



Government of **Western Australia**
Department of **Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety**

RECORD 2017/15

SGTSG MID-CONFERENCE FIELD TRIP GUIDE: THE WESTERN NORNALUP ZONE, ALBANY–FRASER OROGEN, WESTERN AUSTRALIA

by
NE Timms



Geological Survey of
Western Australia



Curtin University



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Perth 2017



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Western Australia**

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Cover image: Elongate salt lake on the Yilgarn Craton — part of the Moore–Monger paleovalley — here viewed from the top of Wownaminy Hill, 20 km southeast of Yalgoo, Murchison Goldfields. Photograph taken by I Zibra for the Geological Survey of Western Australia

SGTSG Denmark 2017

Biennial Meeting of the Specialist Group in
Tectonics and Structural Geology, Geological
Society of Australia

Denmark Riverside Club, Denmark, WA

8-12 November 2017



Mid-conference Field Trip Guide: The Western Nornalup Zone, Albany-Fraser Orogen, Western Australia

Thursday 9th November, 2017

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Wave at Lowlands Beach (image = Steve Reddy)



Welcome to southwest Western Australia

The objective of this field trip is to bring the delegates of SGTSG Denmark 2017 together in the field and take a glimpse of the spectacular geology within reach of the conference venue. We will focus on rocks of the Nornalup Zone of the Albany-Fraser Orogen, which are exposed on numerous coastal sections in the region. This field guide has been assembled to provide some background on the local geology, give a few details about key localities, and highlight some points for discussion. We aim to visit three localities during the trip, time permitting. However, the conference organizers know many more fantastic outcrops in the area – just ask for advice if you are considering taking yourself on a self-guided trip throughout the week.

On behalf of the SGTSG 2017 Committee, welcome to southwest Western Australia! We hope that you enjoy yourselves. *Nick Timms*

Introduction to the geology of southwest Western Australia

The following review attempts to reflect current state of understanding of the geology of southwest Western Australia, incorporating contemporary nomenclature and the most recent available data. A thorough review on the historical development of ideas is not offered to keep this document succinct. Readers are directed elsewhere for detailed reviews, e.g., Fitzsimons and Buchan (2005); Spaggiari et al. (2009); Spaggiari et al. (2011); Mole et al. (2012); Spaggiari et al. (2014). Research in the area is ongoing, and a variety of new data are currently being acquired. Some ideas summarized here may be subject to change!

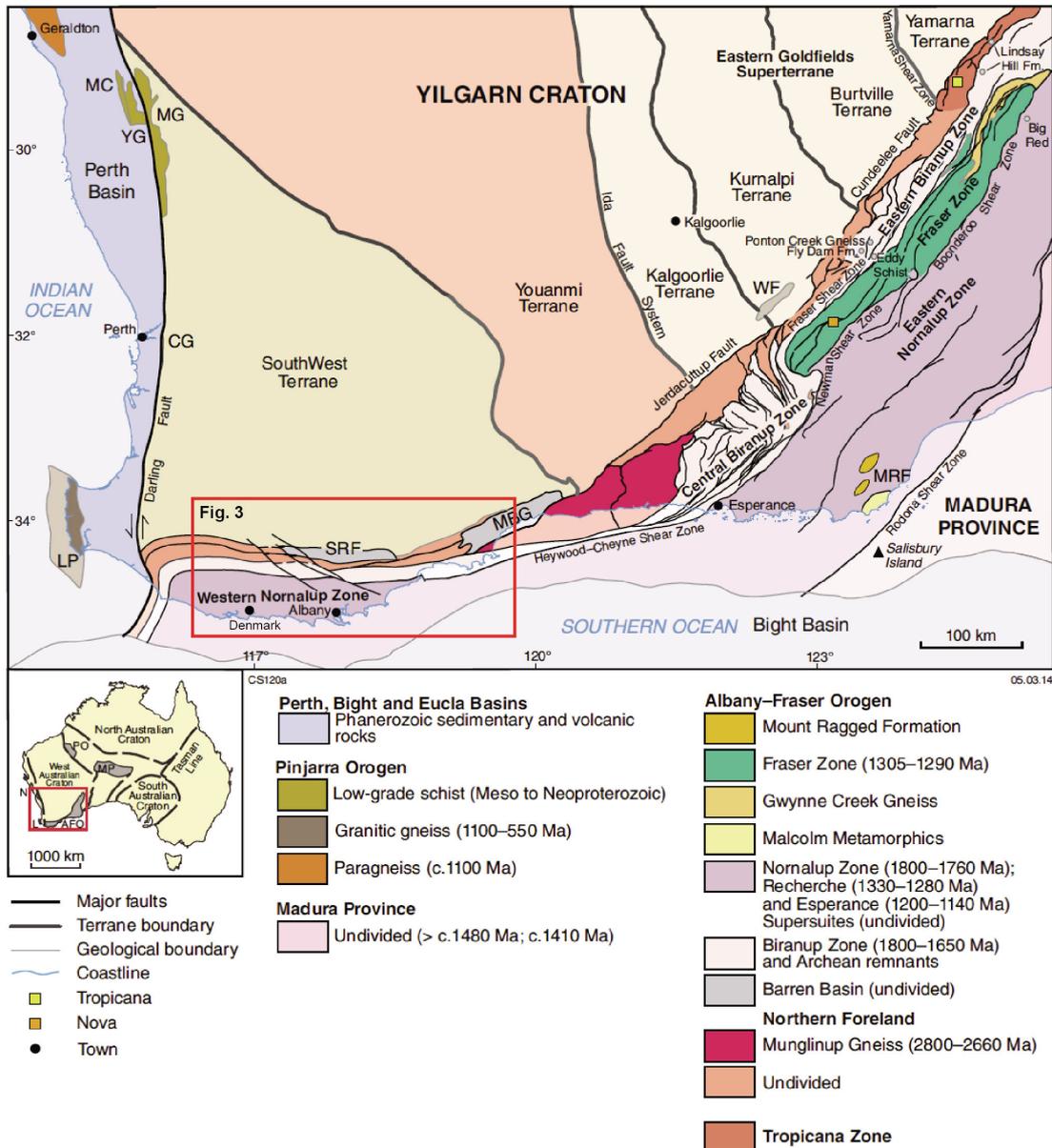


Figure 1. Simplified, pre-Mesozoic interpreted bedrock geology of the Albany–Fraser Orogen and tectonic subdivisions of the Yilgarn Craton. Abbreviations used: SRF = Stirling Range Formation; MBG = Mount Barren Group; WF = Woodline Formation; MRF = Mount Ragged Formation; CG = Cardup Group; LP = Leeuwin Complex; MC = Mullingar Complex; MG = Moora Group. Inset: AFO = Albany–Fraser Orogen; MP = Musgrave Province; PO = Paterson Orogen; L = Leeuwin Complex; N = Northampton Complex. From Spaggiari et al. (2014). See pre-conference field guide for updated map.

The southern and western margins of the Yilgarn Craton

On this excursion, we will visit rocks of the Proterozoic Albany–Fraser Orogen, which truncates and partially rework the southern margin of the Archean Yilgarn Craton. The Yilgarn Craton broadly comprises Eastern Goldfield Superterrane and the Western Yilgarn Craton, juxtaposed along the Ida Fault System.

