Seismic and borehole-based mapping of the late Carboniferous succession in the Canonbie Coalfield, SW Scotland: evidence for a ‘broken’ Variscan foreland?

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Abstract

Local seismic and borehole-based mapping of the Carboniferous Pennine Coal Measures and Warwickshire Group successions in the Canonbie Coalfield (SW Scotland) provides evidence of repeated episodes of positive inversion, syn-depositional folding and unconformities. A Duckmantian (Westphalian B) episode of NE-SW transpression is recognised, based on onlapping seismic reflector geometries against NE-trending positive inversion structures and contemporaneous NNE-trending syn-depositional growth folding. The basin history thus revealed at Canonbie is at variance with generally accepted models in neighbouring northern England that imply subsidence was due to post-rift thermal subsidence during late Carboniferous times. A late Westphalian-Stephanian unconformity recognised within the Warwickshire Group succession signifies NW-SE, *c*. 10 % local basin shortening during a time of major shortening in the late Carboniferous Variscan foreland, contradicting suggestions that maximum Variscan shortening had negligible impact on Carboniferous basins in northern Britain. Local inversion structures appear to have strongly influenced local late Westphalian-Stephanian depocentres. In this respect, the Variscan foreland at Canonbie may have resembled a ‘broken’ foreland system. Variations in crustal rheology, fault strength and orientation,

and mid-crustal detachments are suggested to have played important roles in determining strain localisation and the nature of Westphalian-Stephanian depocentres in the Canonbie Coalfield.

1. Introduction

One of UK coal mining's legacies is the vast quantity of subsurface data that we inherit. These data record an important chapter of the Earth's history, the amalgamation of Pangaea, and have the potential to be widely repurposed as the UK seeks to decarbonise and fulfil its energy needs through more sustainable resources (Watson *et al.*, 2019). We present a study based on subsurface (seismic and borehole) data from the Canonbie Coalfield in SW Scotland (see Fig. 1 for location). These coal-bearing strata were deposited in the northern British part of an expansive late Carboniferous Variscan foreland basin system, the complex characteristics of which have been debated for decades (Leeder, 1982; Coward, 1993; Ziegler, 1993; Woodcock and Rickards, 2003; Underhill *et al.*, 2008). In both modern and ancient foreland systems, syn-kinematic sedimentary sequences can indirectly reveal the nature of the various tectonic episodes that influenced the basin and its regional setting. In ancient foreland systems, these sequences are often absent due to later uplift and denudation. In contrast, a near complete record of the late Carboniferous syn-kinematic megasequence (e.g. Besly *et al.*, 1993; Peace and Besly, 1997) is locally preserved at the Canonbie Coalfield (Chadwick *et al.*, 1995; Waters *et al.*, 2011; Jones *et al.*, 2011).

Using archived seismic and borehole datasets curated by the UK Onshore Geophysical Library (UKOGL) and the British Geological Survey (BGS), we investigate the characteristics of the preserved late Carboniferous syn-kinematic sedimentary sequence preserved in the Canonbie Coalfield, and the tectonic controls that were exerted upon its depositional and post-depositional deformation. Widely held perceptions of ancient foreland basin systems such as the Variscan foreland, often portray these systems in broadly two-dimensional perspectives on tectonic scales. These systems include a single collision zone adjacent to a region of subsidence occurring primarily along a restricted, laterally migrating flexure-induced foredeep depozone. Deposition also occurs to lesser extents within forebulge and backbulge depozones. A simplistic laterally dissipating compressional stress field is typically derived from a short-lived contractional episode (e.g. DeCelles and Giles, 1996; DeCelles, 2012; Catuneanu, 2019). However, at Canonbie we demonstrate syn-depositional faulting, folding and positive inversion exerted strong controls on early Westphalian (Bashkirian) through to Stephanian (Kasimovian) depocentres. Such behaviour is not just at variance with generally accepted models for late Carboniferous basin development in neighbouring northern and central England therefore, but also with many conceptual models for generic foreland basin systems. Evolution of the Canonbie Coalfield and its regional setting is perhaps more akin to 'broken' foreland systems such as in the eastern Andean retro-arc foreland of Patagonia where sedimentation is controlled by local tectonism (e.g. Strecker *et al.*, 2011; Bilmes *et al.*, 2013). We attempt to reconcile competing tectonic models for the northern British part of the Variscan foreland and demonstrate the importance of inherited crustal structures, the relative susceptibilities of these structures to reactivation and the influence of an evolving stress field on the characteristics of the syn-kinematic sedimentary sequence preserved at Canonbie.

2. Regional geological setting

In northern Britain, there are two models for late Carboniferous tectonic evolution. The first focuses upon inversion tectonics following early Carboniferous rifting and post-rifting, relating to a dissipating stress field derived from the Variscan collision zone of central-southern Europe (Leeder, 1982; Corfield *et al.*, 1996). The Variscan orogen formed in southern-central Europe in response to approximately northward accretion of early Palaeozoic island arcs and continental fragments and later Gondwanan-derived elements onto Laurussia during the prolonged late Palaeozoic assembly of Pangaea (Warr, 2012; Murphy *et al.*, 2016; Shaw and Johnston, 2016; Edel *et al.*, 2018). The orogen reached its maximum intensity during the late Carboniferous, culminating with the closure of the Palaeotethys Ocean and the formation of the Cantabrian and central Iberian oroclines (*c.* 310-295 Ma) (Murphy *et al.*, 2016). The northern margin of this belt can be traced approximately east-west across southern England where it separates the late Carboniferous foreland basin of southern Wales (Burgess and Gayer, 2000) from the low-grade metamorphic external Variscan thrust belt and early Carboniferous foredeep (Murphy *et al.*, 2016). Within the British Variscan foreland region, the magnitude of dominantly oblique contemporaneous thrust and fold inversion structures generally increases towards the Variscan Front (Fraser and Gawthorpe, 1990; Corfield *et al.*, 1996; Woodcock and Rickards, 2003; Warr, 2012). This style of deformation is analogous to modern day shortening exerted between orogenic collision zones and adjacent foreland regions (Copley *et al.*, 2011; Assumpcao, 1992), such as with the Himalayas and northern India (Powers *et al.*, 1998).

However, a tectonic model that revolves solely around northward-vergent Variscan compressional stresses does not readily incorporate parallel to oblique late Carboniferous fold and thrust structures such as those that characterise both the Canonbie Coalfield and the northern British Variscan foreland (Fig. 1). Copley and Woodcock (2016) calculate that such discontinuities must have been significantly weaker (with an effective co-efficient of friction at least less than 30 % lower) than intact country rock for them to have reactivated during Variscan compression rather than new faults initiate. Coward's (1993) alternative tectonic model for the Variscan foreland highlights the influences of dextral strike-slip movement along pre-existing and long-lived NW-SE trending thick-skinned faults; wrench movement along structures such as the Southern Upland Fault Zone in southern Scotland accommodated westwards reinsertion of Baltica between North America and central-southern Europe. Reinsertion is believed to have been a response to the contemporaneous, but distal, Uralian Orogeny. The Uralian Orogeny formed as the result of accretion of the Siberian and Kazakh plates against Baltica's eastern (Laurussian) margin and the closure of the Ural Ocean; orogeny began during the late Carboniferous and continued into the early Jurassic (Bea *et al.*, 2002; Brown *et al.*, 2006).

3. Seismo-stratigraphic analysis of the Canonbie Coalfield

3.1 Datasets

A number of datasets have been utilised in the study of the late Carboniferous succession at Canonbie (Fig. 2). These include 12 UK Oil and Gas Authority and 7 UK Coal Authority onshore digital 2D seismic reflection profiles, originally acquired by Edinburgh Oil & Gas Ltd. and by the British Coal Corporation respectively. Seismic surveys for coal exploration are typically shot at higher frequencies (<125 Hz) and with lower depths of penetration than surveys for oil and gas exploration (20-80 Hz; Gochioco, 1990). Seismic reflection profiles shot for coal exploration therefore enable detailed mapping of onlapping and truncated seismic reflection geometries within sedimentary units at shallow depths, helping to constrain the timing of various deformation events. Note that the seismic reference datum from which the seismic reflection profiles are plotted for British Coal exploration surveys often varies from the sea level datum typically used for oil and gas surveys. Where the coal exploration datum was flat but shot above sea level, the reflection profile was shifted vertically in two-way travel time, assuming a constant near surface velocity of 2400 ms^{-1}. Where the reference datum was sloping, the reflection profile was not used for mapping in this study. These data are supported by 19 borehole penetrations, all of which provide stratigraphic constraints and some of which are associated with petrophysical (mainly gamma ray and acoustic) data and time-depth calibration data. These boreholes were drilled between 1854 and 2008 for coal, oil and gas and coalbed methane exploration purposes (Picken, 1988; Creedy, 1991; Chadwick *et al.*, 1995). The quality of data associated with each borehole varies accordingly. We encourage readers to follow web links to uninterpreted versions of our seismic lines, which can be found in the figure captions.

3.2 Stratigraphy

In accordance with previously published UK literature and industrial reports, the traditional NW European Carboniferous chronostratigraphic subdivisions have been adopted (Waters *et al.*, 2011; Davydov, 2004); these subdivisions and the current international subdivisions are correlated in Figure 3.

The Canonbie Coalfield is situated on the Scottish-English border within the northern Solway Carboniferous Basin. The coalfield is one of few places in the UK that preserves a near complete Westphalian stratigraphic record (Fig. 3). The Canonbie stratigraphic succession consists of <300 m of Langsettian-Duckmantian (Westphalian) Pennine Lower and Middle Coal Measures Formations (*herein*: PLCM and PMCM). Ordinarily, in north-western Europe, the base of this succession is defined by the *Subcrenatum* Marine Band (Waters *et al.*, 2011). This unit is absent at Canonbie, and across the entirety of the Midland Valley of Scotland (Cameron and Stephenson, 1985; Dean *et al.*, 2011) such that the Pennine Coal Measures Group (PCM) rests disconformably upon the underlying Namurian succession. The PCM succession is correlative across both the coalfield and NW Europe based on frequent stratigraphically defined coal seams and marine bands. The Pennine Upper Coal Measures Formation (PUCM) is poorly documented in historical accounts of the Canonbie Coalfield and contains only limited amounts of coal-bearing strata that provide stratigraphic control. Similarly-aged stratigraphy can be recognised further afield in southern Scotland as well as in Cumbria, courtesy of inter-bedded *Spirorbis*-bearing limestone beds (Mykura, 1967).

Overall upwards-coarsening and primarily 'red-bed' Warwickshire Group strata, conformably overlie PCM strata at Canonbie (Fig. 3) (Jones *et al*., 2011). Given the poor likeness of the Warwickshire Group strata at Canonbie with the Warwickshire Group Whitehaven Sandstone Formation of West Cumbria, and the paucity of stratigraphically correlative strata from both locations, three locally-defined formations are used to describe the succession at Canonbie (Jones *et al.*, 2011). These are the Eskbank Wood, Canonbie Bridge Sandstone and Becklees Sandstone formations. Only strata of the *Tenuis* Chronozone (lower Westphalian D) have been proved within the lowermost mudstone dominated Eskbank Wood Formation (Jones *et al*. 2011). No biostratigraphically-defined age constraints are given for the remainder of the Warwickshire Group. However, the Canonbie Bridge Formation shares petrographic characteristics with the Halesowen Formation of the English Midlands and is believed to be of predominantly Asturian (Westphalian D) age also (Jones *et al*., 2011; Morton *et al*., 2015). A chronostratigraphic correlation of the late

Westphalian-Stephanian succession preserved at Canonbie across southern Scotland, northern England and central England is included in figure 3.

3.3 Seismic horizons and time-depth conversion

Several latest Devonian to Permian-aged seismo-stratigraphic horizons were mapped in two-way travel time. The most consistent mappable surface is the base Permian angular unconformity against which Carboniferous reflectors truncate upwards. The Westphalian-Stephanian succession is characterised by strong, semi-continuous seismic reflectors due to the presence of thick inter-bedded channel sands (Jones *et al.*, 2011) and low-density coals (Picken, 1988). Based on similar studies within the region (Kimbell *et al*., 1989; Chadwick *et al*., 1995), a single strong, positive, continuous reflector is believed to mark the Great Limestone Member (Alston Formation, Yoredale Group) at the base of the Canonbie Namurian succession. Below this unit, similar inter-bedded limestone-derived reflectors characterise the Visean succession of the Tyne Limestone Formation (also Yoredale Group). The top Caledonian (lower Palaeozoic) basement horizon is interpreted as being represented by a series of strong positive continuous reflectors that are believed to represent subsurface equivalents of the Birrenswark Volcanic Formation (Inverclyde Group) (*cf*. Kimbell *et al.*, 1989).

