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**Thermochronology and stratigraphy of the Thomson Orogen,
north-eastern Australia**

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BSc (App Geo)

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Abstract

The Tasmanides comprise the eastern third of the Australian continent and record the break-up of Rodinia and the subsequent formation and break-up of Gondwana. The Tasmanides are sub-divided into a number of basement terranes or orogens (the Delamerian, Lachlan, Mossman, Thomson, and New England Orogens), as well as an overlying Permo-Triassic basin system (the Bowen-Sydney-Gunnedah Basin). Due largely to lack of outcrop, the Thomson Orogen is the least understood of the various Tasmanides components, resulting in significant uncertainty about the age, lithology, thermal history, and internal stratigraphy of the Thomson Orogen. The present study combined field observations and $^{40}\text{Ar}/^{39}\text{Ar}$ geo- and thermo-chronology to address some of these uncertainties.

The first part of this thesis is focused on a previously undescribed succession of northern Thomson Orogen metasediments that are herein named the Mt. McLaren beds. These late Cambrian to Early Ordovician low-grade quartzites and metapelites are correlated both with other northern Thomson Orogen strata, as well with sandstones in the Centralian Superbasin. Findings from this project suggest that these eastern and central Australian sediments were deposited in the shallow Larapintine Sea, an epeiric seaway that may have spanned the entire continent in early Paleozoic time. The shallow marine environment responsible for the deposition of the Mt. McLaren beds and correlative northern Thomson Orogen strata differs from the deeper marine depositional environment of turbidites in the southern Thomson and Lachlan Orogens.

The second part of the thesis includes new $^{40}\text{Ar}/^{39}\text{Ar}$ results from the northern Thomson Orogen that constrain the timing of what seem to be distinct episodes of metamorphism and exhumation that span most of the Paleozoic Era. These results share similarities with previous data from both the Lachlan and New England Orogens, and they help develop a first-order thermal history of the northern Thomson Orogen. This history includes mid to late Cambrian metamorphism, as suggested by previous K-Ar data, which seems to have been at least broadly coincident with the Delamerian Orogeny in southern Australia. Many of the new $^{40}\text{Ar}/^{39}\text{Ar}$ ages from northern Thomson Orogen metasediments are Ordovician, as are previous results from the Lachlan Orogen, suggesting that many of the deformational episodes more clearly recognizable in the Lachlan Orogen can be traced northward into the Thomson Orogen. Cooling ages of ~310 to 400 Ma from both Thomson Orogen metasediments and Ordovician to Middle Devonian granites that intrude them point toward periods of extensional exhumation in the Late Devonian to mid Carboniferous, as well as in the late Carboniferous to early Permian. Both periods are marked by basin initiation, including the late

Carboniferous-early Permian development of the Bowen-Sydney-Gunnedah basin system. The youngest $^{40}\text{Ar}/^{39}\text{Ar}$ cooling age (~ 270 Ma) measured from the northern Thomson Orogen is similar to previous results from the New England Orogen and seems to mark the beginning of the Permian-Triassic Hunter-Bowen Orogeny.

Declaration by author

This thesis is composed of my original work, and contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference has been made in the text. I have clearly stated the contribution by others to jointly-authored works that I have included in my thesis.

I have clearly stated the contribution of others to my thesis as a whole, including statistical assistance, survey design, data analysis, significant technical procedures, professional editorial advice, and any other original research work used or reported in my thesis. The content of my thesis is the result of work I have carried out since the commencement of my research higher degree candidature and does not include a substantial part of work that has been submitted to qualify for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution. I have clearly stated which parts of my thesis, if any, have been submitted to qualify for another award.

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Publications during candidature

Conference abstracts

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Contributions by others to the thesis

The following people contributed to this thesis:

- Access to drill core was arranged by Mr David Purdy of the Geological Survey of Queensland, from which a number of samples for the geochronology component of this thesis were taken,
- Prof Paulo Vasconcelos and Dr David Thiede completed early $^{40}\text{Ar}/^{39}\text{Ar}$ geochronology work,
- Dr Kevin Welsh provided critical revisions of Chapter 2,
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None.

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Table of Contents

Abstract	i
Declaration by author	iii
Publications during candidature	iv
Conference abstracts	iv
Publications included in this thesis	iv
Contributions by others to the thesis	v
Statement of parts of the thesis submitted to qualify for the award of another degree	v
Acknowledgements	vi
Keywords	vii
Australian and New Zealand Standard Research Classifications (ANZSRC)	vii
Fields of Research (FoR) Classification	vii
Table of Contents	viii
List of Figures	x
List of Tables	x
List of abbreviations used in thesis	xi
Chapter 1: Introduction	1
1.2 The Tasmanides	1
1.3 The Thomson Orogen	4
1.4 Thesis overview	4
Chapter 2: Sedimentology and stratigraphy of the Mount McLaren beds, NE Queensland, and implications for Cambrian-Ordovician depositional environments of eastern Australia ...	6
Abstract.....	6
2.1 Introduction	6
2.2 Mount McLaren and the Mount McLaren beds.....	8
2.3 Sedimentology and stratigraphy of the Mount McLaren beds	10
2.4 Discussion.....	11
2.4.1 Depositional environment of the Mount McLaren beds.....	11
2.4.2 Cambrian-Ordovician stratigraphic correlations in eastern Australia	12
2.4.3 Implications for Cambrian-Ordovician sandstone deposition in eastern and central Australia	14
2.4.4 Comparison with Ordovician turbidites in the Lachlan Orogen.....	15
2.5 Conclusions	16
Chapter 3: ⁴⁰Ar/³⁹Ar thermochronology of the Thomson Orogen	17
Abstract.....	17
3.1 Introduction	17
3.1.1 Background.....	19
3.2 Methods	20
3.3 Results	22
3.3.1 Igneous rocks	26
3.3.1.1 Granite Springs Granite	26
3.3.1.2 Hungerford Granite.....	27
3.3.1.3 Retreat Granite.....	28
3.3.1.4 Thunderbolt 1 drillcore	28
3.3.1.5 Ooroonoo 1 drillcore.....	29
3.3.2 Metamorphic rocks	30
3.3.2.1 Sefton Metamorphics.....	30
3.3.2.2 Halls Reward Metamorphics	30
3.3.2.3 Anakie Metamorphic Group	31

3.3.2.4 Mt. McLaren beds.....	34
3.3.2.5 Les Jumelles beds	34
3.4 Discussion.....	34
3.4.1 Igneous rocks	35
3.4.1.1 Retreat Granite.....	35
3.4.1.2 Granite Springs Granite and Hungerford Granite.....	37
3.4.1.3 Mooramin Granite.....	37
3.4.1.4 Ooroonoo 1 drillcore.....	37
3.4.2 Metamorphic rocks	38
3.4.2.1 Sefton Metamorphics.....	38
3.4.2.2 Halls Reward Metamorphics	38
3.4.2.3 Les Jumelles and Mt. McLaren beds	39
3.4.2.4 Anakie Metamorphic Group	39
3.4.3 Implications for the tectonic history of the Thomson Orogen.....	40
3.4.3.1 Rodinia rifting.....	40
3.4.3.2 Delamerian Orogeny.....	41
3.4.3.3 Benambran Orogeny.....	41
3.4.3.4 Tabberabberan Orogeny	42
3.4.3.5 Hunter-Bowen Orogeny.....	42
3.5 Conclusions	43
Chapter 4: Summary	44
4.1 Cambrian-Ordovician stratigraphy of the northern Thomson Orogen	44
4.2 Thermal history of the Thomson Orogen	44
4.3 Summary of the stratigraphic and tectonic development of the Thomson Orogen	45
References.....	47
Appendix A: Sample information.....	1 page
Appendix B: ⁴⁰Ar/³⁹Ar geochronology data tables.....	8 pages
Appendix C: ⁴⁰Ar/³⁹Ar geochronology figures.....	22 pages

List of Figures

Chapter 1

1.1 The Tasmanides (after Glen, 2005).....	3
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Chapter 2

2.1 Geologic and tectonic divisions of the Tasmanides	7
2.2 Simplified geology of Mt. McLaren and geologic cross-section	8
2.3 Stratigraphic column of the Mt. McLaren Fm. with interpretation of depositional environments	9
2.4 Sedimentary structures in the Mt. McLaren beds.....	10
2.5 Proposed stratigraphic relationships between the siliciclastic rocks of the Thomson Orogen.....	13
2.6 Extent of the Cambrian-Orodoevician Larapintine Sea	15

Chapter 3

3.1 The Tasmanides (after Glen, 2005)	18
3.2 Ar geochronology sample locations	21
3.3 Anakie Metamorphic Group geochronology comparison.....	33
3.4 $^{40}\text{Ar}/^{39}\text{Ar}$ geochronology results and previous K-Ar and $^{40}\text{Ar}/^{39}\text{Ar}$ geochronology of Thomson Orogen rocks, with temporally relevant orogenic events.....	36

List of Tables

Chapter 3

3.1 $^{40}\text{Ar}/^{39}\text{Ar}$ geochronology results summary	25
3.2 Comparison of $^{40}\text{Ar}/^{39}\text{Ar}$ ages from this study with previous K-Ar ages.....	34

List of Abbreviations used in the thesis

Abbreviations are explained in text.

Chapter 1: Introduction

The tectonic evolution of eastern Australia is defined by a number of orogenic events that can be temporally and spatially correlated, therefore assisting with tectonic models of supercontinent evolution. The east Australian Tasmanides, which consist of the Delamerian, Lachlan, New England, Mossman, and Thomson Orogens, as well as the Bowen-Gunnedah-Sydney Basin System, record the breakup of Rodinia and the subsequent formation of eastern Gondwana (Glen, 2005). Due largely to poor exposure, the Thomson Orogen is the least understood of the various components of the Tasmanides. Improved understanding of the Thomson Orogen will thus improve models of the tectonic evolution of eastern Australia, and will assist with temporal and spatial correlations of orogenic events that affected other parts of the Tasmanides.

Of the work that has been conducted on the Thomson Orogen, the vast majority has focussed on the main outcrops of the Anakie Inlier and Charters Towers Province (e.g., Withnall et al., 1995; Fergusson et al., 2001; Withnall and Henderson, 2012). As these areas represent only a small portion of the expansive Thomson Orogen, questions remain as to whether these outcrops are truly representative of the orogen as a whole. To help address this question, this project was undertaken to improve the understanding of the age and thermal history of the Thomson Orogen, as well as its stratigraphy. This was achieved via stratigraphic study of previously unnamed and undescribed outcrops of metasediments (chapter 2), as well as placing radiometric age constraints on metamorphism and exhumation through $^{40}\text{Ar}/^{39}\text{Ar}$ geochronology (chapter 3). I describe the depositional environment for the sediments of the north-easternmost Thomson Orogen, describe the thermal history of a number of intrusive magmatic rocks and metamorphosed sediments, and compare thermal events that have affected the Thomson Orogen to orogenies that have affected other portions of the Tasmanides.

1.2 The Tasmanides

Multiple episodes of deformation and metamorphism have affected the Tasmanides, in this thesis the tectonism of interest ranges from the late Neoproterozoic to the Permian. The late Neoproterozoic saw the deposition of the Centralian Superbasin from a large epicontinental sea that covered much of what is now central Australia (Walter et al., 1996; Maidment et al., 2007). The second super-sequence of the Centralian Superbasin is associated with the rifting of the supercontinent Rodinia (Li and Powell, 2001). The rifting of Rodinia is also associated with the deposition of sediments comprising the Adelaide Rift Complex of South Australia (Glen, 2005). In detail, Rodinia is believed to have undergone multiple phases of rifting (Direen and Crawford, 2003a; Direen and Crawford, 2003b; Glen, 2005; Fergusson and Henderson, 2015), from ~825 -

~740 Ma, though the first major episode of break up was at ~750 Ma (Li et al., 2008) and was associated with the development of the Palaeo-Pacific Ocean (Li and Powell, 2001). In Australia, the Tasman Line, which separates Palaeozoic eastern Australia from older crust to the west, is a key component in the history of Rodinia and Gondwana. The Tasman Line is believed to represent the boundary along which Rodinia broke apart, although some authors suggest this occurred much farther to the east (Direen and Crawford, 2003b).

Following the Neoproterozoic breakup of Rodinia, the Tasman Orogenic Belt developed. This belt, commonly referred to as the Tasmanides, formed as part of the Terra Australis Orogen of Gondwana (Cawood, 2005). A 600 - 580 Ma rifting event is associated with clastic sedimentation and igneous intrusions in eastern Australia (Direen and Crawford, 2003a; Direen and Crawford, 2003b). These sediments were sourced either locally (Fergusson and Henderson, 2015) or were washed north from Antarctica along the eastern margin of Gondwana (Veevers, 2004). The latter stages of the 600 – 580 Ma rifting event overlapped with the Petermann Orogeny of central Australia (650 - 580 Ma; Fergusson and Henderson, 2015).

By the middle to late Cambrian Gondwana had assembled (Li and Powell, 2001). East-west contraction during the Delamerian Orogeny occurred at ~514 - 490 Ma (Foden et al., 2006), with the effects felt as far north as the Anakie Inlier of the Thomson Orogen (Withnall et al., 1996). In the late Cambrian to Ordovician the shallow Larapintine Sea covered much of central Australia (Maidment et al., 2007), and quartz turbidites were deposited in the Lachlan Orogen and southern Thomson Orogen (Murray, 1986; Veevers, 2015). The cessation of the Delamerian Orogeny marks the end of the Delamerian Supercycle and the beginning of the Benambran Cycle of the Lachlan Supercycle, which itself concludes with the Benambran Orogeny (Glen, 2005). Turbidite deposition in the Lachlan Orogen is associated with the Benambran Cycle (~490 - 434 Ma; Glen, 2005), which has temporal links to the Mossman Orogenic event of north Queensland (Fergusson et al., 2013). The latter stages of contractional deformation during the Benambran Orogeny are associated with intrusions of the Lachlan Orogen in Victoria (Draper, 2006; Champion et al., 2009). The marine environment of the Cambro-Ordovician continued in the Silurian and early Devonian, though preserved sediments fall into two distinct types: clastic shoreline sediments that grade into deep marine environments, and those associated with an active volcanic margin (Li and Powell, 2001). Their significance, and their relationship to each other, is speculative, though southward movement along the eastern Gondwana margin might be the cause, potentially associated with late Silurian subduction under the north Queensland part of the Gondwana margin (Li and Powell, 2001).

