



# BUREAU OF MINERAL RESOURCES, GEOLOGY AND GEOPHYSICS

## RECORD

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Record 1986/8

BMR STRATIGRAPHIC DRILLING IN THE AMADEUS BASIN,  
NORTHERN TERRITORY, 1985

by

M. OWEN



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C-5

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## SUMMARY

Two continuously cored stratigraphic holes were drilled for the Bureau of Mineral Resources in the Amadeus Basin in April and May 1985 to investigate the Early Ordovician Horn Valley Siltstone and the Cambrian Tempe Formation and Chandler Limestone in the Gardiner Range, about 200 km. west of Alice Springs.

Hermannsburg #41 was spudded in the upper part of the Deception Siltstone and penetrated a complete section of the Illara Sandstone, Tempe Formation, and Chandler Limestone before being completed in the uppermost Arumbera Sandstone. The total depth was 444.54 metres. An important result from the hole was the demonstration of a disconformity between the Tempe Formation and the Chandler Limestone.

Mount Liebig #2 spudded in the middle Stairway Sandstone and provided a complete section in the Horn Valley Siltstone before terminating in the upper Pacoota Sandstone with a total depth of 471.77 metres.

## INTRODUCTION

The Amadeus Basin is a large (about 155 000 sq. km.) intra-cratonic basin which has had a complex geological history from the Late Proterozoic to Carboniferous (Wells et al. 1969). The Division of Continental Geology commenced a multidisciplinary research program in the Basin in 1983, with the Cambro-Ordovician interval being the focus of attention. As part of this study, four shallow stratigraphic holes were drilled in late 1983, (Owen & Morris, 1985) and a further two fully cored stratigraphic holes were drilled in April and May 1985. Preliminary results from the 1985 drilling are presented in this record.

The stratigraphic sequence in the Cambro-Ordovician part of the Amadeus Basin is described in Wells et al., 1969; it is shown in summary in figure 1.

**Figure 1**  
**GENERALIZED STRATIGRAPHIC TABLE**  
**AMADEUS BASIN**

ORDOVICIAN	UPPER	LARAPINTA	UPPER ORDOVICIAN ? Ss unit		
			CARMICHAEL Ss., Siltst.		
			STOKES Siltst., Sh., Ls.		
	MIDDLE		STAIRWAY Ss., Siltst.		
CAMBRIAN	LOWER	PERTAORRITA	HORN VALLEY Siltst., Sh., Dol.		
			PACOOTTA Ss., Silt.		
	UPPER		GOYDER Ss. Dol., Sh.		
	MIDDLE		PETERMANN Ss.	SHANNON Ls.	
			DECEPTION Siltst.	HUGH RIVER Siltst	
			ILLARA Ss.		
			TEMPE Sh., Ls Siltst.	GILES CREEK Dol	
			CHANDLER Salt, Sh., Ls.		
	LOWER			TODO RIVER Dol	
			ARUMBERA	Ss Siltst Cgl	

The drilling programme undertaken by the Bureau of Mineral Resources has been designed to improve our understanding of two intervals, the Horn Valley Siltstone and the Tempe Formation/Chandler Limestone. The former is known to be the major hydrocarbon source rock in the Amadeus Basin (Gorter, 1983) while the latter have also been considered to have some source rock potential. Both intervals form very poor outcrop and are deeply weathered, hence drilling is an essential adjunct to any study of their sedimentology, source rock potential or palaeontology.

#### DETAILS OF HOLES DRILLED

All holes were named after the 1:250 000 Sheet areas they occur on, thus BMR Hermannsburg #41 was the forty-first hole drilled by BMR on the Hermannsburg 1:250 000 Sheet.