(Fig. 1). The latter formed by accretion of several NW–SE trending greenstone belts intruded by granites, forming the Kalgoorlie, Kurnalpi, Burtville and Yamarna Terranes from west to east, respectively (Fig. 1). The former contains the South West and Youanmi Terranes in contact with the Albany–Fraser Orogen, which preserve an older, more complex history with gneisses, BIFs, metasedimentary rocks, greenstone belts and granitoid intrusions (Wilde, 1980; Pidgeon and Wilde, 1990; Nemchin and Pidgeon, 1999; Wyche et al., 2004). Detrital zircon populations from the Western Yilgarn Craton indicate protracted crustal evolution back as far as 4.4 Ga (Wilde et al., 2001). Granitoid activity was

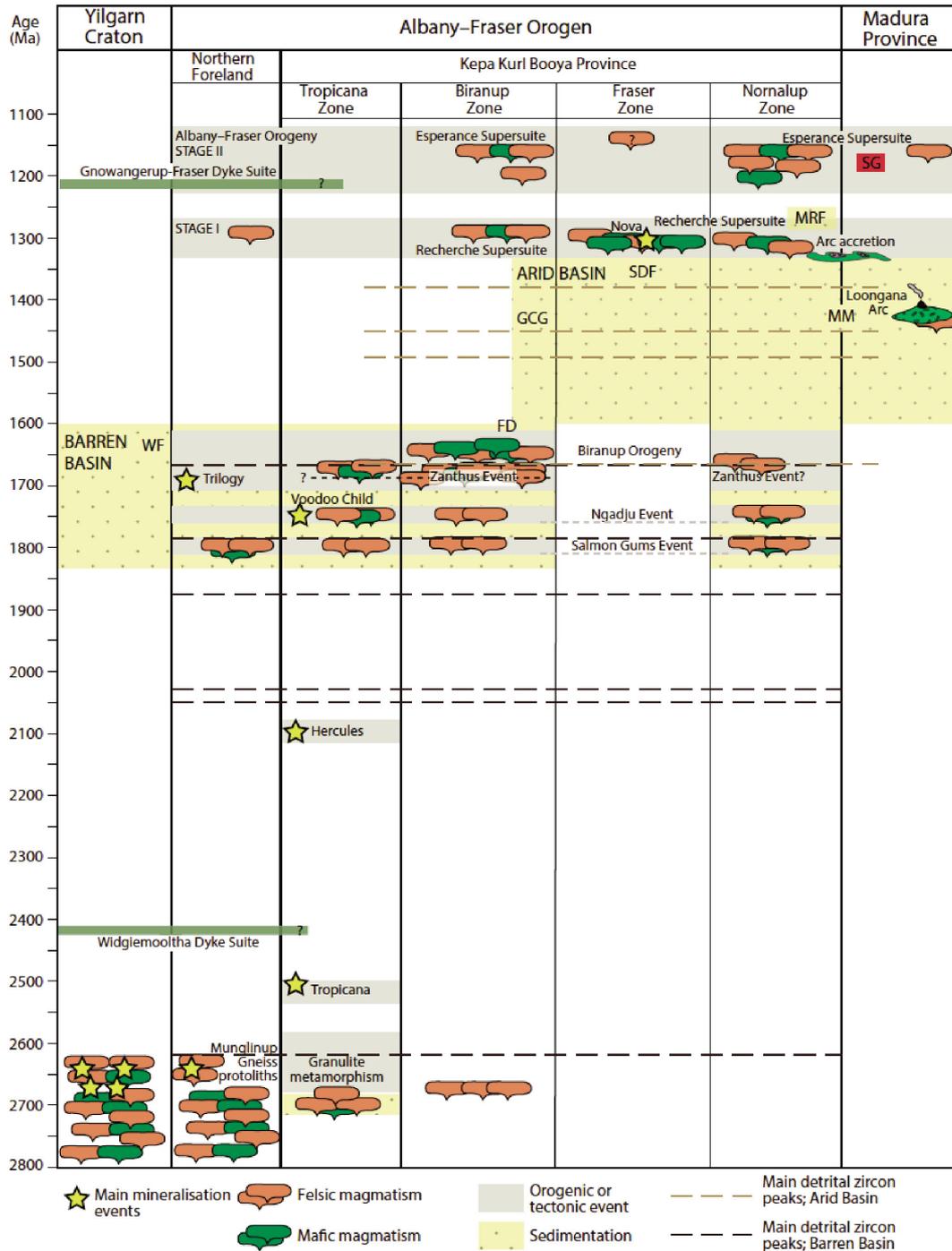


Figure 2. Time-space plot showing events of the Albany-Fraser Orogen and adjacent Yilgarn Craton and Madura Province, after Spaggiari et al. (2014). Abbreviations used: FD = Fly Dam Formation; GCG = Gwynne Creek Gneiss; Malcolm Metamorphics; MRF = Mount Ragged Formation; SDF = Snowys Dam Formation; SG = Salisbury Gneiss; WF = Woodline Formation.

long-lived with systematically younger emplacement in almost continuous pulses across the southwest–central Yilgarn Craton at 3000–2820, 2805–2720, and 2720–2600 Ma (Mole et al., 2012). Terranes shared at least 150 Ma granite activity prior to final Craton amalgamation at ca. 2650 Ma (Mole et al., 2012). However, the Yilgarn is very poorly-exposed along its southern margin and is consequently understudied in this location.

The western margins of the Yilgarn Craton and Albany-Fraser Orogen are bound by the N-S trending Darling Fault and the Paleozoic-Recent Perth Basin beyond (Playford et al., 1976; Harris, 1994b; Song and Cawood, 2000; Olierook et al., 2015). A sweeping southward deflection of the Albany-Fraser Orogen and augen gneiss and mylonite domains in the Yilgarn Craton close to the Darling Fault has led to the interpretation that the Darling Fault

nucleated on a pre-existing, large-scale sinistral ductile shear zone (Bretan, 1986; Dentith et al., 1993; Harris, 1994a; Beeson et al., 1995). West of the Darling Fault are numerous Proterozoic inliers of the Pinjarra Orogen – the Leeuwin, Mullingar and Northampton Complexes – that are not related to the Albany-Fraser Orogen (Fig. 1) (Fitzsimons, 2003) and references therein.

The Albany-Fraser Orogen

The margins of all of the terranes of the Yilgarn Craton have been truncated, intruded and reworked in the Albany-Fraser Orogen in a domain referred to as the Northern Foreland, which has been thrust over the pristine Yilgarn Craton (Fig. 1) (Kirkland et al., 2011; Spaggiari et al., 2014; Spaggiari et al., 2015). The Munglinup Gneiss comprises orthogneiss with 2717–2640 Ma protolith ages interlayered with metamorphosed mafic rocks and minor metachert (jaspilite), amphibolitic schist, serpentinite, and metamorphosed ultramafic rocks (Spaggiari et al., 2014). Peak metamorphism reached granulite facies conditions in places, and occurred between 1210 to 1180 Ma. Significant mineral deposits at Tropicana and Nova are located in the Northern Foreland (Fig. 1).