The Tabberabberan Orogeny of the middle Devonian (~390 - 380 Ma) is associated with back-arc extension and emplacement of granitoids throughout the Lachlan Orogen. Evidence of the Tabberabberan Orogeny is also preserved in the New England Orogen and the far north of the Thomson Orogen (Glen, 2005).

The Kanimblan Orogeny of the late Devonian to Carboniferous (~340 Ma; Glen, 2005) involved rifting and sedimentation associated with a convergent margin that led into the Permian-Triassic Hunter Bowen Orogeny (~265 - 230 Ma; e.g., Kositsin et al., 2009). Widespread evidence of the Hunter Bowen Orogeny is observed in the New England Orogen and, to a lesser extent, the northernmost Thomson Orogen (Davis et al., 1998).

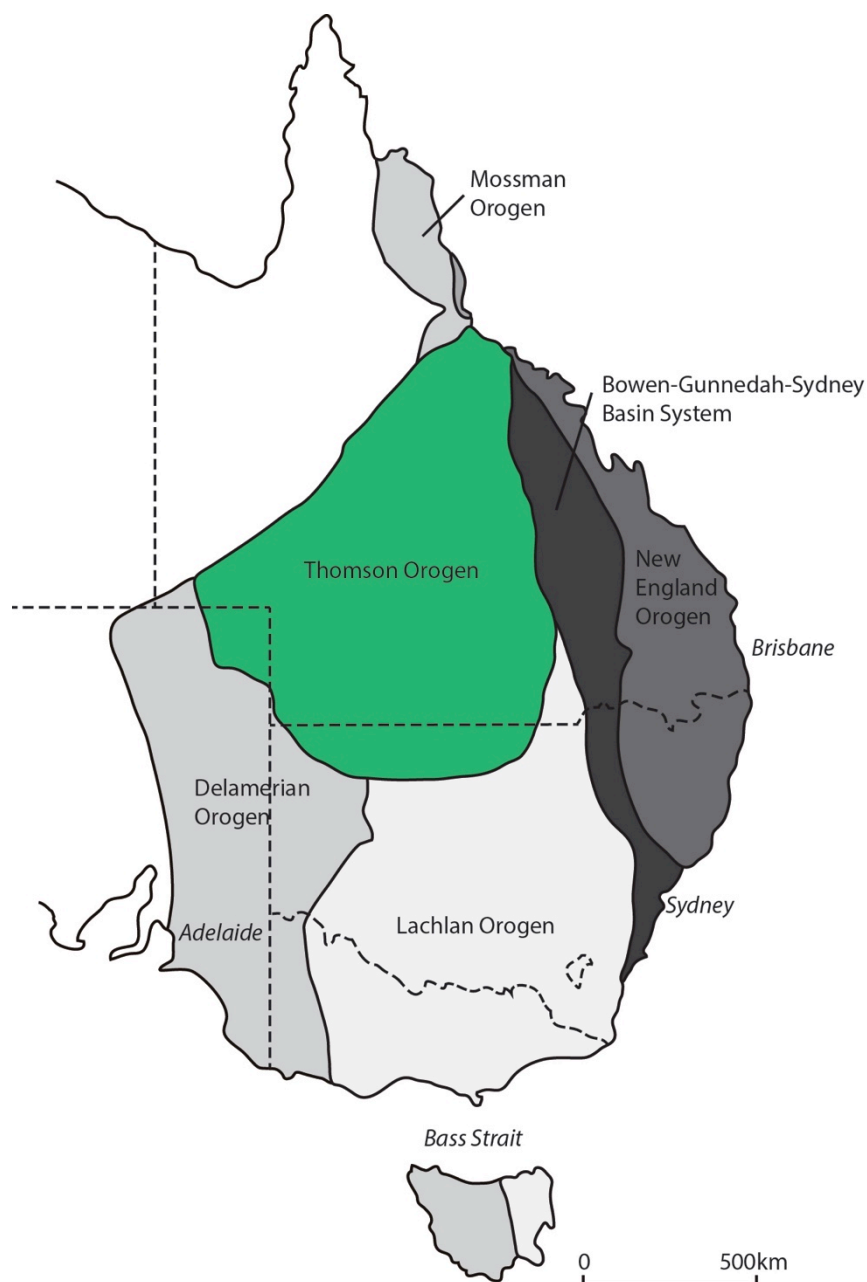


Figure 1.1: The Tasmanides (after Glen, 2005).

1.3 The Thomson Orogen

The name Thomson Orogen was coined by Murray and Kirkegaard (1978) as a way of distinguishing the northern Tasmanides, then referred to as the Tasman Orogenic Zone, from the Lachlan and Kanmantoo (now Delamerian) Orogens of the south. The great expanse, and the hidden nature, of the Thomson Orogen warranted study as an entity entirely of its own. Despite comprising a significant portion of Australia, the tectonic evolution of the Thomson Orogen is poorly understood and constrained. Previous work has focussed on the largest exposures of the Anakie Inlier and Charters Towers Province, also known as the Lolworth-Ravenswood Block (e.g., Withnall et al., 1995; Fergusson et al., 2001), with some work conducted on drillcore obtained from government sponsored extension of oil exploration wells into basement rocks (Webb and McDougall, 1968; Murray, 1994). These drillcore were dated with K-Ar geochronology in the 1960s (Harding, 1969), which provided some early, though somewhat unreliable, radiometric age constraints.

The oldest known rocks of the Thomson Orogen are the Neoproterozoic outcrops of the Anakie Inlier (Withnall et al., 1995; Fergusson et al., 2001). These rocks were deformed multiple times, likely during the Delamerian Orogeny as suggested by K-Ar dating (Withnall et al., 1996), and earlier K-Ar dating of basement drill core has provided somewhat unreliable Devonian ages for intrusions into the Thomson Orogen (Harding, 1969). Combined, these geochronological data provide a basis from which to build a more accurate thermal history of the Thomson Orogen.

1.4 Thesis overview

In chapter 2 a previously undescribed outcrop of Thomson Orogen sediments is described and named. The outcrop at Mount McLaren is compared to other units in the northern Anakie Inlier and Charters Towers Province, a number of which are found to be deposited in potentially similar environments, and are of comparable provenance and age.

Chapter 3 details the $^{40}\text{Ar}/^{39}\text{Ar}$ geochronology undertaken for this project. A number of drillcore and surface samples were obtained from the Geological Survey of Queensland's Exploration Data Centre, with further samples of metamorphic rocks from key areas of the north-eastern Thomson Orogen obtained during fieldwork undertaken for this project. Many samples were previously dated by the K-Ar method, thus new $^{40}\text{Ar}/^{39}\text{Ar}$ step-heating data test the accuracy of the previous K-Ar results.

In chapter 4 I summarise the main findings of my research, and propose possibilities for future work. Appendix A contains sample location information, including coordinates. Appendix B contains tables of the $^{40}\text{Ar}/^{39}\text{Ar}$ analytical results. Appendix C contains $^{40}\text{Ar}/^{39}\text{Ar}$ geochronology step-heating spectra, ideograms, and isochrons of data from the Thomson Orogen.

Chapter 2: Sedimentology and stratigraphy of the Mount McLaren beds, NE Queensland, and implications for Cambrian-Ordovician depositional environments of eastern Australia

Abstract

The Thomson Orogen comprises basement rocks of a large part of north-eastern Australia. Much of the Thomson Orogen is made up of metasediments, but the depositional environments of these rocks remain largely undescribed. Most previous studies of the northern Thomson Orogen have focused on relatively large exposures in the Anakie Inlier and Charters Towers Province, leaving some smaller exposures overlooked. One of these relatively small exposures is at Mount McLaren in east-central Queensland, where >2,000 m of previously undescribed strata of the northern Thomson Orogen are exposed. These metasediments are herein named the Mount McLaren beds. Based on lithological and geochronological similarities, we suggest that the Mount McLaren beds correlate with the Les Jumelles beds and the Puddler Creek Fm. We propose that the late Cambrian-Early Ordovician relatively shallow-marine environment of the Mount McLaren beds was a precursor to the Ordovician deep marine environment of much of the Lachlan and southern Thomson Orogens.

2.1 Introduction

The Thomson Orogen is one of a number of east Australian crustal domains (collectively referred to as the Tasmanides) that record evidence of Rodinia breakup and the subsequent formation of the eastern margin of Gondwana (Glen, 2005). The Tasmanides include the Thomson, Delamerian, Lachlan, New England and Mossman Orogens, as well as the overlying Permo-Triassic Bowen, Gunnedah and Sydney Basin system (Figure 2.1).

The Neoproterozoic to early Paleozoic Thomson Orogen, which consists, primarily, of meta-sandstone, pelites, and granite, underlies much of Queensland and northern New South Wales (e.g., Draper, 2006; Purdy et al., 2013). The primary exposures of the Thomson Orogen are within the Anakie Inlier and in the Charters Towers Province of NE Queensland (Purdy and Brown, 2011; Withnall and Henderson, 2012; Purdy et al., 2013; Figure 2.1), both of which have been the focus of significant previous research (see summaries in Withnall et al. (1995) and Fergusson and Henderson (2013). In the Anakie Inlier, Thomson Orogen rocks are collectively referred to as the “Anakie Metamorphic Group”, a succession of Neoproterozoic to Cambrian sediments that have undergone greenschist- to amphibolite-facies metamorphism (Withnall et al., 1995; Withnall et al., 1996; Fergusson et al., 2001; Fergusson et al., 2007a).

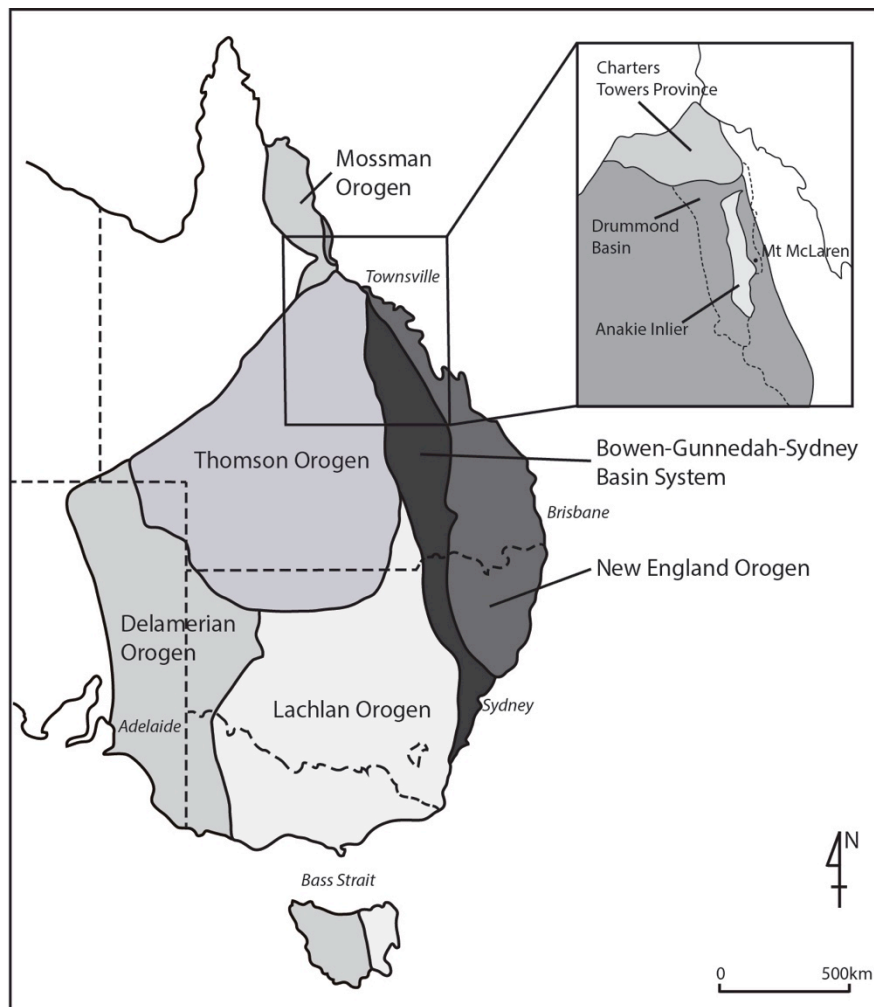


Figure 2.1: Geologic and tectonic divisions of the Tasmanides, eastern Australia (after Glen 2005), with inset showing major divisions of the northern Thomson Orogen (after Purdy et al., 2013; Fergusson and Henderson, 2013).

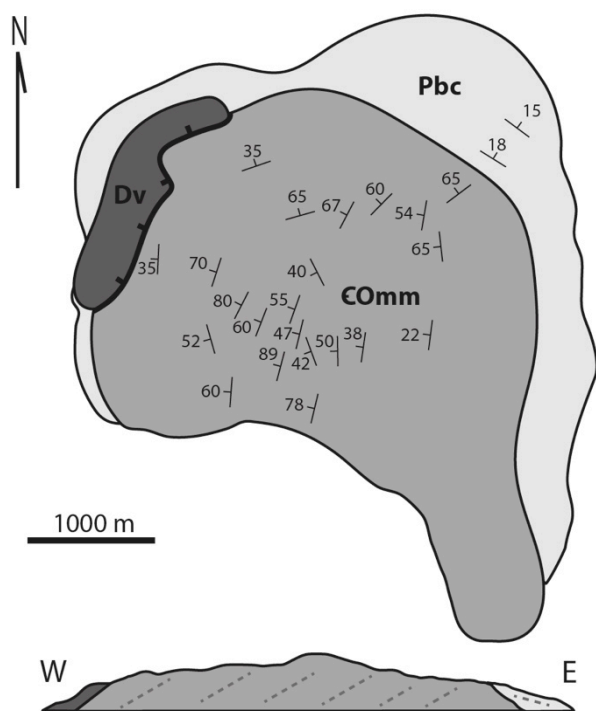
The Anakie Metamorphic Group and correlative strata continue at depth below younger basins such as the Drummond, Bowen, Galilee, Adavale and Eromanga Basins (Withnall et al., 1995). The Charters Towers Province is composed of Neoproterozoic to early Palaeozoic metasediments (Purdy et al., 2013; Fergusson et al., 2007).