The holes were drilled vertically and continuously cored to total depth, once thin surficial sediments had been penetrated and cased. Drilling was done under contract on behalf of BMR by B.H.F. Drilling Pty. Ltd. (South Australia) using a Vickers Keogh model VK 1000H drilling rig, equipped with wire-line core barrels providing either HQ or NQ sized core. The crews worked a seven day week and usually two ten hour shifts each day. Recovery was generally excellent, averaging well over 95%. The core obtained is housed in the BMR Core and Cuttings Laboratory, Fyshwick, A.C.T.

All core was described in the field and the accompanying logs to this record were drawn up from these descriptions. In addition each box of core was photographed on site before being packed for shipment to Canberra. At least a quarter of all core will be permanently kept in the Core and Cuttings Laboratory. No geophysical logging of the holes was done because of financial constraints on the programme.

## DESCRIPTION OF HOLES

BMR HERMANNSBURG #41

Location:-On the Hermannsburg 1:250 000 sheet, in the Gardiner Range about 6 km west of Katapata Gap, and 270 metres on a bearing of  $185^{\circ}$  from the intersection of seismic lines P84-A2 and P84-A3. ( $23^{\circ} 56' 03''$ S  $132^{\circ} 05' 36''$ E). Elevation of ground estimated as 750m ASL.

Objective:- To provide a continuous core through the Deception Siltstone, Illara Sandstone, Tempe Formation and Chandler Limestone.

Drilling Details;- Drilling began on the 19th. April, 1985 and the hole was initially cased with PQ casing to 9.5 metres before coring with a HQ core barrel commenced. Subsequently the total loss of water return at a depth of 23.75 metres resulted in the PQ casing being extended to 24.00 metres. There were no further major problems and coring with HQ size core continued to the total depth at 444.54 metres, which was reached on the 4th May. Over much of the hole there was a slight loss of water return and a total of fourteen loads of water, each of 12,000 litres, were used. The water supply was from a dam about 25km. from the drill site. Upon abandonment a cover was tack-welded over the top of the hole but it was otherwise left open.

Results: The hole was spudded about 65 metres below the contact of the Deception Siltstone and the overlying Petermann Sandstone. The Deception Siltstone consisted for the most part of thinly interbedded brown micaceous siltstone and sandstone with occasional thicker beds of fine to medium grained sandstone. A feature of the Formation was the abundance of water escape structures

and mud flakes. A grey, poorly bedded, vuggy dolomite was also intersected from 46.75 to 48.50 metres. The Deception Siltstone was unfossiliferous, although indications of bioturbation were seen at several horizons.

The boundary with the underlying Illara Sandstone has been placed at 112.68 metres, although the contact is gradational over several tens of metres, with sandstone beds gradually becoming thicker and more common downwards. The horizon selected as the boundary correlates with that in nearby surface outcrops. The Illara Sandstone consists dominantly of cross-bedded, fine to medium grained quartz sandstone, generally fairly well sorted, and with abundant mud flakes. Thin mudstone laminae are quite common, and several thicker mudstone beds, up to 5 metres thick are also present. The sandstones often have an indistinct lamination caused by slight concentrations of heavy minerals, provisionally identified as magnetite. Glauconite is absent from the unit, except about 15 metres above the base, where both glauconite and limestone grains were seen and are thought to have been re-worked from the underlying Tempe Formation. No fossils were seen in the unit.

The contact of the Illara Sandstone with the Tempe Formation is also gradational, the boundary being placed at the base of the lowest major sandstone horizon, at 256.81 metres.

The Tempe Formation consists of dark grey mudstone with interbedded limestone, dolomite and cross-bedded sandstone. Limestone forms about 20% of the Formation and is usually grey, though sometimes becoming light brown, is often dolomitic, and some beds are glauconitic. Stylolites are present in the thicker

beds, and comminuted fossil debris occurs at several levels. Siltstone and fine sandstone are common as thin laminae in mudstone, and are often rich in glauconite. Sandstone, which is often glauconitic, becomes increasingly more major downwards and the base of the Formation is marked by a 23 metre thick bed of glauconitic, cross-bedded sandstone. Two beds of intraclast breccia are also present, at 272.8 and 278.9 metres.