Bulk sonic velocities for the Permian succession (2900 ms^{-1}), the Westphalian-Stephanian succession (3600 ms^{-1}) and the latest Devonian-Namurian succession (4500 ms^{-1}) were used to construct a simple velocity model. These values were derived from sonic velocity log data for the Easton, Timpanheck and Becklees boreholes. A seismic velocity of 5000 ms^{-1} was used for the basement (*cf*. Evans, 1994). The velocity model was used to convert the seismic surveys from time to depth domain. Although uncertainty surrounding the time-depth conversion process is acknowledged, the velocity model is deemed adequate for the purposes of the structural interpretation reported in this study. Stratigraphic data derived from borehole reports was used to better constrain structural interpretations of the depth converted seismic survey.

4. Structure of the Canonbie Coalfield

To understand the late Carboniferous kinematic evolution of the Canonbie Coalfield better, we present an integrated interpretation of the depth-converted seismic dataset, borehole data and outcropping geology. Several key structures have been identified as a result of that analysis (Fig. 5a). These include: 1) the NE-SW trending Bewcastle anticline and Hilltop Fault; 2) the NNE-SSW trending Solway syncline; 3) the NE-SW trending Gilnockie Fault; 4) ENE-WSW and E-W trending normal faults such as the Archerbeck, Rowanburn, Woodhouselees and Glenzierfoot Faults, and; 5) (N)NW-(S)SE trending strike-slip faults such as those exposed at surface laterally offsetting the coalfield's Permian cover. We describe the Westphalian-Stephanian succession through a series of time-slices, focussing upon how this succession was influenced by the combined effects of these key structures during its deposition.

4.1 Namurian and Pennine Lower Coal Measures (PLCM)

Based on isochore thickness maps (Fig. 5b-d), and unlike the general case across the Midland Valley of Scotland (Ritchie *et al.*, 2003; Underhill *et al.*, 2008), Namurian and PLCM stratigraphy at Canonbie shows little evidence of varying significantly in thickness across the coalfield (Fig. 5b); although, this is in contrast with the southern part of the Solway Basin where Chadwick *et al*. (1995) observed mild thickening within the southern trough of the Solway Syncline and Akhurst *et al*. (1997) records a localised late Namurian angular unconformity. The local PCM subcrop is bound to the northwest by the Gilnockie Fault and to the southwest by the Hilltop Fault that both dip towards the southeast and display net normal and reverse displacement respectively. From seismic data, Picken (1988) interpreted a known local basal Westphalian break in deposition (represented by the absence of the *Subcrenatum* marine band) as a low-angle overstepping unconformity that resulted from syn-depositional anticlinal growth along a *c.* N-S compressional axis (e.g. Fig. 10 in Picken, 1988). The originally observed outcropping example of this unconformity was argued to represent low-angle unconformable onlap and overstep (Lumsden *et al.*, 1967) but has recently been reinterpreted as, instead, representing a localized sedimentary feature, resulting from multiple phases of river channel-bank collapse (Jones and Holliday, 2016). After careful re-examination of this seismic dataset however, we now interpret the PLCM onlap surface of Picken (1988) as actually representing the Gilnockie Fault, along a 2D seismic profile parallel to the fault, which offsets late Carboniferous strata as well as the strata below it (Fig. 6). The absence of basal Westphalian stratigraphy at Canonbie, we believe, represents a parallel disconformity.

4.2 Pennine Middle and Upper Coal Measures (PMCM and PUCM)

Variations in the thickness of PMCM and PUCM stratigraphy (Figs. 5c, d) suggest that the NNE-SSW trending Solway Syncline acted as a significant depocentre for Duckmantian and younger Westphalian stratigraphy (also see Fig. 7). Throughout the coalfield, these units also thicken gradually towards the Hilltop Fault, within the fault's footwall, but are at their thickest (<700 m) within the Solway Syncline axial zone. This structure forms a broad, slightly asymmetrical syncline in the south-eastern part of the coalfield (Fig. 5a). To the immediate south, a 'minor early Carboniferous high' (Picken, 1988) or local strike-parallel northwards plunge of the Solway syncline marks the southern margin of the Canonbie coalfield. The Solway Syncline continues to the south beyond this 'high', where it meets the northern margin of the early Carboniferous Lake District Block (Chadwick *et al.*, 1995). Whilst the syncline's eastern limb is cross-cut by the Hilltop Fault, its western limb shallows progressively towards the north and west. In the north-western part of the coalfield, a series of bright reflectors within the PMCM can be seen gently onlapping against similarly bright reflectors along the syncline's western limb (Fig. 8, and inset Fig. 8b). Based on borehole stratigraphy, the reflector that most closely resembles the surface of onlap is thought to represent the approximately late Duckmantian (Westphalian B) Archerbeck coal seam (also PMCM) (Fig. 4).

Synthetic and antithetic faults that merge with the Gilnockie Fault at 1-2 km depth, spatially correlate with the upper limit of the Solway Syncline's western limb (Fig. 8), onto which the Upper Coal Measures and younger Westphalian stratigraphy thin gently (Fig. 5c, d). The *Cambriense* Marine

Band (locally referred to as the *Skelton* Marine Band) that marks the base of the PUCM succession is locally absent in borehole penetrations along the north-western margin of the Canonbie Coalfield (Timpanheck, Bogra and Beckhall; Fig. 2). The underlying stratigraphic units form a series of mild, together <2 km wide, parallel trending anticlines, which are overstepped by younger Westphalian stratigraphy (Fig. 8). These mild folds are together tilted south-eastwards by the coalfield wide Solway syncline. As with the Hilltop Fault, along the south-eastern margin of the coalfield, latest Devonian-Visean units (Inverclyde and Border Groups) within the hangingwall of the Gilnockie Fault thicken gently towards the fault, indicating normal movement at the time of latest Devonian-Visean deposition.

Evidence from borehole stratigraphy suggests that minor thickness increases in PMCM and PUCM units towards the ENE-WSW to E-W trending Archerbeck, Rowanburn, Woodhouselees and Glenzierfoot Faults within their hanging walls may be tentatively interpreted based on seismic reflection profiles, although growth of the Solway Syncline appears to have had a greater influence on thickness distribution of Westphalian stratigraphy. These structures all appear to dip steeply towards the south, displacing Carboniferous stratigraphy in a normal sense (Fig. 6). Latest Devonian to early Carboniferous-aged units (Inverclyde and Border Groups) are offset normally by and may be tentatively interpreted as gently thickening towards the Archerbeck, Rowanburn, Woodhouselees and Glenzierfoot Faults within their hanging walls, as they do towards the major parallel fault systems that bound the Solway Basin to the south (Chadwick *et al.*, 1995).

4.3 Warwickshire Group

Although much of the subcropping Warwickshire Group succession has been partly eroded prior to Permian deposition, thus limiting further use of isochore thickness maps, reflector geometries observed within the Canonbie Bridge and Becklees Sandstone Formations in the Solway syncline trough suggest that the nature of this depocentre was altered during deposition of the Becklees Sandstone Formation. In higher resolution coal exploration seismic reflection profiles, a thick succession (< 200 m) of Becklees Sandstone Formation can be observed showing angular onlap against the Canonbie Bridge Sandstone Formation stratigraphy within the Solway syncline's western limb (Fig. 9). In addition, reflectors belonging to the Canonbie Bridge Sandstone Formation within the syncline's western limb are slightly truncated against the surface of onlap (marked u/c 3; Fig. 9b). This surface of onlap is interpreted as an angular, partially erosional, unconformity. An additional unconformable horizon can be observed from the seismic data and down cuts into younger Becklees Sandstone stratigraphy within the Solway syncline, truncating underlying reflectors (u/c 4; Fig. 9b). Given that the Becklees Sandstone Formation has been interpreted as having been deposited in a fluvial environment (Jones *et al.*, 2011) and given the broad U-shape geometry of the unconformity, this feature is interpreted as representing an erosive and, most likely, confined fluvial channel set (*cf*. Ramos *et al.*, 2002). Above angular unconformity u/c 3 (Fig. 9b), the axis of the Solway syncline appears to have migrated south-eastwards towards the Hilltop Fault. Given the discordance between reflectors within the Canonbie Bridge and Becklees Sandstone Formations in the syncline's western limb (Fig. 9a), this eastwards migration of the Solway syncline depocentre is most likely associated with a steepening of this western limb. In addition, and along the syncline's north-western limb, the entirety of the Carboniferous succession forms a high amplitude (<1 km) anticline with a shorter and shallowly dipping north-western limb (Fig. 9a). This anticline correlates spatially with the Gilnockie Fault, which dips more shallowly, at least locally, within the uppermost 800 m of the subsurface. The onlapping reflector geometries described here within the Warwickshire Group of the Solway syncline (Fig. 9a), constrain the timing of the formation of this anticline to to the earliest deposition of the Becklees Sandstone Formation (*cf*. Fig. 3) (Jones *et al.*, 2011).

The NNE-trending Bewcastle anticline occurs within the hanging wall block of the parallel Hilltop Fault. Unlike the comparatively minor anticlines along the north-western margin of the coalfield, there are no timing constraints for the formation of this anticline but it is assumed that they formed at similar times. The Hilltop Fault tips out within the Solway Basin around the southern margin of the coalfield (Chadwick *et al.*, 1995).

4.4 Stephanian-early Permian

Later Stephanian to early Permian deposits are absent from the Canonbie Coalfield, as is generally the case in the rest of north-western Europe (see Besly and Cleal, *in press*). Both Permian strata and older Carboniferous strata are offset normally by one of the steeper synthetic faults to the Gilnockie Fault as well as ENE- to east-trending faults (Figs. 6, 8). Older Westphalian strata are offset by a greater magnitude along this structure than Permian strata, suggesting that an episode of normal faulting preceded Permian deposition. At least two (N)NW-(S)SE trending faults cut, with apparent dextral offset, the Gilnockie Fault as well as the Permian-aged cover by <500 m along the western margin of the coalfield (Fig. 5a); this pattern is consistent all across the Northumberland-Solway Basin (de Paola *et al.*, 2005). This group of structures is difficult to identify within seismic reflection profiles, suggesting that their vertical displacement is minimal. A strong degree of uncertainty surrounding the timing of these structures is acknowledged.

5. Tectonic controls on the late Carboniferous evolution of the Canonbie Coalfield

We believe that the fragmented late Carboniferous kinematic evolution of the Canonbie Coalfield can be constrained by at least three episodes of deformation (Fig. 10). These three episodes of deformation can be represented by unconformities described in the PMCM and the Warwickshire Group respectively (Figs. 8 and 9) as well as later normal fault movement prior to deposition of the basal Permian succession at Canonbie (Fig. 6).

5.1 Pennine Coal Measures (PCM) unconformity

Based on isochore thickness distributions for PMCM and PUCM and asymmetric, low-amplitude folding correlating spatially with the Gilnockie Fault, the local PMCM unconformity is interpreted to indicate significant syndepositional tectonism. Although folding of the entire Carboniferous succession beneath the base Permian unconformity has ultimately distorted the nature of the PMCM unconformity, 2D palinspastic cross-section restoration of a NE-SW section through the Canonbie Coalfield and Gilnockie Fault reveals that low amplitude folding occurred at the same time as this unconformity (Fig. 10c), resulting in 1.4 % along length shortening. Along strike, the steeper sided limbs of asymmetric, low-amplitude folds correlate laterally with the steeply dipping synthetic and antithetic normal faults of the Gilnockie Fault (Fig. 8), although there is interference between adjacent folds. Previous studies of inverted basins suggest that similar asymmetric, low-amplitude folding can be indicative of ‘mild’ positive fault inversion (*sensu* Song, 1997) - where the ‘null point’ or the point along an inverted fault’s length at which there is zero net displacement (*sensu* Williams *et al.*, 1989) remains at the fault’s upmost tip (*cf*. Butler, 1998; Jackson *et al.*, 2013). Mild inversion structures are strongly dominated by folding due to partial reverse reactivation of a fault along its length, where thrusting does not accommodate a significant amount of shortening (Jackson *et al.*, 2013). Compressional stress at the time of folding is insufficient to prompt full reverse reactivation of these faults. The asymmetrical nature of the local PMCM and PUCM depocentre in the Canonbie Coalfield can be explained by these asymmetric and mild inversion structures (Figs. 5 and 8). Oblique-slip (dextral) movement along similar NE-SW trending structures, such as the Gilnockie and Hilltop Faults, may have contributed to the slightly oblique NNE-SSW trending growth of the Solway syncline with respect to these faults.

