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13. Project Unit 13-013. Geology and Mineral Potential of the Cobden Area, Northeastern Central Metasedimentary Belt, Grenville Province



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INTRODUCTION

The Cobden NTS 31 F/10 map area straddles the Ontario–Quebec provincial border, encompassing approximately 1088 km², of which 680 km² are in Ontario (Figure 13.1). The Cobden map area is bounded by latitudes 45°30' to 45°45'N and longitudes 76°30' to 77°00'W, and encompasses all or parts of Admaston, Bromley, Horton, Ross, Stafford, Westmeath and Wilberforce townships. Mapping of the Cobden area began in 2013 (Easton 2013), with an additional 5 weeks of mapping during the 2014 field season. The only previous mapping of this area consists of 1:100 000 scale mapping from the 1970s (Lumbers 1982a, 1982b). Despite the limited mapping base for the area, several mineral deposit inventories of Renfrew County, including the study area, were conducted in the late 1970s (Carter, Colvine and Meyn 1980; Storey and Vos 1981a, 1981b; Masson and Gordon 1981). All Universal Transverse Mercator (UTM) co-ordinates given in this article are provided in Zone 18, North American Datum 1983 (NAD83).

GEOLOGICAL OVERVIEW AND TERRANE SUBDIVISION

As noted in Easton (2013), the Cobden map area is split in two by a previously undocumented northtrending fault, which he termed the Ross fault (*see* Figure 13.1). The two-thirds of the Cobden area west of the Ross fault, herein referred as the Bromley subdomain (*see* Figure 13.1), consists of high metamorphic grade paragneiss, orthogneiss and marble tectonic breccia, all of which are intruded and metasomatized by Late Syenite suite rocks (1090 to 1030 Ma). In contrast, the eastern one-third of the Cobden area, herein referred to as the Ross subdomain (*see* Figure 13.1), is underlain by calcite and dolomite marble, which locally preserve relict stratigraphy. The marbles are intruded by the Chenaux gabbro (1231±2 Ma: Pehrsson, Hanmer and van Breemen 1996), which locally preserves primary mineralogy. The Late Syenite suite and metasomatic rocks appear to be absent from the eastern one-third of the Cobden area. Metamorphic grade is estimated to be lower amphibolite facies east of the Ross fault and upper amphibolite facies west of the fault.

Also present in the eastern one-third of the area, adjacent to the Ottawa River, are several small areas of highly deformed, mafic and quartzofeldspathic gneiss that have a characteristic magnetic signature (Figure 13.2), and may be retrograded granulite facies rocks. These areas of gneiss have a sheet-like geometry and may have been thrust on top of the marbles (*see* Figure 13.1). These rocks are more abundant on the Quebec side of the Ottawa River. They cannot be assigned to any terrane or domain in Ontario and are herein referred to as the Rocher–Fendu subdomain, named after Lac du Roche–Fendu on

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the Ottawa River where they are well exposed. Field party personnel verified the presence of cordierite in several localities in these high-grade gneisses (*see* Figure 13.1), as reported by Lumbers (1982a).

In addition to the Ross fault, the Cobden area is also cut by several northwest-trending, dominantly vertical faults related to the Ottawa–Bonnechere graben system, which locally preserve Upper Ordovician limestones of the Gull River and Bobcaygeon formations on their down-dropped sides (cf. Russell and Williams 1985).

GEOPHYSICAL DATA

A high-resolution (200 m line-spacing) aeromagnetic and gamma-ray spectrometric survey was flown for the Ontario Geological Survey over much of Renfrew County, including the Cobden map area, during October 2013 (*see* Figure 13.2). The data from this survey were released in June 2014 (Ontario Geological Survey 2014). Key observations from this data set related to the geology of the Cobden area are as follows.

Easton (2013) interpreted the Ross fault as a near-vertical fault based on the previous low-resolution (800 m line-spacing) aeromagnetic data (Ontario Geological Survey 1999), but the high-resolution data indicates that it may dip moderately to the east. Magnetic features present in Bromley subdomain appear to continue for up to 500 m beneath mapped marbles belonging to the Ross subdomain (*see* Figure 13.2). It is not known if this indicates that the Ross fault is a thrust fault, or simply an east-dipping normal fault.



