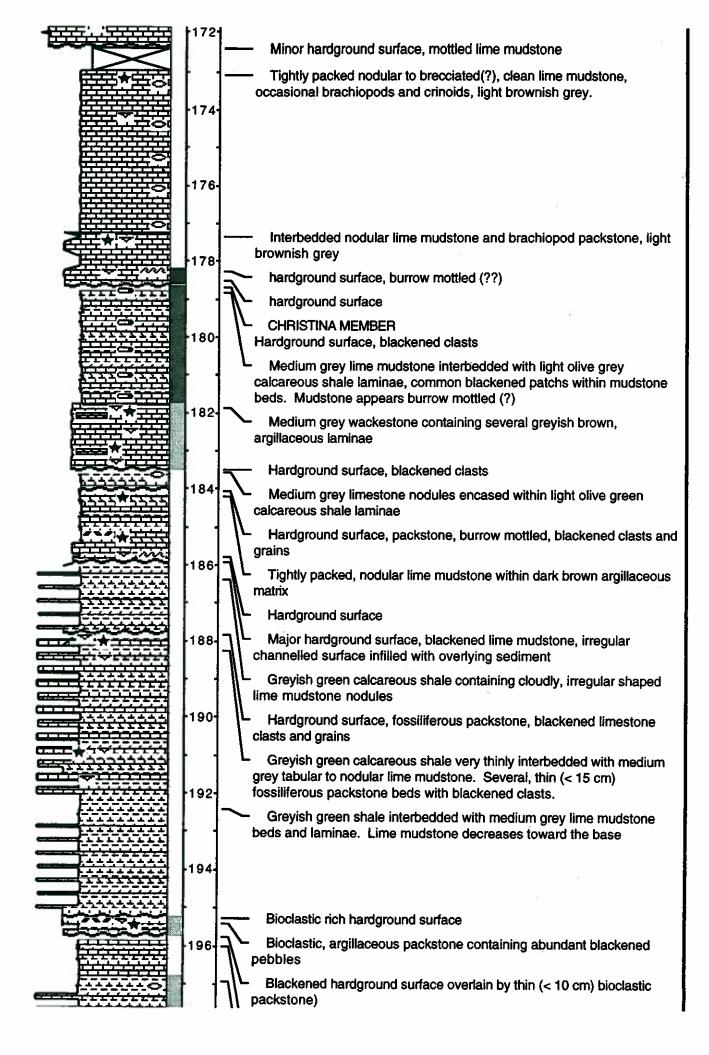
Logged Interval: Lower Moberly to middle Calumet

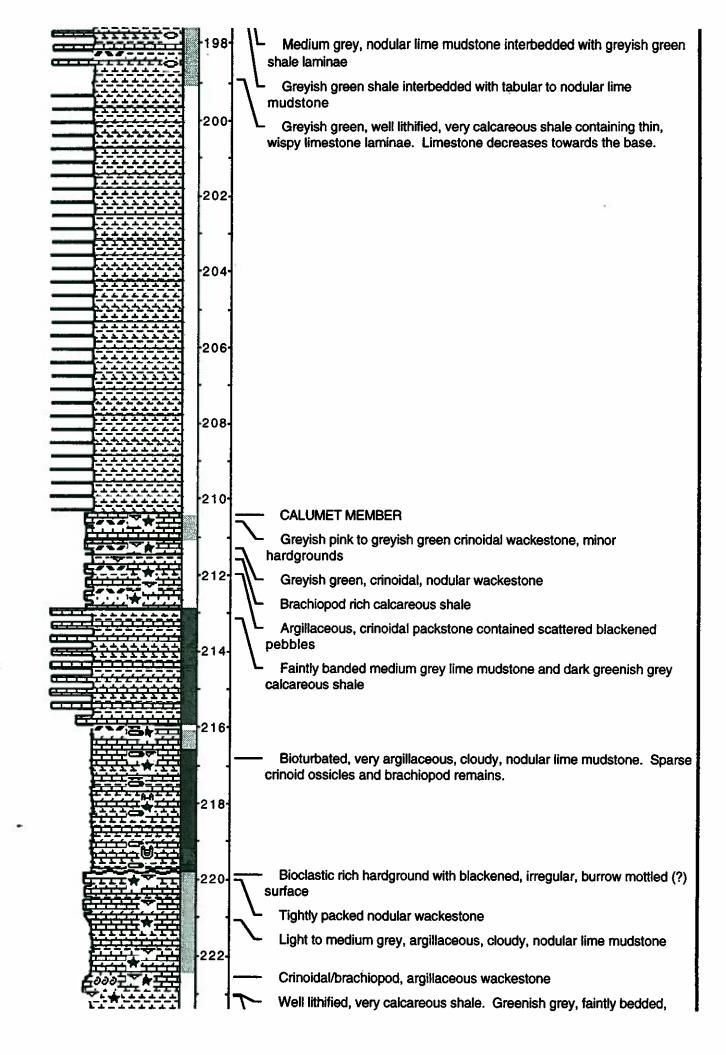
Core Location: UTF Fort McMurray

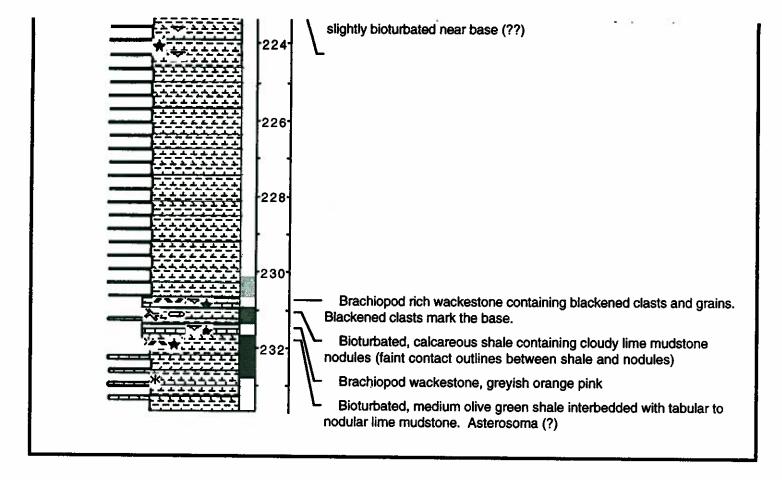
2 1/2 inch, slabbed

Sampled for limestone purity









SYNCRUDE 05-26-9-1 AB6-9-93-10w4

Date logged: January 4, 1994

Logged by: D. K. Cotterill (Alberta Geological Survey)

Ground: 0.00 m

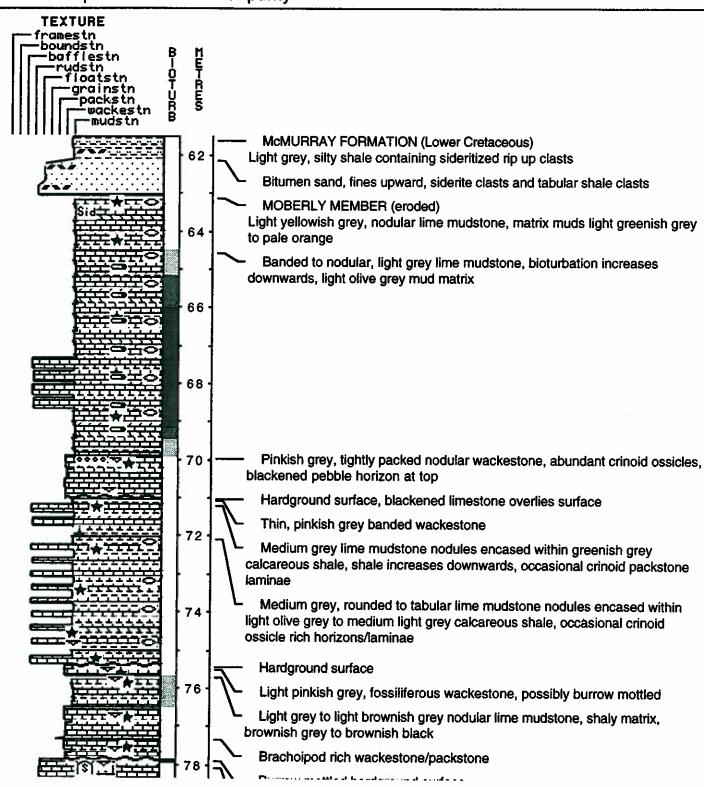
KB: 316.20 m

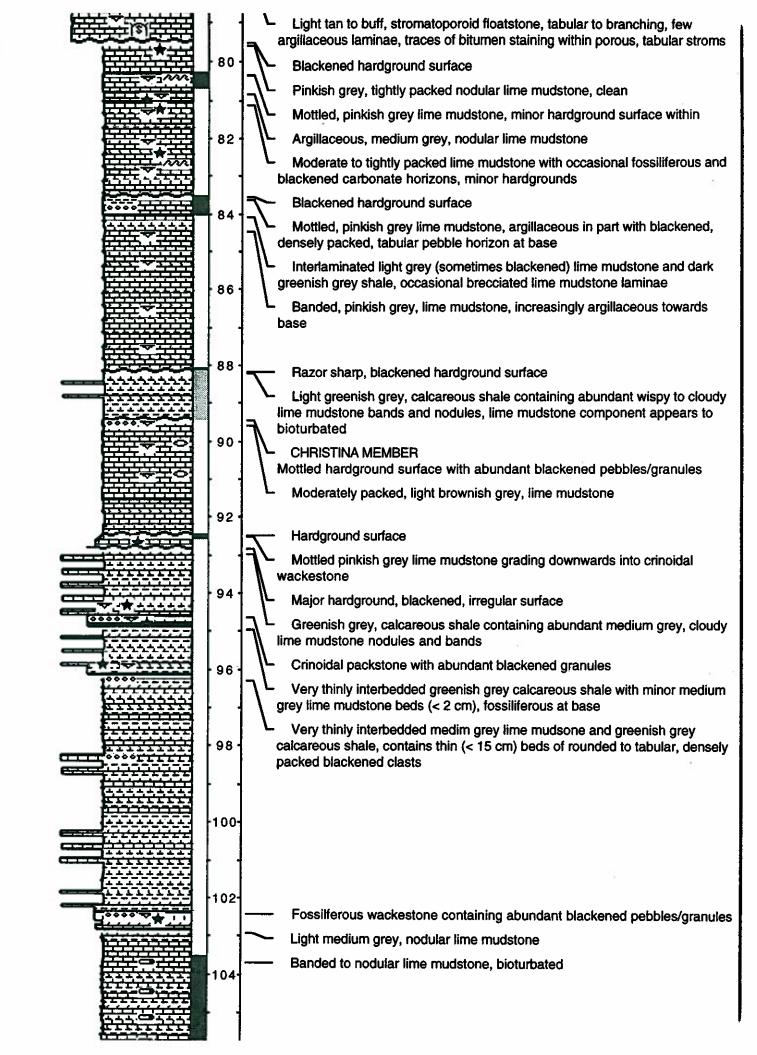
Remarks: Cored Succession: Middle Moberly to basal Firebag