Outboard of the Northern Foreland lies Proterozoic crystalline rocks of the Kepa Kurl Booya Province and deformed remnants of sedimentary basins that collectively form the Albany-Fraser Orogen (Spaggiari et al., 2014). Fault-bound lithotectonic zones have been defined with increasing distance from the Yilgarn Craton: Tropicana, Biranup, Fraser, and Nornalup Zones, respectively (Fig. 1) (Spaggiari et al., 2014). Protolith ages and metamorphic conditions in these zones are variable. Metasedimentary rocks define three spatially- and temporally-distinct basins: the 1815–1600 Ma Barren Basin, the 1455–1305 Ma Arid Basin, and the 1280–1215 Ma Ragged Basin (Figs 1, 2) (Spaggiari et al., 2014; Waddell et al., 2015). Mesoproterozoic granitic intrusions occur throughout the Biranup and Nornalup Zones in two pulses: ca. 1330–1280 Ma (Recherche Supersuite) and ca. 1200–1125 Ma (Esperance Supersuite) (Fig. 2). Granite emplacement and metamorphism during these times define Stages I and II of the Albany-Fraser Orogeny, respectively (Fig. 2).

Biranup Zone in the west Albany-Fraser Orogen

In the western Albany-Fraser Orogen, rocks of the Biranup Zone are exposed west of Albany along the coast in the vicinity of Bremer Bay, and we won't be visiting them on this field trip (Fig. 3). The Biranup Zone forms a belt of high-grade metamorphic rocks between the Nornalup Zone and the Yilgarn Craton. It

consists of a complex mix of intensely deformed high-grade felsic orthogneisses that are interlayered with minor metasedimentary rocks (mainly quartzite, BIF and pelitic rocks), mafic (metagabbro) intrusions and lesser amounts of hybrid rocks.

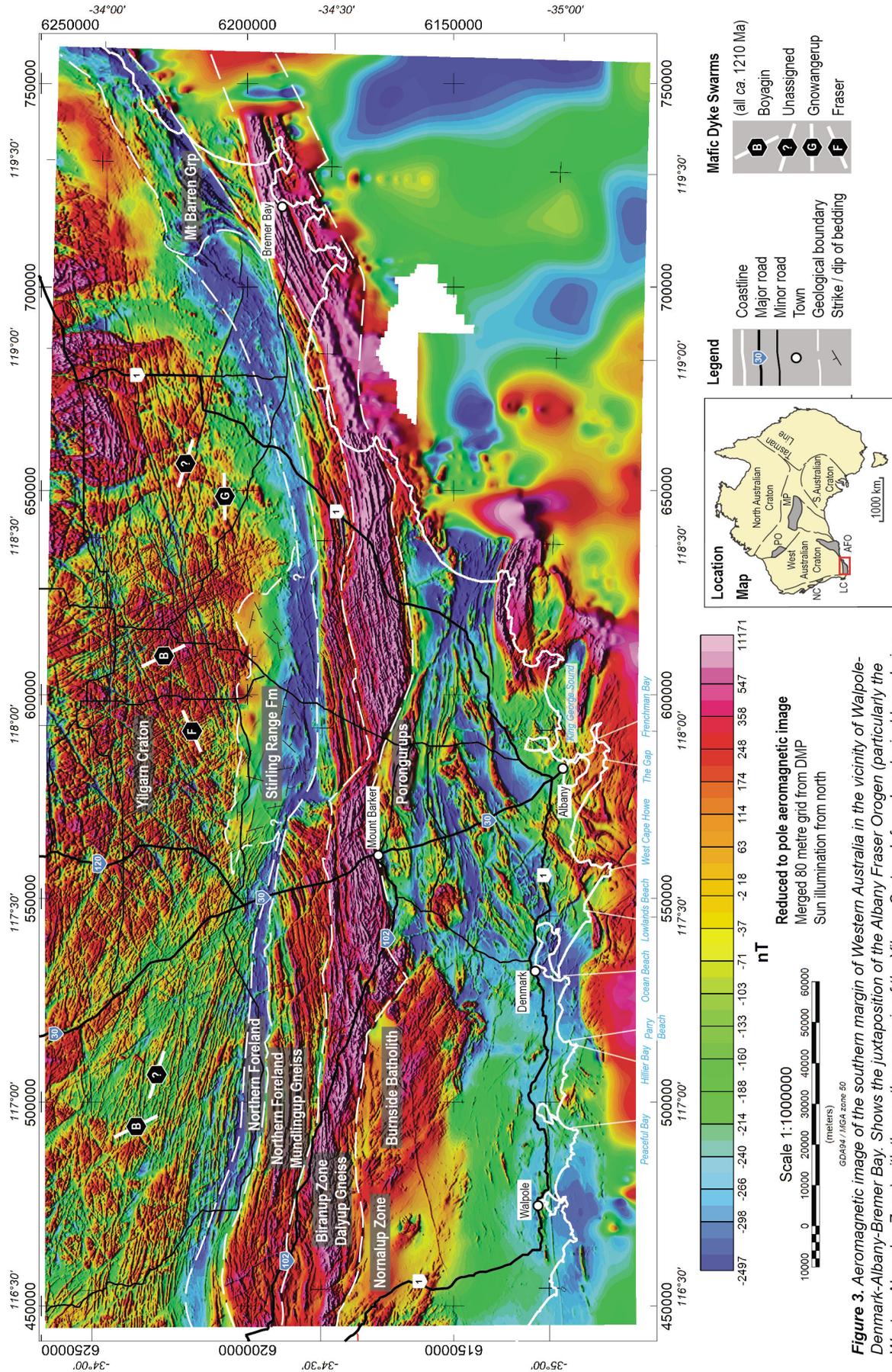
The rocks are more intensely deformed than the Nornalup Zone, and primary layering is transposed by the deformation. Metamorphism outlasted deformation, hence the rocks are recrystallised with granoblastic textures and have mineral assemblages in the granulite facies.

Rocks of the Biranup Zone are considered to have been deep continental crust. Ages range from 1810 to 1625 Ma, with later emplacement as tectonic slices to shallower crustal levels at about 1.2–1.1 Ga.

Nornalup Zone in the west Albany-Fraser Orogen

The Nornalup Complex forms the southern part of the orogen is juxtaposed with the Biranup Zone by the Heywood-Cheyne Shear Zone (or its western correlative equivalent), and is exposed along the southern coast in the Walpole-Denmark-Albany region (Fig. 1). It consists of felsic (quartzo-feldspathic) gneiss derived from granitic rocks and pelitic-semipelitic metasedimentary rocks. Rocks of the complex are strongly deformed (though not as intensely as rocks of the Biranup Complex) and are recrystallised during metamorphism in upper amphibolite facies, and locally to hornblende-granulite facies. The metasedimentary rocks are generally migmatitic or gneissose. Evidence of partial melting and pegmatite dykes are common. Protracted ductile deformation, anatexis and emplacement of pegmatites between ca. 1187 and 1150 Ma (Bodorkos and Clark, 2004; Spaggiari et al., 2009).

These high-grade orthogneisses and paragneisses are intruded by sheet-like bodies of granitoids of the Recherche and Esperance Supersuites, which include porphyritic granitic rocks of the large 1190 to 1170 Ma Burnside Batholith (Fig. 3), which is assigned to the Esperance Supersuite (Pidgeon, 1990; Black et al., 1992; Fitzsimons and Buchan, 2005). The granitoids range in composition from diorite through granodiorite to granite. The granitic intrusions include older slightly deformed phases, which are cut by younger, less deformed phases. The granitic intrusions are well exposed in the Albany area, where the late granitoids commonly form prominent rounded tors, similar to the large tors of porphyritic granitoids that make up the Porongurup Range to the north of Albany.