Figure 13.1. Simplified geological map of the Cobden area showing the location of subdomains, major faults and significant mineral occurrences. Abbreviations: Ag, silver; Au, gold; cord, cordierite; cps, counts per second; dol, dolomite; eTh, equivalent thorium; K, potassium; ls, limestone, Mg, magnesium; Mo, molybdenum; Pb, lead; REE, rare earth elements; Th, thorium; U, uranium; Zn, zinc.

Rocks of the Central Metasedimentary Belt boundary tectonic zone (CMBBTZ) exhibit strong, linear northwest or north-northwest magnetic trends, for example, on the north side of Muskrat Lake north of Cobden (*see* Figure 13.2). These trends correspond to differences in surface geological units as mapped by Lumbers (1982b), and confirm the observation made by Easton (2013) that rocks of the CMBBTZ underlie much more of the Bromley subdomain (i.e., occur further south) than previously indicated.

The high-resolution data confirm the highly magnetic character of the Chenaux gabbro (*see* Figure 13.2). Immediately east of Haley, a prominent, 3 km long, north-northeast-trending magnetic high could be a subsurface dike or subsurface extension of the Chenaux gabbro beneath marbles exposed on surface. It is not known if this subsurface magnetic anomaly has any association with the observed hydrothermal alteration of the dolomite marbles at Haley, as described under "Economic Geology".

The Cobden area is cut by at least 7 major west-trending mafic dikes that are interpreted to be part of the Grenville dike swarm, which was emplaced at *circa* 590 Ma (Kamo, Krogh and Kumarapeli 1995). It is possible that these dikes may be associated with west-trending faults, although, if that is the case, movement along those faults would be mostly vertical, as the faults do not appear to laterally offset either Precambrian or Paleozoic strata. These dikes occur in 3 main corridors, approximately 10 km apart, containing dikes with strike lengths ranging from 3 to 17 km (*see* Figure 13.2). One corridor lies in the area of Haley Station (4 km southwest of Haley), another immediately north of Cobden, and the third is located just north of the northern boundary of the Cobden NTS map area north of Beachburg. The majority of these



Figure 13.2. Map showing the second vertical derivative (2-VD) of the magnetic field for the Cobden area of Ontario, with key features indicated. See text for details. Magnetic data *from* Ontario Geological Survey (2014).

dikes occur beneath Paleozoic limestones, and have limited surface expression, although one of the dikes located east of Haley Station is overlain by a linear series of swamps. The dikes appear to cross the Ross fault without offset. The relationship between the dikes and the Rocher–Fendu subdomain is unclear, in part because of the higher magnetic character of that subdomain. In some instances, it appears that the dikes end at the subdomain boundary, but, in other instances, it appears that the dikes continue into the subdomain. Lumbers (1982b) mapped Grenville dikes within Rocher–Fendu subdomain, suggesting that the dikes did intrude the subdomain.

Paleozoic strata in the Cobden area are generally sufficiently thick (>>100 m) to subdue the magnetic character of the underlying Precambrian strata; this is particularly evident in first vertical derivative (1-VD) of the magnetic field. The only area where the Paleozoic strata may be thin (<100 m) occurs north of Beachburg.

The high-resolution gamma-ray spectrometric data (Ontario Geological Survey 2014) defines the same airborne gamma-ray spectrometric highs for uranium and thorium as those indicated by the data of Carson et al. (2004a, 2004b). Areas of active farming and/or areas underlain by Leda clay within the Cobden area are characterized by potassium and equivalent thorium (eTh) highs in the high-resolution gamma-ray spectrometric data. These anthropogenic anomalies limit the use of the gamma-ray spectrometric data to distinguish rock units over most of the Cobden area.