5.2 Warwickshire Group unconformity

The Warwickshire Group unconformity appears to represent a more significant rearrangement of the local foreland basin system. Two-dimensional palinspastic restoration of the NW-SE striking cross-section illustrated in figure 9 suggests that the Warwickshire Group unconformity, seen in seismic data along the buried axis of the Solway syncline (Fig. 9), formed because of anticlinal folding due to shallowly dipping basement-involved thrusting along the Gilnockie Fault. This second basin reorganisation episode resulted in at least 10 % shortening (Fig.

10b). Unlike prior inversion that occurred during the deposition of the PMCM, shortening occurring during deposition of the younger Warwickshire Group succession appears to have been partly accommodated by the most shallow, comparatively shallowly-dipping part of the Gilnockie Fault (*cf*. Fig. 9a). As this part of the fault does not appear to have accommodated significant extension or shortening prior to this later episode of basin inversion, this part of the fault may have originated as a footwall short-cut (*cf*. Hayward and Graham, 1989). The Warwickshire Group unconformity represents a significant rearrangement in the nature of the local Solway Syncline depocentre (Fig. 9a). Folding and thrusting appears to have caused a steepening of the syncline's north-western limb, and perhaps in doing so, confined the local longitudinal fluvial system causing it to become more erosive (*cf*. Ramos *et al.*, 2002; Suriano *et al.*, 2015). Major reverse movement along the Hilltop Fault at this time and the resulting uplift of the hanging wall may have constituted a minor lithospheric load along the coalfield's south-western margin (*cf*. Karner and Watts, 1983). This would have perhaps prompted additional localised flexure-induced accommodation and restricted uplift of the Solway syncline's eastern limb and supplied the coalfield with an additional source of local clastic detritus (*cf*. Jones *et al*., 2011). The minor Carboniferous high, that marks the southern limit of the coalfield (Picken, 1988; Chadwick *et al.*, 1995), may be attributed to the Hilltop Fault pinching out laterally at a similar latitude if the depocentre immediately to the north (the coalfield) were partly attributed to local flexure-induced subsidence.

5.3 Basal Permian unconformity and latest Westphalian-early Permian relaxation

The post-Westphalian kinematic evolution of the coalfield, prior to deposition of the Permian succession appears to be represented by a 'relaxation' in compressional stresses (*cf*. Dempsey, 2016). Normal offset occurs primarily along pre-existing E-W orientated faults, perhaps indicating dextral transtension (*cf*. Coward, 1993; Monaghan and Pringle, 2004; De Paola *et al.*, 2005; Pharaoh *et al.*, 2019) but also along the Gilnockie Fault (Fig. 8). The basal Permian angular unconformity cuts stratigraphy below it, perhaps suggesting further uplift prior to Permian deposition following the late Westphalian-Stephanian (*cf*. Underhill and Brodie, 1993), although this uplift event appears not to have been accommodated by fault movement.

6. A comparison with the modern 'broken' Northern Patagonian foreland basin system

We suggest that syn-depostional faulting, folding and positive inversion influenced late Carboniferous depocentres in the Canonbie Coalfield. In this respect, the coalfield provides evidence that suggests that northern Britain during late Carboniferous times was one of many basins that did not fit perfectly within a traditional post-rift tectonostratigraphic framework (e.g. McKenzie, 1978). Instead, the coalfield, which was situated in the distal Variscan foreland system, evokes similarities between the northern British part of the Variscan foreland basin system and the 'broken' foreland basin systems (e.g. Bilmes *et al.*, 2013). Whereas traditional foreland basin system models imply that regional geodynamic processes cause expansive and largely uninterrupted basin systems (DeCelles and Giles, 1996), in 'broken' foreland systems palaeodrainage, sediment routing and subsidence trends are frequently disrupted by uplifted intra-foreland basin blocks (Strecker *et al*., 2011). The archetypal example of this type of basin is the modern 'broken' Northern Patagonian foreland in Argentina, which is adjacent to the Andean Mountains (Bilmes *et al*., 2013; Gianni *et al*., 2015; Lopez *et al*., 2019; Bucher *et al*., 2019) (Figs. 11a and c). Here, several narrow Quaternary-aged depocentres still exist oblique to the predominant collision zone and some up to 1000 km away from the oceanic subduction zone (Gianni *et al*., 2015). These depocentres are defined by comparatively uplifted intra-foreland basement blocks that have been reactivated contemporaneously with Andean collision after having initially formed as earlier Mesozoic rift basins (Bilmes *et al*., 2013) (Fig. 11c). The (Neogene) syn-kinematic sedimentary sequence is characterised by stratigraphically frequent angular unconformities, and evidence of complex palaeodrainage systems and localised sediment routing (Lopez *et al*., 2019).

As with several of the smaller depocentres that together constitute the ‘broken’ Northern Patagonian foreland, the late Carboniferous Solway Syncline depocentre appears to have been restricted by the uplift of the Bewcastle Anticline and the limbs of the Solway Syncline from as early as Duckmantian (Westphalian B) times (Fig. 10). The PUCM and Warwickshire Group sediments deposited thereafter are characterised by stratigraphically frequent angular unconformities (*cf*. Lopez *et al*., 2019). The work of Jones *et al*. (2011), in particular, highlights complex sediment routing and palaeodrainage systems during late Carboniferous times around the Canonbie area. Given the general uncertainty surrounding the youngest Carboniferous sediments of the British Isles (e.g. Besly, 2019), rapid lateral subsidence variations implied by unit thickness variations (Fig. 3) and similarly complex sediment routing and palaeodrainage relationships (Jones *et al*., 2011), a framework based on the ‘broken’ Northern Patagonian foreland has the potential to be expanded across the late Carboniferous Variscan foreland basin system (Figs. 11b and d). Further work with similar datasets across the British Variscan foreland, studying the nature of local unconformities and thickness trends within the late Carboniferous succession is however, undoubtedly required before previous assumptions regarding the British Isles at this time can be re-assessed.

7. Discussion

7.1 Regional tectonic implications

The two intra-Carboniferous unconformities observed in the Canonbie Coalfield approximately correlate with long-recognised angular unconformities in the English Midlands. The earliest PMCM unconformity at Canonbie equates very approximately with the Symon unconformity, a diachronous and generally poorly understood unconformity (or unconformities) that locally separates the Etruria Formation from the onlapping and overstepping Halesowen Formation in the coalfields of Shropshire, South Staffordshire and Warwickshire (Clarke, 1901; Besly and Cleal, 1997; Butler, 2019) (Fig. 3). Poole (1988) also makes this comparison in a comment on Picken’s (1988) structural characterisation of the Canonbie Coalfield. Corfield *et al*. (1996) postulate an overall SE-orientated compressional stress field (σ_1) during late Westphalian-Stephanian times. Following the beginning of 'Symon deformation', fluvial red-bed material derived predominantly from the south and south-east began expanding into the basins of the English Midlands (Besly, 1988). Similarly timed phases of deformation are also interpreted by Ritchie *et al*. (2003) within the Scottish Upper Coal Measures Formation based on oil and gas exploration seismic in the eastern part of the Midland Valley of Scotland and implied by an angular unconformity at the base of the Whitehaven Sandstone Formation in West Cumbria (Akhurst *et al*., 1997).

The Warwickshire Group unconformity, which is observed in seismic, crops out along the River Esk, within the study area, and was recognised by Jones *et al.* (2011) who observed polygonal cracks penetrating the underlying Canonbie Bridge Sandstone filled by markedly more poorly-sorted and quartz-rich arenitic Becklees Sandstone Formation, suggesting a prolonged depositional hiatus. Given the great magnitude of shortening and the general absence of pre-Permian compressional deformation accommodated by the Becklees Sandstone Formation in the Canonbie Coalfield, we argue that this unconformity, previously only recognised in outcrop, represents the final major pulse of Variscan inversion in the British Isles (e.g. Peace and Besly, 1997). Tectonostratigraphically equivalent (post-inversion) units in the British Isles may therefore be represented by the Clent Formation of the English Midlands, which unconformably rests on top of the Enville Member (Salop Formation) in South Staffordshire, or the Kennilworth Sandstone Formation, which locally rests unconformably on top of the Tile Hill Mudstone and Salop formations in Oxfordshire (approximately 40 km SE) and conformably upon the Tile Hill Mudstone Formation in Warwickshire (Besly and Cleal, 1997; Peace and Besly, 1997) (Fig. 3). This may suggest a younger age (Autunian or Gzhelian-Asselian) for the Becklees Sandstone Formation than anticipated prior to this study (*cf*. Besly and Cleal, in press) and that either the polygonal cracks observed by Jones *et al*. (2011) represent a time-gap of up to 8 My or, more likelier, that the Canonbie Bridge Sandstone Formation represents a condensed (200 m thick) time-equivalent unit relative to the far thicker Warwickshire Group successions of central England (>1 km thick) (Fig. 3). Additional sedimentary accommodation in central England may have been a flexural isostatic response to the Variscan Mountains, further to the south. This latest episode of deformation correlates approximately with the *c*. 310-295 Ma (Murphy *et al*., 2016) formation of the Iberian and Cantabrian oroclines. Therefore, an alternative more SSW-orientated compressional stress direction could be implied. The Solway syncline has traditionally been associated with Variscan shortening (Chadwick *et al.*, 1995).

Attributing late Carboniferous growth of the NNE-SSW trending syncline to either SE or SSW shortening axes (Fig. 5a), creates a series of geometric problems, particularly so in a lower strain setting (*cf*. Copley and Woodcock, 2016). Folding of the NNE-trending Solway Syncline may have alternatively been accommodated by dextral movement along NE-SW trending thick-skinned structures and kinematic strain partitioning (*cf*. De Paola *et al.*, 2005; Leslie *et al.*, 2015). The schematically illustrated two-dimensional strain ellipse for dextral strike-slip movement along NE-SW orientated deep basement faults incorporates simultaneous broadly east-west shortening and broadly north-south extension, echoing early Westphalian growth of the NNE-SSW trending Solway Syncline and mild inversion of the Gilnockie Fault, as well as extension across the broadly east-west trending Rowanburn, Woodhouselees and Glenzierfoot faults (inset Fig. 5a). The structural framework represented by this strain ellipse also accommodates simultaneous strike-slip movement of conjugate faults oblique to the main NE-SW trending faults (e.g. Fig. 6). The localised stress field may have been caused by dextral movement along basement involved faults such as the Gilnockie and Hilltop faults within our study area (Fig. 9), or by distant movement along major thick-skinned faults such as the Southern Upland and Highland Boundary fault systems to the north (Fig. 1). If so, these movements may represent responses to a longer-lived stress regime, derived perhaps from the Uralian Mountains to the east (*cf*. Coward, 1993), which was interrupted sporadically throughout late Carboniferous times by phases of supposed Variscan deformation. Along both the Solway Syncline and across the Midland Valley of Scotland, NNE- to NE-orientated growth folding is proven to have occurred prior to these phases of deformation at Canonbie and throughout Namurian times by unit thickness variations (e.g. Read, 1988; Chadwick *et al*., 1995), perhaps suggesting pre-

Westphalian NE-SW dextral transpression (e.g. Underhill *et al*., 2008). The preferential intrusion of Early Permian igneous material along tensile and approximately ENE- and WNW-orientated faults and pre-Permian normal activation of these faults perhaps suggests post-Westphalian and Stephanian NE-SW dextral transtension (e.g. De Paola *et al*., 2005).

7.2 Strain localisation along obliquely orientated structures

Given the important role that faulting, folding and positive inversion appears to have played in determining the characteristics of late Carboniferous depocentres in the Canonbie Coalfield, we consider the localisation of strain along depocentre defining structures. In northern Britain, the localisation of strain along obliquely orientated structural trends with respect to the apparent, approximately N-S compressional stress orientation requires fault damage zones significantly weaker (>30 %) than intact bedrock (Copley and Woodcock, 2016). Having possibly undergone reverse (dextral) reactivation during Namurian times and reverse reactivation during deposition of the PMCM, albeit only partial reactivation along fault length (Fig. 6), NE-SW trending faults such as the Gilnockie Fault are likely to have remained susceptible to further reverse reactivation, even in a contrasting lateral sense, during deposition of the Warwickshire Group. There is limited evidence to suggest that approximately E-W trending structures that were roughly perpendicular to the orientation of maximum compressional stress, at Canonbie or in the immediately surrounding region, accommodated significant basin shortening during this period (Fig. 6) (De Paola *et al.*, 2005). Three-dimensional sandbox models and modern day analogues for inverted basins suggest that steep faults orientated perpendicular to the orientation of maximum compressive stress are unlikely to accommodate significant shortening in low-strain settings (Keller and McClay, 1995; Di Domenica *et al.*, 2014). With this in mind, E-W structures that were perpendicular with respect to compressional stress, may have remained ‘frozen’ during this period, leaving more oblique, recently active and, therefore, mechanically weaker structures to accommodate preferential shortening.