The Barren Basin

The Palaeoproterozoic metasedimentary Barren Basin, which includes the Stirling Range Formation, and the Mount Barren Group, evolved between 1815–1600 Ma, and is thought to have extended at least 1000 km along the southern and southeastern Yilgarn Craton Margin. The majority of sedimentary units of the Barren Basin are quartz-rich lithologies that include cross-bedded sandstones, pure sandstones now metamorphosed to quartzites, pebbly sandstones and siltstones. The most common inferred sedimentary environment is that of moderate to high energy, fluvial to shallow marine, conditions, indicative of a broad and relatively shallow basin.

The Stirling Range Formation is one of the oldest formations in the Barren Basin, with deposition prior to around 1800 Ma. Three units have been distinguished within the Stirling Range Formation: lower and upper units of quartzite and a middle unit of quartzite, slate and phyllite. The gentle southerly dip of beds making up the Formation probably reflects the long limbs of large asymmetric folds that were re-folded by large-scale open easterly trending folds.

The Mount Barren Group is a sequence of quartzite, pelitic schist, and minor conglomerate deposited on the southern margin of the Yilgarn Craton during the Palaeoproterozoic. It is divided into three distinct stratigraphic units: the Steere Formation, Kundip Quartzite and Kybulup Schist. The Steere Formation unconformably overlies the Yilgarn Craton and consists of a basal conglomerate and overlaying quartzite with minor amounts of pelitic schist and dolomite. The thickness of the Steere Formation varies from 5 to 15 m and is poorly exposed. The Kundip Quartzite overlies the Steere Formation and varies in thickness from 10 to 200 m. The Kundip Quartzite consists of predominantly quartzite, with minor conglomerate, breccia, and pelitic bands present. The Kybulup Schist is the uppermost unit in the Mount Barren Group and consists of pelitic to psammopelitic schist and minor quartzite. The metamorphic grade of the Kybulup Schist increases from greenschist facies at Point Ann to upper amphibolite facies at West Beach.

During the late Mesoproterozoic, the Mount Barren Group was affected by two major deformation events (Fig. 2). The first deformation event (DA) resulted in the formation of three generations of folds, and a maximum metamorphic grade of upper amphibolite facies (only seen in the southeast part of the Mount Barren Group, near Ravensthorpe). This high metamorphic grade indicates that part of the Mount Barren Group was buried up to a depth of 30 km during this

deformation/metamorphic event. The second deformation event (DB) resulted in the formation of a single phase of folding. North- to northwest-directed thrusting and folding in the Stirling Range Formation, Mount Barren Group, Mount Ragged Formation and Northern Foreland is thought to be contemporaneous with other Stage II events (Clark et al., 2000; Kirkland et al., 2011; Waddell et al., 2015).

Mafic dyke swarms

The Albany-Fraser Orogen and the adjacent Yilgarn Craton contain several differently oriented sets (swarms) of mafic dykes that are clearly visible on aeromagnetic surveys, but are mostly unexposed (Fig. 3). Four intersecting swarms are visible on the Yilgarn Craton adjacent the western Albany-Fraser Orogen trending NW-SE, E-W and ENE-WSW sets that are attributed to the Boyagin, Gnowangerup, and Fraser dyke swarms, respectively, plus a WNW-ESE trending set that is unassigned (Fig. 3) (Myers, 1990; Harris and Li, 1995). Most dykes terminate at the interface with the Albany-Fraser Orogen (Fig. 3). However, similar-trending aeromagnetic lineations can be seen in the Albany-Fraser Orogen, albeit much more sparsely distributed, are interpreted as related mafic dykes (Fig. 3). SHRMP U-Pb dating of zircon, zirconolite and baddeleyite in these dykes yields ages of ca. 1218 Ma to ca. 1202 Ma that are mostly within uncertainty of one another (Evans, 1999; Qiu et al., 1999; Wingate et al., 2000; Pidgeon and Nemchin, 2001; Pidgeon and Cook, 2003; Rasmussen and Fletcher, 2004; Wingate and Kirkland, 2011; Pisarevsky et al., 2014). These ages are interpreted to represent major dyke emplacement during a short-lived, mantle-derived magmatic pulse of the Marnda Moorn large igneous province during the late Mesoproterozoic (Pisarevsky et al., 2014; Wang et al., 2014). Emplacement of the Marnda Moorn dyke swarms was synchronous with Stage II tectonism of the Albany-Fraser Orogen (Fig. 2) (Clark et al., 2000; Adams, 2012). Most dykes are sub-parallel to the Albany-Fraser Orogen, which has led to suggestions that the dyke swarms provided precursor mechanical weaknesses for localisation of orogenesis. Meta-mafic lenses in the Munglinup Gneiss in the Northern Foreland are interpreted to be deformed remnants of these dyke swarms. Many mafic dykes are exposed on the coastal outcrops of the Nornalup Zone in the Walpole-Denmark-Albany region, some of which we will visit on this field trip.

Cooling and exhumation of the Albany-Fraser Orogen

The end of Stage II, defined by the end of Esperance Supersuite magmatism, delimits the

end of the Albany-Fraser Orogeny (Clark et al., 2000). Hornblende, biotite and muscovite $^{40}\text{Ar}/^{39}\text{Ar}$ thermochronology indicate differential timing and rates of cooling and exhumation along and across the Albany-Fraser Orogen (Fig. 4) (Scibiorski et al., 2015; Scibiorski et al., 2016). After discounting samples that suffer from excess ^{40}Ar , biotite cooling ages in the western Biranup and Nornalup Zones of ca. 1172–1144 Ma indicate rapid cooling rates of 22–33 °C/Ma, with the Biranup Zone recording higher values (Fig. 4) (Scibiorski et al., 2015). In contrast, biotite and muscovite cooling ages in equivalent zones in the eastern Albany-Fraser Orogen ca. 1171–1158 Ma indicate much slower cooling rates of 8.2–9.5 °C/Ma and commenced 20 Myr earlier (Fig. 4) (Scibiorski et al., 2016). Nevertheless, the data indicate rapid exhumation following peak metamorphism at ca. 1180 Ma. The differences in rates have been linked to the 45° variation in strike of the Albany-Fraser Orogen, particularly changes in proportions of orthogonal thrusting

vs transcurrent kinematics during a uniform NE-directed convergence direction in an overall transpressive system (Fig. 4d, e) (Scibiorski et al., 2016). However, structures responsible for syn-orogenic exhumation have not been identified.

Gondwana amalgamation and breakup

As far as it is known, tectonic quiescence followed cessation of the Albany-Fraser orogeny at ca. 1144 Ma. The Walpole-Denmark-Albany region of the orogen was not directly affected by Pinjarra Orogen (younger than ca. 1090 Ma) and the amalgamation of Gondwana ca. 550–500 Ma that was prevalent on the western margin of Western Australia (Fitzsimons, 2003; Janssen et al., 2003) and responsible for recrystallization and resetting of $^{40}\text{Ar}/^{39}\text{Ar}$ ages of micas on the western margin of the Yilgarn Craton (Lu et al., 2015).

