Paper No. 46

GEOLOGY AND GEOCHEMISTRY OF THE ALICE ARM MOLYBDENUM DEPOSITS

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ABSTRACT

A number of molybdenum-bearing granitic stocks, referred to as the Alice Arm intrusions, are emplaced in sedimentary rocks marginal to the east contact of the Coast Plutonic Complex between Stewart and Terrace. Several deposits are known in the vicinity of Alice Arm, of which the most important is Lime Creek.

The Alice Arm intrusions occur as small stocks of quartz monzonite porphyry, most of which exhibit the features of multiple intrusion. All plutons are cut by lamprophyre dykes of post-mineral age. Sedimentary rocks adjacent to stock contacts are thermally metamorphosed to biotite hornfels.

Several stages of molybdenite mineralization are contained in quartz veinlet stockworks best developed near stock contacts. Late stage polymetallic veins are known at most deposits.

Geochemical investigations of the Lime Creek deposit show that distribution patterns for alteration minerals and geochemical elements define the main geological events inasmuch as some elements correlate with original unaltered rock while others are related to contact metasomatism or stages of hydrothermal alteration and mineralization.

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K-Ar ages indicate that the age of intrusion and mineralization are nearly synchronous at about 53 m y.

INTRODUCTION

A number of porphyry molybdenum deposits and prospects occur along the eastern margin of the Coast Plutonic Complex between Stewart and Terrace in northwestern British Columbia (Figure 1). The greatest clustering of these deposits is in the vicinity of Alice Arm, at the head of an inlet of the same name 160 km north of Prince Rupert. To date, the most significant of these deposits is the former producing mine, British Columbia Molybdenum, situated on Lime Creek 6.5 km south of Alice Arm (Figure 1).

This paper is divided into two parts: the first part describes the general geological setting of the molybdenum deposits while the second part is devoted to a more extensive description of each deposit, and in particular the geology and geochemistry of the Lime Creek deposit.

HISTORY

Molybdenite mineralization in the Alice Arm area was first recognized during early prospecting for silver-bearing veins. Part of the Lime Creek deposit was first staked in 1911 by W. McLean but the main feature of interest at that time was a narrow silver-lead-zinc vein later determined to be peripheral to the molybdenite deposit.

The first molybdenite production in the area was from the Tidewater deposit in 1916 (Figure 1) where 345 tonnes averaging 1.60 percent molybdenite was mined from quartz veins in sedimentary rocks just south of a small granitic stock.

Intensive exploration for molybdenite deposits took place in the late 1950's when Kennco Explorations, (Western) Limited did limited work on the Roundy Creek and Tidewater properties and, in 1959, acquired an option on claims at Lime Creek from Gunn Fiva of Alice Arm. Diamond drilling was carried out from 1959 to 1963 when British Columbia Molybdenum Limited, a wholly owned subsidiary, was incorporated. A decision to put the property into production was made in late 1964. Mining and milling operations began in 1967 and were suspended in August 1972 due to weak molybdenum markets. Production totalled 10,400 tonnes of molybdenum. Remaining reserves are estimated to be in the order of 36 million tonnes of slightly less than 0.20 percent molybdenite.

Climax Molybdenum Corporation of British Columbia, Limited acquired the property in 1973 and has been conducting geological and feasibility studies since that time.

Exploration in the area for similar deposits during the 1960's resulted in the discovery of several good prospects including the Ajax, Bell Molybdenum, and Roundy Creek properties in the immediate Alice Arm area and a number of other prospects such as the THM, Hoan Creek, and those south of the Nass River (Figure 1).

GEOLOGICAL SETTING

Molybdenum-bearing granitic stocks, referred to collectively as the Alice Arm intrusions (Carter, 1974), occur near the western edge of the Bowser successor basin and marginal to the Coast Plutonic Complex (Figure 1). The Alice Arm intrusions occur in the form of small stocks, generally not exceeding 0.8 km in diameter. Porphyritic quartz monzonite is the dominant rock type, and this distinguishes the molybdenum-bearing stocks from equigranular satellitic stocks related to the Coast Plutonic Complex. While molybdenum-bearing stocks generally intrude Bowser assemblage siltstones, greywackes, and shales of Late Jurassic age, some do occur within the Coast Plutonic Complex. Examples of these are Molly Mack and Penny Creek prospects.

Evidence for both forceful and passive emplacement of the intrusions is well documented. In the Alice Arm area, sedimentary rocks have been arched and domed around the stocks. Elsewhere, little disturbance of the country rock is seen and the elongate nature of some of the intrusions indicates that they probably were emplaced along major fault zones.

South of Alice Arm, several molybdenum-bearing stocks are clustered near remnants of flat-lying Quaternary basalt which probably overlie their feeders. In the Nass River area, small stocks occur south and west of the Recent lava flow.

Many of the stocks apparently have been localized at or near intersections of east-northeast and north-northwest faults (Seraphim, et al., this volume). Several of the stocks (Bell Molybdenum, Roundy Creek, Kay) in the Alice Arm to Nass River area are elongated in an east-northeast direction which may also represent some control by faults or by the attitude of the sedimentary rocks. Also, a crude east-northeast distribution of the stocks is evident in the cluster south of Alice Arm and south of the Nass River (Figure 1). Some stock contacts are rectilinear in plan, again reflecting the dominant fault and fracture patterns. A good example of this is seen at the Ajax molybdenum deposit northeast of Alice Arm (Figure 2).