The contact of the Tempe Formation with the underlying Chandler Limestone is at 372.97 metres, and is considered to be a disconformity, with cross-bedded fine sandstone of the Tempe Formation resting on dark reddish-brown siltstone of the upper Chandler Limestone. The siltstone of the Chandler is mostly poorly bedded, may be dolomitic in part, and contains several horizons up to 15 cm. thick of small-scale intra-clast brecciation, with some thin, vertical, infilled fissures also present. This passes down at 384.60 metres into a breccia of dolomite, limestone and chert in a brown sandy matrix, with clasts up to 5 cm. across, which in turn passes down at 387.98 metres into limestone.

The limestone is light to dark grey in colour, may be dolomitic, and contains chert as both clasts and as irregular interbeds. Stylolites are common and there are several zones of thin intraclast breccia. The basal 25.5 metres of the Chandler Limestone is made up of poorly bedded to un-bedded brown siltstone, which has a gradational contact with both the overlying limestone and with the underlying Arumbera Sandstone at 426.94 metres.



The Arumbera Sandstone in the Gardiner Range has previously been called the Eninta Sandstone, although its correlation with the Arumbera Sandstone to the north was suspected (Wells et al. 1970). Recent work on the seismic stratigraphy of the intervening areas (J. Lindsay, pers comm.) has demonstrated that the two sandstone units are continuous under the Missionary Plains and that the name Eninta Sandstone is not needed.

The Arumbera Sandstone was penetrated from 426.94 metres to the total depth of the hole at 444.54 metres, and consists of interbedded, brown, fine to medium grained sandstone with minor silstone and mudstone. Cross-bedding, mudflakes, water escape structures and contorted bedding are common.

The dip of the intersected rocks shows considerable and rapid variation down the hole from about  $26^{\circ}$  in the top 30 metres to less than  $3^{\circ}$  at 350 metres. Although no deviation survey was performed, the driller in charge's judgement was that this was not due to deviation of the hole but must reflect an actual change in the dip.

## BMR MOUNT LIEBIG #2

Location:- On the Mount Liebig 1:250 000 sheet, in the Gardiner Range about 25 km. east-southeast of Camel's Hump, and 20 metres east of seismic line P83-A1 at shot point 690. 23° 54' 12"S 131° 50' 05"E, ground elevation about 800 metres ASL.

Objective:- To provide continuous core through the Horn Valley Siltstone and, if time permitted, to core the upper Pacoota Sandstone.

Drilling Details:- Drilling commenced on the 6th. May with PQ casing being run to 9.00 metres before coring with a HQ core barrel was started. The interval from 9.00 to about 25.00 metres proved to be very weathered, resulting in some core loss, together with only part water return. Firmer rock below 25 metres resulted in both quicker drilling and less core loss. Water loss still caused concern however, since the dam being used for the water supply had only a limited amount remaining, and it became necessary to case the hole to 121.10 metres. This was accomplished by leaving the HQ drill stem in the hole and changing to NQ, which was able to run inside the HQ drill stem. Coring then continued with NQ down to the total depth of 471.77 metres, which was reached on the 15th. May. Water return continued to be poor, with several porous sandstones in the Pacoota Sandstone being a particular problem. A total of 21 loads (each 12,000 litres) of water were used.

Upon completion of the hole it proved impossible to pull the HQ rods being used as casing and these had to be left in the hole. Upon abandonment a cover was tack-welded over the top of the hole but it was otherwise left open.

Results:- The hole was spudded in the middle part of the Stairway Sandstone, an estimated 115 metres below its contact with the Stokes Formation. Most of the middle Stairway Sandstone, which forms a marked recessive interval in outcrop around the drill site, is composed of thin to medium interbedded mudstone and fine sandstone, which appeared un-weathered below 31.5 metres. A feature of the unit was the abundant and at times extreme bioturbation. Often bedding has been completely disrupted, giving a mottled appearance to the rock.