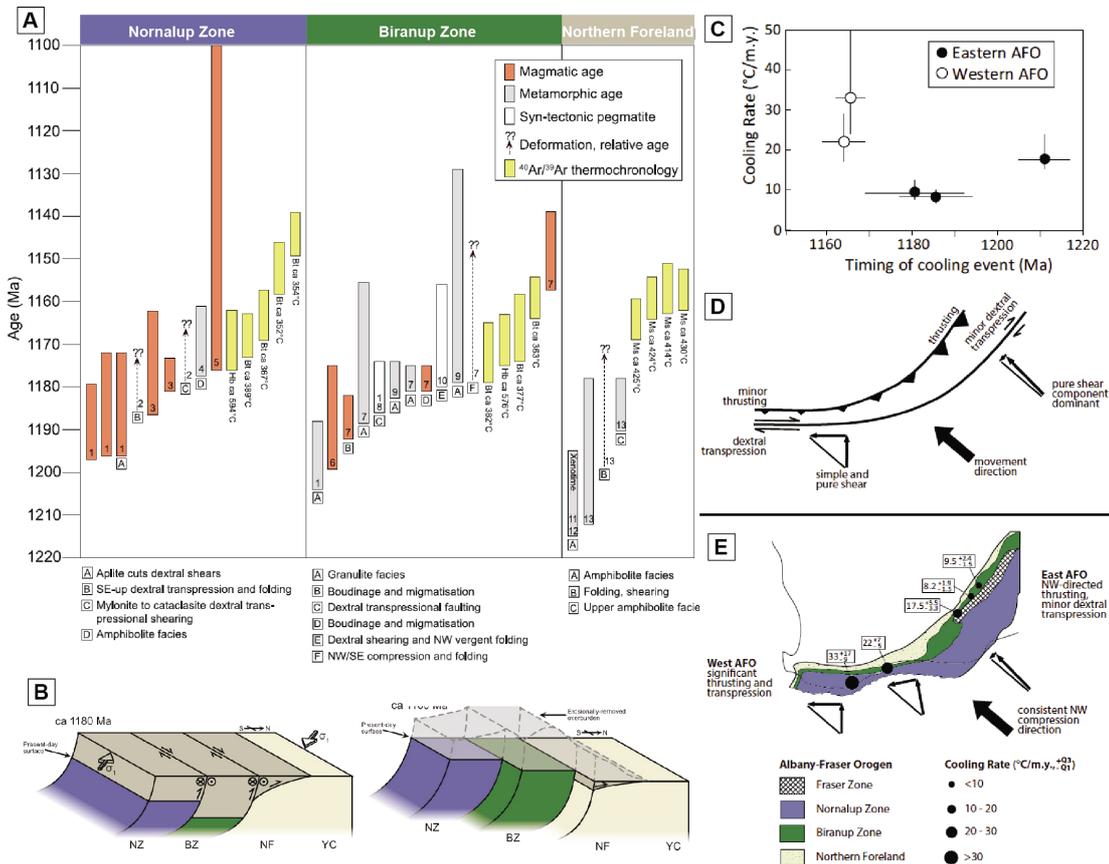


Figure 4. Differential cooling and exhumation across and along the Albany-Fraser Orogen after Scibiorski et al. (2015) and Scibiorski et al. (2016) and references therein. (a) Summary of SHRIMP U/Pb zircon and $^{40}\text{Ar}/^{39}\text{Ar}$ data of Stage II from the western and central Albany-Fraser Orogen. Data bars are shown at 2σ uncertainty level. (b) Schematic diagram showing transpression-related exhumation of the western Albany-Fraser Orogen from ca 1180 to ca 1160 Ma. (c) Comparison of cooling ages and cooling rates in the eastern and western Albany-Fraser Orogen from $^{40}\text{Ar}/^{39}\text{Ar}$ data. (d) Schematic diagram showing changes in kinematics associated with single convergence direction for a curved orogen. (e) Simplified map of the Albany-Fraser Orogen showing differential cooling rates from east to west, explained in terms of spatial differences in the proportions of orthogonal convergence vs transcurrent movement.

However, the region has been susceptible to resetting of the Rb-Sr system in biotite to as young as ca. 418 Ma in the vicinity of Walpole (Libby and de Laeter, 1998).

The N-S trending Perth Basin to the west developed initially as an intracontinental rift basin since at least Permian. Continental breakup occurred initially along the western margin of Australia and Greater India, and was synchronous with ca. 137 to 130 Ma Bunbury Basalt volcanism in the Perth Basin (Ollierook et al., 2016). The development of the southern rift system along the southern margin of Australia is summarised by Totterdell et al. (2000) and Totterdell and Bradshaw (2004). Rifting initiated during the Late Jurassic, initially with along a NW-SE azimuth, when fluvial and lacustrine sediment-filled half grabens developed in the Bight and Drumtoon Basins (Willcox and Stagg, 1990). This was followed by thermal subsidence phase in the Early Cretaceous as a NNE-SSW-oriented extensional regime was established (Willcox and Stagg, 1990; Totterdell et al., 2000). Accelerated rifting and breakup was diachronous along the southern margin, initiating in the west near the India-Antarctica-Australia triple junction at ca. 90-87 Ma, systematically migrated eastwards, concluding in entire margin breakup ca. 45 m.y. later (Sayers et al., 2001; Halpin et al., 2008; Diren, 2012). The southern rift system has been influenced by deep-seated pre-existing basement structures throughout basin evolution, particularly NW-SE trending shear zones (Teasdale et al., 2003; Totterdell and Bradshaw, 2004). Commencement of sea-floor spreading is defined by the earliest magnetic anomaly in the Bight region, which occurred at ca. 83 Ma (Sayers et al., 2001), which was followed by thermal subsidence and establishment of a passive margin.

Where is the rest of the Albany-Fraser Orogen now?

The Albany-Fraser Orogen plays an important role in tectonic reconstructions of Gondwana. However, the location of Antarctica's counterpart to the Albany-Fraser Orogen is not abundantly clear, and reconstructions are not unanimously agreed upon (Fig. 6). Palecontinent reconstruction has been attempted by many researchers using various approaches over the years (Powell, 1988; Norvick et al., 2001; Fitzsimons, 2003; Veevers et al., 2007; Boger, 2011; Williams et al., 2011; White et al., 2013; Aitken et al., 2016; Maritati et al., 2016; Morrissey et al., 2017; Tucker et al., 2017). Previous reconstructions have placed variable emphasis on matching the geology. Valid reconstructions need to consider matches of the positions major pre-existing structures, geophysical anomalies, sedimentary basins, as well as the tectonic (P-T-t) histories and detrital

provenance histories of the rocks themselves. Some previous reconstructions have suffered from correlation issues due to poor geological constraints, particularly from Antarctica. It is clear that rigorous reconstruction requires consideration of continental motion on a spherical body, and needs to be consistent with sea-floor spreading and extensional structures of the intervening basin(s), which are taken into account using G-Plates. However, a solution that satisfies all of these criteria is yet to be found.