A subdued aeromagnetic signature coincides with an area of low potassium and low eTh in a 7 km² area in southeastern Ross subdomain (*see* Figure 13.1) bounded by Castleford, Eady, Mullins and River roads. The reason for this anomaly is not readily apparent, but it could indicate an area underlain by Paleozoic limestone.

ECONOMIC GEOLOGY

Industrial Minerals

Preliminary geochemical data from calcite and dolomite marbles of the Ross subdomain indicates that they are characterized by the presence of rare earth element patterns with negative cerium anomalies (Figure 13.3). Negative cerium anomalies in limestones are interpreted as indicating deposition in a marine environment with a minimal input of continental clastic debris (cf. Easton 1995). The only marbles not showing this signature are the dolomite and tremolite marbles found adjacent to the former magnesium metal plant at Haley (Dominion Magnesium Ltd., later Chromasco Ltd., later Timminico Ltd., MDI31F10SW00002). These magnesium-rich, and commonly silica-rich, marbles are characterized instead by very low total rare earth element (REE) contents, and concave patterns where lanthanum, cerium, praseodymium, ytterbium and lutetium are high, and samarium, europium, gadolinium and terbium are low (*see* Figure 13.3). This unusual pattern is interpreted to be the result of post-depositional alteration of the original carbonate rock in a high-fluid flow regime, which likely introduced silica into the system and which also removed elements such as zinc and some of the rare earth elements. Whether or not this hydrothermal alteration is related to a nearby subsurface aeromagnetic anomaly related to the Chenaux gabbro (*see* "Geophysical Data") remains to be determined.

Thus, the marbles that served as feedstock for magnesium metal production may be unique. Exploration for similar magnesium feedstock needs to focus not only on the presence of dolomite marbles, but also on the REE geochemistry of those dolomite marbles. Additional sampling of the marbles in Ross subdomain was conducted during the 2014 season in order to both expand the available data set and to support a BSc (Honours) thesis on strontium isotopes in the marbles that is being conducted at Carleton University by J. Forrester under the supervision of Professor N. Witting.

Base Metal Mineralization

The potential for mafic and quartzofeldspathic rocks present in the Rocher–Fendu subdomain in Ontario to host volcanogenic massive sulphide (VMS) mineralization has previously gone unrecognized. In part, this was because it was not appreciated how similar these rocks are to the host rocks of the former New Calumet zinc-lead-silver-gold mine located immediately across the Ottawa River on Grand Calumet Island, Quebec (cf. Moorhouse 1941; Sangster 1967; Williams 1992) (*see* Figure 13.1). At the former New Calumet Mine, dolomite and calcite marbles (Ross subdomain) occur in the deeper footwall of the deposit, and are structurally overlain by mafic gneisses with arc-tholeiite geochemical affinities and biotite-sillimanite quartzofeldspathic gneisses (Williams 1992). The deposit itself is hosted in a package of mafic and quartzofeldspathic gneisses, with the mafic gneisses having an arc basalt-boninite geochemical affinity (Williams 1992). Also present at the mine are migmatific gneisses containing orthoamphibole, garnet, cordierite and gahnite, and which host gold mineralization emplaced during a late-stage greenschistfacies metamorphic event (Williams 1990). The rock types, as well as the metallic mineralogy of the deposit (sphalerite, galena, pyrrhotite) are all consistent with the former New Calumet Mine being the product of a volcanogenic massive sulphide (VMS) mineralization system.

On the Ontario side of the Ottawa River, 2 areas within the Rocher–Fendu subdomain warrant exploration for similar mineralization. The first occurs in the vicinity of Killoran Bay. Garnet-cordierite– bearing quartzofeldspathic gneisses are abundant on the north side of Killoran Bay and on islands offshore, and occur immediately above the contact with Ross subdomain marbles. In addition, on the south side of Killoran Bay, a gossan zone, with a minimum width of 5 m, occurs in mafic gneiss located immediately above the contact with Ross subdomain marbles 5055695N). Cordierite-bearing gneisses are present structurally above the gossan zone. Assay samples from the gossan zone are pending, and the