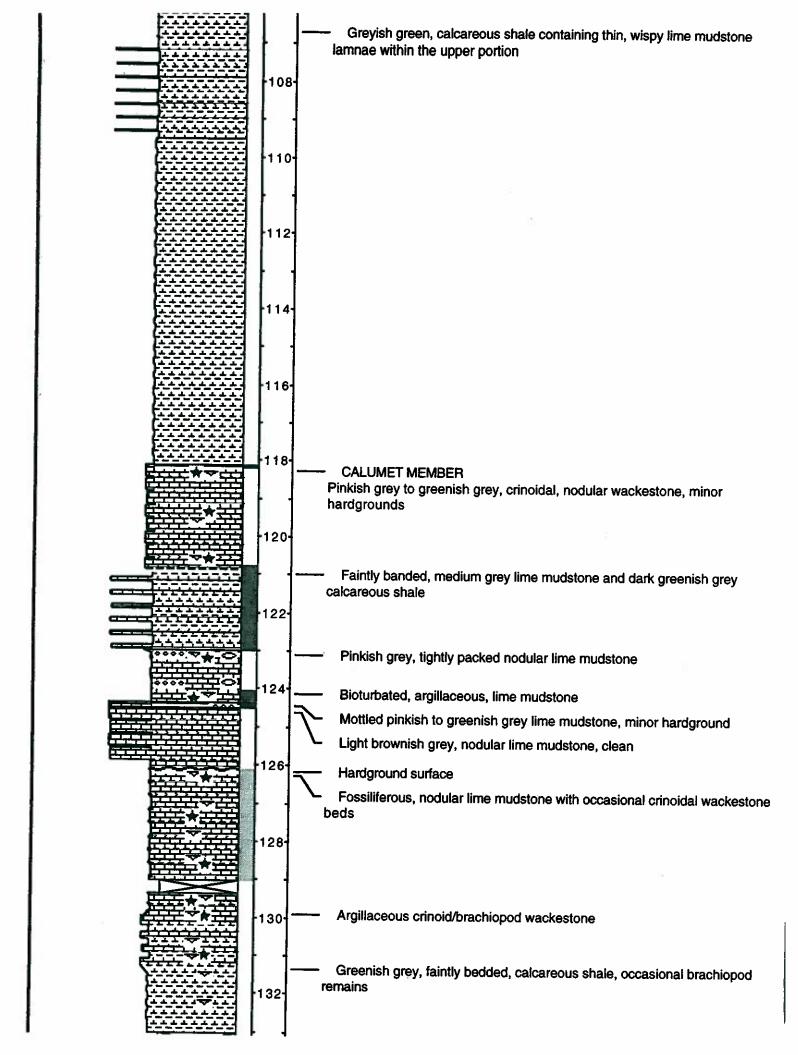
Logged Interval: Middle Moberly to basal Firebag

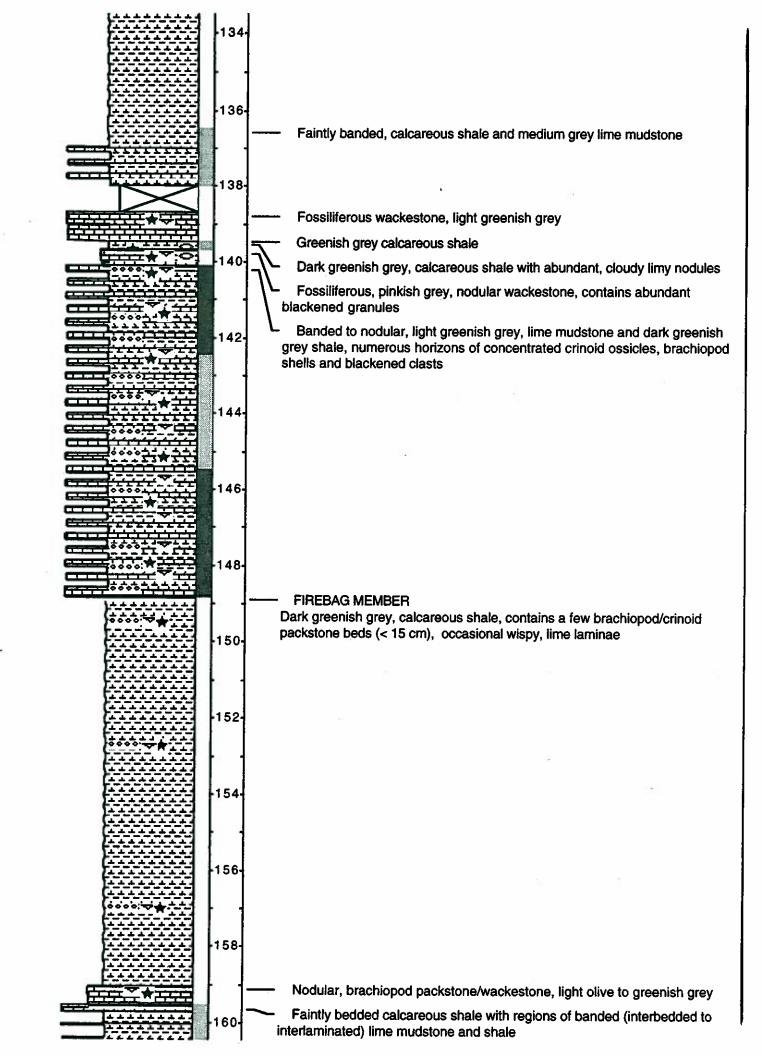
Core Location: ERCB Core Research Centre 2 1/2 inch, slabbed, excellent condition

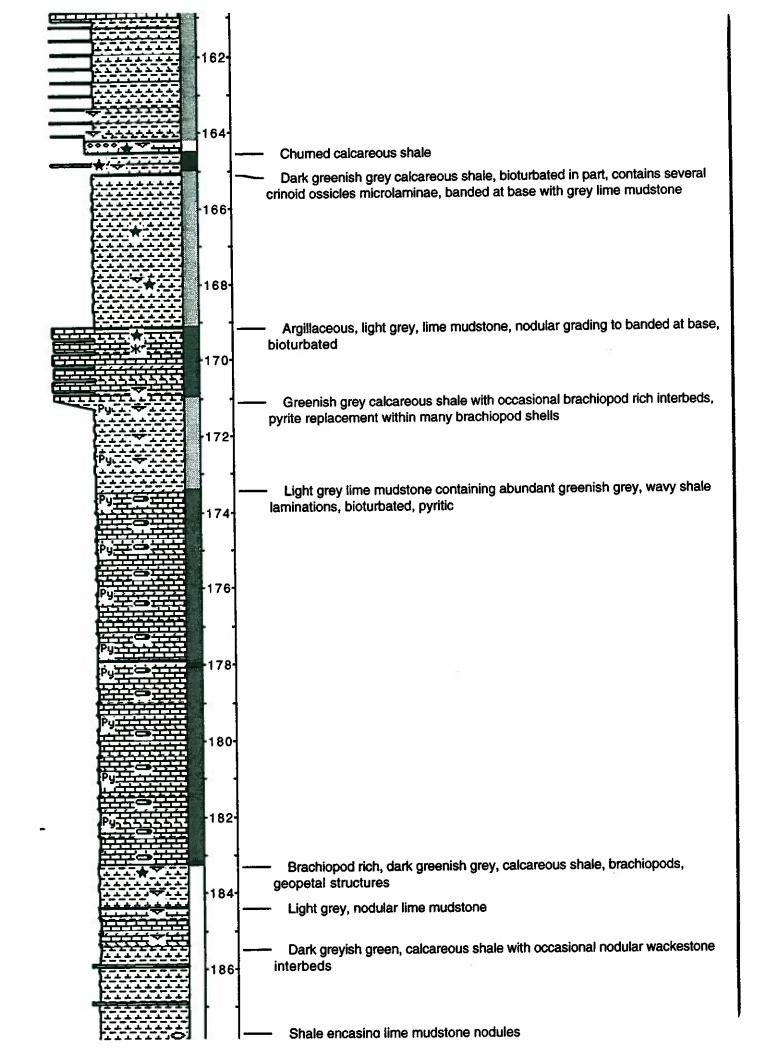
Sampled for limestone purity

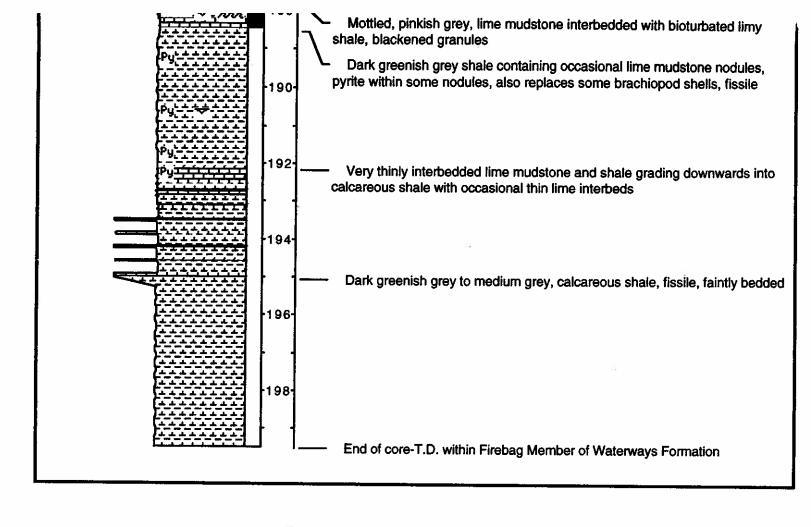












Bear Rodeo 1 8-20-89-9w4

Date logged: January 13, 1994

Logged by: D.K. Cotterill (Alberta Geological Survey)