Smaller exposures of the Thomson Orogen also provide insight into its depositional environment. Mount McLaren in east-central Queensland is one such exposure of coherent basement stratigraphy. In this contribution we describe the basic sedimentology of the newly named Mount McLaren beds, evaluate potential correlative units in the northern Thomson Orogen, and discuss implications for proposed models of extensive Cambrian to Ordovician sandstone and turbidite deposition in eastern Australia.

2.2 Mount McLaren and the Mount McLaren beds

Mount McLaren is located 40 km north-east of Clermont in central Queensland, to the east of the Anakie Inlier and to the west of the Permian-Triassic Bowen Basin, one of the major sedimentary basins that overlie the Thomson Orogen. Mount McLaren is a circular basement outcrop, with a diameter of ~5000 m, of moderate relief compared to the surrounding central highlands. The basement stratigraphy at Mount McLaren is well exposed along a number of shallow streambeds that run roughly perpendicular to strike. In places, along-strike exposures are also quite extensive. The Mount McLaren basement rocks were mapped in the 1990s as “Neoproterozoic to Cambrian undivided phyllite, cleaved sandstone, labile meta-arenite and quartzite” (Withnall et al., 1995), but the extent of the Mount McLaren exposure warrants more detailed description.

The majority of Mount McLaren is made up of a succession of tilted quartzites that we have named the Mount McLaren beds. In general, these beds consist of west-dipping, greenschist-facies meta-sandstones and lesser meta-siltstones. Field relationships and detrital zircon U-Pb data bracket the



age of the Mount McLaren beds to between the late Cambrian and Late Devonian (Oorloff, 2014), but, as described below, likely correlation with other northern Thomson stratigraphic sequences narrow this range to late Cambrian to Early Ordovician. On the western side of Mount McLaren, the Mount McLaren beds are structurally overlain by Devonian volcanic rocks that are temporally correlative with the Silver Hills Volcanics of the Drummond Basin (Oorloff, 2014). On the eastern side of Mount McLaren, the Mount McLaren beds are structurally overlain by an east-dipping conglomeratic unit containing clasts of both the Mount McLaren beds and Devonian volcanic rocks (Oorloff, 2014; Figure 2.2).

Legend

$60/35$ Strike and dip of bedding

Normal fault, tick on hanging wall

Pbc Permian Back Creek Group

Dv Devonian volcanics

COMm Cambrian-Ordovician Mount McLaren Beds

Figure 2.2: Simplified geology of Mt. McLaren (-22.35° latitude, 147.78° longitude) and geologic cross-section.

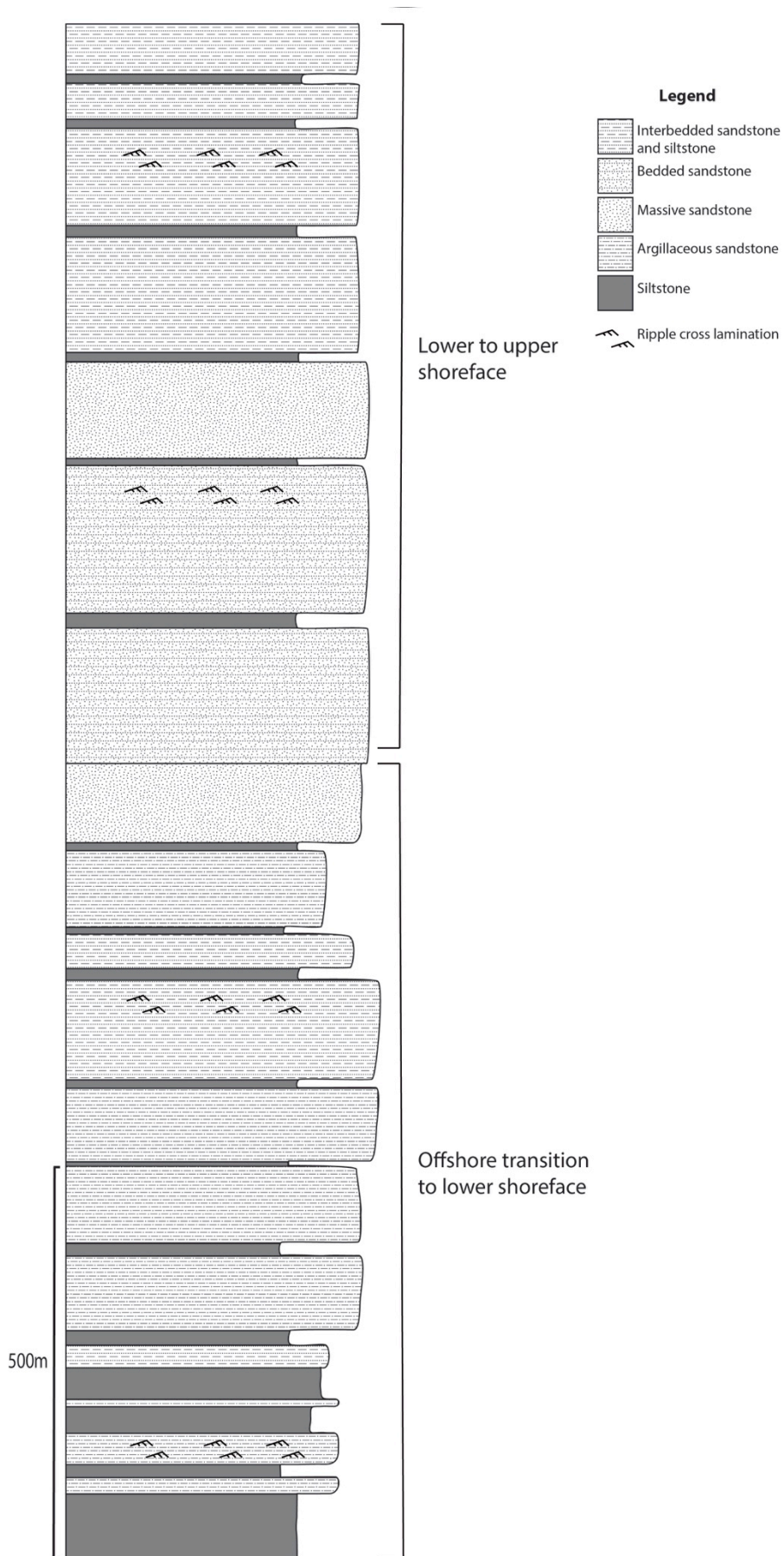


Figure 2.3: Stratigraphic column of the Mt. McLaren Fm. with interpretation of depositional environments.

2.3 Sedimentology and stratigraphy of the Mount McLaren beds

The exposed portion of the Mount McLaren beds at their type locality is ~2,200 m-thick, although this is a minimum thickness estimate because both the upper and lower contacts are faults. The Mount McLaren beds have undergone greenschist-facies metamorphism, which has obscured sedimentary structures, but sufficient sedimentary detail is preserved to broadly describe the sedimentology of the formation.



Figure 2.4: Sedimentary structures in the Mt. McLaren beds. Clockwise from top-left: (a) Bedding in sandstone, (b) planar- and cross-stratification, (c) hummocky cross-stratification, (d) graded bedding.

We subdivide the Mount McLaren beds into upper and lower successions that are defined by broad lithological and textural differences (Figure 2.3). The lower succession is 950 m-thick and is dominated by medium- to fine-grained, quartz-rich sandstones that have been metamorphosed to quartzite. The sandstones are up to 200 m-thick with sharp, erosive bases, separated by thinner (generally <20 m-thick) siltstone units (Figure 2.4a) that occur near the base of the beds. The siltstones (which are now metapelites) are finely laminated but otherwise have few observable

sedimentary structures. The sandstone beds vary in thickness between 0.5 and 10 m, although they are generally between 2 and 4 m-thick. The sandstones are planar bedded (Figure 2.4a), often massive but also displaying normal grading in places and are locally cross-bedded (Figure 2.4b). Examples of hummocky cross-stratification (HCS, Figure 2.4c) are present toward the top of the lower succession.

The upper succession is of similar lithology to the lower succession, but there is broad-scale coarsening of grain size up-section, including very coarse and subangular quartz clasts within the base of some beds in the upper succession. Sandstone units of the upper succession are up to 200 m-thick, and although they are interbedded with minor sandy siltstones (as in the lower succession), the siltstones of the upper succession are fewer and thinner, such that overall silt content is reduced in the upper 1,200 m of the exposed section. In general, few sedimentary structures are present in the upper succession, though toward the top of the section repeated units of interbedded sands and silts were observed, as were graded beds >10 cm-thick that have coarse bases and possible contorted bedding (Figure 2.4d).

Petrographic analysis of sandstone samples from both the upper and lower successions revealed little compositional variation. The samples are dominated by quartz and secondary micas. Moderately to well sorted, sub-rounded quartz grains have syntaxial overgrowths and undulose extinction, with primary grain shape preserved in many cases. These observations indicate that the sandy units were deposited as sub-rounded and moderately to well sorted, quartz-rich sand, with some minor clays. One sample contains alternating layers of recrystallised quartz and actinolite. The amphiboles in this sample form a bladed, intergrown mass of crystals that overprint the original quartz grains, and are therefore the result of a later event likely unrelated to the deposition of the beds.

2.4 Discussion

2.4.1 Depositional environment of the Mount McLaren beds

The general sedimentology of the Mount McLaren beds is coarse- to medium-grained, massive sands with occasionally observable <1 m-scale planar cross-bedding, alternating with silty clays. The lower succession consists of massive and cross-bedded, fine-grained sandy units that alternate with silty clays with poorly preserved but convincing HCS is observed in the middle of the beds, which suggests shallow-marine deposition (Johnson and Baldwin, 1996; Myrow and Southard, 1996; Dumas and Arnott, 2006). We therefore propose that the depositional environment of the Mount McLaren beds was similar to a storm-dominated clastic shelf containing elements of the

offshore transition and the lower to upper shore face. A potential alternate interpretation is a deep water, fan-type deposit, though the lack of more recognizable Bouma-sequence deposits or channels in thicker sandstone units usually observed in submarine fan deposits (e.g., Mutti and Ricci Lucchi, 1972) and the presence of HCS in at least some areas of the succession argues against this. Although it is difficult to identify small-scale regressive and transgressive cycles within the beds, silt content decreases, and sand units are generally coarser, up-section. This observation suggests an overall shoaling from the base to the middle of the upper succession, above which cm-scale interbedded sands and silts, in association with possible contorted bedding near the top of the upper succession, may indicate a change to a deeper water facies (e.g. Bourgeois, 1980). Stratigraphic sequences such as the Mount McLaren beds that consist of thousands of meters of sandy, shallow marine deposits are somewhat unusual but are not without precedent (e.g. Levell, 1980; Lindsey and Gaylord, 1992; Higgs, 1996).

2.4.2 Cambrian-Ordovician stratigraphic correlations in eastern Australia

Similarities in lithology and detrital zircon U-Pb ages suggest that the Mount McLaren beds correlate with the Les Jumelles beds and Puddler Creek Fm. of the nearby northern Anakie Inlier and Charters Towers Province, respectively (Oorloff, 2014; Lee et al., 2015; Figure 2.5). Similarities in detrital zircon U-Pb ages were determined by visual matching of histogram peaks, as well as comparisons of maximum depositional ages. The Les Jumelles beds, which are located in the northernmost part of the Anakie Inlier, consist of very fine- to medium-grained quartzose to feldspathic sandstones and mudstones (Blewett et al., 1998; Blake et al., 2012). Detrital zircon U-Pb data constrain the maximum depositional age of the Les Jumelles beds to 528 ± 9 Ma (middle Cambrian; Cross et al., 2015), and they are intruded by the Early to Middle Ordovician Coquelicot Tonalite (Blake et al., 2012). These age constraints therefore permit temporal correlation with the ≥ 505 Ma Mount McLaren beds, determined by the youngest detrital zircon (Oorloff, 2014).