7.3 Strain location within rheologically weaker crustal rock

Line-length restoration suggests that at least 10 % cumulative shortening occurred along a NW-SE axis throughout the prolonged late Carboniferous inversion phase (Fig. 9). In reality, basin shortening is likely to have been larger due to both sub-seismic scale shortening and out-of-plane deformation. This shortening occurred in a region widely regarded as having occupied a low-strain setting within the Carboniferous foreland (Corfield *et al.*, 1996; De Paola *et al.*, 2005). In the Midland Valley of Scotland, steeply dipping faults such as the Highland Boundary and Southern Upland fault systems are believed to have exerted a strong control on the magnitude of shortening (Ritchie *et al.*, 2003; Underhill *et al.*, 2008). A dissipating stress field derived from these faults may have contributed towards the localised stress field at Canonbie. However, despite their shared proximities to these fault systems, as well their similarly orientated structural fabrics, based on regional studies subsurface studies and accounts of outcropping geology (*cf*. Chadwick *et al*., 1995; Lumsden *et al*., 1967), there is a large disparity between the high magnitude of basin shortening observed at Canonbie compared with the Scottish Southern Uplands or the Lake District (Fig. 1). The Solway Basin and the Canonbie Coalfield is underpinned by relatively weak upper crustal rock, composed predominantly of thick Carboniferous sediment and weakly metamorphosed Ordovician-Silurian slate and phyllite (Rickards and Woodcock, 2005; Stone *et al.*, 2012). This contrasts with the thinner Carboniferous successions preserved immediately to the south and north of the coalfield that are underpinned by mechanically strong granitoid basement rock in the Lake District and partially granitic, greywacke dominant basement rock in the Southern Uplands of Scotland (Bott *et al*., 1967; Allsop *et al*., 1987; Howell *et al*., 2019, 2020). As a result, the Solway Basin may have therefore also accommodated shortening for a wider region, including those mechanically stronger regions that were less able to accommodate basin shortening, just as the Solway Basin likely accommodated early Carboniferous extension for a wider region.

High magnitude seismic-scale folding and thrusting is often accommodated by a shallow to mid-level crustal detachment (Coward *et al.*, 1999). The northwards dipping Iapetus suture zone that, prior to Caledonian collision of Avalonia and Laurentia, separated present day Scotland from northern England (*cf*. Freeman *et al*., 1988; Soper *et al*., 1992) constitutes such a detachment. This detachment is undoubtedly at a relatively shallow depth beneath the Canonbie Coalfield and Solway Basin, regardless of the contrasting interpolations of the onshore Iapetus suture zone (Fig. 1) (Chadwick *et al.*, 1995; De Paola *et al.*, 2005). Furthermore, our cross-section restorations of the Solway Syncline through the Canonbie Coalfield suggest a detachment at 6 to 7 km depth below surface (Fig. 9) that may reflect this suture. Along with the locally mechanically weak crustal rock underpinning the region, the favourable (slightly oblique) structural fabric orientation and the weak (following dextral reactivation) accommodating NE-trending faults, this detachment may therefore have also been able to aid the accommodation of greater localised basin shortening with respect to adjacent areas.

7.4 Implications for decarbonisation and low carbon subsurface energy resources in northern England and southern Scotland

Over the past century, coal including that sourced from the Canonbie Coalfield fuelled the bulk of the UK's electricity and heating. Due to both the increased availability of domestic natural gas and the UK's recent effort to decarbonise its energy supply, this is no longer the case. On the contrary, the use of coal is widely condemned by western media as coal is now regarded as the 'dirtiest' fossil fuel because of the associated CO_2 and other pollutant emissions. However, UK coal mining has left a legacy of abandoned infrastructure that has the potential to be repurposed as the UK seeks to further decarbonise its energy supply (Andrews *et al*., 2020). At the time of writing, the British Geological Survey are constructing and operating a research site in Glasgow to further understand the potential of water from abandoned coalmines for geothermal energy (Watson *et al*., 2019). Coupled CO_2 sequestration and enhanced coal bed methane recovery offers a further, if riskier, low carbon subsurface energy prospect for northern England and southern Scotland (Jones *et al*., 2004). This technology remains in its infancy although the Canonbie Coalfield itself was investigated as recently as 2015 for coal bed methane purposes. Development plans were abandoned due to, amongst other factors, the 'structural complexity' of the coalfield. To date, three deliberate deep geothermal wells have been drilled in neighbouring northern England, penetrating Carboniferous strata (Gluyas *et al*., 2018). Thus far, the most encouraging of these wells was the Eastgate borehole which intersected high permeability basement faults and fractures (Manning *et al*., 2007). Carboniferous tectonism is widely believed to have been underpinned by steeply dipping thick-skinned, basement involved faults such as those intersected by the Eastgate borehole (Corfield *et al*., 1996). Our cross-section restorations for the Canonbie Coalfield, however, suggest that deformation in this area was instead accommodated by more shallowly dipping structures that are sub-horizontal at *c*. 6-7 km depth. Given that this study has revealed inconsistencies between past assumptions made regarding the bedrock that hosts these potential resources and reality, and that investments such as those highlighted are already being made, would it therefore not be worth investing time exploring pre-existing and publicly available datasets in order to reduce uncertainties surrounding the UK subsurface?

8. Conclusions

- Local seismic and borehole-based mapping of the late Carboniferous succession in the Canonbie Coalfield (SW Scotland) provides evidence of repeated episodes of positive inversion, syn-depositional folding and unconformities within the Westphalian (Bashkirian-Moscovian) to Stephanian (Kasimovian) Pennine Coal Measures and Warwickshire Group successions.
- Positive inversion and syn-depositional folding dictated Westphalian-Stephanian depocentres at Canonbie. The basin history thus revealed is at variance with generally accepted models in neighbouring northern England that state these basins subsided due to post-rift thermal subsidence during the late Carboniferous.
- A Stephanian (?) unconformity within the Warwickshire Group succession at Canonbie, which approximately correlates with ~10 % local basin shortening, documented further major basin shortening throughout the late Carboniferous Variscan foreland and the

formation of the Cantabrian and Iberian oroclines in southern Europe, also contradicts observations that maximum Variscan shortening at this time had minimal impact on late Carboniferous basins in northern England.

- Our mapping of the Westphalian-Stephanian succession at Canonbie evokes similarities between the local Variscan foreland basin system and ‘broken’ foreland systems, where sedimentation is controlled by local tectonism, such as the North Patagonian broken foreland in South America.
- Local variations in crustal rheology, inherited fault strengths and their variation over time, fault orientation with respect to the evolving dominant stress field and mid-crustal detachments are suggested to play important roles in strain localisation and ultimately the nature of Westphalian-Stephanian depocentres at the Canonbie Coalfield.

Acknowledgments

We acknowledge with thanks the help and co-operation in Dr. Tim Pharoah (BGS) and the staff of the National Geoscience Data Centre in locating the borehole velocity data for the British Coal boreholes. Dr. Malcolm Butler (UKOGL) is thanked for facilitating access to the seismic data; Keith Whitworth (formerly of British Coal) is thanked by providing a digital copy of the logs of Becklees Borehole. We would like to also acknowledge constructive reviews on an earlier version of this manuscript by Dr. David Millward and by Dr. Steven Corfield.

Funding

This manuscript contains work conducted during a PhD study undertaken as part of the Natural Environment Research Council (NERC) Centre for Doctoral Training (CDT) in Oil & Gas [grant number: NEM00578X/1]. It is sponsored by Natural Environment Research Council, the Keele University Acorn Fund and the National Productivity Investment Fund (NPIF) whose support is gratefully acknowledged.

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Figure 1

Fig. 1: (top) A simplified onshore geological map of northern Britain depicting the outcropping Carboniferous succession. Major compressional structures are annotated in bold, many of which in northern England and southern Scotland are oblique with respect to roughly north-south orientated Variscan compressional stress (Corfield *et al.*, 1996). Numbered annotations indicate areas of northern Britain where Warwickshire Group (or age equivalent stratigraphy) has been observed cropping out (Powell *et al.*, 2000; Waters *et al.*, 2007; Jones *et al.*, 2011) (also see Fig. 3). MVS = Midland Valley of Scotland; M-LS = Midlothian-Leven Syncline; BA = Bewcastle Anticline; SS = Solway Syncline; DF = Dent Fault; MD FTB = Môn-Deemster Fold and Thrust Belt. Mapping data courtesy of the British Geological Survey. (bottom) A schematic NE-SW cross-section from the Southern Uplands, through the Solway Basin and to the Lake District.

Figure 2

Fig. 2: A summary of the seismic and borehole data from the Canonbie Coalfield used in this study. All seismic data was accessed through UKOGL (UK Onshore Geophysical Library). Borehole data was accessed through the UK OGA (Oil and Gas Authority), IHS Markit and the BGS's (British Geological Survey) archives at Keyworth.

Figure 3

Fig. 3a: (left) Stratigraphic columns showing international and regional Stage units of the late Carboniferous. (right) Chronostratigraphic correlation of the Pennine and Scottish Coal Measures, and Warwickshire Group from the Canonbie coalfield to southern Scotland, north-west England and the English Midlands. Based primarily on petrographical work conducted by Jones *et al.* (2006; 2011), augmented by the seismic and regional interpretations of this study and data presented in Picken (1988), Powell *et al*. (2000) and Waters *et al*. (2007). The correlation of regional Carboniferous stages of Davydov (2004) is adopted, along with the palynozone subdivisions of Waters *et al*. (2011). SLCM = Scottish Lower Coal Measures (Fm.); SMCM = Scottish Middle Coal Measures; SUCM = Scottish Upper Coal Measures; PLCM = Pennine Lower Coal Measures; PUCM = Pennine Upper Coal Measures; Esk. = Eskbank Wood; Can. = Canonbie Bridge Sandstone; Beck. = Becklees Sandstone; WSF = Whitehaven Sandstone Formation; WSM = Whitehaven Sandstone Member; MBM = Millyeat Beds Member. 3b: Locations of chronostratigraphically correlated Scottish Coal Measures, and Warwickshire Group successions in the British Isles and relative to the late Carboniferous Variscan thrust front (location of thrust front taken from Corfield *et al*., 1996). 3c: Depth correlations for the Pennine and Scottish Coal Measures, and Warwickshire Group from the Canonbie coalfield to southern Scotland, north-west England and the English Midlands. Unit thicknesses are taken from Waters *et al*. (2011). The Clent Formation and Kennilworth Sandstone Formation (in green) are those interpreted by Peace and Besly (1997) to have been deposited after an alleged final phase of Variscan inversion tectonics in the English Midlands.

Figure 4

Fig. 4: (left) Stratigraphic columns showing international and regional Stage units. (right) A seismic well tie for the Becklees borehole. Gamma ray, density, sonic and lithological logs (based on Jones and Holliday, 2006; Jones *et al.*, 2011) are shown along with synthetic and observed seismic traces. A = Langsettian; B = Duckmantian; C = Bolsovian; D = Asturian; Gr. = Group; Fm. = Formation; TVD = True Vertical Depth.

Figure 5

Fig. 5: Depth map to base Pennine Coal Measures Formation in metres in the Canonbie coalfield. The dominant structural trends interpreted in the Canonbie Coalfield can be accounted for by dextral wrenching along NE-SW orientated faults (inset top-left; 2D strain ellipse illustrating predicted discontinuity trends after dextral wrench on NE-SW orientated faults). 5b, c and d: Isochore thickness maps for the Pennine Lower, Middle and Upper Coal Measures Formations respectively, based on the seismic interpretations of this study. Thickening during deposition of the Pennine Middle and Upper Measures Formations is controlled dominantly by growth within the Solway Syncline structure.

Figure 6

Fig. 6: An interpreted SW-NE orientated seismic profile from the Canonbie Coalfield (Seismic line ED86-04), depicting normal faulting and strike-parallel plunge of the Solway Syncline. For section location, see Figure 2. Uninterpreted profiles for all the seismic sections included in this study can be previewed at ukogl.org.uk.