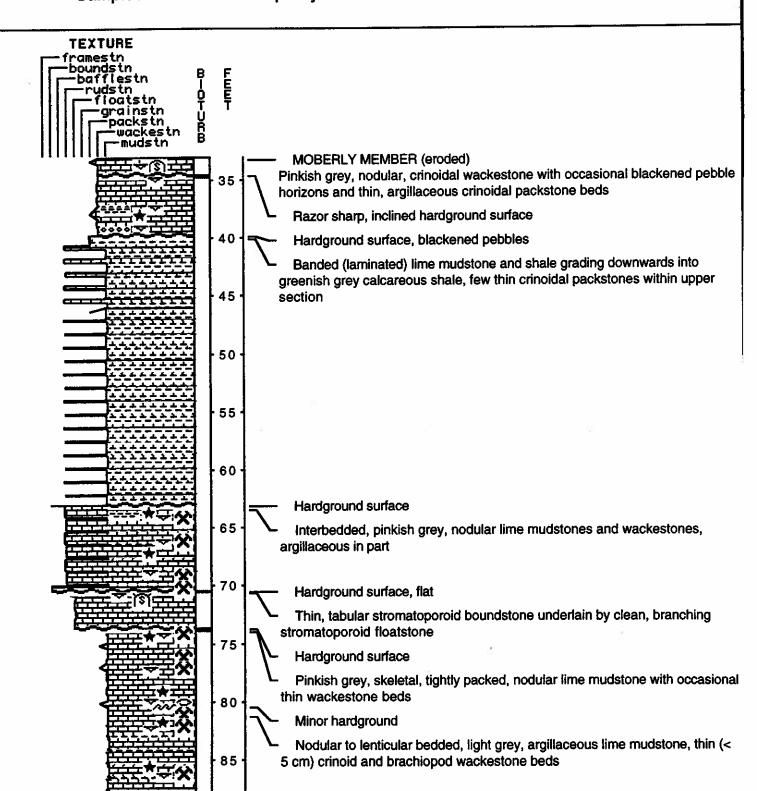
Ground: 817.00 ft KB: 0.00 ft

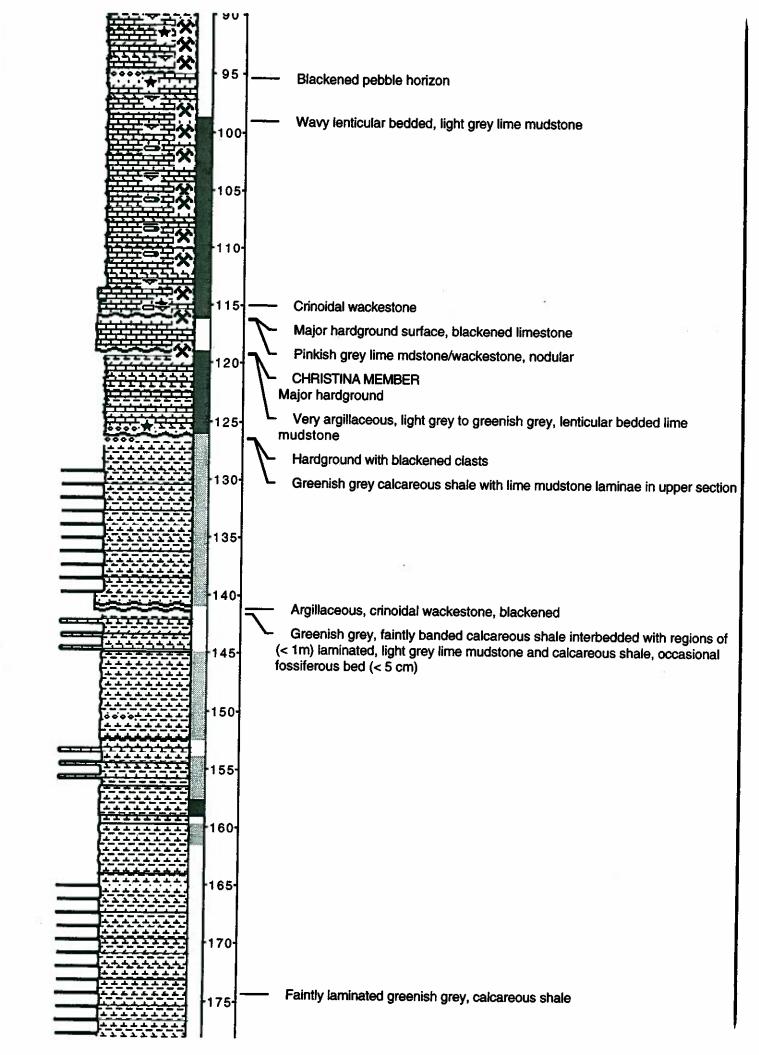
Remarks: Cored Succession: Moberly Member to Precambrian basement

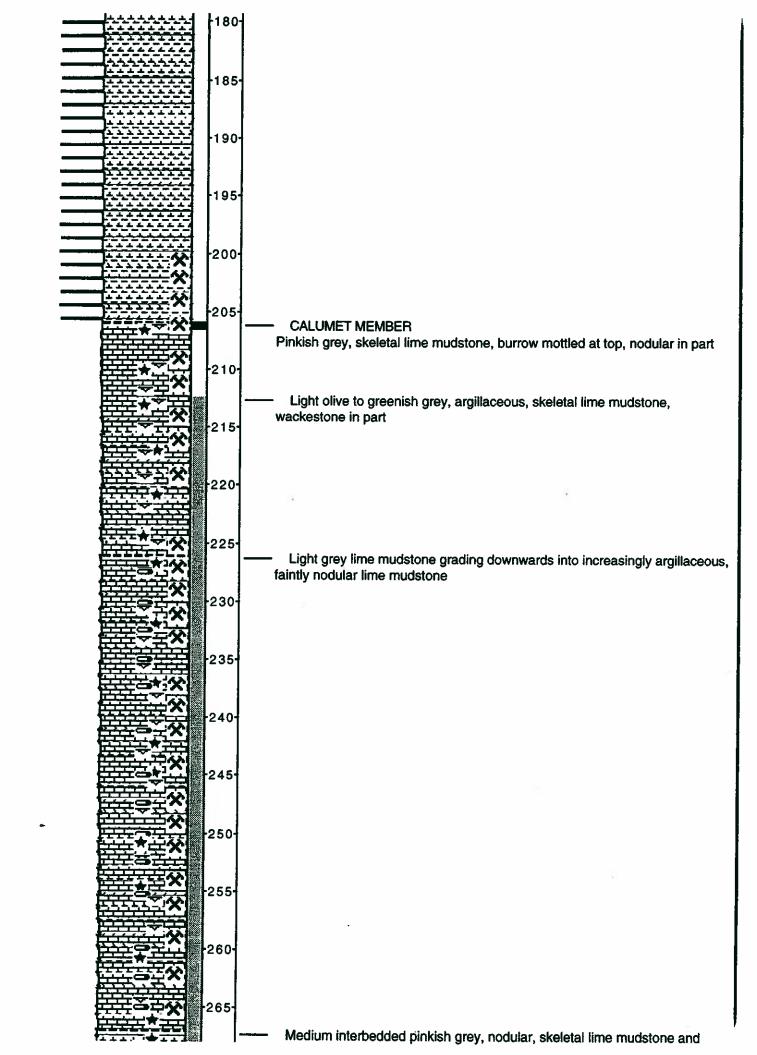
Logged Interval: Moberly Member to Fort Vermilion Fm.