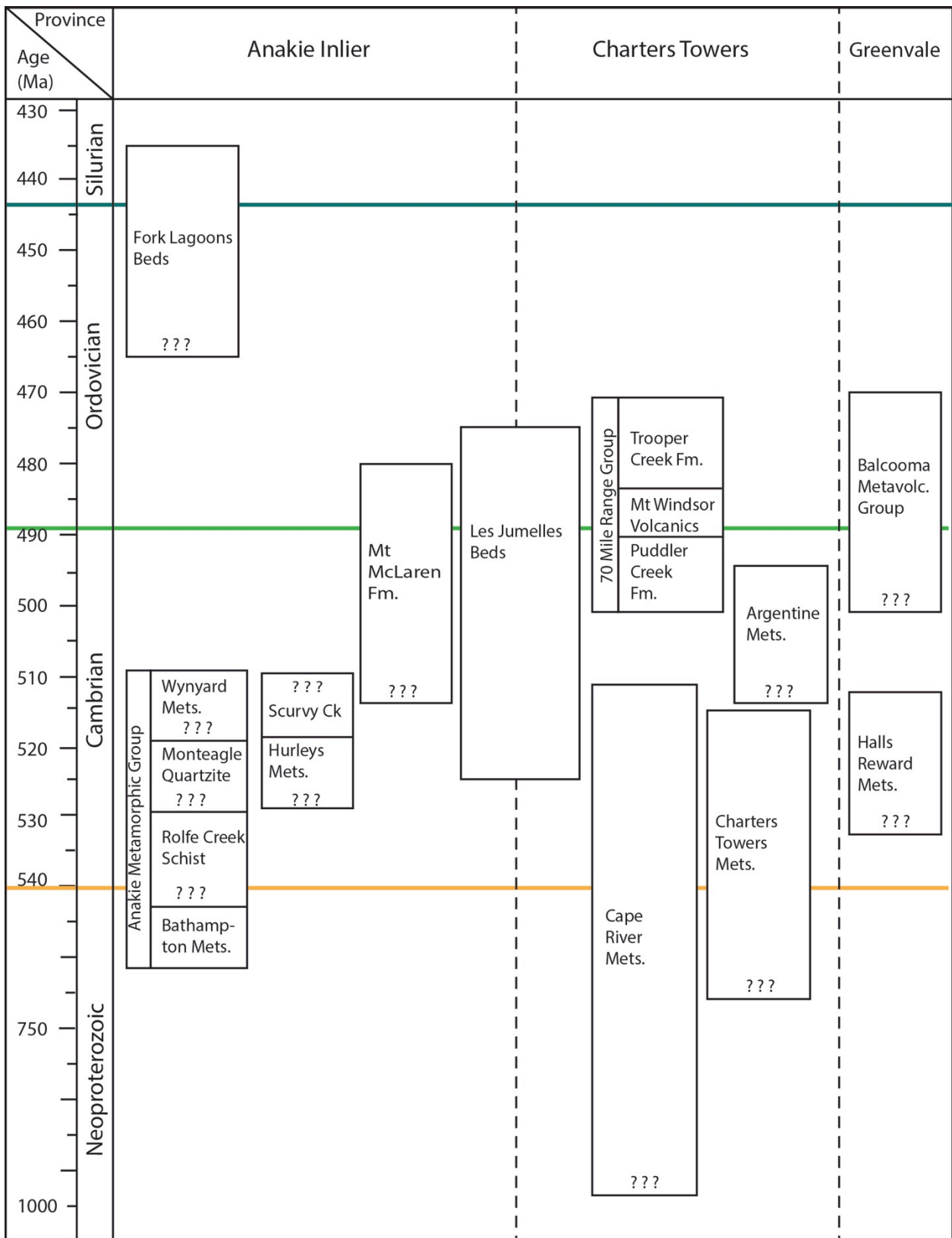


Figure 2.5: Proposed stratigraphic relationships between the siliciclastic rocks of the Thomson Orogen. Age constraints for Fork Lagoons beds from Palmieri (1978) and Fergusson et al. (2007a); Mt. McLaren Fm. from Oorloof et al. (in review); Scurvy Creek Meta-arenite, Hurleys Metamorphics, and the Anakie Metamorphic Group from Withnall et al. (1996) and Fergusson et al. (2001); Les Jumelles beds from Fergusson and Henderson (2013) and Purdy et al. (2013); Cape River Metamorphics from Fergusson et al. (2007a), and Hutton (1997) in Fergusson and Henderson (2013); Charters Towers Metamorphics from Hutton and Crouch (1993), and Fanning (1995) in Fergusson and Henderson (2013); Seventy Mile Range Group from Henderson (1986), Fergusson et al. (2007a), and Cross et al. (2015); Argentine Metamorphics from Fergusson et al. (2007a); Balcooma Metavolcanics from Withnall et al. (1991); and Halls Reward Metamorphics from Nishiya et al. (2003).

The Puddler Creek Fm., which is the oldest stratigraphic unit of the Charters Towers Province, likely correlates with the Les Jumelles beds (Fergusson and Henderson, 2013; Purdy et al., 2013; Cross et al., 2015). A recent geochronology report published by the Geological Survey of Queensland (Cross et al., 2015) provides a maximum depositional age of ~499 Ma for the Puddler Creek Fm. based on unpublished detrital zircon U-Pb data. A minimum depositional age is provided by the overlying Early Ordovician Mount Windsor Volcanics, which have been dated at 479 ± 5 Ma. The Puddler Creek Fm. consists of graded, fine- to medium-grained sandstone beds of 5 cm to 2.5 m thickness, interspersed with siltstones that are up to 4 m-thick (Henderson, 1986; Berry et al., 1992), similar to both the Les Jumelles beds and Mount McLaren beds.

Importantly, the Mount McLaren beds seem to be roughly the same age as the youngest part of the Anakie Metamorphic Group, the Wynyard Metamorphics, which have a maximum depositional age of ~510 Ma and are made up of fine- to medium-grained meta-quartzite and medium-grained mica schist (Fergusson et al., 2001; Offler et al., 2011; Purdy et al., 2013). In summary, lithological and detrital zircon U-Pb data, in conjunction with radiometric dating of the Coquelicot Tonalite and Mount Windsor Volcanics, suggest that the Mount McLaren beds, Les Jumelles beds, Puddler Creek Fm., and Wynyard Metamorphics are correlative and were deposited in the late Cambrian to Early Ordovician (Figure 2.5).

2.4.3 Implications for Cambrian-Ordovician sandstone deposition in eastern and central Australia

In addition to the east Australian correlations described above, there are also likely correlations between the Thomson Orogen and strata of the Neoproterozoic to Paleozoic Centralian Superbasin (Walter et al., 1992; Maidment et al., 2007). Specifically, the Mount McLaren beds correlate with the shallow marine, Early Ordovician Pacoota Sandstone of the Amadeus Basin in central Australia on the basis of similarities in detrital zircon ages, with the main histogram peak at ~500 Ma (Maidment et al., 2007; Oorloff, 2014). The widespread Cambrian-Ordovician sandstones of eastern and central Australia are depositional remnants of the Larapintine Sea, an early Paleozoic shallow, epi-continental sea that covered much of central and eastern Australia (Li and Powell, 2001; Haines and Wingate, 2007; Maidment et al., 2007; Figure 2.6). The early Paleozoic deposits of the Larapintine Sea are linked by detrital zircons that have both Pacific-Gondwanan (~700 to 500 Ma)

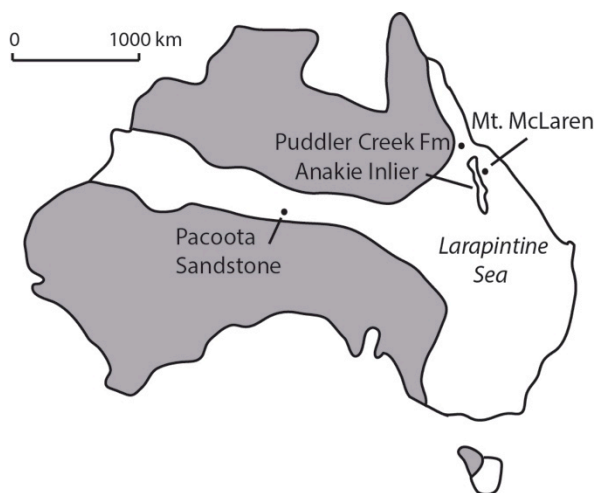


Figure 2.6: Extent of the Cambrian-Ordovician Larapintine Sea showing the location of Mt. McLaren (after Squire et al. 2006).

and Grenville-Gondwanan (~1300 to 1000 Ma) age populations, attributes that are useful for tracing sediment provenance (Fergusson et al., 2001; Squire et al., 2006; Maidment et al., 2007; Fergusson et al., 2007c). A number of studies have suggested that the Ross Orogen of eastern Antarctica was the source of both these Australian Cambrian-Ordovician sediments (Cawood, 2005; Maidment et al., 2007), as well as the somewhat younger Ordovician

turbidites of the Lachlan Orogen (Fergusson et al., 2013), which are discussed in more detail

below. The older, Grenville-Gondwanan aged

sediments are likely derived from the Musgrave Province in Central Australia, although a more distal source is also likely (Maidment et al., 2007). This interpretation implies that sediment was transported north from the Ross and Delamerian Orogens, reworked along the margin of eastern Gondwana, and eventually deposited in the offshore to shoreface transition of the Larapintine Sea (Cook, 1972; Maidment et al., 2007), a process not unlike the modern-day transportation of beach sands from south-eastern Australia to the coast of Queensland (Boyd et al., 2008).

2.4.4 Comparison with Ordovician turbidites in the Lachlan Orogen

In the southern part of the Thomson Orogen, turbidites logged in basement drill core (Murray, 1994) may be correlative with some Ordovician turbidites of the Lachlan Orogen, e.g.: those of the Sunbury Group of Victoria (Glen et al., 2009). One prominent model for the source of these sediments is the so-called “Trans-Gondwanan Supermountain” (TGSM), which is proposed to have developed in Neoproterozoic to Cambrian time during the collision of East and West Gondwana (Squire et al. 2006). Erosion of the TGSM may have resulted in a “super-fan” that was similar to, though much larger than, the present-day Bengal fan (Squire et al., 2006; Veevers, 2015). The most northerly extent of this super-fan is regarded by Veevers (2015) as the Argentine and Wynyard Metamorphics of the northern Thomson Orogen, as well as the Ordovician Fork Lagoons beds of the Anakie Inlier. However, we draw a different conclusion on the basis of depositional facies and temporal correlations. Our interpretation of the depositional environment of the Mount McLaren beds, in conjunction with our proposed correlations for the Cambrian-Ordovician rocks of the northern Thomson Orogen, argues against a super-fan interpretation, because we view the northern Thomson Orogen metasediments as shallow marine deposits unrelated to a deep-water fan. Moreover, based on the radiometric ages from the northern Thomson Orogen, the Mount McLaren

beds, Wynyard Metamorphics, Les Jumelles beds, and Puddler Creek Fm. all seem to be older than Ordovician turbidites of the Lachlan Orogen, and most of the metasediments of the northern Thomson Orogen, including the Argentine Metamorphics, are older still (e.g., Fergusson et al., 2001). Additionally, although some studies have interpreted a deep water depositional environment for the Fork Lagoons beds (e.g. Fergusson and Henderson, 2013) there is considerable evidence, such as the presence of carbonates, for shallow water deposition of these sediments (see Withnall et al., 1995). We suggest, therefore, that the Ordovician turbidites of the Lachlan Orogen differ, both in terms of age and depositional environment, from the more shallow marine Cambrian-Ordovician sandstones of the Mount McLaren beds and their northern Thomson Orogen correlatives. This conclusion implies that (1) the northern Thomson Orogen metasediments were not deposited at the northern extent of a super-fan system emanating from the TGSM; and (2) there was a change in relative sea level during the intervening 20 to 60 My period between deposition of the late Cambrian-Early Ordovician Mount McLaren beds in offshore to shoreface transition conditions in the northern Thomson Orogen, and Ordovician deep marine deposition of turbidites in the Lachlan and southern Thomson Orogens. The apparent change in depositional environment recorded by the uppermost portion of the Mount McLaren beds may be a harbinger of this transition.

2.5 Conclusions

The newly-named Mount McLaren beds are a ~2,200 m-thick, late Cambrian to Early Ordovician accumulation of northern Thomson Orogen metasediments deposited in a shallow, clastic sea that covered a large portion of north-eastern and central Australia. Based on lithological similarities and detrital zircon U-Pb data, the Mount McLaren beds seem to correlate with other stratigraphic units in the northern Thomson Orogen, including the Les Jumelles beds in the northern Anakie Inlier and the Puddler Creek Fm. of the Seventy Mile Range Group of the Charters Towers Province (Oorloff, 2014; Lee et al., 2015). The most probable source of the sediment comprising these stratigraphic units is the Ross-Delamerian Orogen, with transport occurring along the eastern margin of Gondwana (e.g., Maidment et al., 2007; Fergusson and Henderson, 2015). The Mount McLaren beds and their stratigraphic correlatives were part of a large, shallow sea that was the precursor to a deep marine environment in which Ordovician turbidites of the Lachlan Orogen were subsequently deposited.

Chapter 3: $^{40}\text{Ar}/^{39}\text{Ar}$ thermochronology of the Thomson Orogen

Abstract

The Thomson Orogen is part of the east Australian Tasmanides, a province of deformed rocks that records the breakup of Rodinia and subsequent formation and break-up of Gondwana. The least understood of the Tasmanides, being covered by younger sedimentary basins in many places, the Thomson Orogen comprises the majority of Queensland and extends into northern New South Wales. In comparison, the Lachlan and New England Orogens, which lie to the south and east of the Thomson Orogen, respectively, are relatively well-studied, but the lack of geochronological data from the Thomson Orogen precludes detailed comparisons. Understanding the age and thermal history of the Thomson Orogen is key to placing it in context with the remainder of the Tasmanides. This chapter provides an overview of K-Ar and $^{40}\text{Ar}/^{39}\text{Ar}$ geo- and thermo-chronology undertaken on rocks of the Thomson Orogen, adds new $^{40}\text{Ar}/^{39}\text{Ar}$ data, and places these results within the context of eastern Australian tectonism.

The Thomson Orogen preserves evidence of having undergone temporally similar tectonic events to those reported in the New England and Lachlan Orogens, and, to a lesser degree, the Delamerian Orogen. The results from this study show that metamorphic rocks of the Thomson Orogen are dominantly Ordovician to Silurian, likely recording events which have been attributed to Benambran, Tabberabberan and/or Kanimblan orogenic events in the Lachlan Orogen. The sole evidence for Delamerian ages in this study are from the Anakie Inlier. In the east of the Thomson Orogen, evidence for deformation during the early Hunter-Bowen Orogeny (HBO) was found, though lack of these ages <100km to the west suggest the effects of the HBO were not widespread in the Thomson Orogen. $^{40}\text{Ar}/^{39}\text{Ar}$ ages from igneous rocks are interpreted as cooling ages, and are similar to ages recorded in the Lachlan Orogen which have been attributed to the Tabberabberan Cycle of the Lachlan Supercycle. This synthesis should prove useful to the development of future tectonic models of the Thomson Orogen.

3.1 Introduction

The Tasmanides of eastern Australia (Figure 3.1; e.g., Glen, 2005) have been divided into a number of orogens, the development of which are related to convergent-margin tectonism over a wide timeframe that spans most of the Phanerozoic. This long history has been most thoroughly examined in easternmost Australia, where the New England Orogen contains most of the important features (e.g., magmatic arc, accretionary prism, forearc basin) of a convergent margin (e.g., Leitch, 1978; Coney et al., 1990; Li et al., 2012), and in southern Australia, where the Lachlan and

Delamerian Orogens preserve evidence for a multitude of events including accretion, arc magmatism, and continental extension (Glen, 2013). Much of our understanding of the timing of these events comes from $^{40}\text{Ar}/^{39}\text{Ar}$ studies of basement rocks in the Lachlan, Delamerian, and New England Orogens (e.g., Foster et al., 1999; VandenBerg, 1999; Shaanan et al., 2014).