COMPARATIVE GEOLOGY OF THE MOLYBDENUM DEPOSITS

Molybdenum deposits are associated with the Alice Arm intrusions, which usually occur as small oval or elongate stocks. Some intrusions, most notably those at Roundy Creek and Tidewater near Alice Arm, are sheet or sill-like in form and are related to small feeder pipes. Intrusions at Alder Creek, near Lava Lake (Figure 1) and Molybdenum Creek, north of Terrace, are northwest-striking dyke swarms intruding sedimentary rocks. Major geologic features of four deposits are illustrated on Figure 2.

Quartz monzonite porphyry is the prevalent host rock at most deposits. Phenocrysts range in size from 2 mm to 1 cm and include, in decreasing order of abundance, euhedral plagioclase, K-feldspar, and both euhedral and anhedral quartz eyes. Quartz monzonite porphyry is characteristically mesocratic with both biotite and hornblende as primary mafic minerals. Leucocratic quartz feldspar porphyry phases of quartz monzonite to granite composition also are prominent at most of the deposits and at some they constitute the bulk of the intrusive rocks. Muscovite is the mica mineral of this phase.

Some intrusions are zoned, most notably the intrusion that is host to the Lime Creek deposit. Here, a core of quartz monzonite porphyry is bordered by more basic granodiorite and quartz diorite, which may be in part older than the quartz monzonite phase.

Most molybdenum-bearing stocks exhibit several stages of intrusion. The first stage forms the bulk of the stock and is represented by quartz monzonite and/or quartz feldspar porphyry and lesser quartz diorite such as Lime Creek. This main phase may be intruded by fine-grained, equigranular alaskite that consists essentially of quartz, K-feldspar, and myrmekite. Alaskites, which are very common at the Lime Creek and Roundy Creek properties (Figure 2), occur as dykes and irregular masses and are host to better grades of disseminated and lens-like molybdenite mineralization.

Other inter-mineral intrusions include dykes and irregular lenses of intrusive breccia, best developed along the northern stock contact at the Lime

Creek deposit (Figure 2). Angular fragments 1 to 2 cm in size, of both intrusive and country rock, are contained in a granulated matrix of quartz, plagioclase, and K-feldspar.

Several deposits feature intrusive phases that are very late in the intrusive-mineralization sequence. These also are quartz monzonite in composition. Examples include an unexposed plug at Lime Creek, the southwest portion of the Bell Molybdenum stock (Figure 2), and post-mineral dykes at some of the Nass River deposits (Figure 1).

Post-mineral lamprophyric and basalt dykes cut virtually all of the molybdenum-bearing stocks. These usually strike northeasterly, dip vertically, and truncate all pre-existing rocks and structures, including mineralized fractures.

Northwesterly striking faults that are younger than the plutons and lamprophyric dykes are found at Bell Molybdenum, Roundy Creek, and Nass River deposits.

Sedimentary rocks adjacent to the Alice Arm intrusions have been thermally metamorphosed to biotite hornfels in an aureole which may extend outward from the stock contact for 100 to 150 m. Biotite hornfels is a brown, indurated, fine grained rock with a granoblastic texture that consists of quartz, minor feldspar, and abundant felted, brown biotite. Some cordierite and andalusite are developed in the hornfels adjacent to intrusive contacts.

Alteration patterns within and marginal to the molybdenum-bearing stocks are similar to other porphyry deposits. At many of the deposits, a central zone of potassic alteration is partially coincident with molybdenite mineralization. At Lime Creek the most intense potassic alteration occurs in a circular zone in the northern part of the stock (Figure 2). Rock within this core of intense alteration is laced with barren quartz veinlets rimmed by secondary K-feldspar, such that the original quartz monzonite porphyry has been converted to a rock consisting mainly of quartz and K-feldspar. In the outer part of this alteration zone is an annular zone of molybdenite mineralization where secondary K-feldspar is restricted to the margins of quartz-molybdenite veinlets. Other deposits also feature secondary K-feldspar but not to the same degree as at Lime Creek. Secondary biotite, an alteration of primary hornblende, is present to a limited degree in several of the deposits. At Lime Creek, this alteration of hornblende, particularly in the quartz diorite, may be in part deuteric. At Roundy Creek, the potassic alteration zone contains quartz-muscovite veins.

The potassic zone at most deposits is gradational outward to a phyllic (quartz-sericite-pyrite) zone. Where coincident with the margins of the plutons it is superimposed on the effects of thermal metamorphism. This zone is represented at many deposits by a bleaching of the biotite hornfels to a cream or light green colour marginal to fractures and quartz veinlets and is due to the development of very fine-grained quartz, sericite, and some epidote. This type of alteration may be weakly developed, as at many of the deposits, or so intense that the original biotite hornfels has been largely transformed to a buff or light green-coloured rock within a zone several tens of metres outward from the stock contact, as at the Lime Creek and Ajax deposits. Pyrite is a common constituent in this alteration zone, occurring both in quartz veinlets and as disseminations. The intensity of pyritization may be related in part to thermal metamorphism, which involves formation of pyrite and pyrrhotite in the hornfels.