Thin horizons of phosphate nodules are common between 41 and 120 metres, with only the more major ones being shown on the accompanying logs. Individual nodules ranged to up to 5 mm. across and were in beds up to 10 cm. thick. The beds usually had sharp, erosive bases, and often gradational tops into fine sandstone lacking nodules. Beds rich in large pelecypods are common between 64 and 74 metres, while several isolated nautiloid cones were also present at this level. Sandstone becomes dominant below about 90 metres, though it always contains thin mudstone laminae, and usually shows signs of bioturbation.

The contact with the underlying Horn Valley Siltstone, which has been placed at 181.41 metres, is gradational over several metres. It has been placed where mudstone starts to dominate over siltstone and sandstone. The Horn Valley Siltstone is formed dominantly of black, highly fossiliferous, pyritic mudstone with thin interbeds of fine micritic limestone, which are more common in the upper part of the Formation. Fossils present include trilobites, brachiopods, pelecypods, and graptolites in the lower half.

A minor fault at 296.30 metres has had an unknown, though probably small, effect on the unit. The fault plane dipped about  $65^{\circ}$  towards the south, and was marked by minor calcite veins for about 15 cm. either side of the fault.

The basal part of the Horn Valley Siltstone is marked by the presence of calcareous siltstone interbedded with mudstone, marking a gradational contact with the underlying Pacoota Sandstone at 317.18 metres. The contact has been placed at the top of the highest sandstone bed, which also marks the lowest calcareous siltstone beds, however most of the uppermost Pacoota Sandstone is similar to the basal part of the Horn Valley Siltstone.


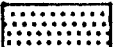


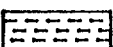


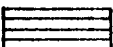


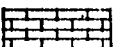


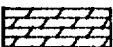
















Much of the upper Pacoota Sandstone penetrated in the hole is composed of interbedded siltstone and mudstone, which is often highly bioturbated, but which lacks any macrofossils. Pyrite is common throughout, and a thin phosphate nodule bed occurs at 321.88 metres. Sandstone is a minor constituent, only dominating between 331 and 350 metres and again below 433 metres. Glauconite is a significant component of the sandstone below 456 metres, while pyrite also occurs commonly.

In contrast to the Hermannsburg #41 hole, the dip remains fairly constant throughout, varying from  $30^{\circ}$  near the top to around  $20^{\circ}$  near the bottom of the hole.

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Figure 2, LEGEND FOR LITHOLOGIC LOGS

<u>LITHOLOGY</u>		<u>BEDDING</u>	
	BRECCIA	PLANAR	CROSS-BEDDED
	SANDSTONE	V. THICK 	
	SILTSTONE	THICK 	
	MUDSTONE	MEDIUM 	
	LIMESTONE	THIN 	
	DOLOMITE	LAMINATED 	
	PHOSPHATE NODULES	<u>BEDDING STRUCTURES</u>	
<u>FOSSILS</u>		BIOTURBATED 	
MACROFOSSILS 		ASSYM. RIPPLES 	
COMMINUTED FOSSIL DEBRIS 		MUD PELLETS 	
NAUTILOID 		DE-WATERING STRUCTURES 	
BIVALVE 		CONTORTED BEDDING 	
<u>MINERALS</u>		CALC. NODULES 	
PYRITE	py	VUGS 	
GLAUCONITE	gl	LOAD CASTS 	
		STYLOLITES 	

