Owing partially to poor outcrop, the tectonic history of the northern part of the Tasmanides is considerably less understood than the southern and eastern counterparts. Nevertheless, some previous studies have suggested that the overall tectonic development of the northern Tasmanides shares strong similarities with the Delamerian (Withnall et al., 1996; Nishiya et al., 2003; Wood, 2006; Wood and Lister, 2013; Spampinato et al., 2015b) and Lachlan Orogens (Fergusson et al., 2001; Burton, 2010), thereby implying periods of deformation that were coincident along the entire length of the east Australian margin (e.g., Fergusson et al., 2007b; Fergusson and Henderson,

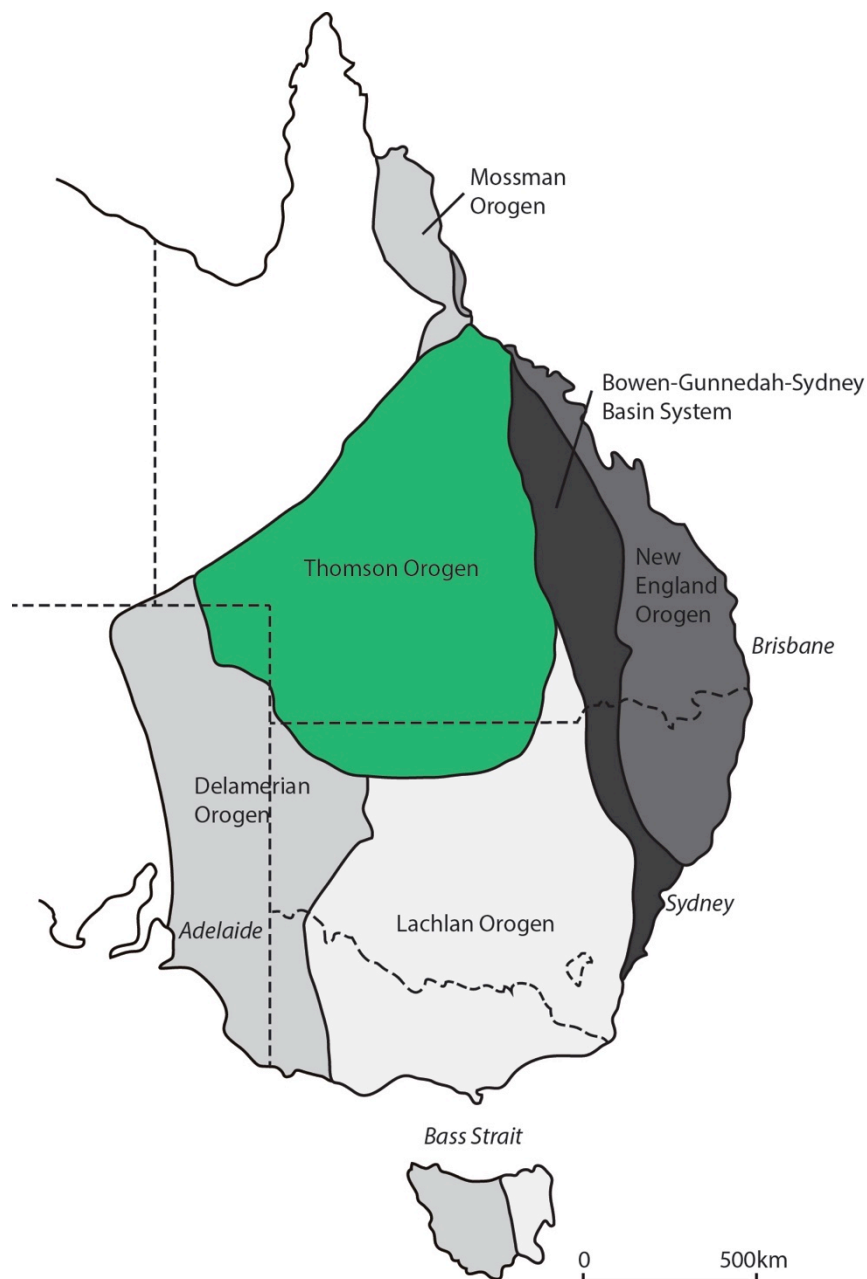


Figure 3.1: The Tasmanides, with the Thomson Orogen highlighted (after Glen, 2005).

2015). In order to test this idea, this project aims to expand and evaluate the $^{40}\text{Ar}/^{39}\text{Ar}$ record of a large component of the northern Tasmanides (the Thomson Orogen), in a manner similar to studies previously conducted in the Lachlan, Delamerian, and New England Orogens. Two specific questions of particular interest that can potentially be answered with the results from this project are (1) are periods of Paleozoic deformation recognized in the Lachlan Orogen also manifest in the Thomson Orogen? and (2) were basement rocks of the Thomson Orogen affected by a period of Permian-Triassic deformation (the Hunter-Bowen Orogeny) that is clearly evident in both the New England Orogen and in basins that overlie the Thomson Orogen, for instance the Bowen Basin? Insight into the first question has implications for the continuity of deformation along convergent margins, while an answer to the second question sheds light on whether the Hunter-Bowen Orogeny was fundamentally thin- or thick-skinned.

3.1.1 Background

Much of the Thomson Orogen is composed of metamorphosed pelitic sediments that are intruded by granites. The $^{40}\text{Ar}/^{39}\text{Ar}$ method is useful for rocks of this type, in particular granites, as they typically contain multiple K-bearing minerals that are suitable for $^{40}\text{Ar}/^{39}\text{Ar}$ geo- and thermochronology. Dating of multiple minerals from a single sample facilitates an understanding of thermal histories, which are particularly important for understanding complex deformation histories.

Previous geochronology of the Thomson Orogen is limited to surface exposures, drill core from mineral exploration, and drill core obtained from a 1960s government program to obtain basement intervals from oil wells. An initial program to date these rocks via the K-Ar method was undertaken in the 1960s, and it ultimately determined Late Devonian to Carboniferous ages for intrusive rocks from basement drill core of what is now the central and southern Thomson Orogen (Harding, 1969). Further K-Ar geochronology of Carboniferous and Devonian igneous rocks of the Anakie High (now the Anakie Inlier) was undertaken by Webb and McDougall (1968). They found that that ages decreased toward the east, in what is now the New England Orogen. More recent work by Withnall et al. (1996) and Nishiya et al. (2003) used K-Ar ages to suggest that the Delamerian Orogeny of south-eastern Australia also affected areas as far north as the Anakie Inlier and the Charters Towers Province, and Henderson et al. (1998) used K-Ar dating to constrain the age of the Silver Hills Volcanics (Anakie Inlier region) to the early Carboniferous.

The $^{40}\text{Ar}/^{39}\text{Ar}$ method builds on the K-Ar method with less potential for error, greater understanding of thermal events due to step-heating, and the potential to determine whether excess or low Ar in a sample is artificially altering the apparent age. The $^{40}\text{Ar}/^{39}\text{Ar}$ method has been used in a limited

number of studies of Thomson Orogen rocks (e.g.: Wood and Lister, 2004, 2013; Fergusson et al., 2005; Wood, 2006). Adding to the work by Withnall et al. (1996), Wood and Lister (2013) concluded that ductile deformation in the Clermont region of the Anakie Inlier occurred at ~510 to 483 Ma, and Wood (2006) demonstrated that metamorphic grade increases while $^{40}\text{Ar}/^{39}\text{Ar}$ ages decrease from NE to SW across the Anakie Inlier, in a similar manner to that reported by Webb and McDougall (1968).

The studies mentioned above notwithstanding, modern $^{40}\text{Ar}/^{39}\text{Ar}$ geochronology studies of the Thomson Orogen have been limited. This study aims to provide a better understanding of the age and thermal history of the Thomson Orogen through a comparative study of previous K-Ar and $^{40}\text{Ar}/^{39}\text{Ar}$ results, as well as by adding new $^{40}\text{Ar}/^{39}\text{Ar}$ ages from key areas. Where other geochronological methods add to these data, i.e., where U-Pb dating of zircons has been conducted from the same unit, these previous results are also referenced.

3.2 Methods

Sixteen samples from the Thomson Orogen, including surface samples and basement drill core, were dated using $^{40}\text{Ar}/^{39}\text{Ar}$ geochronology (Figure 3.2). Samples were selected based on geographical location, as well as previous geochronology studies such as U-Pb dating of both detrital and primary zircons and previous K-Ar dating. The addition of $^{40}\text{Ar}/^{39}\text{Ar}$ data to this existing database reveals a previously unknown thermal history.

Both drill core and surface samples were obtained from the Geological Survey of Queensland (GSQ) Exploration Data Centre (EDC) at Zillmere, Queensland, as well as from field work. An additional surface sample (NQ37) of the Halls Reward Metamorphics was donated by Dr. Bob Henderson via Mr. Ian Withnall. Nine of the 16 samples were from drill core, the remainder were surface samples. From these 16 samples, a total of 21 sub-samples were prepared for $^{40}\text{Ar}/^{39}\text{Ar}$ geochronology. Petrographic analysis was undertaken to confirm that the samples contained minerals suitable for dating, and further SEM analysis was completed to confirm mineralogy prior to irradiation. The minerals dated in this study include muscovite, biotite, hornblende, potassium feldspar and plagioclase feldspar. Where possible, multiple single minerals were selected, however some samples were too fine-grained, and, in these cases, whole rock geochronology was more suitable.

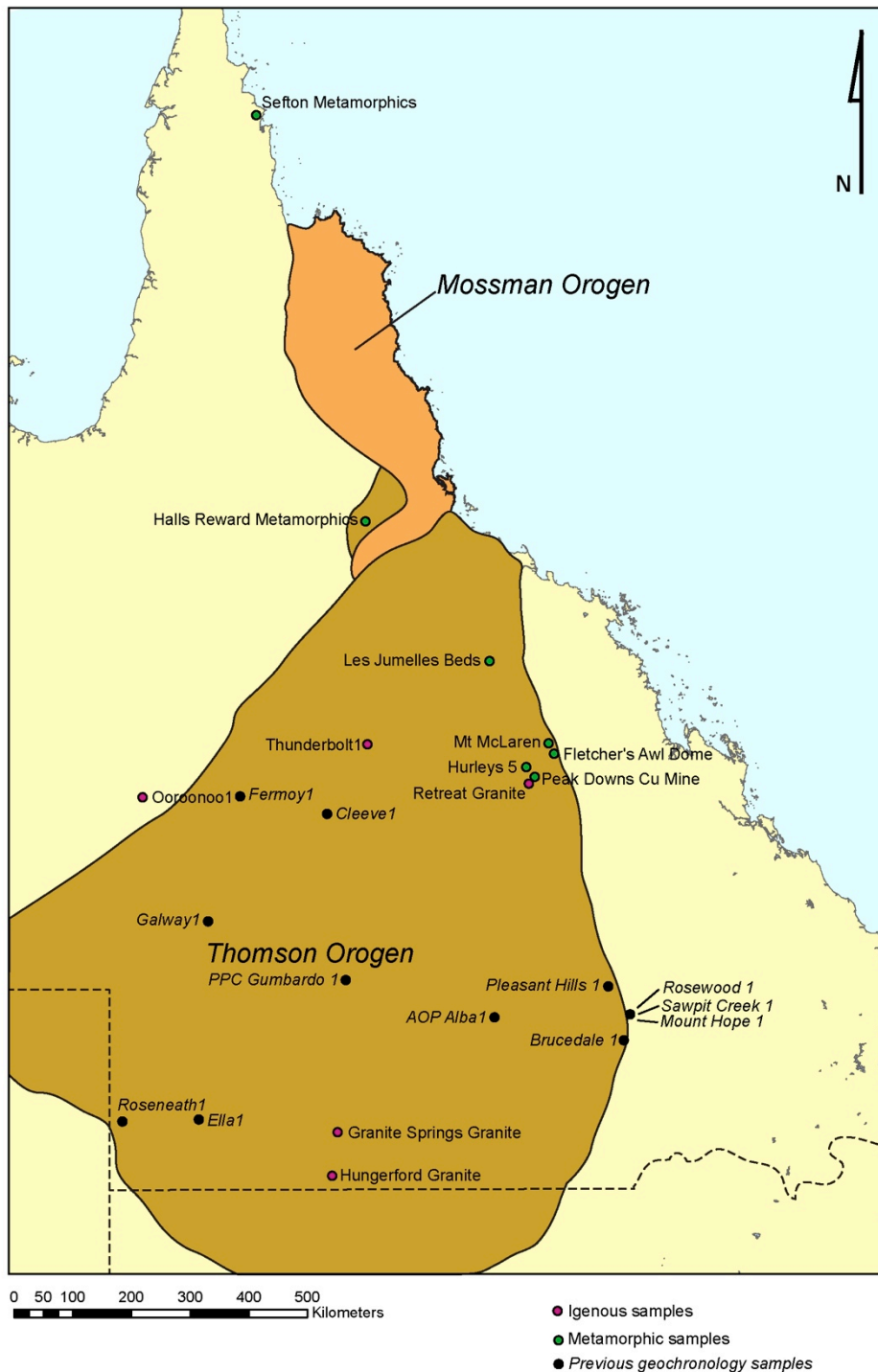


Figure 3.2: $^{40}\text{Ar}/^{39}\text{Ar}$ geochronology sample locations, and locations of previous K-Ar geochronology samples from the Thomson Orogen.