Better grades of molybdenite mineralization in the Alice Arm intrusions are dependent on structural and lithologic controls. Fracturing and attendant quartz-molybdenite veining are best developed near stock contacts. Later alaskite intrusive phases may contain disseminated to nearly massive molybdenite. The ore zone at Lime Creek is annular or ring-shaped in plan, occurring in the northern half of the stock (Figure 2) with molybdenite occurring as selvages in a network of east-northeast and west-northwest quartz veinlets. A similar style of mineralization occurs at most of the other deposits.

Disseminated molybdenite is contained in the alaskite intrusive phase at the Lime Creek deposit. At Roundy Creek, the alaskite contains nearly massive lenses, pods, and parallel bands of molybdenite and much of this is in the form of feather-like intergrowths with the feldspar. Disseminated rosettes of molybdenite occur in leucocratic quartz-feldspar porphyry phases at the Tidewater and Kay properties.

Most of the deposits exhibit several stages of quartz-molybdenite, pyrite, and quartz-pyrite veining. Virtually all of the Alice Arm molybdenite deposits feature late-stage polymetallic quartz-carbonate veins which contain pyrite, galena, sphalerite, tetrahedrite, chalcopyrite, minor molybdenite, and at Lime Creek, four silver-lead-bismuth sulphosalts.

Pyrite halos may extend outward from the molybdenite zone for 150 m to 300 m. Where exposed, the pyrite zone is weathered to a prominent gossan, particularly at the Ajax and Snafu properties.

Two molybdenite deposits are known to occur within granite rocks of the Coast Plutonic Complex. These are the Molly Mack prospect near Anyox and the Penny Creek showing south of Alice Arm (Figure 1). At the Molly Mack property, coarse-grained molybdenite is abundantly disseminated in a small zone of biotite granite contained within a stock-like body of leucocratic quartz monzonite porphyry which is similar in appearance to some phases of the Alice Arm intrusions. The Penny Creek occurrence consists of rosettes of molybdenite in a biotite quartz monzonite, a late phase of the Coast Plutonic Complex.

Numerous showings of molybdenite occur near the eastern margin of the Coast Plutonic Complex and in the satellite stocks related to the complex.

The deposit has several significant features evident on plans and cross sections. In the upper part of the mineralized area the strata dip about 60° northeast compared to dips greater than 70° at lower parts of the stocks. The strata near the surface are cut by numerous parallel or subparallel faults. The molybdenite mineralization is controlled by these pre-existing structures and the grade contours form bands that are subparallel, but definitely crosscutting the stratification. At a lower level a somewhat arcuate form for the molybdenite zone is evident in which there is a relatively lower grade core area that parallels the many northeasterly striking, steeply dipping faults. The outer diameter of the molybdenite zone at this level is about 425 by 520 m.

At a much lower level, the molybdenite zone has expanded to 850 by 610 m, oriented in a northwesterly direction. The ore area has a definite partial ring or arcuate shape with steeply dipping internal structures as indicated by the grade contours and with a definite barren core measuring 490 by 300 m and also oriented northwesterly. However a zone of molybdenite mineralization about 180 m wide trends northeasterly through the middle of the barren core. This represents mineralization controlled by faults and shear zones. At higher levels this fault controlled linear zone merges with the northwest side of the main arcuate zone leaving the barren core with an apparent northeast trend.

Post-ore faulting has displaced the mineralization in places.

Four stages of sulphide mineralization are evident, including initial quartz-pyrrhotite mineralization, followed by at least two stages consisting of quartz-molybdenite-pyrrhotite and a final stage represented by coarse grained quartz veins several centimetres wide, containing sphalerite and lesser amounts of pyrite, galena, and chalcopyrite.

Lime Creek

The Lime Creek deposit is situated 6.5 km south of Alice Arm (Figure 1) (Lat. 55° 25', Long. 129° 25', NTS 103P/6W, El. 610 m).

Although one of the earliest discovered mineral deposits in the Alice Arm camp, the major period of exploration took place between 1959 and 1963 when 13,150 m of diamond drilling was completed. British Columbia Molybdenum Limited carried out open pit mining operations between 1967 and 1972 and undertook 3,750 m of exploratory drilling during this period. Since acquisition of the property by Climax Molybdenum Corporation of British Columbia, Limited in 1973, a further 3,450 metres of drilling has been done.

Molybdenite mineralization at Lime Creek is associated with a small elliptical stock of quartz monzonite to quartz diorite composition which intrudes siltstones and greywackes of Late Jurassic to Early Cretaceous age (Figure 3). The main stock is 1,000 m in diameter and composed largely of porphyritic rocks. An eastern appendage to this body that is about 500 m long is composed of quartz diorite with normally zoned plagioclase (An_{42-45}). Several of the geochemical patterns (e.g., pyrrhotite distribution, Figure 4) suggest that this more basic eastern appendage is an old phase of the intrusive system.