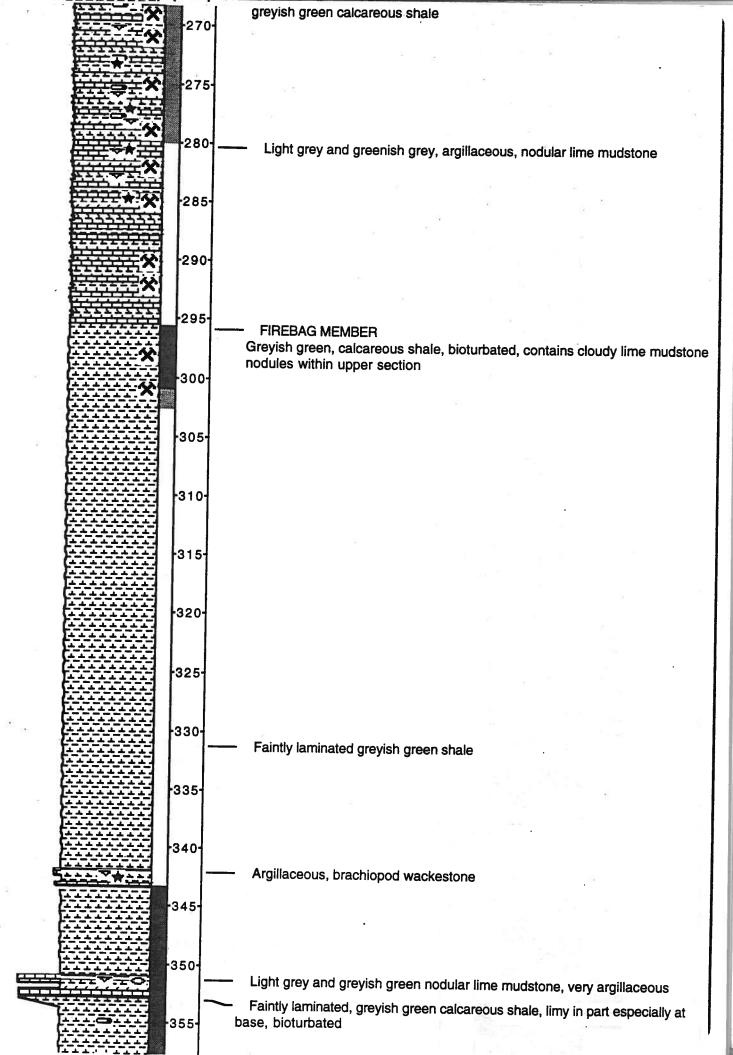
Core Location: ERCB Core Research Centre

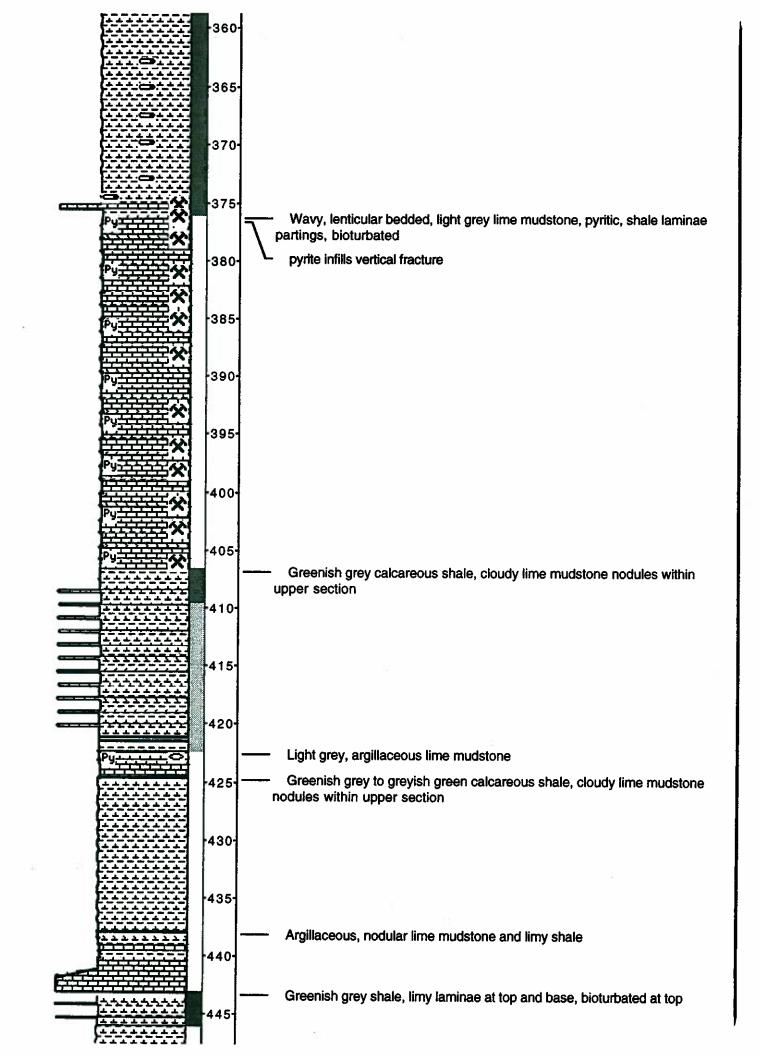
Sampled for limestone purity

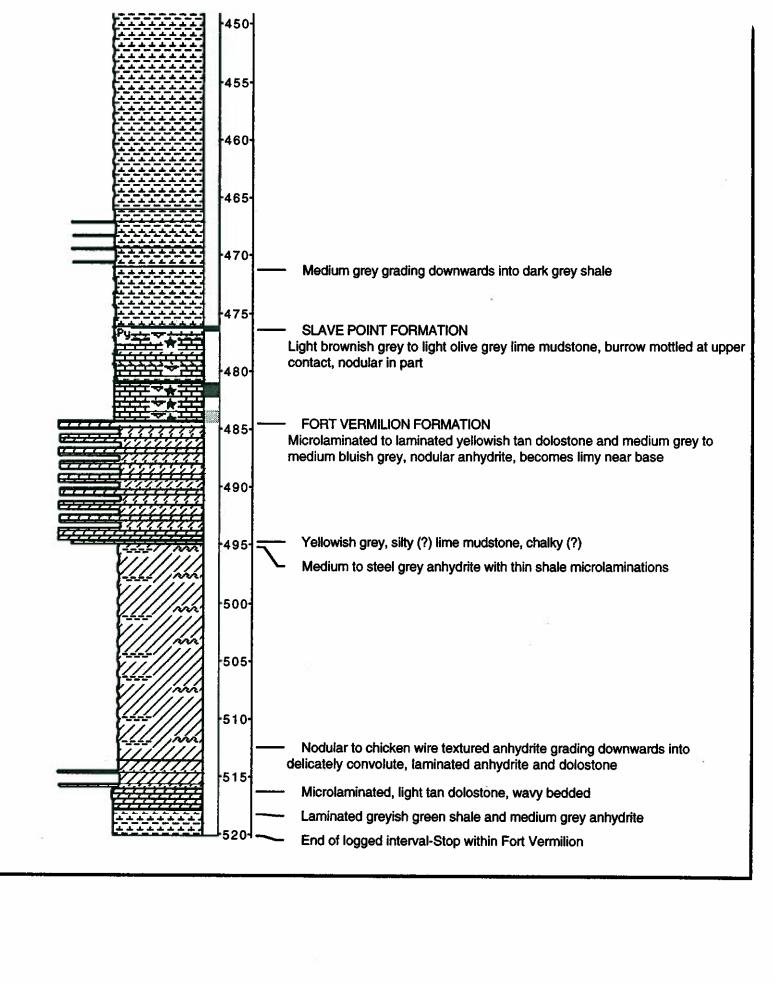












BEAR BILTMORE1

Date logged: January 4, 1994

Logged by: D.K.Cotterill (Alberta Geological Survey)

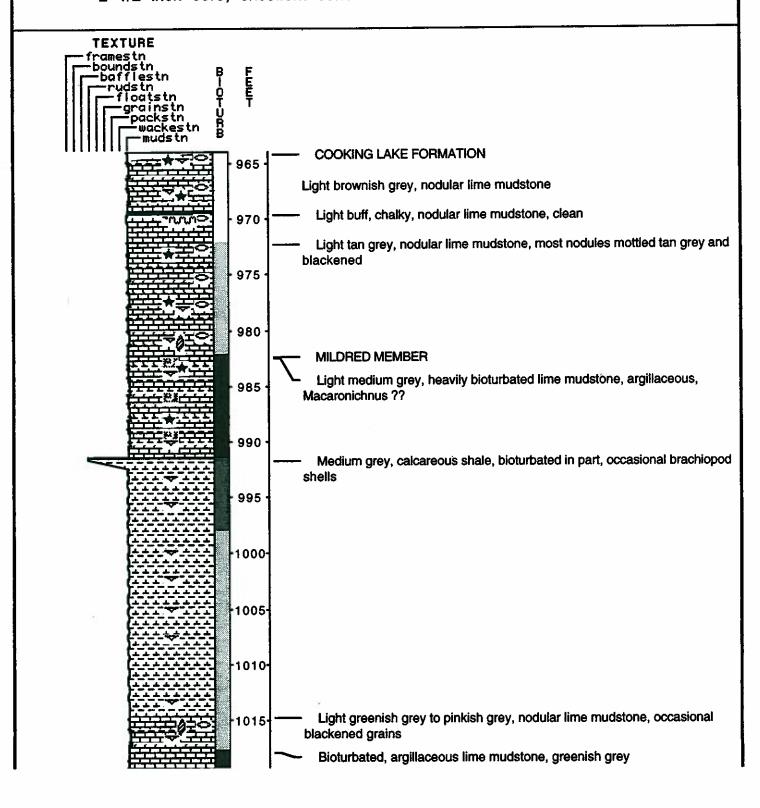
Ground: 1445.00 ft KB: 0.00 ft

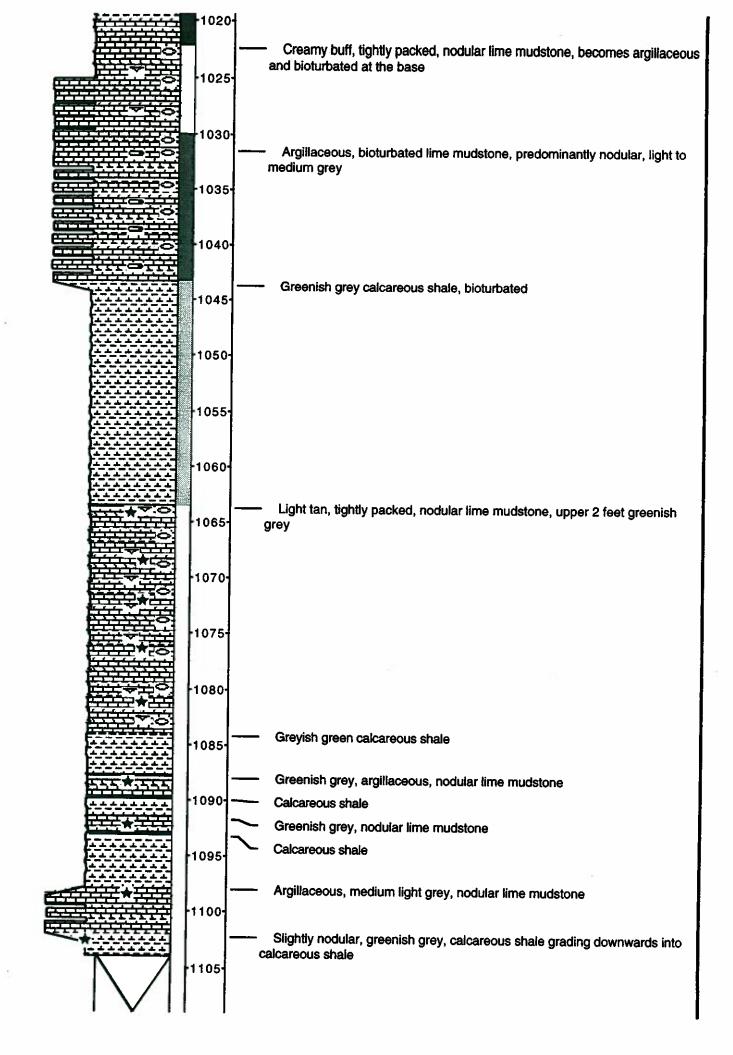
Remarks: Cored Succession: Ireton Formation to Precambrian