Micro-samples of around 1 cm^3 were taken from samples 2122054, 2122055, 2130084, 2152164, 2152166, AOM03 and MLRG01, which were then hand crushed in a percussion mill to pieces of 0.5 - 3 mm in size. These samples were then cleaned in an ultrasonic bath with distilled water for a total of thirty minutes, followed by ethanol for an additional ten minutes, after which they were given a final rinse with acetone and allowed to dry. Similarly, micro samples were taken from samples NQ37, MLHR02, MLLJ06, MLPD01, MLPD02, MLH501, MLH502, MLH503, and

MLH505, which were then hand crushed in a percussion mill to pieces <0.5 mm in size. Due to the presence of carbonate, these samples were acid treated by the following method: they were initially cleaned in a ultrasonic bath with water for a total of thirty minutes, acid-treated with 3.5N HCl for 60 minutes, rinsed with distilled water, acid-treated with 1N nitric acid for a further 60 minutes, then sequentially rinsed with distilled water, acetone, and ethanol. After a final rinse with acetone, the samples were allowed to dry, and then hand-picked under a binocular microscope with selection for irradiation based on size, freshness, and equant habit. Depending on the mineral being used for geochronology, sizes ranged from 0.5 - 3 mm, with the larger sizes for biotite and the smaller for K-feldspar. The grains were loaded into a 21-pit aluminum disk with the neutron fluency monitor Fish Canyon sanidine (age 28.201 ± 0.04 Ma, Kuiper et al., 2008), and GA1550 (98.5 ± 0.5 Ma (McDougall and Wellman, 2011) following the geometry illustrated in Vasconcelos et al., (2002).

Biotite crystals from samples 2122054, 2122055, and 2152164, plagioclase crystals from samples 2122054, 2122055, 2130084, and 2152164, K-feldspar crystals from sample MLRG01, and amphibole crystals from 2152166 were irradiated in October 2014 for 14 hours at Oregon State University, USA in a TRIGA-type reactor in a Cd-lined CLCIT facility. A second disk, containing whole rock grains from samples AOM03, MLLJ06, MLPD01, MLPD02, MLH501, MLH502, MLH503, and MLH505, muscovite crystals from samples NQ37 and MLHR02, and biotite crystals from MLHR02, was irradiated in June 2015 for 16 hours at Oregon State University, USA in a TRIGA-type reactor in a Cd-lined CLCIT facility. After a 6 month decay period samples were heated using a defocused continuous-wave argon-ion laser beam and the gas fractions were analysed in a MAP215-50 mass spectrometer at the University of Queensland Argon Geochronology in Earth Sciences Laboratory (UQ-AGES) following the procedures outlined in Vasconcelos et al., (2002). Full system blanks and air pipettes were analysed before and after each sample.

Individual sample analyses were corrected for mass discrimination, nucleonic interferences, and atmospheric contamination, adopting a $^{40}\text{Ar}/^{39}\text{Ar}$ value for atmospheric argon of 298.56 ± 0.31 (Lee et al., 2006). Analyses of individual sanidine crystals from the neutron fluency monitor Fish Canyon and GA1550 were used to calculate the J irradiation factor, and were within error of previously reported primary and refined ages (Spell and McDougall, 2003; McDougall and Wellman, 2011).

3.3 Results

Forty-two step-heating experiments were conducted on 16 samples: 26 step-heating experiments

<i>Sample No.</i>	<i>Sample Name</i>	<i>Lab No.</i>	<i>Material</i>	<i>No. of steps</i>	<i>Plateau age ± 2σ (Ma)^a</i>	<i>Steps & % in plateau</i>	<i>Integrated age ± 2σ(Ma)</i>	<i>Ideogram age ± 2σ(Ma)^b</i>	<i>Isochron age ± 2σ (Ma)^c</i>	<i>⁴⁰Ar/³⁹Ar intercept</i>
2122054a (1)	Granite Springs Granite	8646-01	biotite	1	397.3 ± 3.8	A-H (96%)	396.3 ± 4.3	397.2 ± 1.2 (n = 11)	398.8 ± 4.4 (n = 12)	244 ± 62
2122054a (2)	Granite Springs Granite	8646-02	biotite	1	406.0 ± 2.8	A-L (100%)	405.7 ± 3.8	406.00 ± 0.75 (n=12)	N/A	N/A
2122054b (1)	Granite Springs Granite	8635-01	plag	10	350.7 ± 2.5	C-J (99.5%)	352.7 ± 3.4	350.73 ± 0.77 (n = 9)	347.9 ± 6.0 (n = 9)	560 ± 410
2122054b (2)	Granite Springs Granite	8635-02	plag	10	N/A	N/A	379.9 ± 3.5	348.64 ± 0.93 (n = 5)	N/A	N/A
2122055a (1)	Hungerford Granite	8642-01	biotite	12	361.4 ± 2.6	A-J (95.1%)	361.3 ± 3.3	361.40 ± 0.68 (n = 12)	362.7 ± 3.0 (n = 12)	140 ± 82
2122055a (2)	Hungerford Granite	8642-02	biotite	12	365.5 ± 2.8	E-L (83.3%)	364.5 ± 3.3	365.49 ± 0.73 (n = 9)	N/A	N/A
2122055b (1)	Hungerford Granite	8634-01	plag	10	332.6 ± 5.7	C-G (58%)	337.8 ± 6.2	332.1 ± 1.7 (n = 6)	324 ± 10 (n = 10)	335 ± 30
2122055b (2)	Hungerford Granite	8634-02	plag	10	321.6 ± 2.9	C-H (56.9%)	332.1 ± 3.2	325.75 ± 0.77 (n = 5)	312 ± 11 (n = 8)	750 ± 370
MLRG01 (1)	Retreat Granite	8643-01	k-spar	11	355.9 ± 3.7	B-F (78%)	354.9 ± 3.5	356.41 ± 0.79 (n = 10)	357.7 ± 4.0 (n = 11)	260 ± 42
MLRG01 (2)	Retreat Granite	8643-02	k-spar	15	344.1 ± 2.6	D-O (89.7%)	343.5 ± 3.7	344.16 ± 0.68 (n = 14)	346.4 ± 2.8 (n = 15)	269 ± 14
2130084 (1)	Thunderbolt	8632-01	plag	18	349.5 ± 2.8	H-P (70.1%)	349.4 ± 3.3	348.86 ± 0.65 (n = 13)	347.4 ± 6.6 (n = 18)	370 ± 150
2130084 (2)	Thunderbolt	8632-02	plag	15	N/A	N/A	371.7 ± 7.6	380.8 ± 2.2 (n = 10)	390 ± 18 (n = 15)	264 ± 35
2152166 (1)	Sefton	8641-01	amph	10	397.6 ± 3.3	E-J (65.7%)	388.3 ± 3.8	396.19 ± 0.93 (n = 7)	N/A	N/A
2152166 (2)	Sefton	8641-02	amph	10	335.1 ± 3.6	C-F (75.5%)	325.2 ± 3.1	334.88 ± 0.86 (n = 5)	N/A	N/A

<i>Sample No.</i>	<i>Sample Name</i>	<i>Lab No.</i>	<i>Materal</i>	<i>No. of steps</i>	<i>Plateau age ± 2σ (Ma)^a</i>	<i>Steps & % in plateau</i>	<i>Integrated age ± 2σ(Ma)</i>	<i>Ideogram age ± 2σ(Ma)^b</i>	<i>Isochron age ± 2σ (Ma)^c</i>	<i>⁴⁰Ar/³⁹Ar intercept</i>
2152164a (1)	Ooroonoo	8631-01	biotite	13	N/A	N/A	599.4 ± 5.6	600.1 ± 2.0 (n = 5)	598 ± 33 (n = 13)	280 ± 160
2152164a (2)	Ooroonoo	8631-02	biotite	11	N/A	N/A	644.5 ± 7.5	613.2 ± 3.0 (n = 4)	N/A	N/A
2152164b (1)	Ooroonoo	8644-01	plag	10	585 ± 12	C-E (50.5%)	427.9 ± 4.2	585.0 ± 2.9 (n = 3)	640 ± 16 (n = 10)	680 ± 270
2152164b (2)	Ooroonoo	8644-02	plag	10	N/A	N/A	759.8 ± 10.0	426.7 ± 1.9 (n = 4)	N/A	N/A
2152164c (1)	Ooroonoo	8645-01	plag	11	N/A	N/A	603 ± 14	391.9 ± 6.7 (n = 3)	N/A	N/A
2152164c (2)	Ooroonoo	8645-02	plag	11	N/A	N/A	481.1 ± 9.3	408.5 ± 5.0 (n = 3)	320 ± 120 (n = 10)	1030 ± 800
MLHR02a (1)	Halls Reward	8764-01	musc	10	441.5 ± 2.0	A-J (100%)	441.3 ± 2.3	441.48 ± 0.63 (n = 10)	N/A	N/A
MLHR02a (2)	Halls Reward	8764-02	musc	10	480.3 ± 4.2	E-G (52.4%)	490.4 ± 2.7	480.3 ± 1.1 (n = 3)	N/A	N/A
MLHR02b (1)	Halls Reward	8771-01	biotite	11	446.6 ± 2.4	E-K (77.7%)	431.4 ± 2.4	446.57 ± 0.78 (n = 7)	N/A	N/A
MLHR02b (2)	Halls Reward	8771-02	biotite	11	448.1 ± 3.0	C-I (72.9%)	426.5 ± 2.8	448.1 ± 1.1 (n = 7)	N/A	N/A
NQ37 (1)	Halls Reward	8770-01	musc	9	447.8 ± 2.0	B-I (97.8%)	447.3 ± 2.2	447.81 ± 0.67 (n = 8)	448.0 ± 2.5 (n = 9)	230 ± 140
NQ37 (2)	Halls Reward	8770-02	musc	8	447.4 ± 1.7	C-H (96.1%)	444.8 ± 2.0	447.61 ± 0.43 (n = 7)	N/A	N/A
MLLJ06 (2)	Les Jumelles	8763-02	WR	10	N/A	N/A	452.0 ± 2.2	451.81 ± 0.62 (n = 10)	N/A	N/A
AOM03 (1)	Mt McLaren	8769-01	WR	10	312.8 ± 1.8	B-E (64.8%)	307.1 ± 1.6	312.79 ± 0.58 (n = 5)	307.8 ± 6.2 (n = 10)	160 ± 120
AOM03 (2)	Mt McLaren	8769-02	WR	9	315.3 ± 1.9	B-D (66.0%)	308.0 ± 1.4	315.25 ± 0.44 (n = 3)	N/A	N/A

<i>Sample No.</i>	<i>Sample Name</i>	<i>Lab No.</i>	<i>Material</i>	<i>No. of steps</i>	<i>Plateau age ± 2σ (Ma)^a</i>	<i>Steps & % in plateau</i>	<i>Integrated age ± 2σ (Ma)</i>	<i>Ideogram age ± 2σ (Ma)^b</i>	<i>Isochron age ± 2σ (Ma)^c</i>	<i>⁴⁰Ar/³⁹Ar intercept</i>
MLH501 (1)	Anakie	8777-01	WR	11	N/A	N/A	485.0 ± 2.4	499.4 ± 1.0 (n = 3)	N/A	N/A
MLH501 (2)	Anakie	8777-02	WR	11	N/A	N/A	479.8 ± 2.4	491.1 ± 1.1 (n = 5)	N/A	N/A
MLH502 (1)	Anakie	8776-01	WR	11	489.7 ± 3.5	E-H (52%)	480.2 ± 2.5	491.80 ± 0.88 (n = 5)	N/A	N/A
MLH502 (2)	Anakie	8776-02	WR	11	N/A	N/A	502.3 ± 2.5	491.4 ± 1.1 (n = 4)	N/A	N/A
MLH503 (1)	Anakie	8775-01	WR	11	496.3 ± 3.2	E-H (53.4%)	481.4 ± 2.3	496.25 ± 0.80 (n = 6)	N/A	N/A
MLH503 (2)	Anakie	8775-02	WR	11	496.9 ± 3.0	E-H (51.7%)	483.1 ± 2.5	498.65 ± 0.807 (n = 6)	N/A	N/A
MLH505 (1)	Anakie	8774-01	WR	12	N/A	N/A	479.5 ± 2.3	488.6 ± 1.1 (n = 3)	N/A	N/A
MLH505 (2)	Anakie	8774-02	WR	12	N/A	N/A	479.8 ± 2.3	492.37 ± 0.92 (n = 3)	N/A	N/A
MLPD01 (1)	Anakie	8767-01	WR	11	469.7 ± 1.8	D-J (91%)	468.2 ± 2.1	470.37 ± 0.46 (n = 8)	470.5 ± 2.6 (n = 10)	270 ± 210
MLPD01 (2)	Anakie	8767-02	WR	10	469.5 ± 2.2	E-I (82.5%)	464.9 ± 2.1	470.27 ± 0.51 (n = 7)	N/A	N/A
MLPD02 (1)	Anakie	8766-01	WR	9	468.8 ± 1.8	D-I (82.9%)	465.0 ± 2.1	468.79 ± 0.54 (n = 7)	N/A	N/A
MLPD02 (2)	Anakie	8766-02	WR	10	469.1 ± 1.9	E-G (58.4%)	466.7 ± 2.0	468.41 ± 0.56 (n = 4)	N/A	N/A

Table 3.1: ⁴⁰Ar/³⁹Ar geochronology results summary.

(a) A plateau age is defined as 3 or more consecutive steps which comprises of at least 50% of the total ³⁹Ar released and the age values overlap within a 95% confidence interval (Fleck et al., 1977). Errors, including errors in irradiation correction factors and errors in J, are reported at the 95% confidence level and is calculated based on the mean weight by inverse variance. All plateau definitions use error-overlap (2σ). (b) The Ideogram is an age-probability plot, where the age is given by the weight mean of both grains and error based on the standard error of that mean, which is given to (2σ). (c) Isochron age errors include the errors in J and irradiation correction factors but not the uncertainty in the potassium decay constant. Isochron ages are measured to the 95% confidence level (2σ).

were conducted on mineral separates, and the remaining 16 were on whole-rock samples. The results are in Table 3.1. Incremental heating of two separate aliquots for each sample was undertaken, shown as run 01 and run 02, except for sample MLLJ06, where only one run was completed. Where multiple minerals per sample were analysed, the sample number suffix “a”, “b”, etc. was used. Plateaus were defined as three or more continuous steps on the step-heating spectra that achieve $\geq 50\%$ of the total ^{39}Ar released, and with an age overlap of steps at the 95% confidence interval. All $^{40}\text{Ar}/^{39}\text{Ar}$ results have been corrected for mass discrimination and interfering isotopes. Apparent ages obtained from all steps during the step-heating process are reported as integrated ages, which should correspond with previous K-Ar ages if the sample experienced no ^{39}Ar loss by recoil. Please refer to McDougall and Harrison (1999) for further details on the $^{40}\text{Ar}/^{39}\text{Ar}$ method.