The main stock is composed of granitoid rocks of several types and ages with a central zone of quartz monzonite porphyry. Several phases of quartz monzonite porphyry can be distinguished in the central part of the stock on the basis of texture and crosscutting relationships. The rock is essentially medium grained and leucocratic with euhedral to subhedral phenocrysts of normally zoned plagioclase (An_{25-30}) and poikilitic K-feldspar making up the major part of the rock. Hornblende and biotite are the chief mafic minerals.

Quartz diorite, which forms much of the western and southeastern parts of the main stock, is a medium grained white to grey massive rock with sparse phenocrysts of plagioclase. Fine grained secondary biotite has replaced the hornblende crystals in much of the rock. In places large K-feldspar crystals have formed, many over 1 cm across. These megacrysts contain relicts of plagioclase and mafic minerals. Similar poikilitic megacrysts also occur in the quartz monzonites.

Dykes and lenses of white to pink equigranular alaskite intrude the quartz monzonite porphyries and the quartz diorite, particularly in the contact areas of the main stock. This rock consists essentially of anhedral quartz and K-feldspar and commonly contains disseminated crystals or rosettes of molybdenite and occasionally crystals of fluorspar. The molybdenite mineralization of this type significantly enhances the grade of the stockwork deposit.

Intrusive into all rock types and apparently confined to the northern half of the main stock are irregular lenses and dykes of relatively fine grained quartz monzonite and granodiorite porphyry, and intrusive breccias. These are of intermineral age and commonly contain angular fragments of biotite hornfels, quartz monzonite porphyry, quartz diorite, and alaskite in a fine grained granulated matrix.

The latest granitic phase is a post-molybdenite quartz feldspar porphyry that truncates the northeast part of the stock at depth. This rock type, observed only in drill core, apparently terminates the ore grade mineralization of the northeastern part of the ore zone.

Lamprophyre dykes, varying in width from 1 to 10 m, cut all rocks in the main stock, but are especially abundant near the eastern contact. These dykes, which occur in northeasterly trending swarms, include both biotite and pyroxene varieties and have sharp chilled contacts.

The siltstones and greywackes in the general region contain chlorite, sericite, minor epidote and albite plagioclase, hence are within the greenschist metamorphic facies. Emplacement of the stock was accompanied by contact metasomatism of the greywackes to biotite hornfels. The hornfels contains up to 30 percent biotite near the Lime Creek stock. Outward the biotite content drops to zero at the 'biotite line', 500 to 1,000 m away from the stock. Adjacent to the stock, subsequent hydrothermal alteration has converted some of the biotite to sericite.

Hydrothermal alteration is represented largely by quartz, orthoclase, and sericite. These minerals form an almost circular zone of intense alteration centred in the northern half of the Lime Creek stock. Within the central part of the zone, the hydrothermal alteration trends toward a complete replacement of the pre-existing rock by quartz and orthoclase in varying proportions both as veinlets and as pervasive alteration. Any plagioclase remnants within this zone are completely sericitized. The secondary orthoclase rims mineralized quartz veinlets and occurs as grains (up to 5 mm) replacing plagioclase in the rock matrix.

The central intense zone changes quite abruptly to an outer zone of less intense alteration including sericitization of plagioclase plus abundant quartz-orthoclase veinlets. The outer limit of the quartz-orthoclase veinlets forms a circular boundary with diameter of approximately 1,000 m (Figure 5). Within the stock the sericitization is largely confined to the plagioclase; within the biotite hornfels it is mainly along small quartz veinlets and small fractures. The abundance of sericite alteration decreases outward in the stock, and in the southern part of the stock only minor sericite and clay alteration are apparent.

Argillic and sericite alteration of plagioclase feldspar is relatively intense in and adjacent to northeasterly striking faults and shears within all parts of the alteration zone.

Within the alteration zone there is a change in texture of the porphyries. The matrix is recrystallized to a coarser grain size and the phenocrysts are reduced in size by replacement. Thus there appears to be a trend toward an equigranular rock. This end point is never reached and the resulting rock has an almost seriate texture of very irregular crystals.

The zone of molybdenite mineralization is a ring structure, slightly elliptical in outline and elongated east-west (Figure 3). This ring occurs in the within and outward from the intense quartz-orthoclase alteration zone. The annular mineralized zone conforms roughly to the north, east, and west contacts of the stock, whereas the southern part of the zone cuts across the stock at its midpoint. The ring of mineralization has its best grades adjacent to the hornfels contact. Molybdenite content decreases toward the centre of the zone so that a barren core contains only traces of molybdenum.

Molybdenite mineralization occurs along the boundaries of 0.3 to 0.6 cm quartz veinlets, and in hairline fractures. Disseminated molybdenite is found only in the alaskites. Quartz veinlets are closely spaced and appear randomly oriented in a stockwork pattern, but as a general rule the majority of the veins are vertical and strike north-northeast. Recent mapping of the pit by geologists of Kennecott Copper Corporation (Giles and Livingstone, 1975) and Climax Molybdenum Corporation of British Columbia, Limited indicates four separate but superimposed substages of molybdenite mineralization followed by a polymetallic vein stage. The first substage is related to the alaskite dykes and is represented by dissemination and rosettes and by fracture fillings of molybdenite. The second and third substages are represented by quartz-orthoclase-pyrite-molybdenite veinlets in a closely spaced stockwork pattern in the northern parts of the stock and the adjacent biotite hornfels. Subsequently, quartz monzonite breccias were intruded and these are in turn cut by banded quartz-molybdenite veins up to 0.3 m thick.