Unconformable Cenozoic to recent sedimentary rocks

Rocks of the Cenozoic Plantagenet Group and the Mid- to Late-Pleistocene Tamala Limestone (formerly coastal limestone) were deposited directly on to crystalline basement along the southwestern coast of Western Australia (Playford et al., 1976; Quilty et al., 1974). The Tamala Limestone developed adjacent to the coast and along parts of the drowned continental shelf from north of Shark Bay to Esperance on the south coast of WA (Playford et al., 1976; Hearty and O'Leary, 2008; Jorgensen, 2012; Brooke et al., 2014). Given its extensive development (over 1000 km of latitude in a belt several tens of kilometres wide) the Tamala Limestone represents some of the most extensive deposits of this kind and age in the world. Sedimentary units in the region are dominated by calcarenite and aeolianites with subordinate palaeosols, calcretised horizons as well as beach and shallow marine deposits (Playford et al., 1976). Calcite-cemented sandstone with large-scale dune cross-bedding is common. The carbonate cement influences the weathering and erosion giving this unit the appearance of limestone. Palaeosols are developed locally, which represent interdune facies. Basal conglomerate is commonly present that can contain locally-derived clasts up to boulder size.

Topography on the unconformity indicates a non-planar palaeo-erosion surface, and the units lacks stratigraphic marker horizons that can be traced over long distances across the region. Nevertheless, marine units and aeolian units that have been dated elsewhere indicate that deposition must have occurred when sea-levels were at a relative highstand and greater carbonate production was facilitated in the more expansive shallow shelf water body (Hearty and O'Leary, 2008). Accelerated Australia-Antarctica rifting coincided with the Eocene climate optimum and consequent eustatic high, whereas glacioeustacy and the influence of the proto-Leeuwin current contributed more recently (Shafik, 1992; Wyrwoll et al., 2009). Recent uplift indicated by modern river profiles in the southwest is due to dynamic topography (Sandiford, 2003; Barnett-Moore et al., 2014).

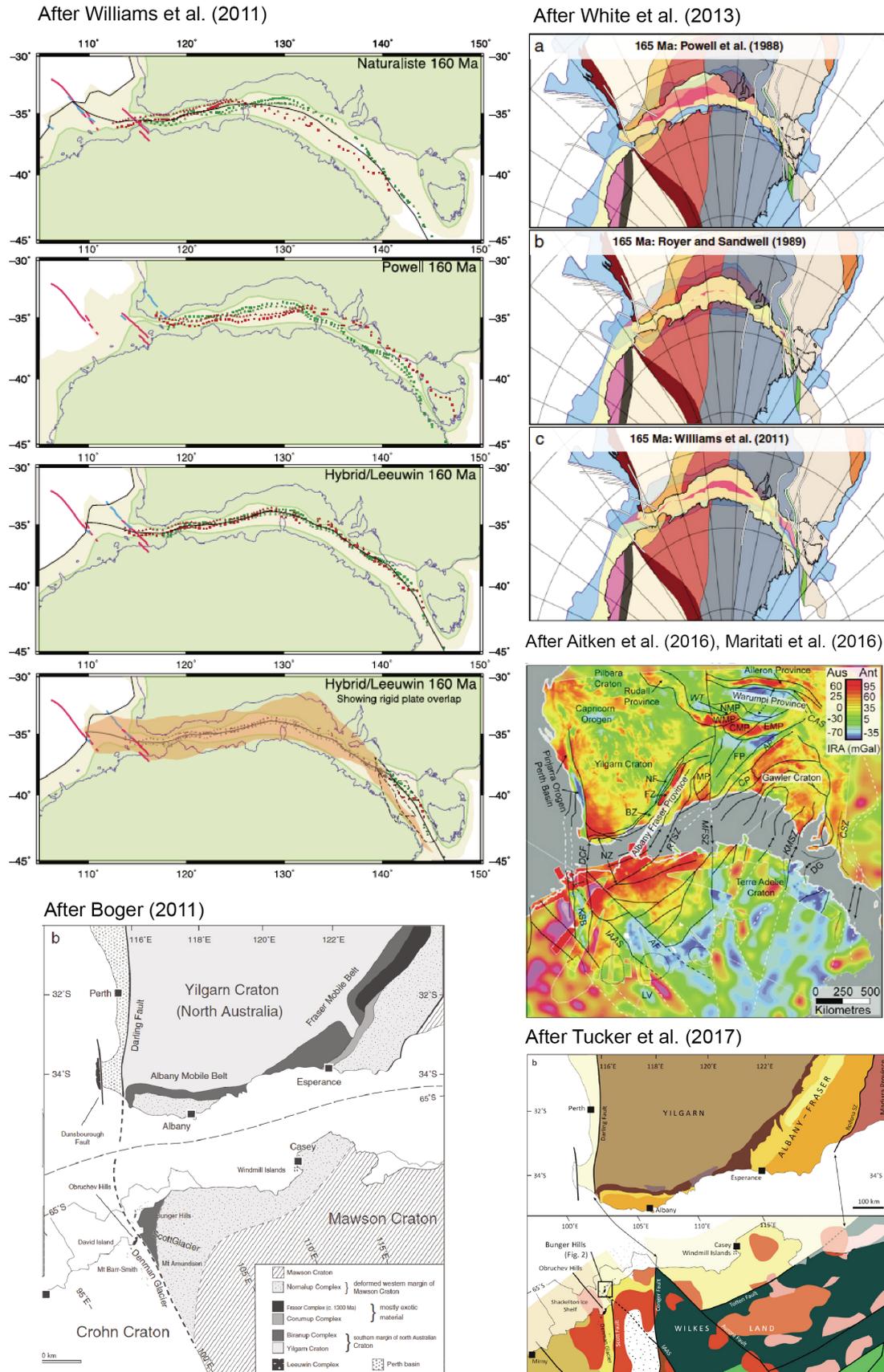


Figure 5. A selection of different plate reconstructions that highlight discrepancies of the correlation between Australia and Antarctica.



Gneisses at Parry Beach (image – Catherine Spaggiari)

Field localities

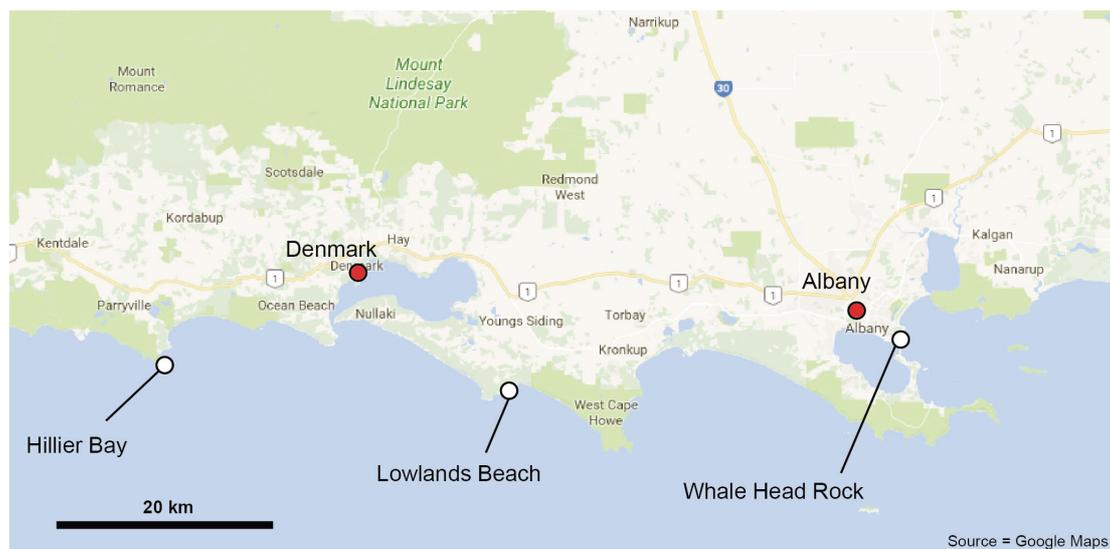


Figure 6. Map of the field localities for this excursion.