Figure 7

Fig. 7: A wireline (gamma ray) correlation panel for the late Carboniferous successions of the Becklees, Glenzierfoot and Broadmeadows boreholes in the Canonbie Coalfield. Gamma ray curves for the Glenzierfoot and Broadmeadows boreholes are derived from Jones *et al*. (2011). Gr. = Group; Fm. = Formation; TVD = total vertical depth.

Figure 8

Fig. 8: An interpreted NW-SE seismic profile (Seismic line ED86-02) depicting folding of the Solway Syncline, mild inversion along antithetic and synthetic normal faults of the Gilnockie Fault, onlapping Pennine Middle Coal Measures (PMCM) against mild inversion folds and normal offset along the Gilnockie Fault. For section location, see Fig. 2. Uninterpreted profiles for all the seismic sections included in this study can be previewed at ukogl.org.uk.

Figure 9

Fig. 9a: An interpreted NW-SE orientated seismic profile depicting folding of the Solway Syncline (Seismic line 80-CAN-54). 9b: A closer look at the reflector geometries belonging to the Becklees Sandstone Formation (Warwickshire Group) within the axis of the Solway Syncline. A series of reflectors are shown onlapping against the western limb of the Solway Syncline. Erosional truncation of reflectors occurs within the axis of the Solway Syncline and is interpreted as representing down cutting, fluvial strata. For section location, see Fig. 2. Uninterpreted profiles for all the seismic sections included in this study can be previewed at ukogl.org.uk.

Figure 10

Fig. 10: Two-dimensional palinspastic cross-section restorations for the NW-SE orientated section presented in Figure 9. Timings of deformation events are constrained by onlapping reflector geometries. The cross-section can be restored by incorporating a sub-horizontal detachment at around 6-7 km depth. Restorations are performed using the unfolding, move-on-fault and decompaction modules in MOVE (Petroleum Experts) structural model building software.

Figure 11

Fig. 11a: A plate tectonic setting map for the North Patagonian Andes and the North Patagonian broken foreland (based on Gianni et al., 2015). A Stephanian-Autunian palaeogeographic reconstruction of the Variscan foreland basin system of the British Isles based partly on Peace and Besly (1997) and the findings of this study. 11c: A schematic cross-section of the North Patagonian Andes, the North Patagonian fold and thrust belt (FTB), North Patagonian foredeep and the North Patagonian broken foreland (from Bilmes *et al*., 2013). 11d: A schematic late Westphalian reconstruction of the Variscan collision zone, external Variscides, Variscan fordeep and the northern British broken foreland. LDB = Lake District Block; ISZ = Iapetus Suture Zone; SSU = Scottish Southern Uplands; MVS = Midland Valley of Scotland.

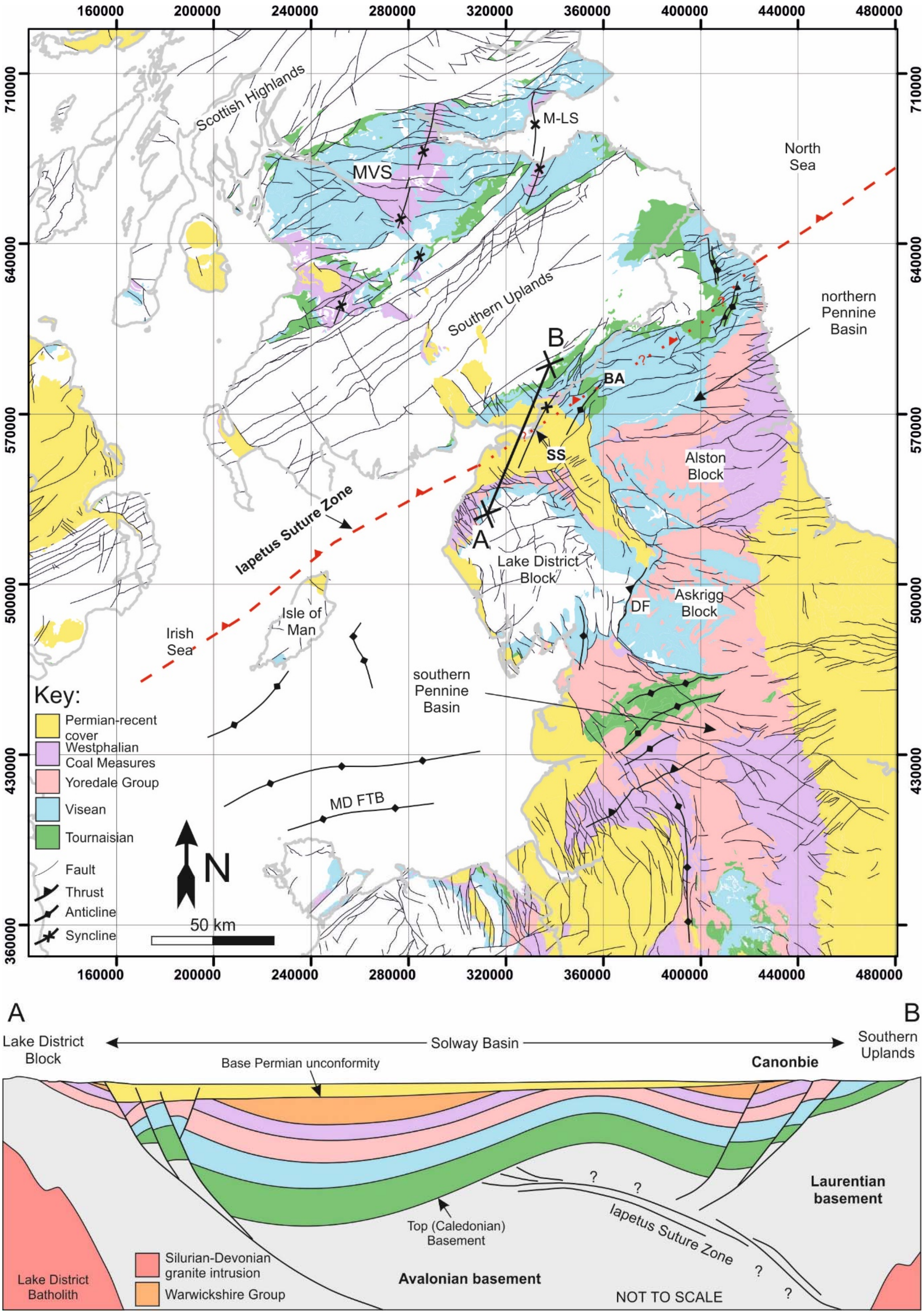

160000
200000
240000
280000
320000
360000
400000
440000
480000
710000
640000
570000
500000
430000
360000
Scottish Highlands
M-LS
North Sea
MVS
Southern Uplands
northern Pennine Basin
B
BA
SS
Alston Block
Iapetus Suture Zone
A
Lake District Block
DF
Askrigg Block
Isle of Man
Irish Sea
southern Pennine Basin
MD FTB
Key:
Permian-recent cover
Westphalian Coal Measures
Yoredale Group
Visean
Tournaisian
Fault
Thrust
Anticline
Syncline
N
50 km
A
B
Lake District Block
Solway Basin
Southern Uplands
Base Permian unconformity
Canonbie
Laurentian basement
Iapetus Suture Zone
Top (Caledonian) Basement
Silurian-Devonian granite intrusion
Warwickshire Group
Lake District Batholith
Avalonian basement
NOT TO SCALE

Fig.1

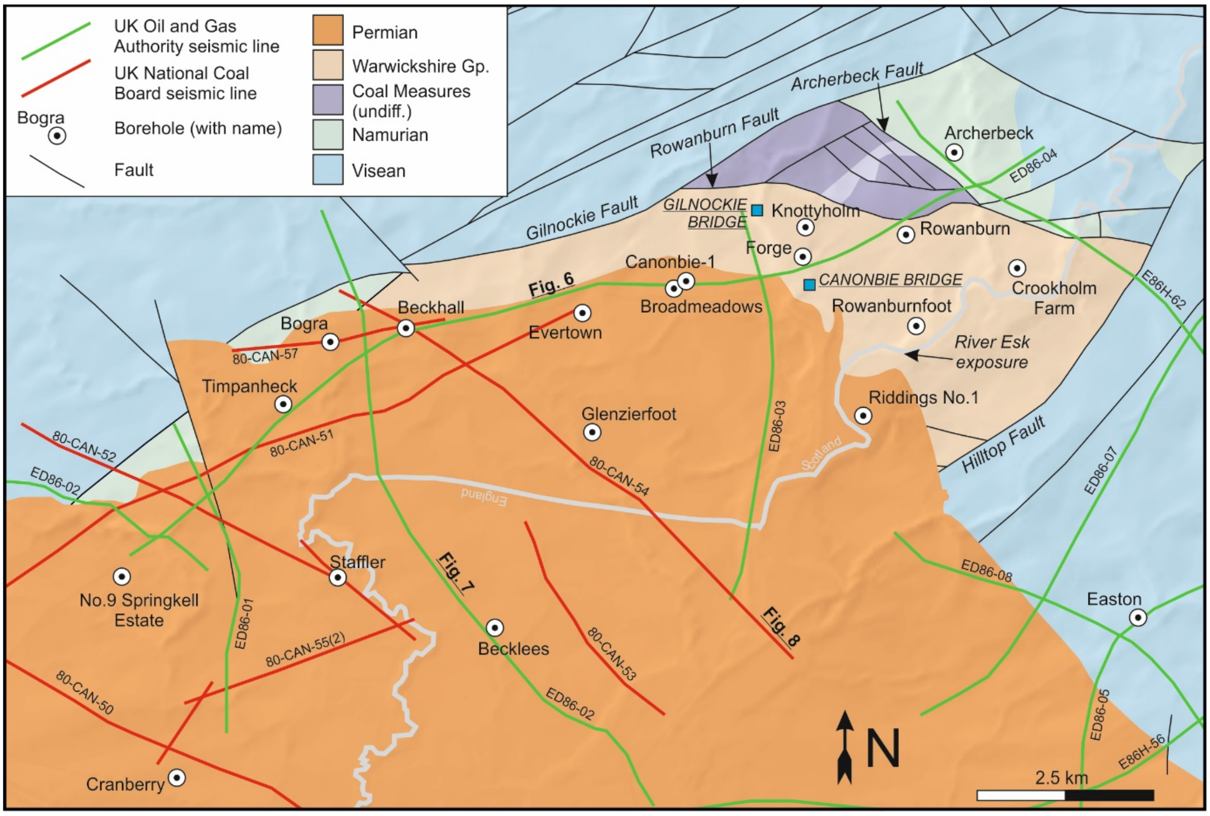

UK Oil and Gas Authority seismic line
UK National Coal Board seismic line
Bogra
Borehole (with name)
Fault
Permian
Warwickshire Gp.
Coal Measures (undiff.)
Namurian
Visean
Archerbeck Fault
Rowanburn Fault
Gilnockie Fault
Hilltop Fault
Archerbeck
GILNOCKIE BRIDGE
Knottyholm
Rowanburn
Forge
Canonbie-1
CANONBIE BRIDGE
Crookholm Farm
Broadmeadows
Rowanburnfoot
River Esk exposure
Beckhall
Bogra
Evertown
Fig. 6
Timpanheck
Glenzierfoot
Riddings No.1
Scotland
England
Staffler
No.9 Springkell Estate
Becklees
Easton
Cranberry
Fig. 7
Fig. 8
80-CAN-57
80-CAN-52
80-CAN-51
80-CAN-54
80-CAN-53
80-CAN-55(2)
80-CAN-50
ED86-01
ED86-02
ED86-03
ED86-04
ED86-05
ED86-07
ED86-08
E86H-62
E86H-56
N
2.5 km