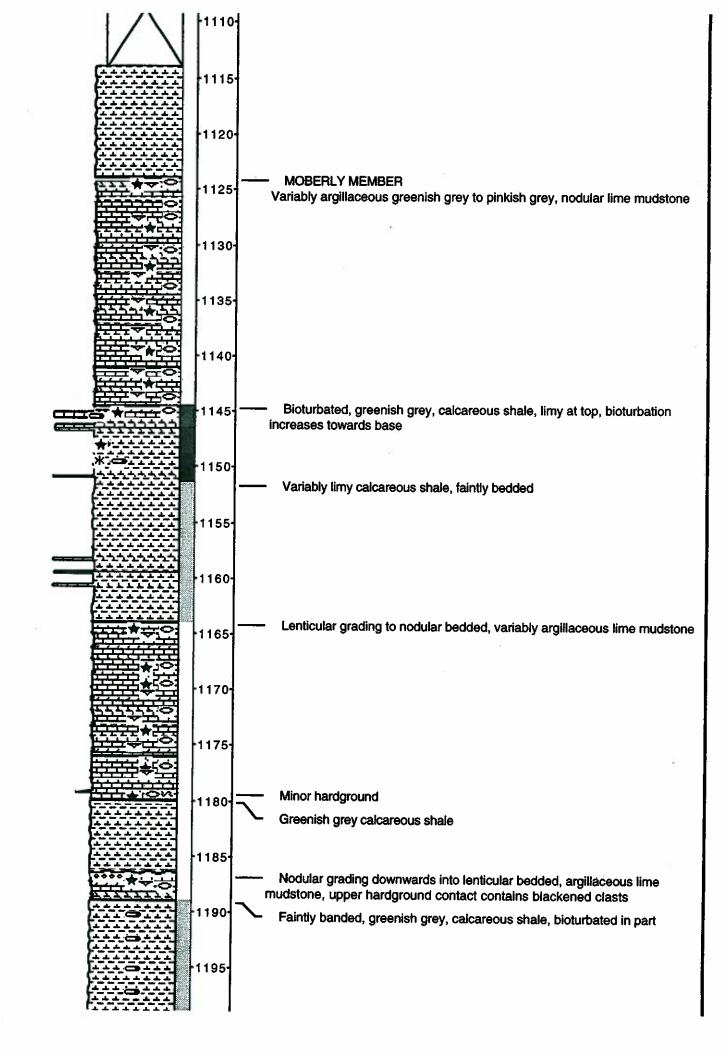
Logged Interval: Basal Cooking Lake to Upper Ft. Vermilion

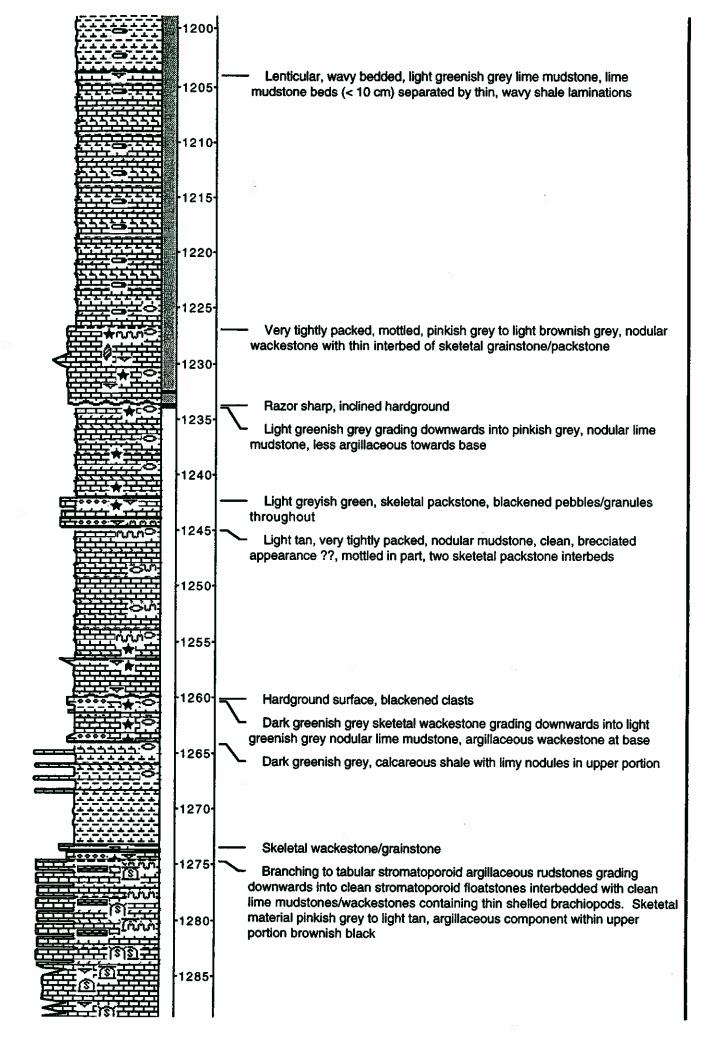
Core Location: ERCB Core Research Centre