Higher grades of molybdenite mineralization occur in areas of intense fracturing and faulting, particularly in the northeast contact area of the stock. However the intensity of fracturing has also provided channelways for the later lamprophyre dyke swarms thus reducing overall grade in this area.

The final stage of mineralization is represented by polymetallic quartz veins up to 1 m wide. These occur in two conjugate fracture sets that cut the molybdenite zone. A north-northeast set is generally predominant. However, in places, the northwest set is predominant and in places both sets are present. The quartz veins contain pyrite, galena, sphalerite, molybdenite, tetrahedrite, chalcopyrite, fluorite, ankerite, dolomite, and a variety of lead bismuth sulphosalts including the rare mineral neyite, first recognized here and named after Charles Ney (Drummond, et al., 1969).

Pyrite occurs as disseminations along and within the stock. Pyrite of the fractures has been introduced with many substages. It can occur in quartz veins, in quartz-molybdenite veins, and by itself. Total pyrite content forms a annulus or halo partly overlapping the molybdenite ring (Figure 8).

Deep drill holes within the stock have encountered anhydrite. Deeper holes also indicated a decrease in hydrothermal alteration at depth (Giles and Livingstone, 1975).

Alteration and Geochemistry at Lime Creek

The rock samples and specimens used for geochemical and petrographic studies were collected from surface exposures and from drill core. Oxidation was not an important factor as most of the pyrite was still intact. Sample spacing, which was closest in the mineralized area, depended on availability of outcrop and of drill core. Sample sites are shown on Figures 4 through 8.

Analyses were by a variety of methods including colorimetric, spectrographic, and XRF techniques. Mineralogical quantities were obtained from semi-quantitative X-ray diffraction estimates (aided by XRF analyses) and adjusted by thin-section studies.

Studies of the Lime Creek molybdenite deposit have shown that specific main stages plus some substages can be recognized in the geological sequence of events. The distribution patterns for the alteration minerals and the geochemical elements support this general thesis. Many of the distribution patterns are duplicated by one or more elements. Some patterns can be correlated with the distribution of the original unaltered rock; some can be related to the changes of contact metasomatism attendant on intrusion; some can be correlated with the main stage of hydrothermal alteration and mineralization; and some can be correlated with late polymetallic quartz veins.

The hornfels at the north contact of the stock imparts a discontinuity to many of the distribution patterns. The intensity of mineralization for some elements is lower in hornfels than in igneous rock.

Contact Metasomatic Stage

The formation of the biotite hornfels adjacent to the intrusions of the district and the conversion of some of the biotite to sericite by subsequent hydrothermal alteration has been mentioned. The distribution of the biotite is illustrated on Figure 4.* Most of the pyrrhotite (Figure 4) formed with the hornfels.

Other changes are also apparent in the mineralogy of the hornfels. The anorthite content of the plagioclase shows an increase (over a width of 300 m) toward the contact of the stock where it is comparable to the anorthite content of the rocks within the stock. The nickel content of the stock and in the surrounding hornfels (for widths up to 300 m) is lower than that found in the remainder of the hornfels zone. The porosity of the hornfels, except for a narrow band at the intrusive contact, is sharply lower than the porosity of the sedimentary rocks outside the biotite line.

Hydrothermal Alteration

Abundant quartz + orthoclase, in erratically varying proportions, form

*Amphibole and pyroxene noted in three samples are included with the biotite estimates.

much of the central zone of intense alteration.* Outside of this central intense alteration zone, the abundance of quartz + orthoclase drops off rapidly; however quartz-orthoclase veinlets can be found outward to the limits of hydrothermal alteration (Figure 5). Any plagioclase remnants within the central core of intense alteration are completely sericitized (Figure 5).

The alteration is reflected by the distribution patterns of many of the rock-forming elements. The potassium pattern (Figure 5) reflects the composition of the original rock plus the orthoclase added during the hydrothermal alteration. Barium, which has also been added, shows a pattern more restricted to the alteration zone. Iron, cobalt (Figure 6), and sodium have been depleted and form negative anomalies in the zone of intense alteration. Arsenic (Figure 6) also shows a negative anomaly over the zones of alteration and molybdenum mineralization.

There has been an overall depletion of elements in the alteration zone. Bulk density measurements show a small but definite negative anomaly with a maximum decrease of density amounting to about 6 percent (Figure 6).