3.3.1 Igneous rocks

Plagioclase and biotite mineral separates were obtained from a surface sample of the Granite Springs Granite and Hungerford Granite, and a drill core sample of granodiorite from the Ooroonoo 1 drill core. Both biotite and plagioclase were separated from samples of the Granite Springs Granite (2122054) and Hungerford Granite (2122055), and biotite and two phases of plagioclase were separated from granite in the basement drill core of well Ooroonoo1 (2152164). Additional samples of igneous rocks come from the Retreat Granite (MLRG01), from which potassium feldspar was separated, and rhyolitic ignimbrite obtained from the Thunderbolt 1 drill core (2130084), from which plagioclase was separated.

3.3.1.1 Granite Springs Granite

Two minerals from sample 2122054 (Granite Springs Granite) were analysed: biotite and plagioclase, referred to as 2122054a and 2122054b, respectively. The biotite produced flat step-heating spectra, with plateau ages of 397.3 ± 3.8 Ma (MSWD 1.59) for run 01 steps A through H, dominated by the lower temperature steps, and 406.0 ± 2.8 Ma (MSWD 1.16) for run 02 steps A through L. The integrated age for biotite run 01 was 396.3 ± 4.3 Ma, and 405.7 ± 3.8 Ma for run 02, within error of their respective plateau ages. The ideogram age for run 01 is 397.2 ± 1.2 Ma (MSWD 1.35, $n = 11$) and for run 02 it is 406.00 ± 0.75 Ma (MSWD 1.16, $n = 12$). The ideogram age of the plateau steps of both runs is 405.09 ± 0.69 Ma (MSWD 1.34, $n = 21$). An isochron age of 398.8 ± 4.4 Ma was achieved for run 01, which is within error of the plateau, integrated, and ideogram ages. An isochron was not achieved for run 02 due to data clustering. Of the two runs, run 02 is considered more reliable, as it contains significantly more gas than run 01. On this basis, the preferred age for biotite in the Granite Springs Granite is 406.0 ± 2.8 Ma.

Plagioclase from the same sample of Granite Springs Granite yielded a plateau age from step C through step J for run 01 of 350.7 ± 2.5 Ma (MSWD 1.09) and an integrated age of 352.7 ± 3.4 Ma. Unlike run 01, run 02 failed to yield a plateau, with the step-heating spectra displaying a saddle-shape that is typically a result of excess Ar. The integrated age for run 02 is 379.9 ± 3.5 Ma. The step-heating spectra steps D through F for run 01 and step C through G for run 02 have similar geometry and, combined, provide an ideogram age of 349.88 ± 0.59 Ma (MSWD 2.00), which is within error of the plateau age obtained for run 01. An ideogram for run 01 alone produces an age of 350.73 ± 0.77 (MSWD 1.20, $n = 9$), which is almost identical to the plateau age. The isochron for run 01 gives an age of 347.9 ± 6.0 Ma, which is within error of the plateau, integrated, and ideogram ages from the same run, however the data are clustered, creating a less reliable result. An isochron was not able to be achieved for run 02. The most reliable age for plagioclase from the Granite Springs Granite is 350.7 ± 2.5 Ma, obtained from the plateau for run 01.

3.3.1.2 Hungerford Granite

Two minerals from the Hungerford Granite were analysed: biotite (2122055a) and plagioclase (2122055b). The biotite produced mostly flat step-heating spectra, with both runs 01 and 02 displaying similar geometry. Plateau ages were 361.4 ± 2.6 Ma (MSWD 1.34) for run 01 and 365.5 ± 2.8 Ma (MSWD 1.77) for run 02. The integrated ages were 361.3 ± 3.3 Ma for run 01 and 364.5 ± 3.3 Ma for run 02, so the plateau and integrated ages from both runs are all within error. The ideogram age for run 01 was 361.40 ± 0.68 Ma (MSWD 1.34, $n = 12$) and 365.49 ± 0.73 Ma (MSWD 1.77, $n = 9$) for run 02, and an ideogram of combined plateau steps from both runs produce an age of 363.46 ± 0.5 Ma (MSWD 1.92). Isochron for run 01 displays clustered data and ages of 362.7 ± 3.0 Ma, within error of the plateau, integrated, and ideogram ages for run 01. An isochron was not achieved for run 02. The preferred age for the biotite from Hungerford Granite is the ideogram age for the combined plateau steps, 363.46 ± 0.5 Ma.

Plagioclase for the same sample yielded step-heating spectra with a slight saddle-shape, with plateau ages of 332.6 ± 5.7 Ma (MSWD 2.20) for run 01 and 321.6 ± 2.9 Ma (MSWD 2.33) for run 02. Integrated ages were 337.8 ± 6.2 Ma for run 01 and 332.1 ± 3.2 Ma for run 02. Run 01 contained less gas overall than run 02 and is therefore less reliable. Ideogram ages of 332.1 ± 1.7 Ma (MSWD 1.88, $n = 6$) for run 01 and 325.72 ± 0.77 Ma (MSWD 1.86, $n = 5$) for run 02 were produced. The saddle-shape of the step-heating spectra can be attributed to excess Ar in the sample, which is also evident in the high atmospheric Ar values from the isochrons. The isochron age for run 01 is 324 ± 10 Ma and 301.4 ± 4.6 Ma for run 02. The preferred age for the plagioclase of the Hungerford Granite is the isochron age obtained from run 02, 301.4 ± 4.6 Ma.

3.3.1.3 Retreat Granite

K-feldspar from sample MLRG01, Retreat Granite, yielded step-heating plateaus of 355.9 ± 3.7 Ma (MSWD 2.71) for run 01, and 344.1 ± 2.6 Ma (MSWD 1.52) for run 02. Integrated ages were 354.9 ± 3.5 Ma for run 01 and 343.5 ± 3.7 Ma for run 02, which are within error of the respective plateau ages. Both runs show an artificially low step A, and steps I through L of run 01 were removed as they were affected by laser decoupling. Run 02 has a longer plateau than run 01, including more high temperature steps and a greater number of total steps. The differences between the two runs could be caused by a number of factors: greater sample mass in one run, differing K content in the feldspar resulting in a staggered K/Ca ratio, and/or multiple K phases within the sample. Ideogram ages of 356.41 ± 0.79 Ma (MSWD 3.88, $n = 10$) for run 01 and 344.16 ± 0.68 Ma (MSWD 1.68, $n = 14$) for run 02 were obtained. An isochron age of 357.7 ± 4.0 Ma was achieved for run 01, with no evidence of excess Ar, but the data are clustered and the line of best fit is defined almost entirely by step A, so this age is not considered reliable. The isochron age for run 02 of 346.4 ± 2.8 Ma shows marginally less clustering, although the line of best fit is also defined by step A, and like run 01 shows no evidence of excess Ar. Run 02 contains more gas than run 01, has a longer plateau that includes more high temperature steps, and the ages obtained for run 02 from the plateau, integrated, ideogram, and isochron results are within error. On this basis the preferred age for the Retreat Granite is the plateau age for run 02, 344.1 ± 2.6 Ma.

3.3.1.4 Thunderbolt 1 drillcore

Plagioclase from sample 2130084, taken from the Thunderbolt 1 drill core, yielded a plateau for run 01 of 349.5 ± 2.8 Ma (MSWD 1.86), with integrated ages of 349.4 ± 3.3 Ma and 371.7 ± 7.6 Ma for runs 01 and 02 respectively. The step-heating spectrum for run 01 is roughly flat, with some discordant low temperature steps, and contained significantly more gas than run 02, which was unable to achieve a plateau due to lack of contiguous steps. Ideogram ages for runs 01 and 02 are very different, with run 01 producing 348.86 ± 0.64 Ma (MSWD 1.89, $n = 13$), compared with 380.8 ± 2.2 Ma (MSWD 1.98, $n = 10$) for run 02. However, isochrons for both runs provided similar ages, with run 01 producing an isochron age of 347.4 ± 6.6 Ma and run 02 producing 390 ± 18 Ma. All ages for run 01 are within error, as are run 02. The likely cause for the differences between the runs is variation in the compositions of the grains that were analysed, which can be observed in the changing K/Ca ratio. The minimum age for the Thunderbolt 1 sample is the plateau age of run 01 of 349.5 ± 2.8 Ma, and the maximum age is the ideogram age from run 02 of 380.8 ± 2.2 Ma.

3.3.1.5 Ooroonoo 1 drillcore

Three minerals were dated from sample 2152164, which was obtained from granite of the Ooroonoo 1 drill core. The biotite separate is referred to as 2152164a, and two phases of plagioclase are referred to as 2152164b and 2152164c. Step-heating of the biotite yielded integrated ages of 599.4 ± 5.6 Ma and 644.5 ± 7.5 Ma for runs 01 and 02, respectively. No plateaus were achieved. Ideogram ages of 600.1 ± 2.0 Ma (MSWD 1.39, $n=5$) for run 01 and 613.2 ± 3.0 Ma (MSWD 1.59, $n=4$) were obtained, though the spread of data resulted in a lack of support for these ages. The isochron for run 01 produced an age of 598 ± 33 Ma, though the clustering of data prevents this from being a useful age. No isochron was achieved for run 02. The biotite has suffered from chloritisation, and contains excess argon; no reliable ages were obtained. .

Plagioclase sample 2152164b yielded a plateau for run 01 of 585 ± 12 Ma (MSWD 3.85), and integrated ages of 759.8 ± 10 Ma for run 01, and 427.9 ± 4.2 Ma for run 02, though no plateau was achieved for run 02 despite a plateau-like shape to the spectrum at ~ 380 Ma. The saddle-shape observed in the step-heating spectrum of run 01 is indicative of excess Ar. This shape is present in the step-heating spectrum of run 02 also, although it is less pronounced. Ideograms for 2152164b had a large spread, with little resolution to the data. The ideogram age for run 02 of 426.7 ± 1.9 Ma (MSWD 1.00, $n=4$) is within error of the integrated age, although reliability is suspect due to the low number of informing data points. Likewise the ideogram age for run 01 at 585.0 ± 2.9 Ma (MSWD 3.85, $n=3$) is supported by insufficient data points and is unreliable. The isochron for run 01 produced an age of 640 ± 96 Ma for run 01 and shows evidence of excess Ar. The isochron for run 02 was poor and is therefore not reported.

The second plagioclase sample, 2152164c, has a step-heating spectrum that is saddle-shaped, like sample 2152164b, indicative of excess Ar. The integrated ages are 603 ± 14 Ma for run 01 and 481.1 ± 9.3 Ma for run 02. The steps are discordant, with insufficient contiguous steps to produce a plateau for either run 01 or run 02, though overlap in steps C, D and E of run 01 and steps C & D of run 02, when forced, provide an age of 402.5 ± 9.7 Ma. Ideogram ages for run 01 and 02 are, like sample 2152164b, poorly supported by data points. The ideogram ages are 391.9 ± 6.7 (MSWD 0.69, $n=3$) for run 01 and 408.5 ± 5.0 (MSWD 0.61, $n=3$) for run 02. The isochron for run 01 is unusable, and for run 02 the isochron age is 320 ± 120 Ma, though data clustering is evident.

The differences and difficulties with plagioclase from granite of the Ooroonoo 1 drill core are potentially due to compositional variation in the Ca and K ratios of the analysed grains. Due to excess Ar, the younger isochron age from 2152164b of 306 ± 52 Ma is preferred for the plagioclase

age of this sample, despite the large error.

3.3.2 Metamorphic rocks

In addition to the igneous samples described above, metamorphic rocks from the Thomson Orogen were dated as well. Where possible, individual minerals were separated from the metamorphic rocks for $^{40}\text{Ar}/^{39}\text{Ar}$ analysis. These minerals include amphibole from the Sefton Metamorphics (2152166), muscovite from the Halls Reward Metamorphics (sample NQ37), and muscovite and biotite from the Halls Reward Metamorphics (samples MLHR02a, MLHR02b). The remaining metamorphic samples are whole rock samples dominated by mica and quartz: drill core from the Peak Downs Copper Mine (MLPD01, MLPD02) and Hurleys 5 (MLH501, MLH502, MLH503, MLH505) drillcores of the Anakie Metamorphics, as well as surface samples of the Les Jumelles beds (MLLJ06) and Mt. McLaren beds (AOM03).

3.3.2.1 Sefton Metamorphics

Amphibole from the Sefton Metamorphics (sample 2152166) yielded plateau ages for run 01 of 397.6 ± 3.3 Ma (MSWD 1.26) from steps E through J, and for run 02 of 335.1 ± 3.6 Ma (MSWD = 2.96) from steps C through F. Integrated ages were 388.3 ± 3.8 Ma for run 01 and 325.2 ± 3.1 Ma for run 02. A change in the K/Ca ratio at step G for run 02 may be evidence of alteration or pervasive chloritisation. The ideogram age of 396.19 ± 0.93 Ma (MSWD 2.15, $n = 7$) for run 01 is preferred over 334.88 ± 0.86 Ma (MSWD 2.61, $n = 5$) for run 02, due to greater number of informing data points for run 01. The ideogram ages for both runs are within error of the respective plateau ages. Isochrons for both runs are poor and unusable. The preferred age for the Sefton Metamorphics is the plateau age for run 01 of 397.6 ± 3.3 Ma, which incorporates more high-temperature steps than that of run 02, and lacks the irregularity in the K/Ca ratio of run 02.

3.3.2.2 Halls Reward Metamorphics

Two samples (NQ37 and MLHR02) were prepared from different locations within the Halls Reward Metamorphics. Muscovite and biotite separates were obtained from biotite-muscovite-quartz schist (sample MLHR02); muscovite is referred to as MLHR02a and biotite as MLHR02b. Only muscovite was separated from sample NQ37.