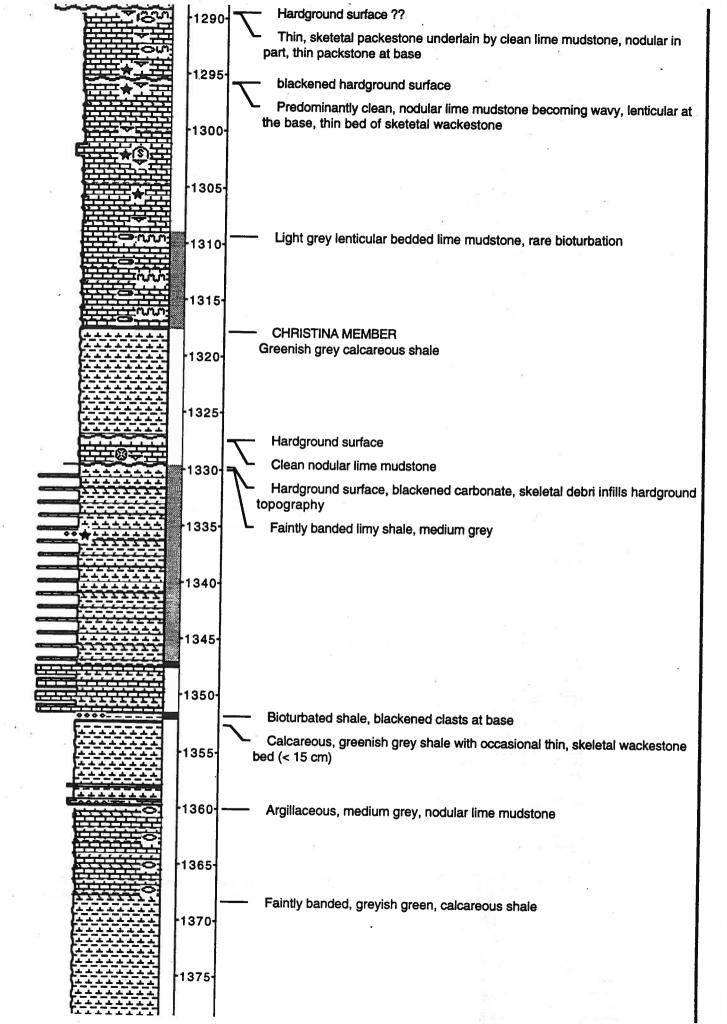
2 1/2 inch core, excellent condition

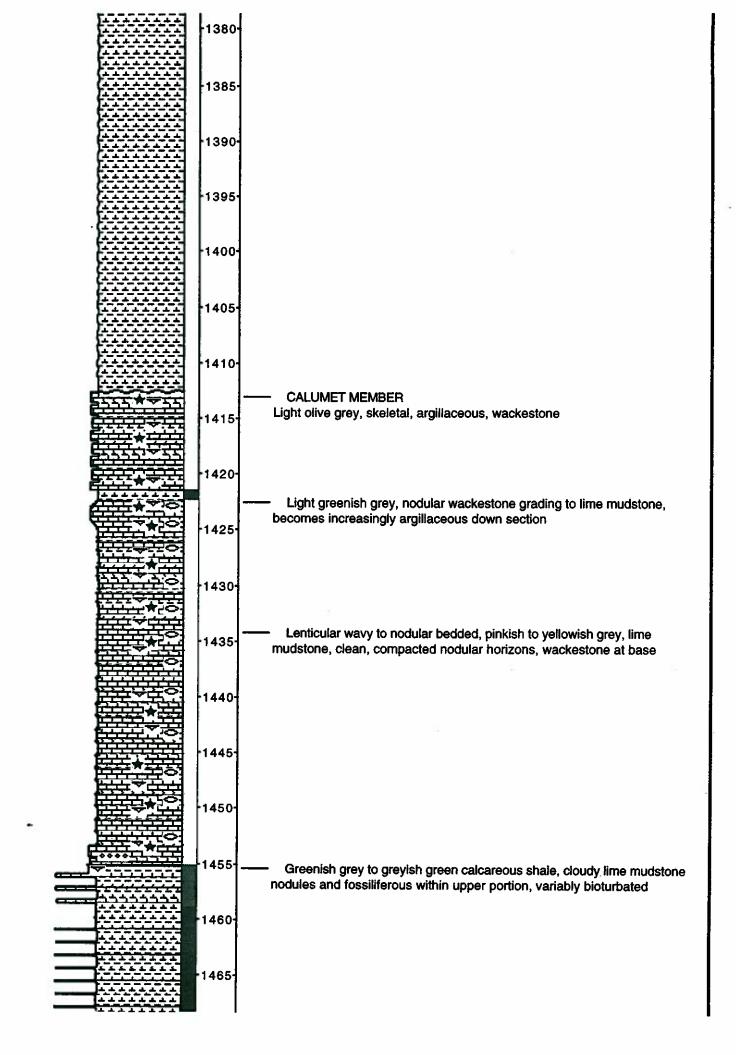


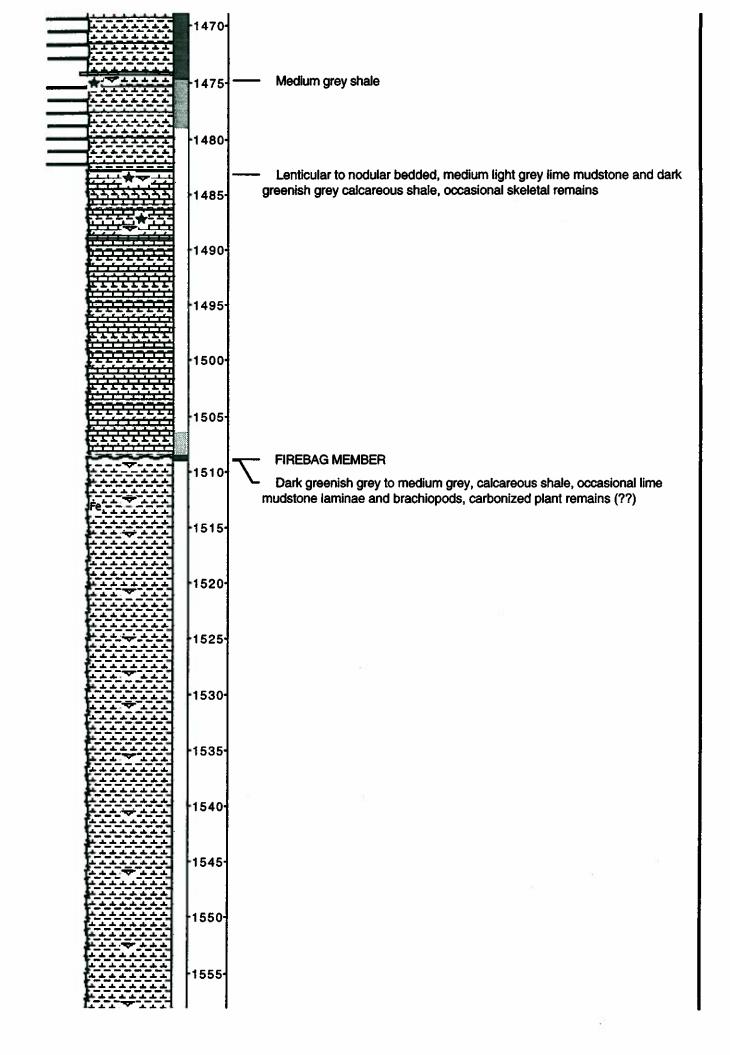


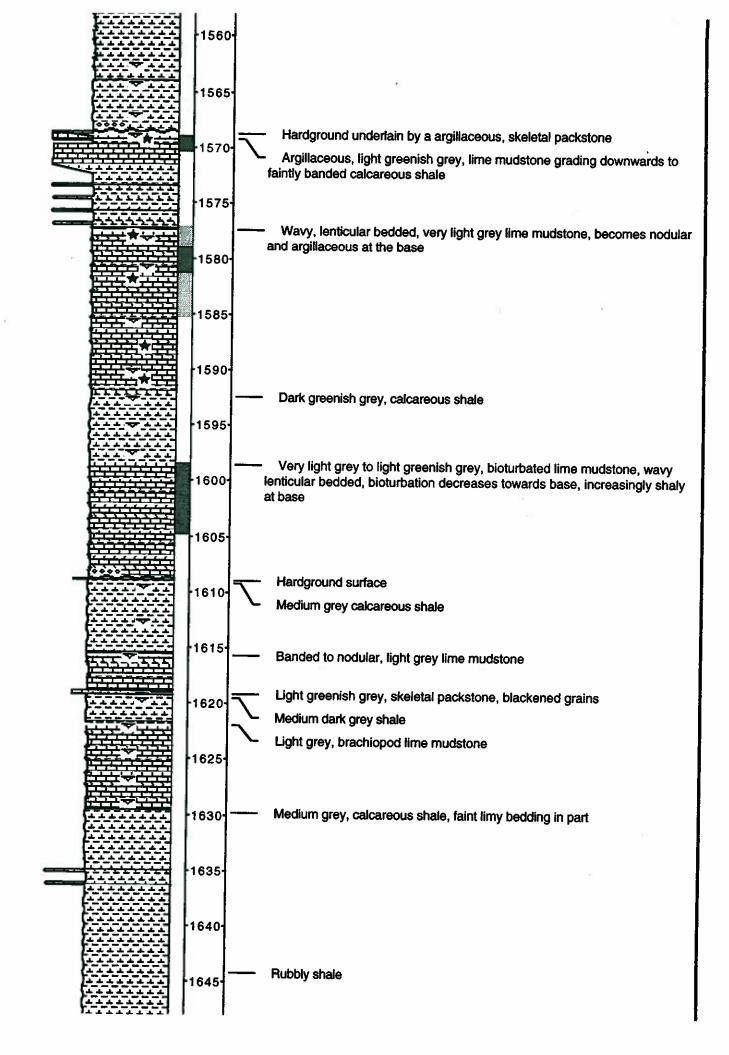


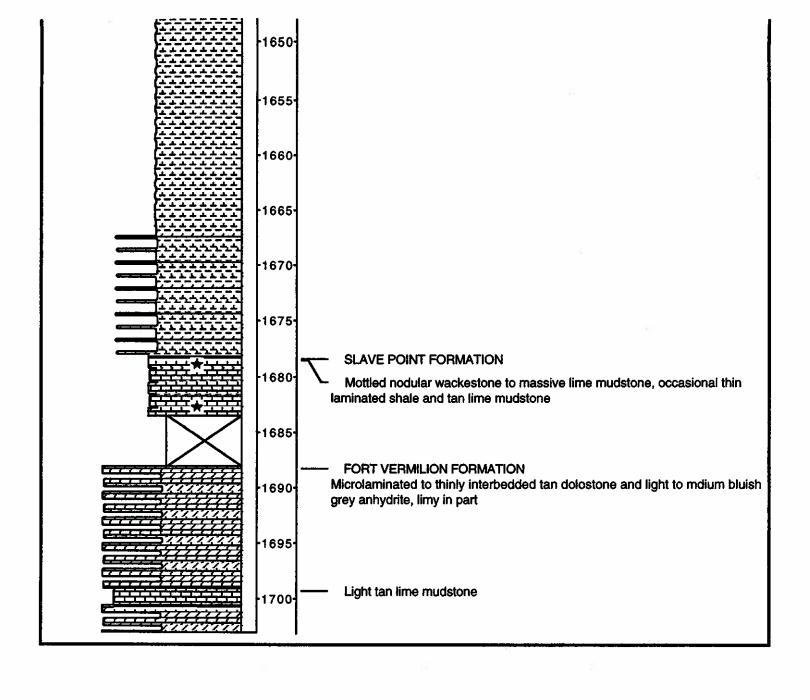










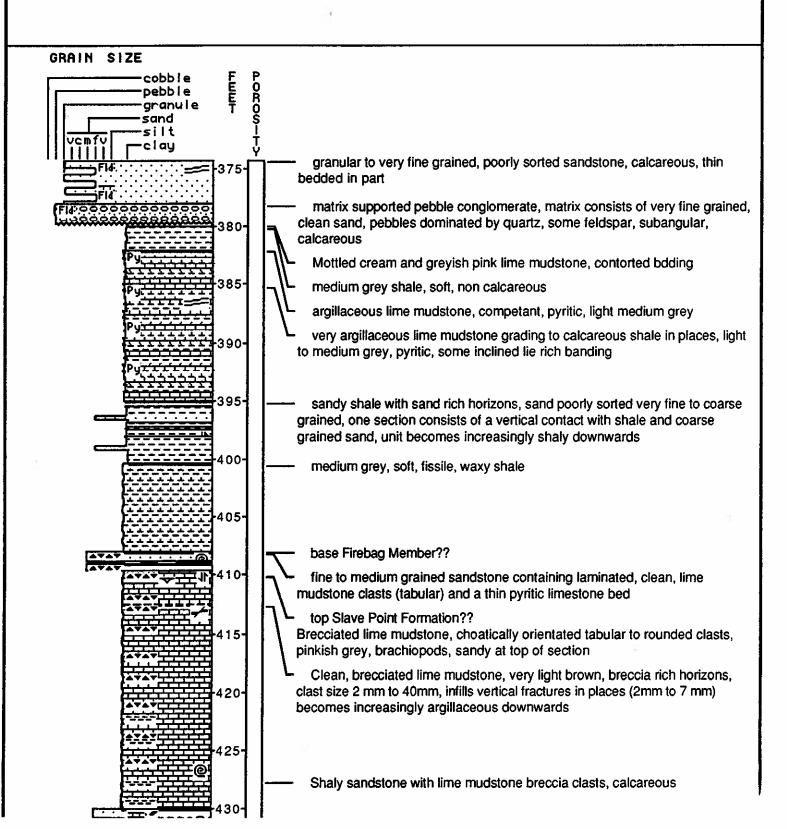


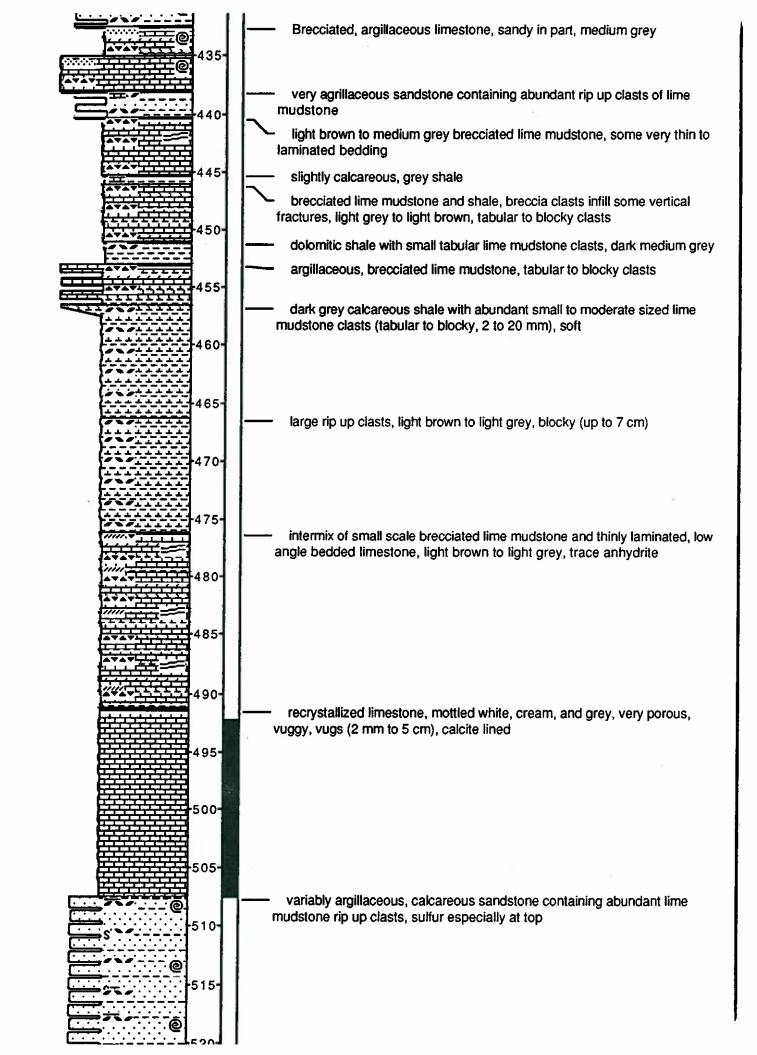
Shell Eatha EV 12-6-99-8w4

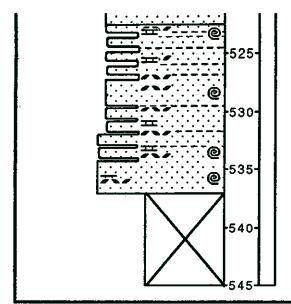