Fig. 2

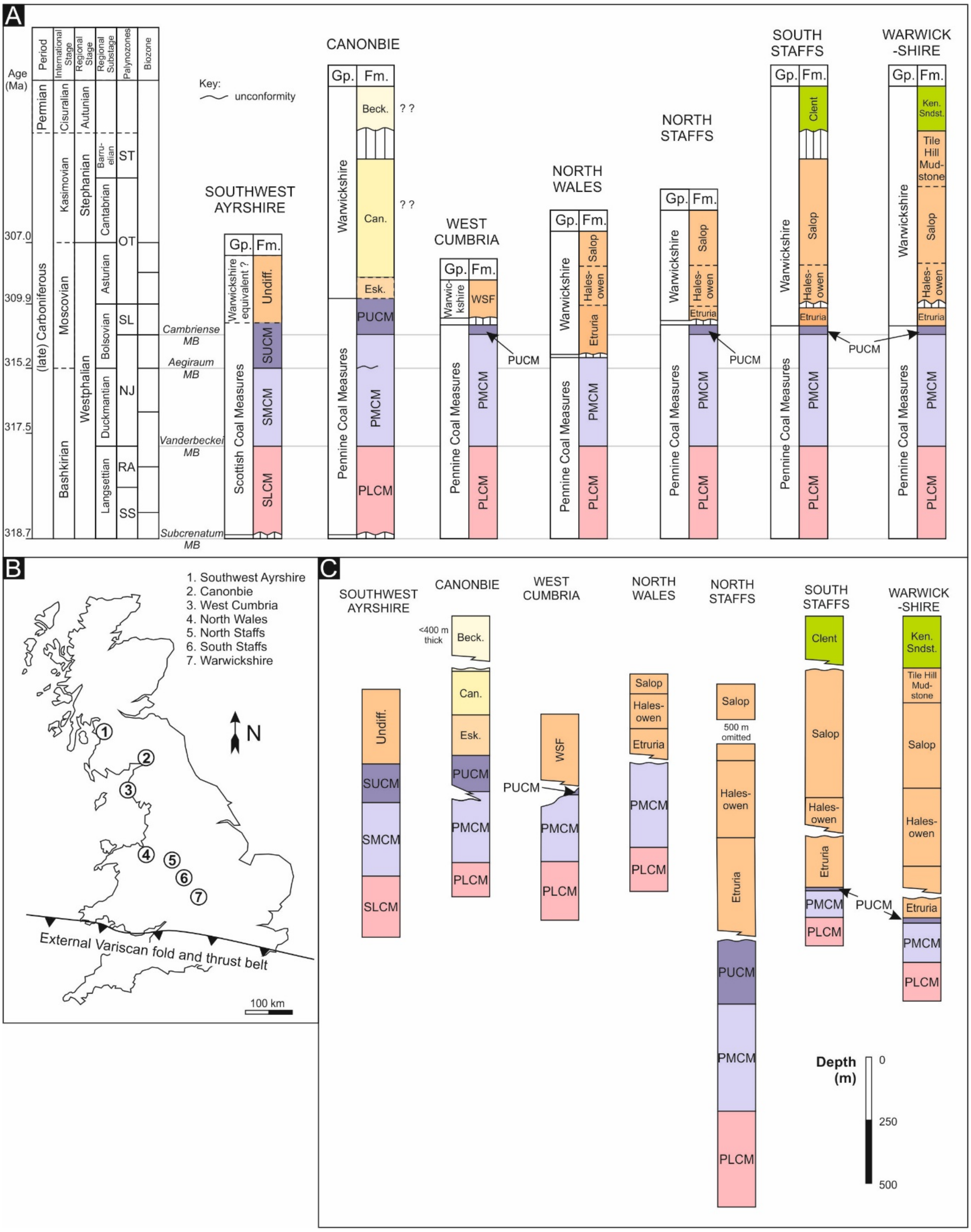

A
Age (Ma)
Period
International Stage
Regional Stage
Regional Substage
Palynozones
Biozone
Permian
Cisuralian
Autunian
(late) Carboniferous
Kasimovian
Moscovian
Bashkirian
Stephanian
Westphalian
Barru-elian
Cantabrian
Asturian
Bolsovian
Duckmantian
Langsettian
ST
OT
SL
NJ
RA
SS
307.0
309.9
315.2
317.5
318.7
Cambriense MB
Aegiraum MB
Vanderbeckei MB
Subcrenatum MB
Key:
unconformity
SOUTHWEST AYRSHIRE
CANONBIE
WEST CUMBRIA
NORTH WALES
NORTH STAFFS
SOUTH STAFFS
WARWICK -SHIRE
Gp.
Fm.
Warwickshire equivalent ?
Scottish Coal Measures
Undiff.
SUCM
SMCM
SLCM
Warwickshire
Pennine Coal Measures
Beck.
Can.
Esk.
PUCM
PMCM
PLCM
? ?
Warwic-kshire
WSF
Salop
Hales-owen
Etruria
Clent
Ken. Sndst.
Tile Hill Mud-stone
B
1. Southwest Ayrshire
2. Canonbie
3. West Cumbria
4. North Wales
5. North Staffs
6. South Staffs
7. Warwickshire
N
External Variscan fold and thrust belt
100 km
C
<400 m thick
500 m omitted
Depth (m)
0
250
500

Fig. 3

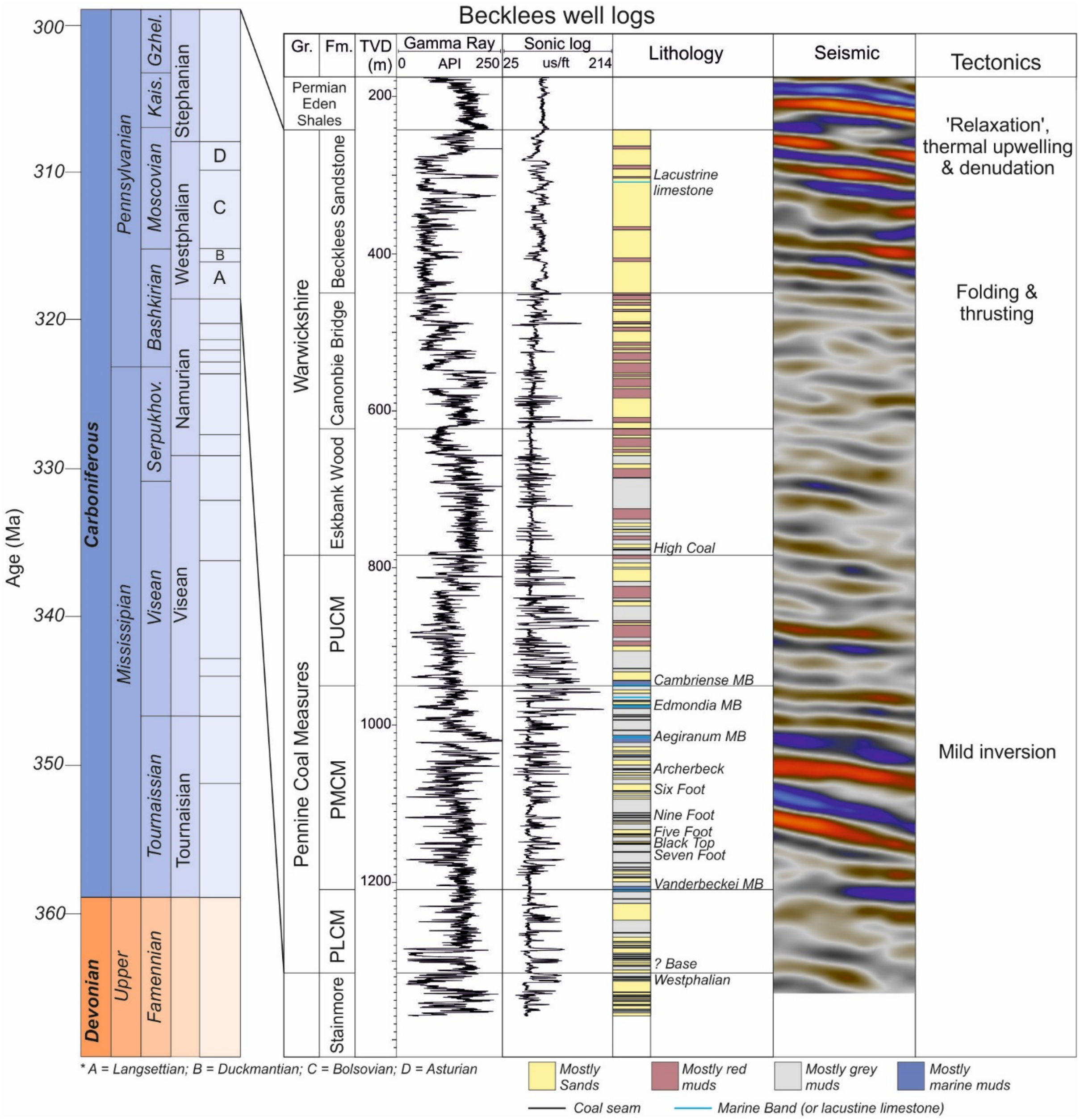
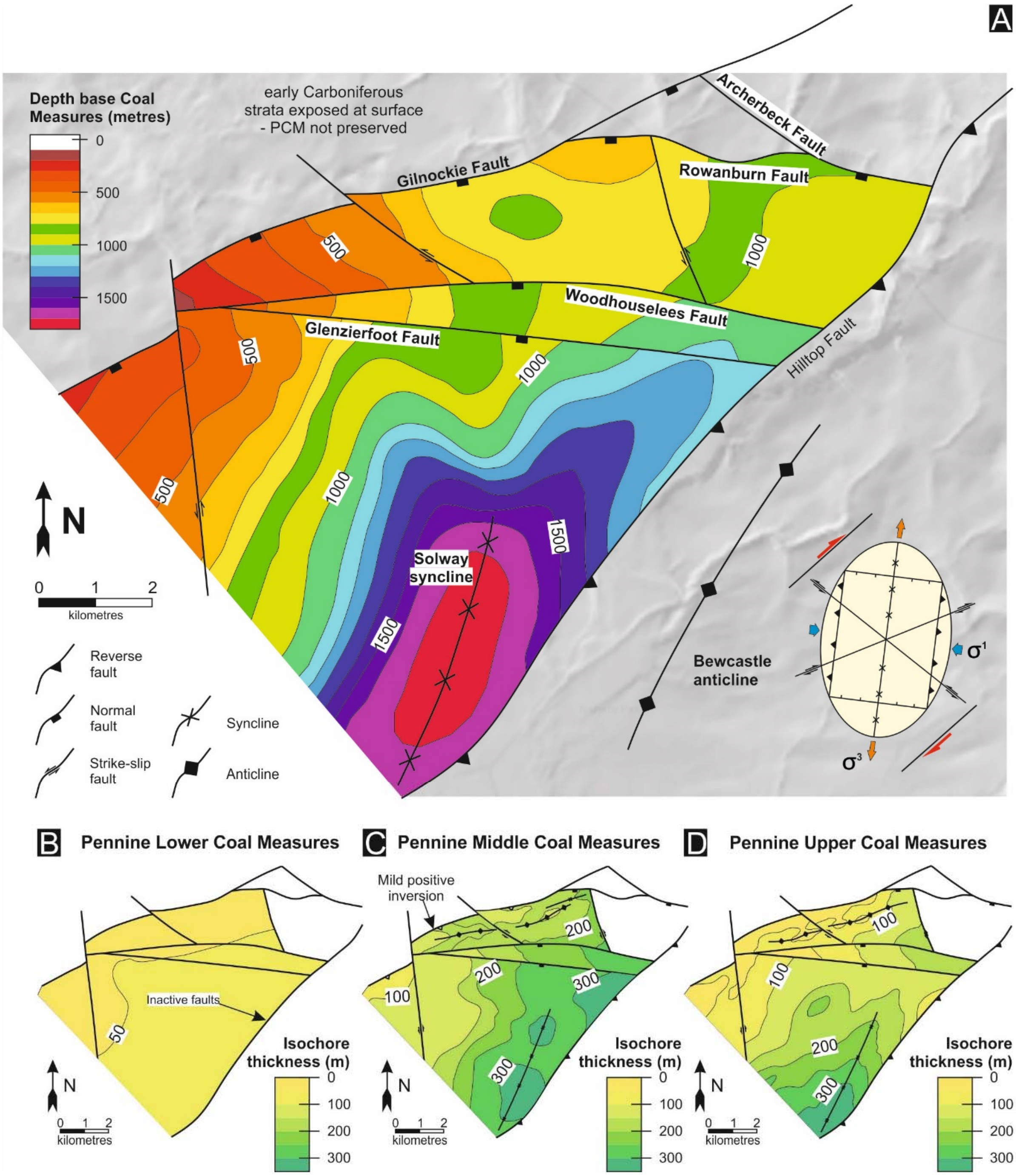

Becklees well logs
Age (Ma)
300
310
320
330
340
350
360
Carboniferous
Devonian
Pennsylvanian
Mississipian
Upper
Gzhel.
Kais.
Moscovian
Bashkirian
Serpukhov.
Visean
Tournaissian
Famennian
Stephanian
Westphalian
Namurian
Visean
Tournaisian
D
C
B
A
Gr.
Fm.
TVD (m)
Gamma Ray
0 API 250
Sonic log
25 us/ft 214
Lithology
Seismic
Tectonics
Permian Eden Shales
Warwickshire
Becklees Sandstone
Canonbie Bridge
Eskbank Wood
Pennine Coal Measures
PUCM
PMCM
PLCM
Stainmore
200
400
600
800
1000
1200
Lacustrine limestone
High Coal
Cambriense MB
Edmondia MB
Aegiranum MB
Archerbeck
Six Foot
Nine Foot
Five Foot
Black Top
Seven Foot
Vanderbeckei MB
? Base Westphalian
'Relaxation', thermal upwelling & denudation
Folding & thrusting
Mild inversion
* A = Langsettian; B = Duckmantian; C = Bolsovian; D = Asturian
Mostly Sands
Mostly red muds
Mostly grey muds
Mostly marine muds
Coal seam
Marine Band (or lacustine limestone)