Figure 13.3. Representative rare earth element (REE) analyses of calcite and dolomite marbles from the area east of the Ross fault, including samples from the former Haley magnesium metal plant. The negative cerium (Ce) anomalies in 3 of the 4 samples are indicative of deposition in seawater (cf. Easton 1995). Normalizing factors used are *from* Sun and McDonough (1989). All analyses from the Geoscience Laboratories, Ontario Geological Survey, Sudbury.

chemical affinity of the host mafic gneiss is being determined. However, samples of similar mafic gneiss collected in 2013 along Kerr Line, 1.9 km to the west, have an arc-tholeiite geochemical signature. The second area occurs adjacent to the Ottawa River at Le Tombereau, just east of Norman Rapids, where Lumbers (1982a, p.21) reported a rusty schist unit in contact with cordierite-bearing quartzofeldspathic gneiss.

Radioactive Mineralization

As discussed in Easton (2013), very few airborne gamma-ray spectrometric highs for uranium and thorium are present in the Cobden area, and all are located in Bromley subdomain (Carson et al. 2004a, 2004b). During the 2014 field season, field party personnel visited both the Vaughan and Forester Falls occurrences (Masson and Gordon 1981, p.126-128: MDI31F10NW00039 and MDI31F10NW00050, respectively), which are both located on an abandoned Canadian National Railways (CNR) right-of-way. The Vaughan occurrence is hosted in a Late Syenite suite syenite to quartz syenite intrusion and, although pegmatitic calcite-diopside-fluorite-apatite veins cut the syenite near the occurrence, the radioactive mineralization does not appear to be directly related to the veins. At the Vaughan occurrence, 3 separate scintillometer assay measurements gave readings of 271 to 281 ppm U and 1116 to 1432 ppm Th (UTM 361075E 5062404N), similar to values reported in Masson and Gordon (1981, p.128). The Forester Falls occurrence is located in a small pegmatite vein, and appears to contain limited radioactivity (12 ppm U, 60 ppm Th, UTM 362228E 5059841N).

More significant uranium mineralization was found hosted in rusty-weathering semi-pelitic and calcareous gneisses approximately 250 m north of the Forester Falls occurrence along the same CNR right-of-way. This occurrence does not seem to have been previously reported, and occurs at the southern limit of a 1.4 km long airborne gamma-ray spectrometric anomaly present in both the Carson et al. (2004a, 2004b) and Ontario Geological Survey (2014) surveys. At this new locality (UTM 362158E 5059911N), readings of over 65 000 total counts per second were obtained, the highest readings ever recorded by the author. A scintillometer assay measurement of 927 ppm U and 2717 ppm Th was obtained from rock at this site, with adjacent soils yielding values of 571 to 711 ppm U and 1787 to 2291 ppm Th. It should be noted that these scintillometer readings are estimates of the uranium and thorium contents in these rocks, and should be confirmed by conventional chemical analysis.

The host rock for this mineralization could not be determined, because of the aforementioned rusty weathering and the hazards associated with obtaining rock samples at this extremely radioactive site. Farther north (500 m; UTM 361837E 5060357N), a quartz syenite vein gave a scintillometer assay measurement of 166 ppm U and 270 ppm Th. Accordingly, it is possible that the airborne gamma-ray spectrometric anomaly in this area may be the result of radioactive mineralization in a variety of host rocks rather than being restricted to a single rock type.

Both the 65 000 counts per second occurrence, and another occurrence 5.5 km to the north on Grants Settlement Road described in Easton (2013) (UTM 361075E 5066294N), occur in Bromley subdomain immediately adjacent to the Ross fault (*see* Figure 13.1). The occurrence described in Easton (2013) is marginal to the Sullivan Island carbonatite complex, although it occurs in a syenite pegmatite vein cutting CMBBTZ rocks. Given their proximity and alignment along the Ross fault, it is possible that there may be some degree of structural control on the location of these 2 extremely thorium-rich occurrences (2717 and 1809 ppm Th, respectively).