Date logged: October 3, 1994

Logged by: D.K. Cotterill (Alberta Geological Survey)

Ground: 1004.90 ft KB: 1012.10 ft Remarks: Cored through sinkhole??







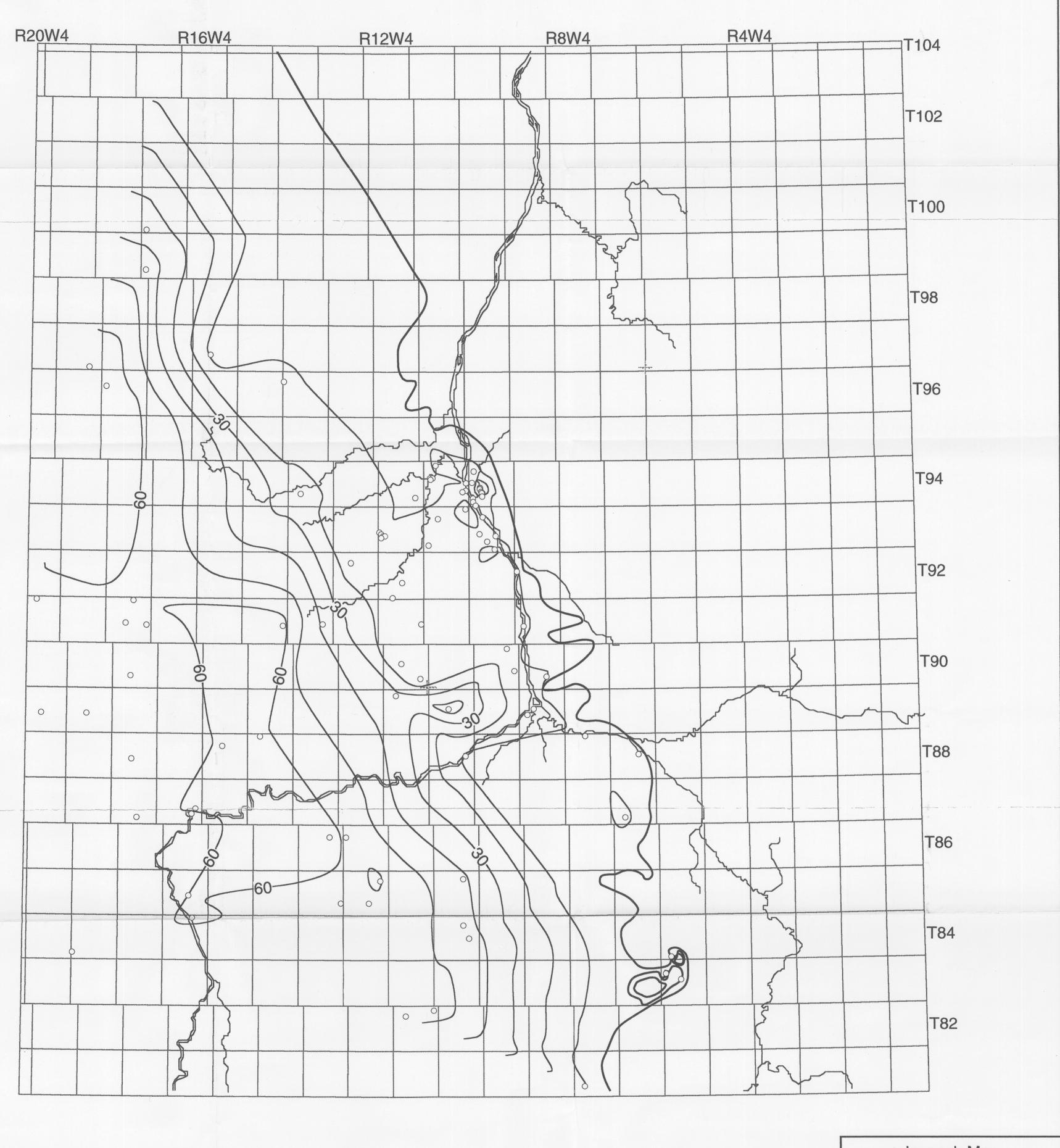


Figure 10. Isopach of the Moberly Member

Isopach Map		
Moberly Member		
Contour Interval = 10 m		
Devonian Northeast Alberta		
(40 km)		
	Figure	
Date:7/13/95	500000	