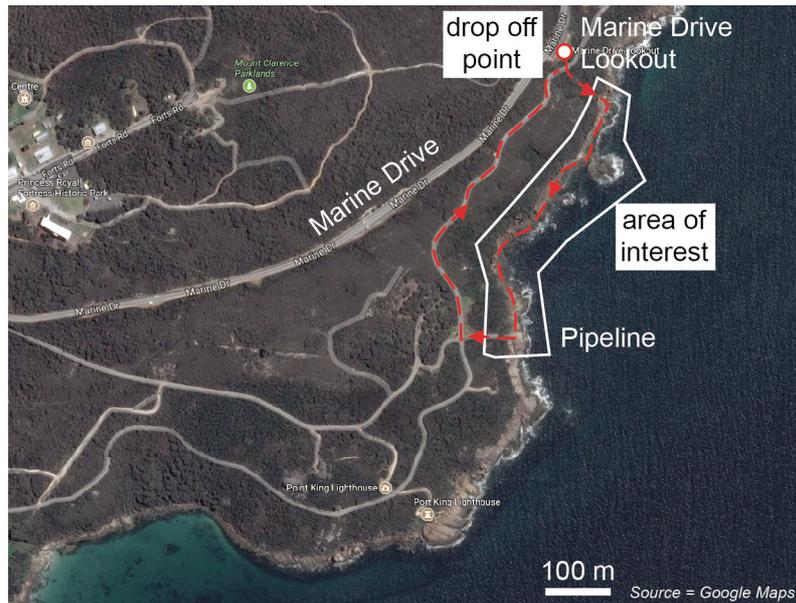
Whale Head Rock, Nornalup Zone, Albany-Fraser Orogen

How to get there

'Whale Head Rock' is the section of shoreline between Wooding Point and King Point on the west side of King George Sound. From a carpark and viewing lookout on Marine Drive, a walking track leads down to the foreshore.

Specific Hazards

- Keep alert for large waves that may surge over smooth rock surfaces that slope into the water.
- Take extra care when walking on large boulders that may move underfoot.



Geology

Granite, which is gneissic in places, and pelitic metasedimentary rocks (some migmatized) are exposed along the foreshore below the carpark. South of a small rocky cove the pelitic metasedimentary rocks have been intruded by granite.

Points for discussion

- **Xenoliths and enclaves** – What is the significance of amphibolite-dominated xenoliths in the north, and metasedimentary-dominated xenoliths in the south?
- **Different generations of granitoids** – When were the granites emplaced, what is their geochemistry and tectonic significance?
- **Timing of the metasedimentary rocks** – When did they form, and what was the basin setting?
- **Rotten green rocks** – What is this – calc-silicate protolith or an alteration assemblage?
- **Metamorphic conditions** – what pressure and temperature conditions did these rocks reach, and when? (Fig. 7)

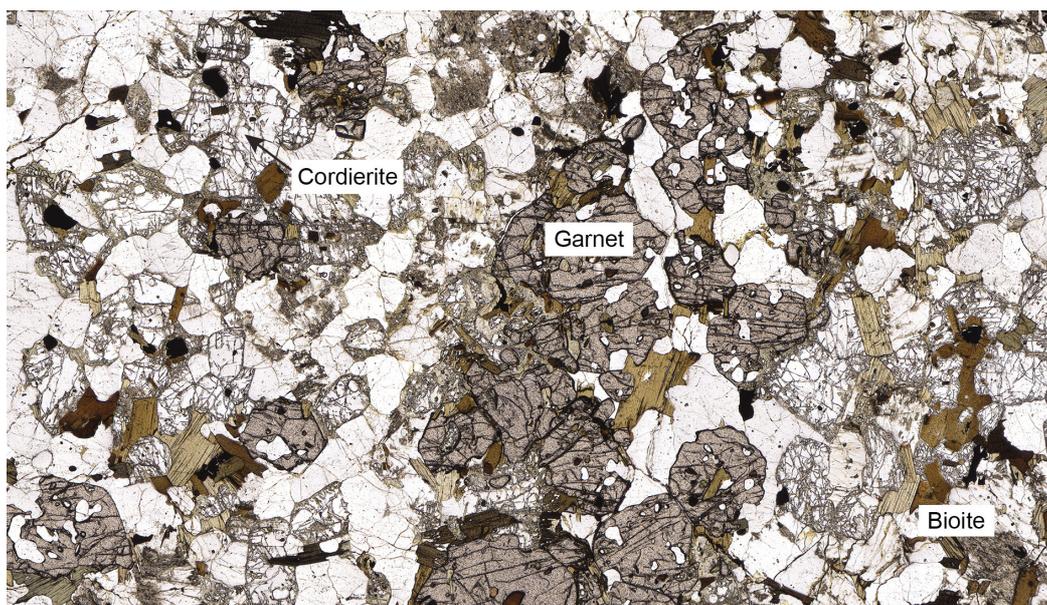


Figure 7. Cordierite-garnet-quartz-biotite gneiss at Whale Head Rock.



Shear zone at Whale Head Rock (image – Steve Reddy)

Lowlands Beach, Nornalup Zone, Albany-Fraser Orogen, & Cenozoic-Pleistocene sedimentary rocks

How to get there

Lowlands Beach, on the eastern side of Knapp Head, is ~34 km west of Albany along the Lower Denmark (Albany-Torbay) Road then south along Tennessee Road South past 'South Downs'. A track leads down from the car park (at end of road) to the beach and large rock pavements at the eastern end of Lowlands Beach.



Specific Hazards

- Beware of large waves that may surge over smooth foreshore rock pavements.
- Lowlands Beach is NOT a safe swimming beach if there is a large swell.
- Do NOT climb cliffs or stand beneath an overhang.

Geology

Granitic rocks equivalent to the Proterozoic Burnside Batholith (1.2-1.1 Ga) are well exposed on the expansive rock pavements beneath the cliffs at the eastern end of Lowlands Beach. The granitic rocks have been intruded by a number of dolerite dykes, also of Proterozoic age.

The Proterozoic rocks are overlain unconformably by limestone of the Plantagenet Group (Tertiary). This limestone crops out on the beach and forms the large cliffs above the beach. Sedimentary features in the limestone include large-scale planar cross bedding and columnar vertical features, which may be preserved tree trunks.

The **unconformity** represents a **hiatus** of about 1,100 million years. Evidence of the unconformity can be seen at the base of the cliff, where boulders of granite and gneiss are enclosed in the basal unit of the Plantagenet Group.