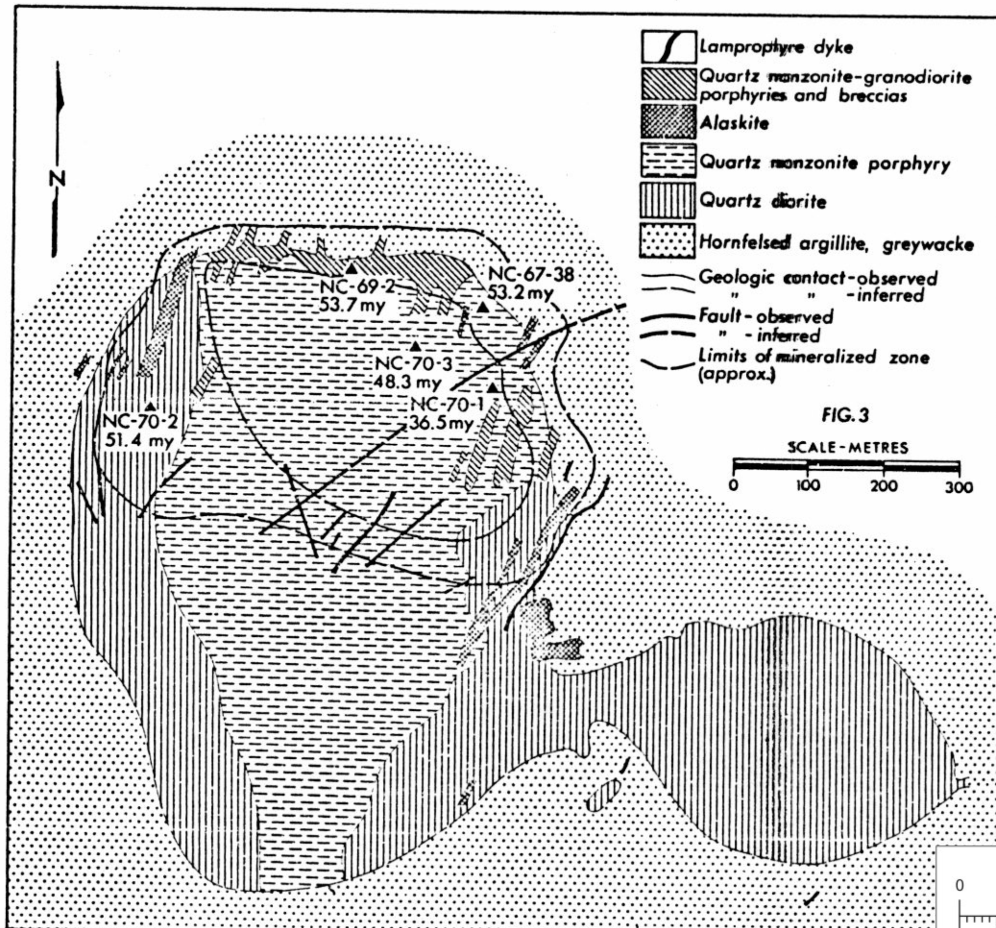
Main Stage of Mineralization

Sulphide mineralization closely associated with the alteration stage introduced molybdenum, sulphur (pyrite), and fluoride which are distributed in overlapping concentric zones around the zone of intense alteration (Figure 7). The copper has been depleted in the centre of the alteration zone, but added to the outer part of the alteration zone as a halo element (Figure 3). The sulphur pattern (Figure 7) reflects the contribution by the pyrite (Figure 8) and by the pyrrhotite (Figure 4). The pyrite halo partially overlaps the negative iron anomaly.

Post-ore Intrusion and Tungsten Mineralization

A post-ore stock intrudes the northeast part of the molybdenite deposit. This stock, although nearly devoid of molybdenum, does have traces of tungsten.

*Orthoclase, quartz, or sericite when plotted separately give very erratic patterns.



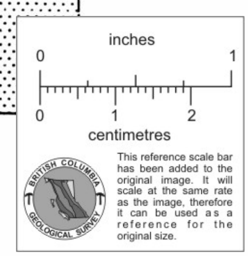


FIG. 3 GEOLOGY OF THE LIME CREEK STOCK

Tungsten mineralization, in the form of scheelite, was accompanied by some pyrrhotite. This relatively late introduction of pyrrhotite accounts for some of the erratic pyrrhotite values appearing within the stock (Figure 4).

Tungsten does not form a good halo to the molybdenite mineralization. It occurs throughout the Lime Creek stock and the adjacent hornfels in a fairly erratic pattern (Figure 3).

Polymetallic Veins

The late polymetallic quartz veins occur within the area of anomalous molybdenum but they are not concentric to the main stage of hydrothermal alteration and mineralization. The pattern for lead (Figure 8) reflects the erratic nature of its distribution. Closer sample spacing would probably make the erratic nature of the pattern even more evident. Patterns for silver, bismuth, gallium, antimony zinc, and cadmium are very similar to the lead pattern.

K-Ar AGE DETERMINATIONS

Potassium-argon ages obtained from samples collected in the Alice Arm-Nass River area are shown on Figures 1 and 2. Analytical data for these and other samples are contained in a preceding paper (Christopher and Carter) in this volume.

Most samples were collected to date the age of intrusion and mineralization. Several, however, were collected to date other geologic units and to assess their relationship to the molybdenum deposits. These include samples collected from the Coast Plutonic Complex and from the basalt outliers south of Alice Arm. With the exception of whole rock samples of biotite hornfels and basalt, all analyses were carried out on biotite separates.

Samples for dating were collected from molybdenum-bearing quartz monzonite porphyries and related intrusive phases at six of the deposits.

Potassium-argon results from the main mineralized phase at these deposits fall within the range of 52.0±3 m y to 53.3±3 m y (Figures 1 and 2). Quartz diorite border phases at British Columbia Molybdenum and Bell Molybdenum are 51.4±1.5 m y and 51.7±2.2 m y respectively, both within the limits of analytical error for the main quartz monzonite phase.