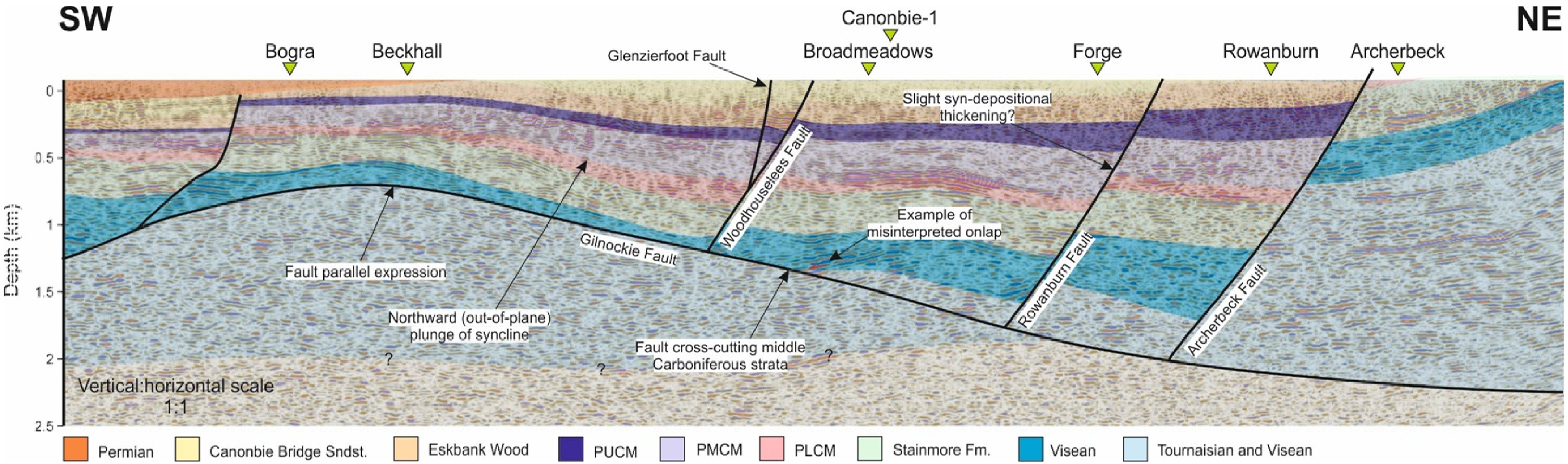
Fig. 4

966



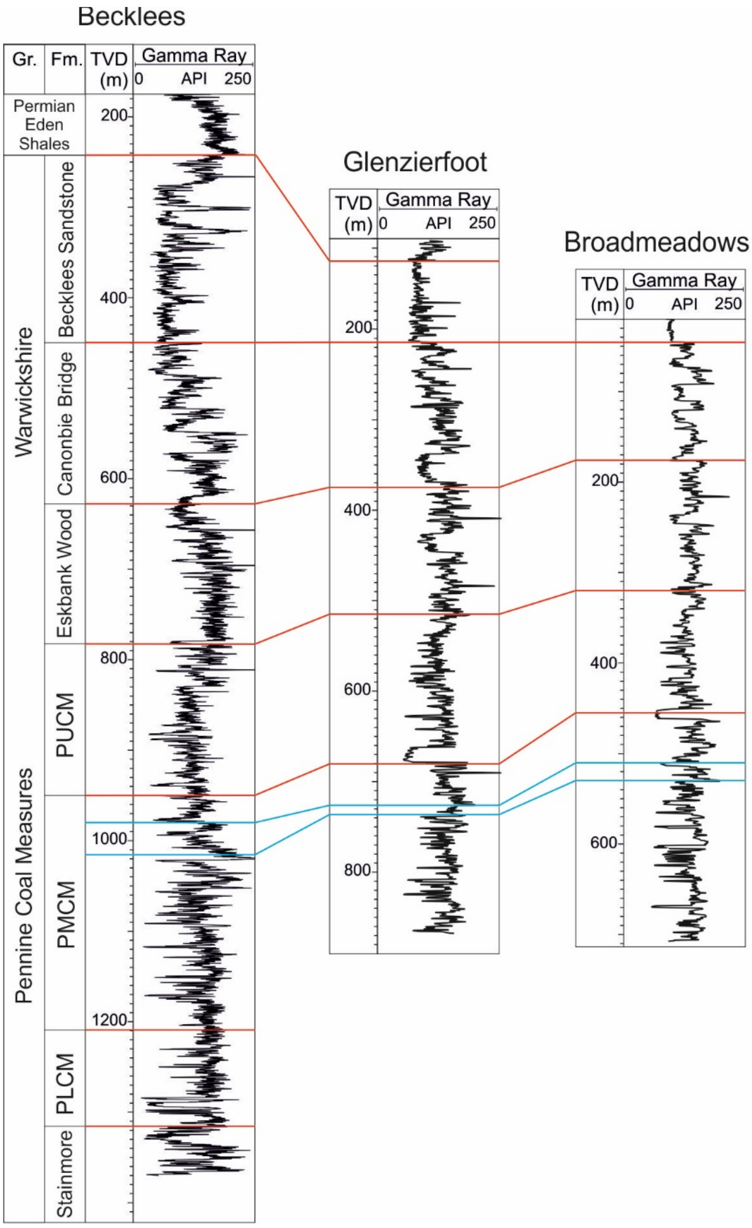
967 Fig. 5

968



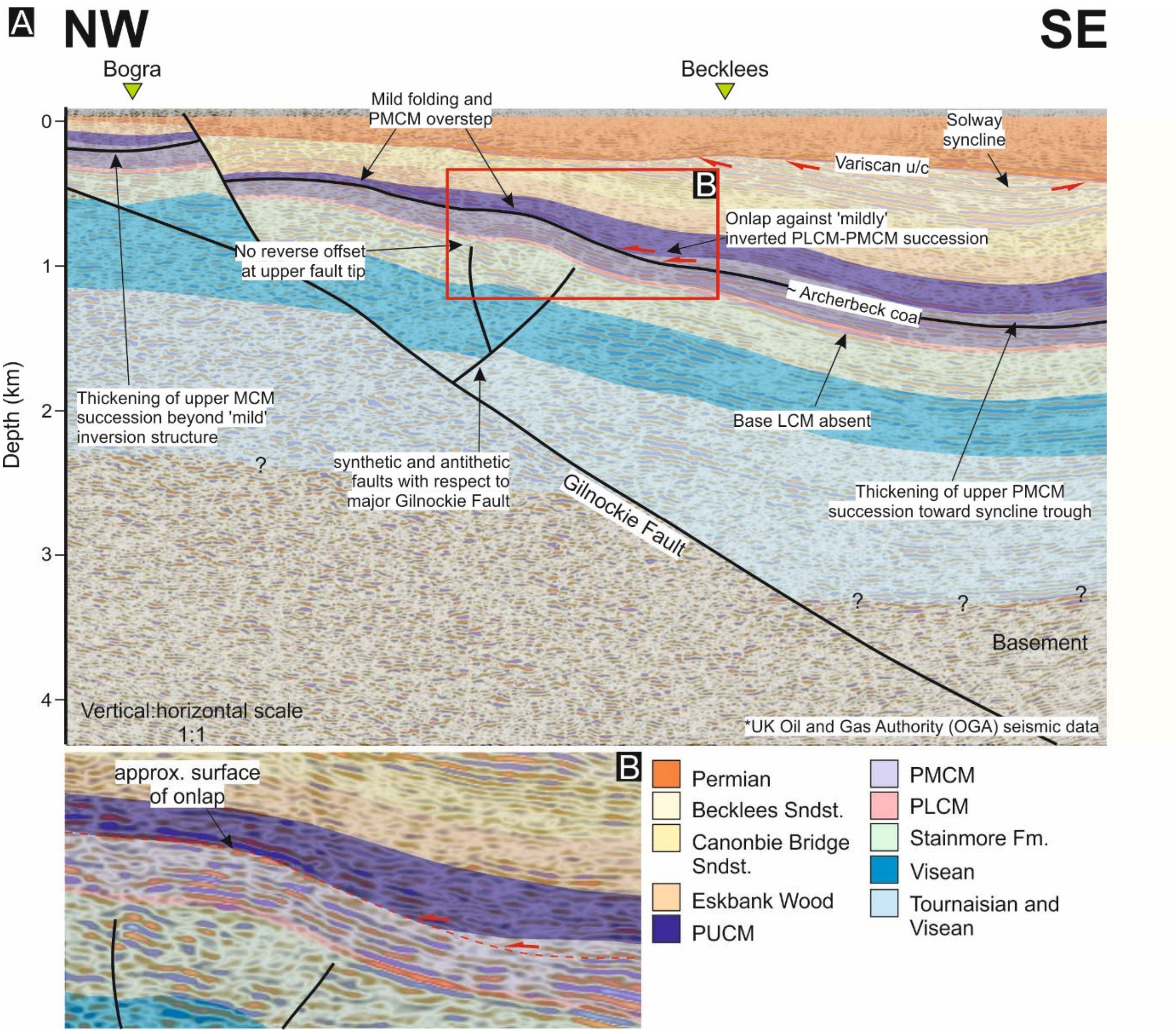
SW
NE
Bogra
Beckhall
Glenzierfoot Fault
Canonbie-1
Broadmeadows
Forge
Rowanburn
Archerbeck
Depth (km)
0
0.5
1
1.5
2
2.5
Slight syn-depositional thickening?
Woodhouselees Fault
Example of misinterpreted onlap
Gilnockie Fault
Rowanburn Fault
Archerbeck Fault
Fault parallel expression
Northward (out-of-plane) plunge of syncline
Fault cross-cutting middle Carboniferous strata
Vertical:horizontal scale 1:1
Permian
Canonbie Bridge Sndst.
Eskbank Wood
PUCM
PMCM
PLCM
Stainmore Fm.
Visean
Tournaisian and Visean