Sample	Total REE (in ppm)	Y (in ppm)	Rock Type or Mineral	Easting Zone 18	Northing NAD83	Comment
Syenite						
13RME-0068	1512	22	Syenite	352019	5048726	Medium-grained red syenite, reported as 1044 ppm total REE <i>in</i> Easton (2013)
13RME-0072	1457	58	Syenite	350711	5050016	Medium-grained red syenite, reported as 1062 ppm total REE <i>in</i> Easton (2013)
13RME-0259	2095	222	Syenite	353928	5053929	Fine-grained, scapolitized syenite, Highway 17 just south of Cobden
13RME-0404	750	52	Syenite	350967	5052930	Medium-grained syenite, Cobden road
Marble						
13RME-0216	216	32	Calcite marble	353916	5053575	Matrix, marble breccia
13RME-0255	638	59	Calcite marble	357859	5048933	Matrix, marble breccia, Highway 17
13RME-0262	689	43	Calcite marble	357541	5049284	Matrix, marble breccia, Highway 17
Minerals						
13RME-0139	1569	161	Calcite	354459	5050976	From vein cutting varitextured and varigrained syenite, host syenite 381 ppm total REE
13RME-0140	1647	154	Calcite	354470	5050932	From vein cutting varitextured and varigrained syenite
13RME-0141	2280	80	Apatite	354470	5050932	From vein cutting varitextured and varigrained syenite

 Table 13.1.
 Rare earth element (REE) data for selected carbonate, syenite and mineral separates from Late Syenite suite rocks in the Cobden area. All analyses from the Geoscience Laboratories, Ontario Geological Survey, Sudbury.

Rare Earth Element Mineralization

Easton (2013) suggested that both the pink-orange metasomatic marbles and the syenites of the Late Svenite suite may potentially host rare earth element (REE) mineralization in the Cobden area. This suggestion has been confirmed by geochemistry conducted on a variety of rock units located in Bromley subdomain. High REE contents (from 750 to 2095 ppm total REE) were found in several syenite phases, as summarized in Table 13.1. In addition, high REE contents (from 569 to 689 ppm total REE) have been found in non-apatite-bearing portions of the pink-orange calcite marble that forms the matrix to metasomatic marble breccia in Bromley subdomain (see Table 13.1). Mineral separates of both calcite and apatite from late calcite-diopside-apatite veins associated with the Late Syenite suite also have vielded high total REE contents (see Table 13.1). Interestingly, there does not appear to be any correlation between vttrium and total REE content in the Bromley subdomain samples (see Table 13.1), even though such a correlation was noted by Easton and Clarke (2013) in marbles in the Brudenell map area immediately to the southwest of the Cobden area. All of the samples reported in Table 13.1 were collected during the course of characterizing the geochemistry of typical Late Syenite suite rocks, rather than by any selective sampling protocol. However, in general, it appears that more uniform, mediumgrained svenite phases (Photo 13.1A) are more likely to host REE mineralization than the varitextured and varigrained syenites (Photo 13.1B) that are most common in the Cobden area.

FUTURE WORK

Two quartzite units, both containing 74 weight % SiO₂, were sampled for detrital zircon geochronology: the first quartzite is in Bromley subdomain (UTM 361321E 5044592N) and the second is 13 km to the east in Ross subdomain (UTM 373839E 5042734N). The purpose of this work is to compare

the depositional history and provenance of the clastic sedimentary rocks from the 2 subdomains. The main intermediate gneiss unit in the Rocher–Fendu subdomain was also sampled for geochronology, in part because of the limited information currently available from this subdomain, but also because of its possible economic significance. A deformed quartz syenite near Cobden was sampled for geochronology in order to determine its age relationship to other syenite intrusions in Bromley subdomain.



Photo 13.1. A) Fine- to medium-grained syenite of the Bromley subdomain, which is more likely to host rare earth element mineralization. Sample 13RME-0072 (*see* Table 13.1). UTM 350711E 5050016N. B) Varitextured and varigrained syenite typical of the Bromley subdomain, which is less likely to host rare earth element mineralization. UTM 353735E 5054135N. Hammer handle is 33 cm long.

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