WELL NAME HERMANNSBURG # 41						SHEET 11 OF 12	
BASIN AMADEUS STATE N.T. LONG. 132 05 36 LAT. 23 56 03							
DRILLER B.H.F. Ltd. GEOLOGIST M. OWEN						GR (AMG) 041-500	
DATE	DEPTH	DIP	LITHOL. LOG	FOSSILS	SEDIM. STRUCT.	LITHOLOGY	ROCK UNIT
3-5-85	400				□	<u>387.98-401.55:</u> GREY DOLOMITIC LST. PASSING DOWN INTO CALC. GREY MDST. TOWARDS BASE OF INTERVAL	CHANDLER LIMESTONE
	410				□	<u>401.55-426.94:</u> BROWN POORLY BEDDED TO UNBEDDED SLTST. WITH POORLY DEFINED INTERNAL LAMINATION.  GRADATIONAL CONTACT WITH BOTH OVERLYING AND UNDERLYING UNITS.	
4-5-85	420				□		ARUMBERA SST.
	430				□	<u>426.94-444.54:</u> INTERBEDDED BROWN FINE TO MEDIUM SST. SLTST. AND MDST. SST. DOMINANT LITHOLOGY. X-BEDDING AND MUDFLAKES COMMON IN SST. TOP 1m. BIOTURBATED.	
	440				□		
COMMENTS CORE RECOVERY 100% THROUGHOUT INTERVAL							



WELL NAME Mt. LIEBIG # 2						SHEET 1 OF 12	
BASIN AMADEUS STATE N.T. LONG. 131 50 05 LAT. 23 54 12							
DRILLER B.H.F. Ltd. GEOLOGIST M. OWEN						GR (AMG) 862-535	
DATE	DEPTH	DIP	LITHOL. LOG	FOSSILS	SEDIM. STRUCT.	LITHOLOGY	ROCK UNIT
6-5-85	0					0.00-9.00 INTERVAL NOT CORED  DEEPLY WEATHERED FINE SST. AND MDST.	STAIRWAY SANDSTONE
	10					9.00-31.50 STRONGLY WEATHERED, INTERBEDDED LT. BR. FINE SST. AND MDST. DETAILS OF LITHOLOGY IN UPPER PART OF INTERVAL LARGELY OBSCURED BY WEATHERING  TOWARDS BASE, THE WEATHERING BECOMES LESS INTENSE AND BOTH SST. AND MDST. ARE HIGHLY BIOTURBATED. IN BEDS NOT AFFECTED BY BIOTURBATION, BOTH SST. AND MDST. ARE LAMINATED.	
7-5-85	20						
	30						
	30	30°				31.50-40.00 INTERBEDDED, USUALLY HIGHLY BIOTURBATED DK. GREY MDST. AND LT. GREY V. FINE SST. MDST. AND SST. LAMINATED WHERE NOT AFFECTED BY BIOTURBATION. LITHOLOGY WITHIN INTERVAL IDENTICAL TO THE OVERLYING INTERVAL EXCEPT FOR THE ABSENCE OF WEATHERING.	
	40						

COMMENTS		PG CASING 0.00-9.00m. HQ CORE TAKEN BELOW 9.00m.	
CORE RECOVERY 100% EXCEPT FOR:-		9.00-10.00 85%	12.00-15.00 95%
		15.00-17.00 85%	17.00-19.10 45%
		19.10-22.06 98%	22.06-25.10 55%
		25.10-28.10 90%	28.10-31.10 97%



















WELL NAME Mt LIEBIG #2						SHEET 10 OF 12	
BASIN AMADEUS STATE N.T. LONG. 131 50 05 LAT. 23 54 12							
DRILLER B.H.F. Ltd. GEOLOGIST M. OWEN						GR (AMG) 886-536	
DATE	DEPTH	DIP	LITHOL. LOG	FOSSILS	SEDIM. STRUCT.	LITHOLOGY	ROCK UNIT
13-5-85	360				Py □	<u>356.40-365.32</u> BLACK PYRITIC MDST. WITH MINOR THIN GREY SLTST. LAMINAE.	PACOOTA SANDSTONE
		21°			Py □		
					Py □		
					Py ≡		
					⊕	<u>365.32-382.37</u> THINLY INTERBEDDED BLACK PYRITIC MDST. AND LIGHT GREY PYRITIC SLTST. EXTENSIVE BIOTURBATION THROUGHOUT HAS MOSTLY DESTROYED BEDDING.	
	370				Py =		
					⊕		
					Py =		
		19°			⊕		
					Py =		
					⊕		
	380				Py =		
14-5-85					Py □	<u>382.37-385.30</u> BLACK PYRITIC MDST. WITH MINOR GREY SLTST. LAMINAE.	
					Py =		
					⊕	<u>385.30-399.49</u> THINLY INTERBEDDED BLACK MDST. AND GREY SLTST. PYRITIC THROUGHOUT. EXTENSIVELY BIOTURBATED.	
					Py =		
	390				⊕		
		21°			Py =		
					⊕		
					Py =		
	400				⊕	<u>399.49-401.67</u> BL. PYR. MDST. WITH VERY MINOR SLTST.	
COMMENTS CORE RECOVERY 100% THROUGHOUT							