Late intrusive phases, which exhibit definite crosscutting relationships with the first phase, were sampled at British Columbia Molybdenum. A dyke of intrusive breccia near the northern contact of the stock has an age of 53.6±1.7 m y, almost identical to the age obtained from the geologically older quartz monzonite porphyry phase (53.2±3 m y). An age of 48.3±1.6 m y was obtained for a sample of a later, nearly post-molybdenite phase of quartz monzonite occurring at a depth of 300 m below the exposed northeast part of the stock. This age determination corroborates the geological evidence that this is a younger porphyry phase which post-dates the main period of molybdenite mineralization and provides an upper limit for the age of molybdenite mineralization. A similar post-mineral porphyry dyke that cuts the quartz monzonite porphyry host rock at one of the Nass River deposits (Figure 2) yields a potassium-argon age of 49.0±2 m y.

A whole rock sample of biotite hornfels from outside the mineralized zone at Bell Molybdenum was dated at 48.7±1.5 m y. Although such a sample should reflect the age of intrusion, the somewhat younger age could be explained by partial argon loss inherent in a whole rock sample.

Two molybdenum deposits returned somewhat anomalous ages. The 48.3±1.9 m y age determined for the Molly Mack occurrence south of Anyox (Figure 1) might be explained by partial resetting of a slightly older age by the emplacement of the adjacent Coast Plutonic Complex granitic rocks. The 36.1±1.6 m y age for the Penny Creek occurrence southwest of Alice Arm (Figure 1) possibly could be due to a complete resetting of the original age by a younger lamprophyre dyke although none was seen during field examination. However, it should be noted that similar Oligocene ages for granitic rocks have been reported in the Prince William Sound area of southern Alaska by Lanphere (1966) and on Vancouver Island by Carson (1969).

Potassium-argon results obtained from previous and contemporary studies in the Alice Arm area are in good agreement with those reported here.

Woodcock, et al. (1966) reported a potassium-argon age of 53.3 m y for a sample collected near the south contact of the British Columbia Molybdenum stock. Later work on the same deposit in 1971 by D. L. Giles, formerly of the Geological Research and Laboratory Division of Kennecott Copper Corporation (Giles and Livingstone, 1975), indicated an age of 53.7 m y for secondary biotite from the alaskite phase.

Giles and Livingstone (1975) also reported an age of 63.2 m y for a biotite from fresh intrusive rock in a drill hole at a depth of 730 m below the open pit. This age is interpreted to represent the age of intrusion of the main granodiorite to quartz monzonite phase. This result is at variance with the interpretation of results described here, where biotite hornfels samples which could be expected to reflect the age of initial intrusion, returned ages in the 50 m y range. Giles' sample could have returned an anomalous age due to accumulation of excess argon.

Potassium-argon ages for four samples collected from granitic rocks of the Coast Plutonic Complex between Alice Arm and Lava Lake (Figure 1) range from 48.8±1.5 to 50.7±2.1 m y. These are in agreement with ages obtained by the Geological Survey of Canada in the same area and are somewhat younger than the mean age of 53 m y determined for the molybdenum-bearing porphyry stocks. Although within the limits of analytical error, these consistently younger ages found along the eastern margin of the Coast Plutonic Complex over a relatively large geographic area (Figure 1) suggest that the molybdenum-bearing stocks were intruded a measurable amount of time prior to the emplacement of the Coast granitic plutons.

Prior to potasssium-argon work, the flat-lying basalts south of Alice Arm were regarded as being of Early to Middle Tertiary age. A sample collected from north of the Bell Molybdenum stock has an age of 0.62±0.6 m y, which is an average of three determinations. A similar sample from a basalt remnant east of Lime Creek has an age of 1.6±0.3 m y. This apparent disparity in age can be attributed to a lower level of accuracy in the conventional potassium-argon method in this geologically young age range.

SYNTHESIS

Molybdenite deposits in the Alice Arm area are genetically related to small intrusions of quartz monzonite composition.

These intrusions, known collectively as the Alice Arm intrusions, are clustered near the east flank of the Coast Plutonic Complex, although potassium-argon ages suggest that the stocks were emplaced a few million years prior to the intrusion of the Coast Plutonic Complex.

The Alice Arm intrusions were probably localized by deep-seated faults and fracture systems (Seraphim and Hollister, this volume). Supporting this concept are initial strontium isotope ratios (Giles and Livingstone, 1975) which indicate that the igneous rocks and mineralization were derived from mantle material with only minor crustal contamination.

The distribution of Quaternary and Recent basalts south of Alice Arm and Nass River suggests that they may have been localized by the same regenerated fault and fracture systems. The incidence of young volcanic activity nearby molybdenite deposits is not uncommon in the Canadian Cordillera.