Fig. 6



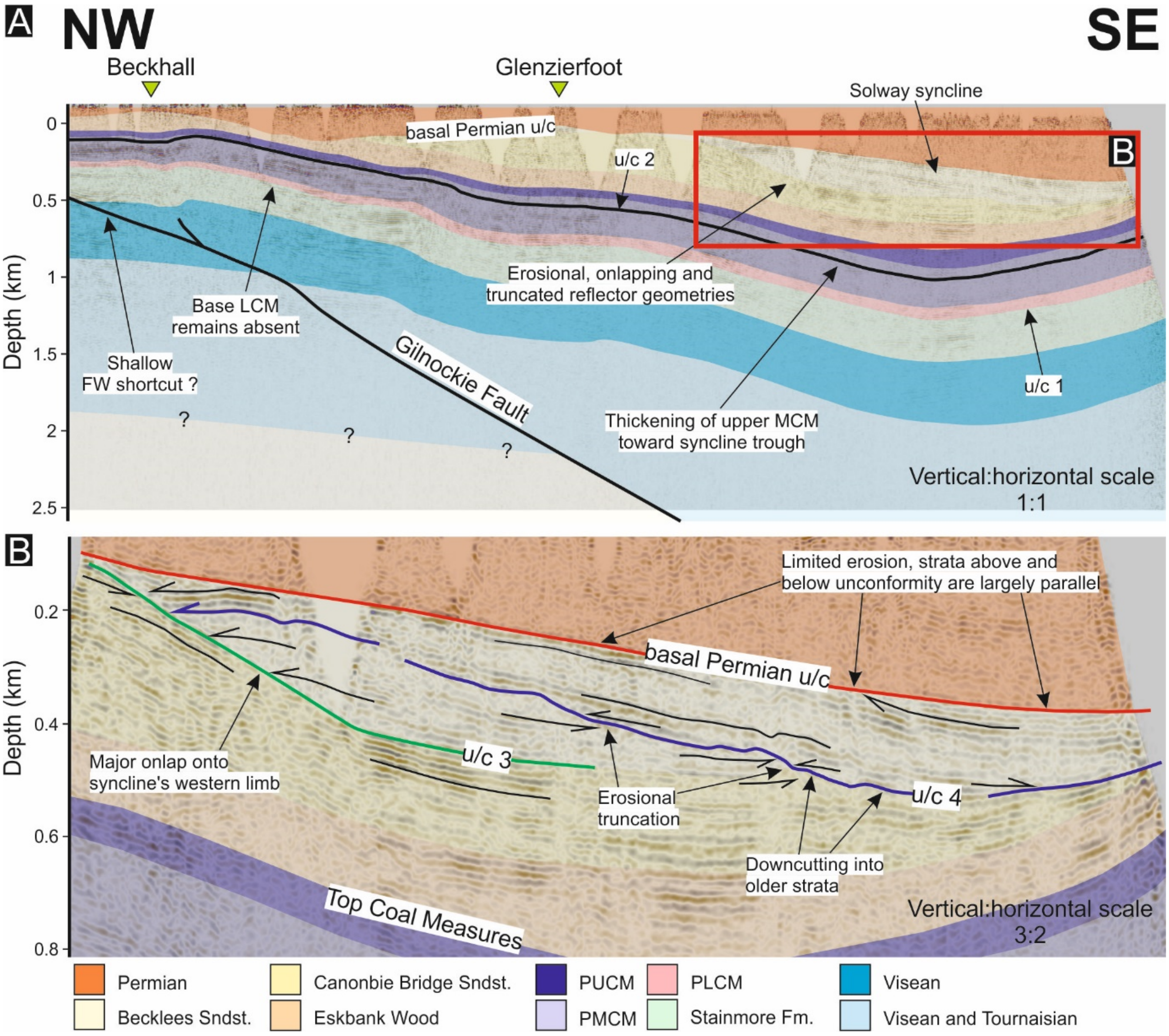
Becklees
Glenzierfoot
Broadmeadows
Gr.
Fm.
TVD (m)
Gamma Ray
0 API 250
Permian Eden Shales
Warwickshire
Becklees Sandstone
Canonbie Bridge
Eskbank Wood
Pennine Coal Measures
PUCM
PMCM
PLCM
Stainmore
200
400
600
800
1000
1200

Fig. 7



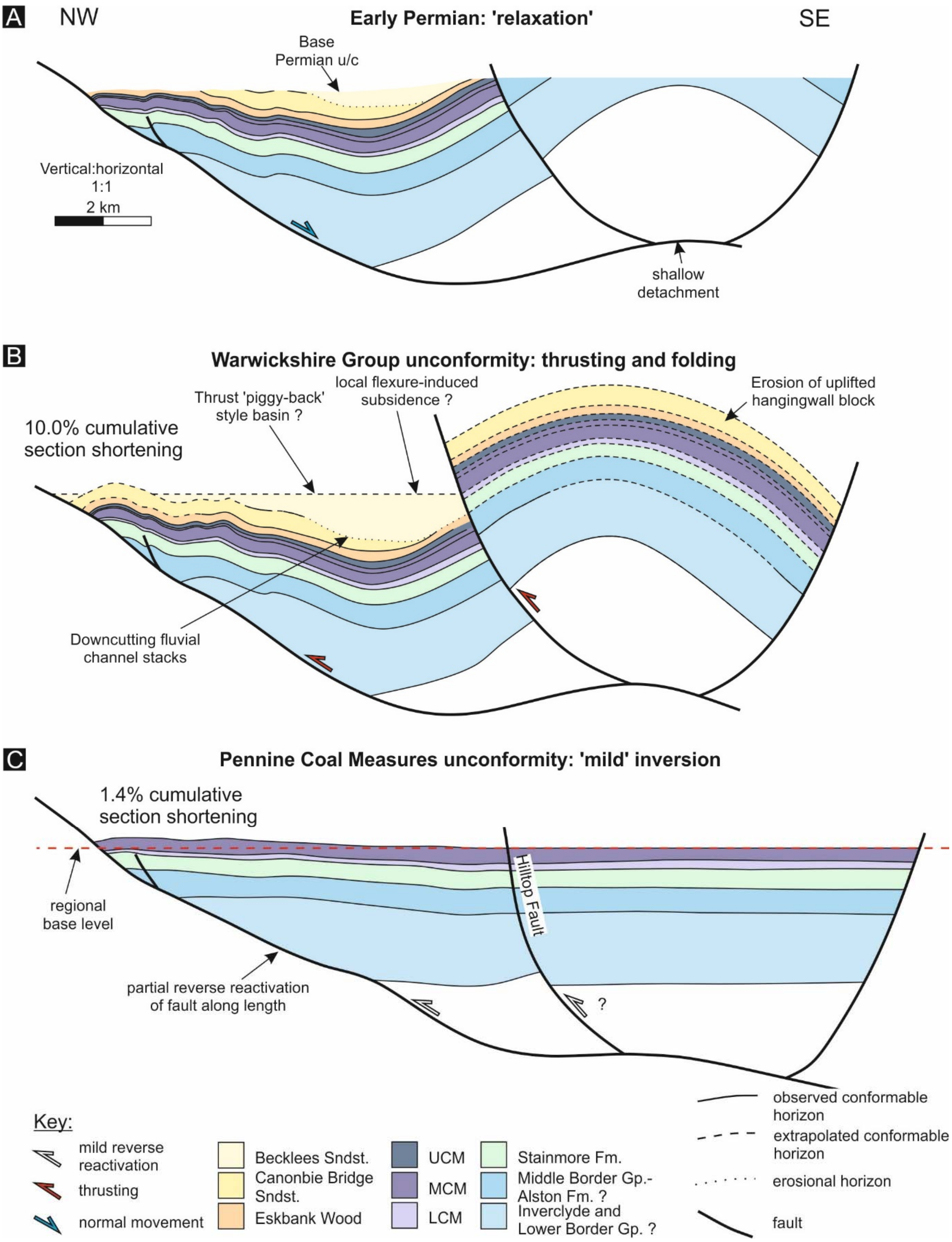
A
NW
SE
Bogra
Becklees
Mild folding and
PMCM overstep
Solway
syncline
Variscan u/c
B
Onlap against 'mildly'
inverted PLCM-PMCM succession
No reverse offset
at upper fault tip
~ Archerbeck coal
Depth (km)
0
1
2
3
4
Thickening of upper MCM
succession beyond 'mild'
inversion structure
Base LCM absent
synthetic and antithetic
faults with respect to
major Gilnockie Fault
Gilnockie Fault
Thickening of upper PMCM
succession toward syncline trough
Basement
Vertical:horizontal scale
1:1
*UK Oil and Gas Authority (OGA) seismic data
approx. surface
of onlap
B
Permian
Becklees Sndst.
Canonbie Bridge
Sndst.
Eskbank Wood
PUCM
PMCM
PLCM
Stainmore Fm.
Visean
Tournaisian and
Visean

Fig. 8

978 

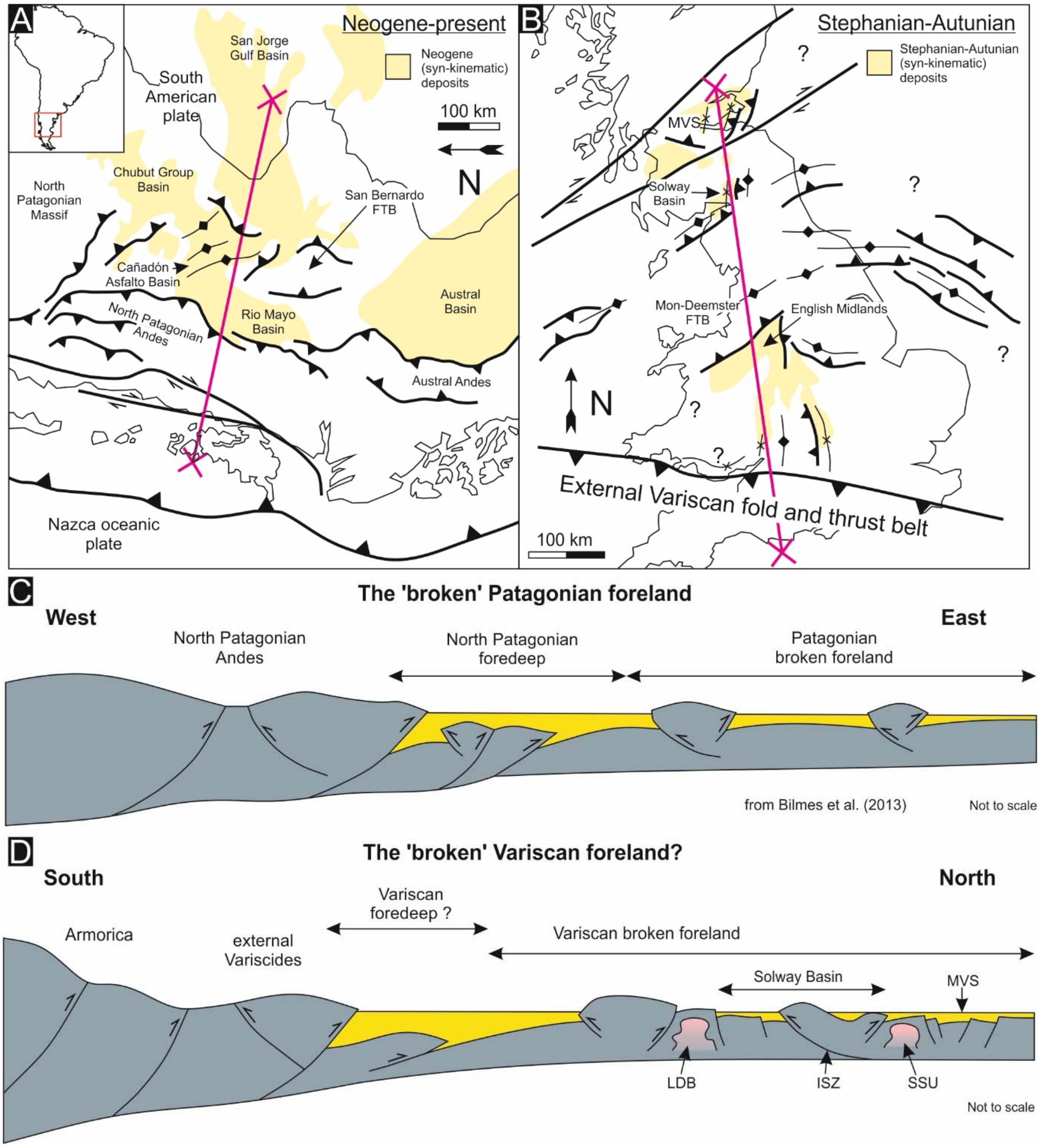
979 Fig. 9

980



A
NW
Early Permian: 'relaxation'
SE
Base
Permian u/c
Vertical:horizontal
1:1
2 km
shallow
detachment
B
Warwickshire Group unconformity: thrusting and folding
local flexure-induced
subsidence ?
Thrust 'piggy-back'
style basin ?
Erosion of uplifted
hangingwall block
10.0% cumulative
section shortening
Downcutting fluvial
channel stacks
C
Pennine Coal Measures unconformity: 'mild' inversion
1.4% cumulative
section shortening
Hilltop Fault
regional
base level
partial reverse reactivation
of fault along length
?
Key:
mild reverse
reactivation
thrusting
normal movement
Becklees Sndst.
Canonbie Bridge
Sndst.
Eskbank Wood
UCM
MCM
LCM
Stainmore Fm.
Middle Border Gp.-
Alston Fm. ?
Inverclyde and
Lower Border Gp. ?
observed conformable
horizon
extrapolated conformable
horizon
erosional horizon
fault

Fig. 10



A
Neogene-present
Neogene (syn-kinematic) deposits
San Jorge Gulf Basin
South American plate
100 km
N
Chubut Group Basin
North Patagonian Massif
San Bernardo FTB
Cañadón Asfalto Basin
North Patagonian Andes
Rio Mayo Basin
Austral Basin
Austral Andes
Nazca oceanic plate
B
Stephanian-Autunian
Stephanian-Autunian (syn-kinematic) deposits
MVS
Solway Basin
Mon-Deemster FTB
English Midlands
N
External Variscan fold and thrust belt
100 km
C
The 'broken' Patagonian foreland
West
East
North Patagonian Andes
North Patagonian foredeep
Patagonian broken foreland
from Bilmes et al. (2013)
Not to scale
D
The 'broken' Variscan foreland?
South
North
Armorica
external Variscides
Variscan foredeep ?
Variscan broken foreland
Solway Basin
MVS
LDB
ISZ
SSU
Not to scale

Fig. 11