Points for discussion

- **Xenoliths and enclaves** – What do they represent, and what is their significance?
- **Different generations of granitoids** – When were the granites emplaced, what is their geochemistry and tectonic significance?
- **Joint and fracture sets** – When did they form, and at what conditions? What is the significance of epidote-bearing fractures?
- **Mafic dykes** – What is the age of the mafic dykes? Can they be related to any of the dyke swarms seen in the Yilgarn Craton? What is their geodynamic setting?
- **Unconformity** – How is the unconformity expressed across the outcrop?



Mafic dykes at Lowlands Beach (image – Nick Timms)

Hillier Bay, Nornalup Zone, Albany-Fraser Orogen

How to get there

Take Parry Beach Road south off the South Coast Highway. Continue past the Parry Beach turn off to the end of the sealed road (bus can turn around at leisure and park in the dead end at the T-junction). Walk down to Hillier Bay by turning east at the T-junction and following the track down south to the sea. Outcrops are to the east of where the track comes out onto the beach. Total walk from the T-junction is 10-15 minutes.



Specific Hazards

- Waves may surge over rocky pavements at high tide or in a significant swell.
- Take extra care climbing and walking over boulders.

Geology

Amphibolite facies paragneisses and orthogneisses of the Nornalup Complex are well exposed on the foreshore at Hillier Bay, and have been mapped in detail by Chapman (1995). Paragneissic protoliths are either S-type granitic rock or sedimentary rock. Orthogneissic protoliths include gabbro intruded by leucogranite. Paragneisses are the oldest lithological units and have the oldest foliation.

Gneissic rocks have been subjected to four deformation events:

- D1: early transpositional folding (F1) and transpositional foliation (F1).
 D2: subhorizontal shear zones (S2) with the hangingwall side moved to the northwest.
 D3: subvertical shear zones (S3) trending 245 and southeast side down and associated upright open folds.
 D4: brittle faulting and accompanying dolerite intrusion.

Progressive prograde metamorphism during D1 and D2 reached upper amphibolite facies during a major tectonic event at about 1300 Ma. D3 deformation and metamorphism occurred during an 1190 Ma event, which is partly constrained by the Parry Beach Adamellite (1190 Ma).

The rocks here are a complex sequence of partially melted orthogneisses and paragneisses. Main units are a grey foliated biotite-bearing grey gneiss, mostly of granodioritic composition, but (Chapman, 1995) also notes garnet-bearing material, mafic amphibole-bearing gneisses, and leucocratic material, which occurs as coarse pegmatites, and as finer-grained vein material that picks out structures and defines the foliation. There are several small outcrops (10-20 m in each dimension) and there is also extensive pavement outcrop.

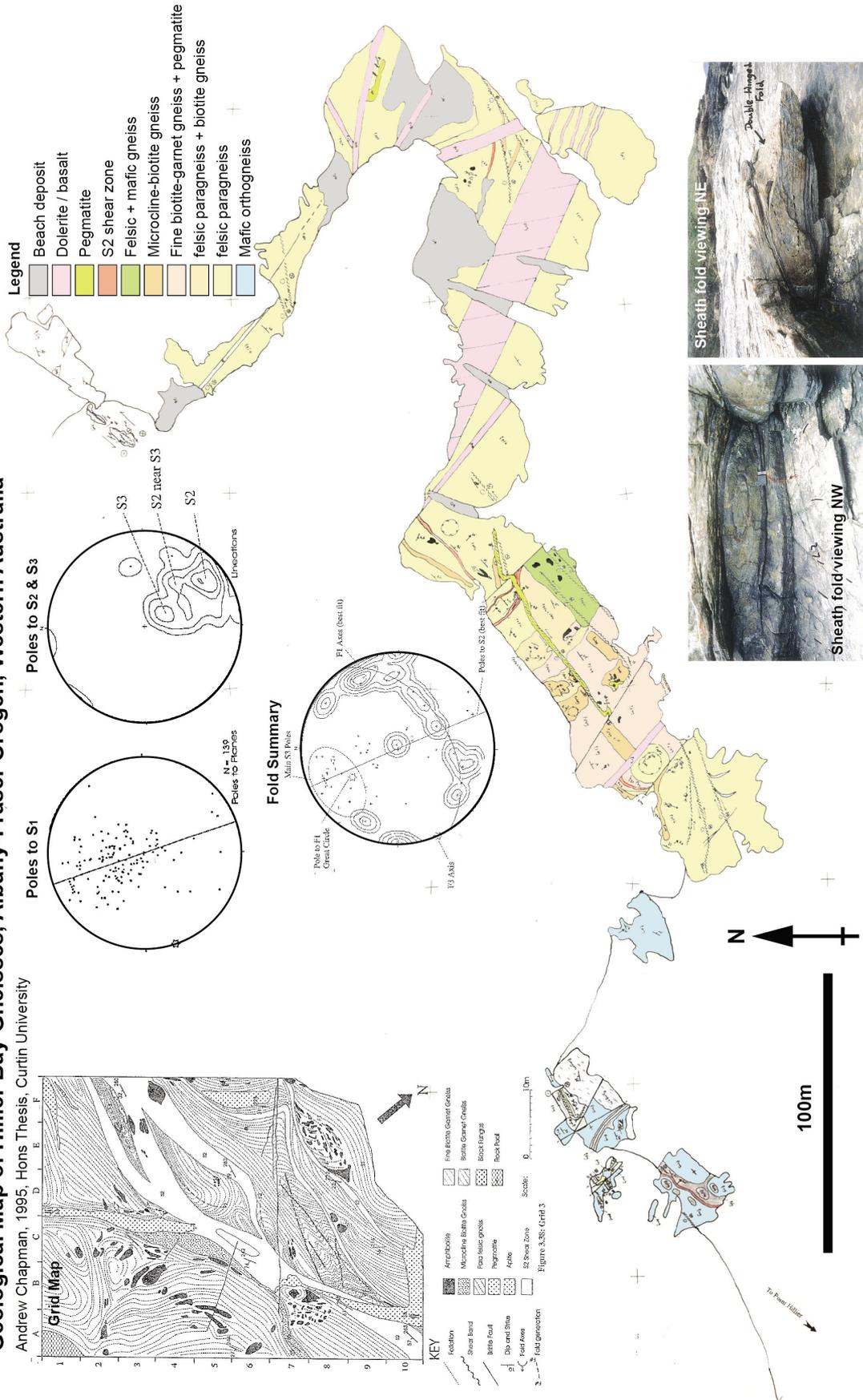
Features of interest include boudinaged melt channels, melt in dilational settings, shear zones with shear sense indicators, dome folds, sheath folds and numerous simple folds, some with sufficient three dimensional exposure to allow measurement of fold axes. It seems likely that the folds have been displaced and rotated within the melt, as they do not have any consistent orientation, so that at least parts of the outcrop are diatexitic. Shear zone orientations across the outcrop are more consistent. Other features of interest include a 3 m wide undeformed mafic dyke and garnet sand.

Points for discussion

- **Sheath folds** – are they a product of single shear event or are they refolded folds?
- **Flat fabric** – What is the tectonic significance of the sub-horizontal fabric?
- **Mafic dyke** – How old are the mafic dykes?
- **Pegmatite** – What is the significance of the pegmatite?

Geological Map of Hillier Bay Gneisses, Albany-Fraser Orogen, Western Australia

Andrew Chapman, 1995, Hons Thesis, Curtin University



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