SHEET 11 OF 12

BASIN AMADEUS STATE N.T. LONG. 131 50 05 LAT. 23 54 12  
DRILLER B.H.F. Ltd. GEOLOGIST M. OWEN GR (AMG) 886-536

DATE	DEPTH	DIP	LITHOL. LOG	FOSSILS	SEDIM. STRUCT.	LITHOLOGY	ROCK UNIT
14-5-85	400	20°			⊕ Py ⊐	399.49-401.67 PYRITIC MDST. WITH OCCAS. THIN GREY BIOTURBATED SLTST. LAMINAE	PACOOTA SANDSTONE
	⊕ Py =				401.67-416.23 INTERBEDDED BLACK MDST. AND GREY SLTST. PYRITE DISSEMINATED THROUGHOUT. BEDDING MOSTLY DESTROYED BY BIOTURBATION.		
	⊕ Py =						
	⊕ Py =						
	⊕ Py =						
	⊕ Py =						
	⊕ Py =						
	⊕ Py =						
	⊕ Py =						
	⊕ Py =						
15-5-85	410	22°			⊕ Py ⊐	416.23-418.70 BLACK, PYRITIC, UN-BEDDED MDST.	
	⊕ Py =				418.70-423.33 THINLY INTERBEDDED BLACK PYRITIC MDST. AND GREY SLTST. BIOTURBATION PRESENT THROUGHOUT BUT NOT STRONGLY DEVELOPED.		
	⊕ Py =						
	⊕ Py =						
	⊕ Py =						
	⊕ Py =						
	⊕ Py =						
	⊕ Py =						
	⊕ Py =						
	⊕ Py =						
	420				⊕ Py ⊐	423.33-426.25 BLACK PYRITIC MDST. WITH RARE THIN SLTST. LAMINAE.	
	⊕ Py =				426.25-433.89 THINLY INTERBEDDED GREY SLTST. AND BLACK PYRITIC MDST. BIOTURBATED THROUGHOUT, AT TIMES INTENSELY. BLACK MDST. WITHOUT SLTST. INTERBEDS IN INTERVAL 432.14-432.50m.		
	⊕ Py =						
	⊕ Py =						
	⊕ Py =						
	⊕ Py =						
	⊕ Py =						
	⊕ Py =						
	⊕ Py =						
	⊕ Py =						
	430				⊕ Py ⊐	433.89-460.42 MEDIUM TO THINLY BEDDED VERY FINE GREY SST. AND SLTST. OR MDST. PYRITE COMMON THROUGHOUT.	
	⊕ Py =						
	⊕ Py =						
	⊕ Py =						
	⊕ Py =						
	⊕ Py =						
	⊕ Py =						
	⊕ Py =						
	⊕ Py =						
					440		
⊕ Py =							
⊕ Py =							
⊕ Py =							
⊕ Py =							
⊕ Py =							
⊕ Py =							
⊕ Py =							
⊕ Py =							
⊕ Py =							
COMMENTS CORE RECOVERY 100% EXCEPT FOR 434.76 - 436.00 85%							