The age of molybdenite mineralization is virtually congruent with the age of intrusion as determined by radiometric (K-Ar) methods. The mineralizing intrusive phase are the alaskites, a feature particularly evident at the Lime Creek and Roundy Creek deposits. Intense fracturing attendant with intrusion of the stocks has resulted in most of the economic and sub-economic molybdenite mineralization occurring in the contact areas of the stocks.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Much of the information contained in this paper was obtained while one of us (N. C. Carter) was carrying out fieldwork in the region for the British Columbia Department of Mines and Petroleum Resources from 1964 to 1970. Petrographic and geochemical studies of the Lime Creek molybdenite deposit were made in 1962 and 1963 by J. R. Woodcock for the Geological Research Division of Kennecott Copper Corporation. This writer wishes to acknowledge his appreciation of Kennecott Copper Corporation and of Climax Molybdenum Corporation of British Columbia, Limited, who subsequently purchased the property, for their permission to publish the data.

Both writers are indebted to companies and individuals who worked on a number of the deposits, including R. F. Sheldon and T. Taketa of Newmont Mining Corporation of British Columbia, Limited, the late J. A. Gower and C. S. Ney of Kennco Explorations, (Western) Limited, A. P. Fawley, formerly consultant for Sileurian Chieftain Mining Company Limited, and W. R. Bacon and E. R. Wozniak, formerly of Bell Molybdenum Mines Limited. D. L. Giles, formerly of the Geological Research and Laboratory Division, Kennecott Copper Corporation, provided assistance to N. C. Carter in 1970.

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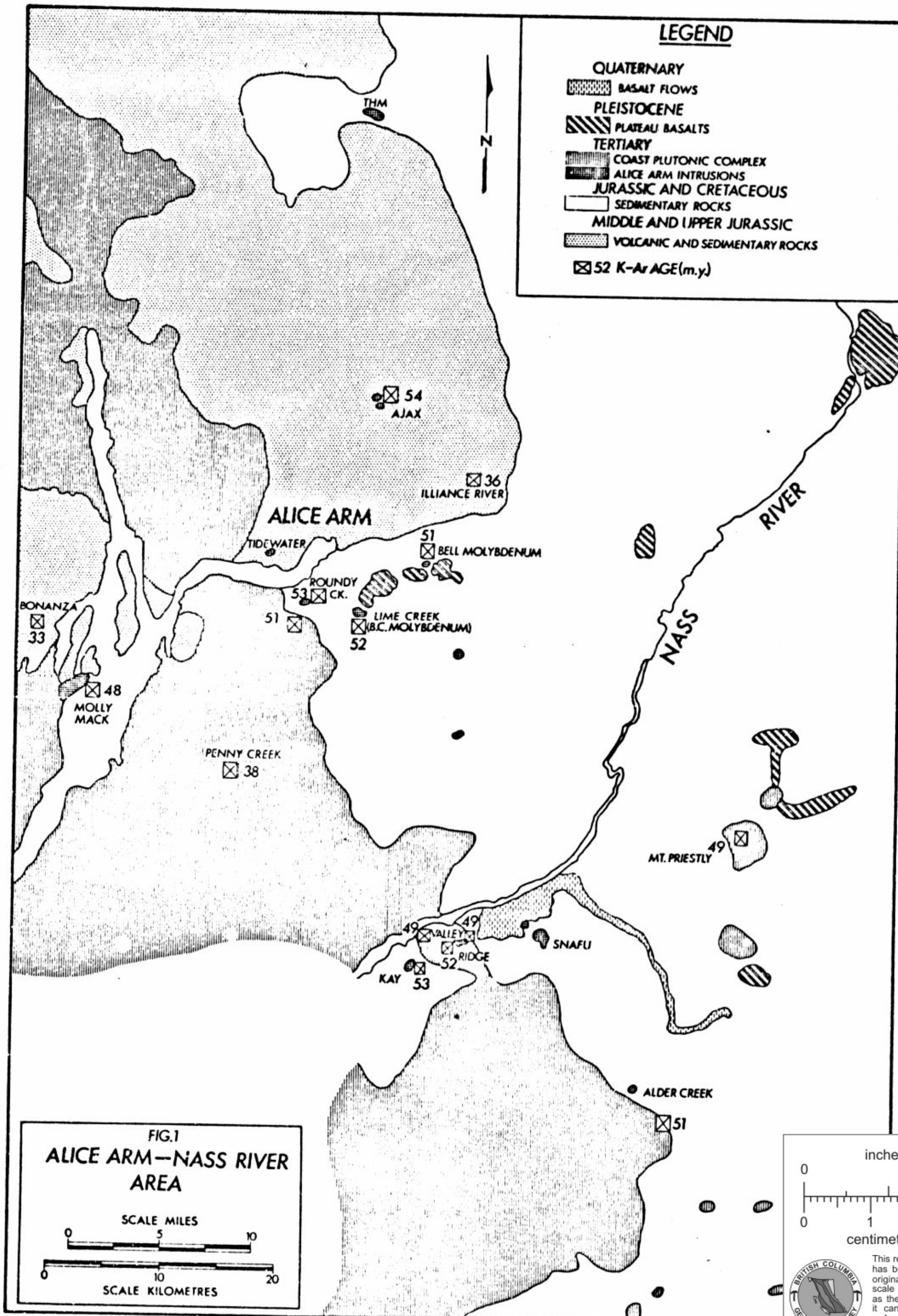

FIG.1
ALICE ARM—NASS RIVER AREA

This reference scale bar has been added to the original image. It will scale at the same rate as the image, therefore it can be used as a reference for the original size.