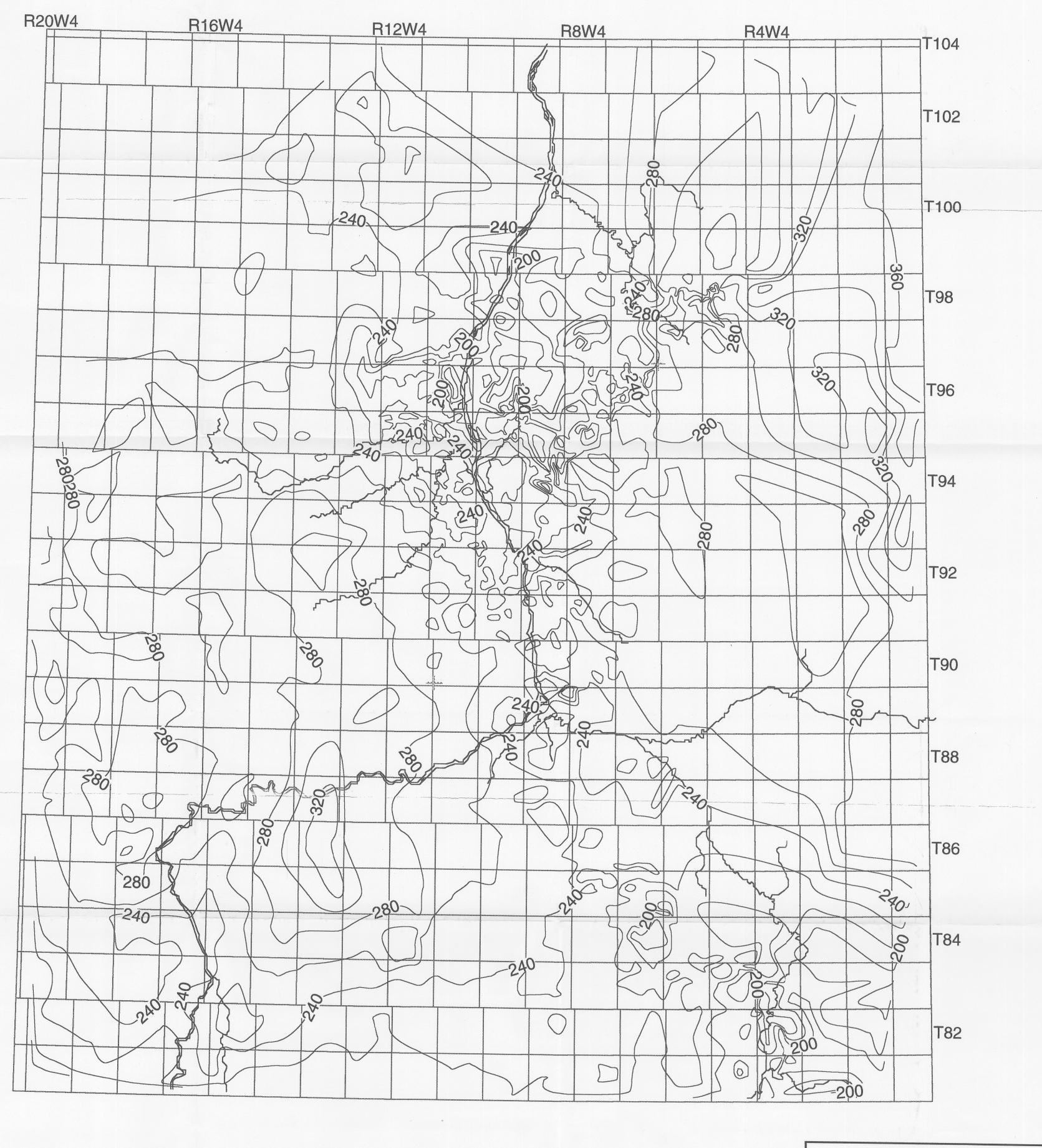


Figure 12. Structure on the sub-Cretaceous unconformity

Structure Map		
Sub-Cretaceous Unconformity		
Contour Interval = 20 m		
Devonian Northeast Alberta		
(50 km)		
	Figure 12	
Date:7/13/95	500000	

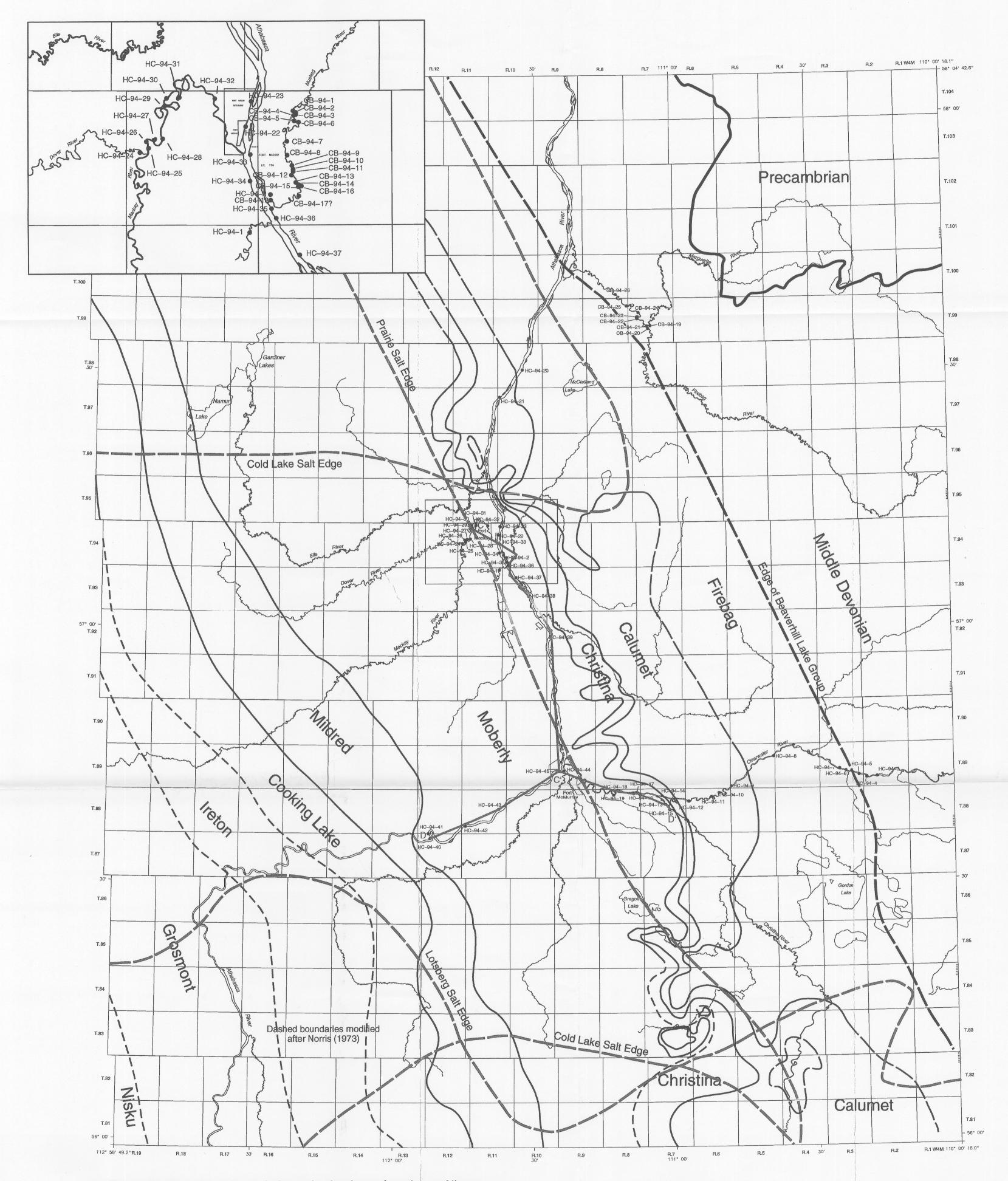


Figure 13. Devonian subcrop belts and salt edges of northeast Alberta

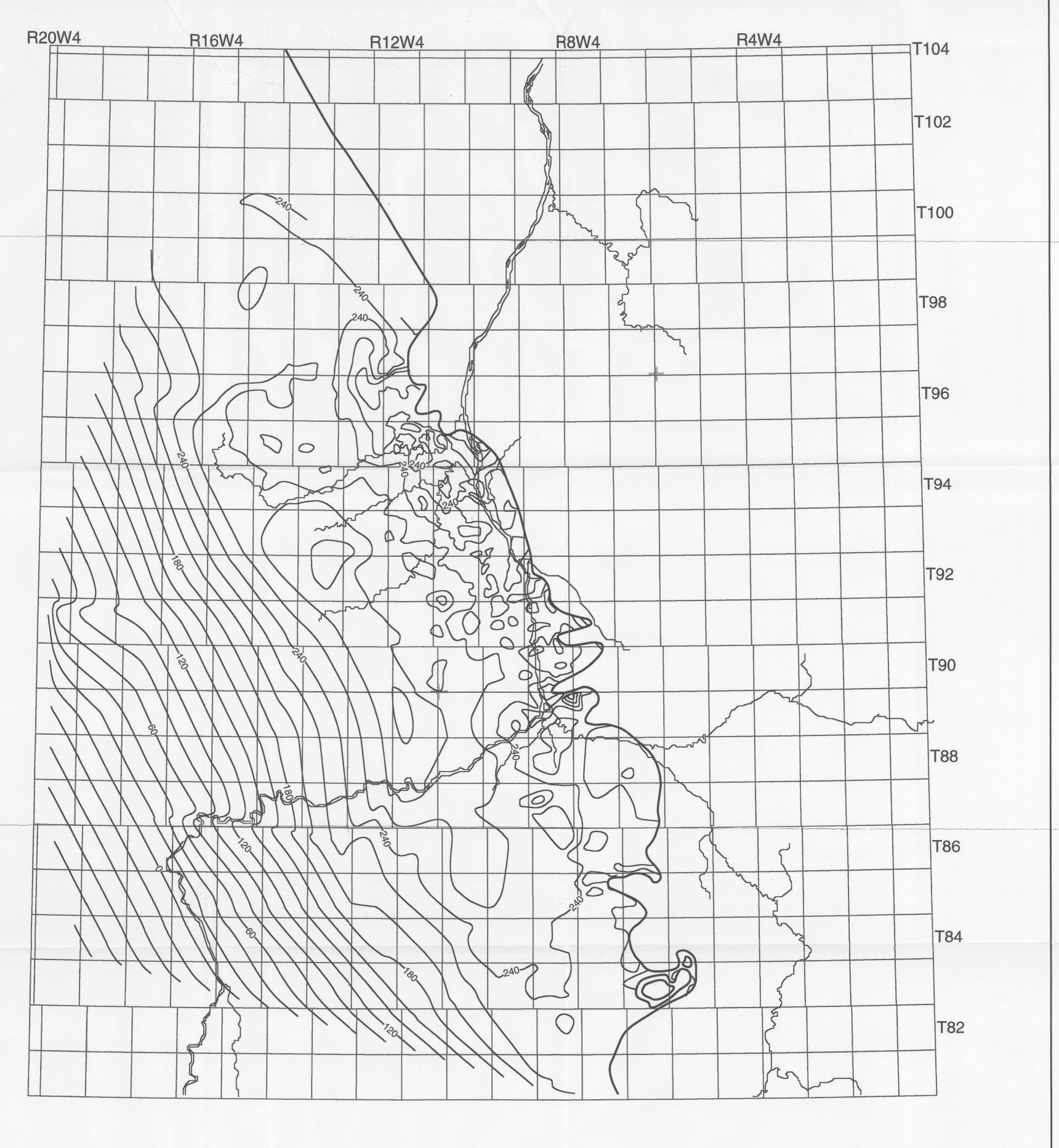


Figure 19. Structure on the Moberly Member

Structure Map		
Top Moberly Member		
Contour Interval = 20 m		
Devonian Northeast Alberta		
(40 km)		
	Figure 19	
Date:3/3/95	1:500000	