Step-heating spectra yielded integrated ages for muscovite from MLHR02a of 441.3 ± 2.3 Ma and 490.4 ± 2.7 Ma for runs 01 and 02, respectively, and plateaus were achieved for both runs. The step-heating spectrum of run 01 is flat, with all steps contiguous, allowing a plateau to be achieved from steps A through J that has an age of 441.5 ± 2.0 Ma (MSWD 1.64). The step-heating spectrum

for run 02 is dissimilar to that of run 01, with discordant low temperature steps, and a plateau was only achieved from steps E through G. The age of this plateau, 480.3 ± 4.2 Ma (MSWD 3.04), is significantly older than that of run 01. The discrepancy likely arises from the presence of detrital mica, as seen in thin section, the effects of which may be seen in the erroneously old, discordant steps of B, C and D, which show ages in excess of 500 Ma. The ideogram age for run 01 is 441.48 ± 0.63 Ma (MSWD 1.64, $n = 10$) and 480.3 ± 1.1 Ma (MSWD 3.04, $n = 3$) for run 02. Isochrons for both runs are poor. The preferred age for the muscovite from sample MLHR02 is that of the plateau for run 01 (441.5 ± 2.0 Ma), with ideogram and integrated ages within error.

Step-heating spectra for biotite from the same sample (MLHR02b) show similar geometry, although only run 01 achieved a plateau. Integrated ages of 431.4 ± 2.4 Ma for run 01, and 426.5 ± 2.8 Ma for run 02 were achieved, which are within error. A plateau was achieved for run 01 from steps E through K, with an age of 446.6 ± 2.4 Ma (MSWD 1.80). Ideogram ages of 446.57 ± 0.78 Ma (MSWD 1.80, $n = 7$) for run 01, and 448.1 ± 1.1 Ma (MSWD 1.52, $n = 7$) for run 02 are within error of the plateau age for run 01. As for the muscovite sample from MLHR02, the biotite sample had poor isochrones. The preferred age for MLHR02b is that of the plateau from run 01, 446.6 ± 2.4 Ma.

NQ37 is a surface sample of muscovite-biotite schist, from which muscovite was separated for analysis. Step-heating spectra for both runs are almost identical, with integrated ages of 447.3 ± 2.2 Ma for run 01 and 444.8 ± 2.0 Ma for run 02. A plateau for run 01 was achieved from steps B through I with an age of 447.8 ± 2.0 Ma (MSWD 1.25), and a similar plateau for run 02 was achieved from steps C through H with an age of 447.4 ± 1.7 Ma (MSWD 1.66). Ideogram ages are likewise similar, with run 01 at 447.81 ± 0.67 Ma (MSWD 1.25, $n = 8$) and run 02 at 447.61 ± 0.43 Ma (MSWD 1.67, $n = 7$). The age for run 01 from the isochron at 448.0 ± 2.5 Ma is within error of the step heating spectra and age probability plot ages. The isochron for run 02 is poor. The preferred age for NQ37 is the plateau age from run 01, which has the longer plateau of the two runs, at 447.8 ± 2.0 Ma.

3.3.2.3 Anakie Metamorphic Group

Whole rock samples of the Anakie Metamorphic Group were analysed from drill core that has previously been dated by the K-Ar method (Withnall et al., 1996). The following samples were collected of Hurleys Metamorphics from the Hurleys 5 drillcore: MLH501 at 165.1 m, MLH502 at 164.1 m, MLH503 at 134.6 m, and MLH505 at 93 m (Figure 3.3). All samples are similar and are dominated by quartz and mica, though the presence of feldspars cannot be excluded. Separation of

individual minerals was not possible for these samples because they were too fine-grained, so whole rock analyses were conducted. Samples MLPD01 and MLPD02 were collected of Bathampton Metamorphics from the Peak Downs copper mine drillcore DDH6N at depths of 490'8" and 481'4", respectively. Like the Hurleys 5 drill core samples, the Peak Downs samples are dominated by quartz and mica. A comparison of previous K-Ar and $^{40}\text{Ar}/^{39}\text{Ar}$ results from this study is provided in Table 3.2.

Runs 01 and 02 from MLH501 had similar geometry, although no plateau was achieved due to lack of contiguous steps. Integrated ages of 485.0 ± 2.4 Ma and 479.8 ± 2.4 Ma were produced for runs 01 and 02, respectively. Ideogram ages are somewhat older: 499.4 ± 1.0 Ma (MSWD 12.08, $n = 3$) for run 01 and 491.1 ± 1.1 Ma (MSWD 4.89, $n = 5$) for run 02. Neither achieved an isochron.

Sample MLH502 yielded integrated ages of 480.2 ± 2.5 Ma and 502.3 ± 2.5 Ma for runs 01 and 02, respectively. Run 01 produced a plateau age of 489.7 ± 3.5 Ma (MSWD 2.44), and no plateau was produced for run 02. Ideogram ages of 491.80 ± 0.88 Ma (MSWD 5.16, $n = 5$) for run 01 and 492.4 ± 1.1 Ma (MSWD 0.33, $n = 4$) for run 02 are within error of the plateau age. As for MLH501, neither run 01 nor run 02 of MLH502 achieved an isochron.

The step-heating spectra for MLH503 are similar, with integrated ages of 481.4 ± 2.3 Ma for run 01 and 483.1 ± 2.5 Ma for run 02. A plateau of 496.3 ± 3.2 Ma (MSWD 3.11) was achieved from steps E through H of run 01, and an almost identical plateau for run 02 was achieved from steps E through H of 496.9 ± 3.0 Ma (MSWD 1.84). Ideogram ages of 496.25 ± 0.80 Ma (MSWD 1.87, $n = 6$) for run 01 and 498.65 ± 0.87 Ma (MSWD 3.70, $n = 6$) are within error of the plateau age. MLH503 is similar to MLH502 and MLH501 in that no isochron was achieved.

Sample MLH505 has almost identical step-heating spectra, however neither runs 01 or 02 achieve a plateau. The integrated ages of 479.5 ± 2.3 Ma for run 01 and 479.8 ± 2.3 Ma for run 02 are within error. Ideogram ages of 488.6 ± 1.1 Ma (MSWD 1.57, $n = 3$) for run 01 and 492.37 ± 0.92 Ma (MSWD 2.09, $n = 3$) for run 02 are poorly supported. MLH505 does not achieve an isochron for either run.

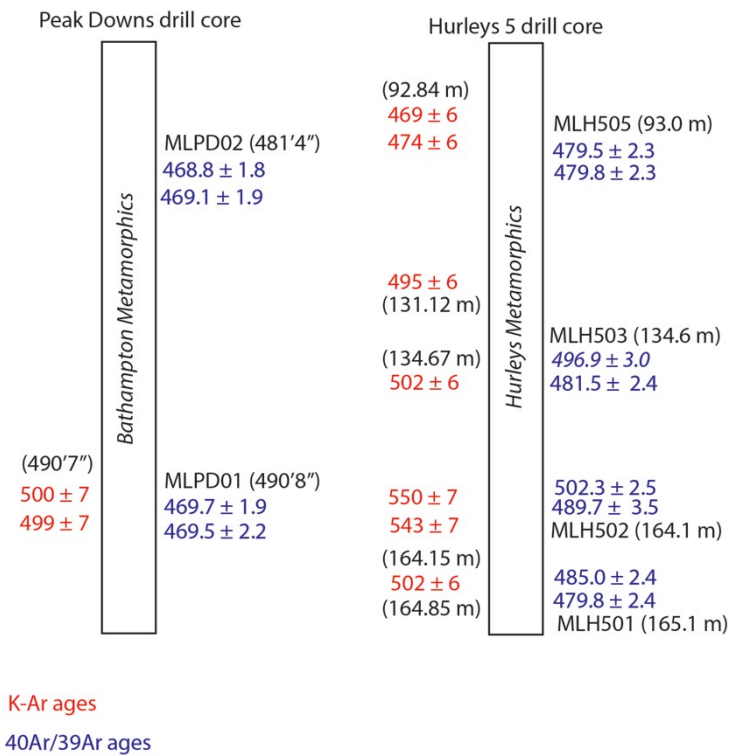


Figure 3.3: Anakie Metamorphic Group geochronology comparison. Previous K-Ar ages by Withnall et al. (1996) in red, and $^{40}\text{Ar}/^{39}\text{Ar}$ results from this study in blue.

MLPD01 has almost identical step-heating spectra, with integrated ages of 468.2 ± 2.1 Ma and 464.9 ± 2.1 Ma for runs 01 and 02 respectively, and plateau ages of 469.7 ± 1.8 Ma (MSWD 1.75) for run 01 and 469.5 ± 2.2 Ma (MSWD 2.49) for run 02. Ideogram ages of 470.37 ± 0.46 Ma (MSWD 5.13, $n = 8$) for run 01 and 470.27 ± 0.51 Ma (MSWD 3.89, $n = 7$) for run 02 are within error. The isochron for run 01 provides an age of 470.5 ± 2.6 Ma, although data are clustered. The isochron for run 02 is poor.

Sample MLPD02 has similar step-heating spectra for run 01 and run 02, integrated ages of 465.0 ± 2.1 Ma and 466.7 ± 2.0 Ma for runs 01 and 02 respectively, and plateau ages of 468.8 ± 1.8 Ma (MSWD 1.26) for steps D through I of run 01, and 469.1 ± 1.9 Ma (MSWD 1.17) for steps E through G of run 02. Ideogram ages were 468.79 ± 0.54 (MSWD 1.26, $n = 7$) for run 01 and 468.41 ± 0.56 Ma (MSWD 2.79, $n = 4$) for run 02. Isochrons for both runs were poor.

Unit	Sample ID	Run	Plateau Age (Ma)	Error (Ma)	Integrated Age (Ma)	Error (Ma)	K-Ar age	Error (Ma)
<i>Bathampton Metamorphics</i>	MLPD02	1	468.8	1.8	465.0	2.1	499	7
		2	469.1	1.9	466.7	2.0		
	MLPD01	1	469.7	1.9	468.2	2.1		
		2	469.5	2.2	465.0	2.1		
<i>Hurleys Metamorphics</i>	MLH505	1			479.5	2.3	469	6
		2			479.8	2.3	474	6
	MLH503	1	496.3	3.2	481.4	2.3	502	6
		2	496.9	3.0	483.1	2.5		
	MLH502	1	489.7	3.5	480.2	2.5	550	7
		2			502.3	2.5	543	7
	MLH501	1			485.0	2.4	502	6
		2			479.8	2.4		

Table 3.2: Comparison of $^{40}\text{Ar}/^{39}\text{Ar}$ ages from this study with K-Ar ages from Withnall et. al. (1996).

3.3.2.4 Mt. McLaren beds

One whole rock sample (AOM03) with a composition dominated by mica and quartz from the upper part of the Mt McLaren beds was analysed. The step-heating spectra for both run 01 and 02 are similar, as are the integrated ages of 307.1 ± 1.6 Ma (run 01) and 308.0 ± 1.4 Ma (run 02). A plateau was achieved for run 01 from steps B through E and has an age of 312.8 ± 1.8 Ma (MSWD 1.77). Run 02 also produced a plateau from steps B through D with an age of 315.3 ± 1.9 Ma (MSWD 3.54). Ideogram ages were 312.79 ± 0.58 Ma (MSWD 1.35, $n = 5$) for run 01 and 315.25 ± 0.44 Ma (MSWD 3.54, $n = 3$) for run 02. An isochron age for run 01 of 307.8 ± 6.2 Ma has low Ar, and the isochron for run 02 is poor. The preferred age for mica from the Mt. McLaren beds is the plateau age from run 01, 312.8 ± 1.8 Ma.

3.3.2.5 Les Jumelles beds

Whole rock analysis of the Les Jumelles beds (MLLJ06) provided a step-heating spectrum with no contiguous steps. An integrated age of 452.0 ± 2.2 Ma was obtained, though step B is erroneously old at 491.4 ± 2.1 Ma, possibly due to the presence of detrital mica. The ideogram age is ~ 450 Ma.

3.4 Discussion

In general, the new $^{40}\text{Ar}/^{39}\text{Ar}$ step-heating ages from this study fall into three broad groups. First, the $^{40}\text{Ar}/^{39}\text{Ar}$ ages from intrusive rocks (all of which are considered cooling ages, as elaborated below) are within a ~ 90 My interval that spans from ~ 415 Ma (Early Devonian) to ~ 325 Ma

(middle Carboniferous). Second, metamorphic rocks of the central and northern Thomson Orogen have $^{40}\text{Ar}/^{39}\text{Ar}$ ages that fall within a ~80 My interval that stretches from ~505 Ma (mid-Cambrian) to ~425 Ma (late Silurian). Third, $^{40}\text{Ar}/^{39}\text{Ar}$ ages < ~315 Ma from the most easterly sample of this study are significantly younger than other metamorphic rocks that were dated. These three broad intervals are also evident in the results of previous K-Ar and $^{40}\text{Ar}/^{39}\text{Ar}$ studies, including a number of intrusive K-Ar ages that fall within the ~305 Ma to ~275 Ma band, similar to the easterly metamorphic samples (Figure 3.4).

Included within the previous results are some K-Ar dates of both igneous and metamorphic rocks that were evaluated by re-dating equivalent samples using $^{40}\text{Ar}/^{39}\text{Ar}$ step-heating. In principle, the original K-Ar dates should equal the integrated ages produced from $^{40}\text{Ar}/^{39}\text{Ar}$ step-heating, but this is not the case for many of the samples that were re-dated for this study. In those cases where the original K-Ar dates agree with the $^{40}\text{Ar}/^{39}\text{Ar}$ integrated ages, the $^{40}\text{Ar}/^{39}\text{Ar}$ ages are frequently more precise.

3.4.1 Igneous rocks

3.4.1.1 Retreat Granite

The Retreat Batholith of the southern Anakie Inlier was dated by the K-Ar method in the 1960s, with resultant ages ranging from 345 - 366 Ma for biotite and 356 - 367 for hornblende, though biotite is typically younger than hornblende from the same sample (Harding, 1969). More recent U-Pb zircon geochronology provides an age of ~390 Ma for the Retreat Granite (Wood, 2006), and 382 ± 7 Ma (Cross et al., 2015) from the Theresa Creek Volcanics. In this study K-feldspar from a sample of the Retreat Granite (MLRG01) produced a $^{40}\text{Ar}/^{39}\text{Ar}$ step-heating age of 344.1 ± 2.6 Ma. Combined, these data suggest that the Retreat Granite was intruded at ~390 Ma (Middle Devonian) and cooled through the partial retention zone for argon in K-feldspar at ~345 Ma (early Carboniferous).

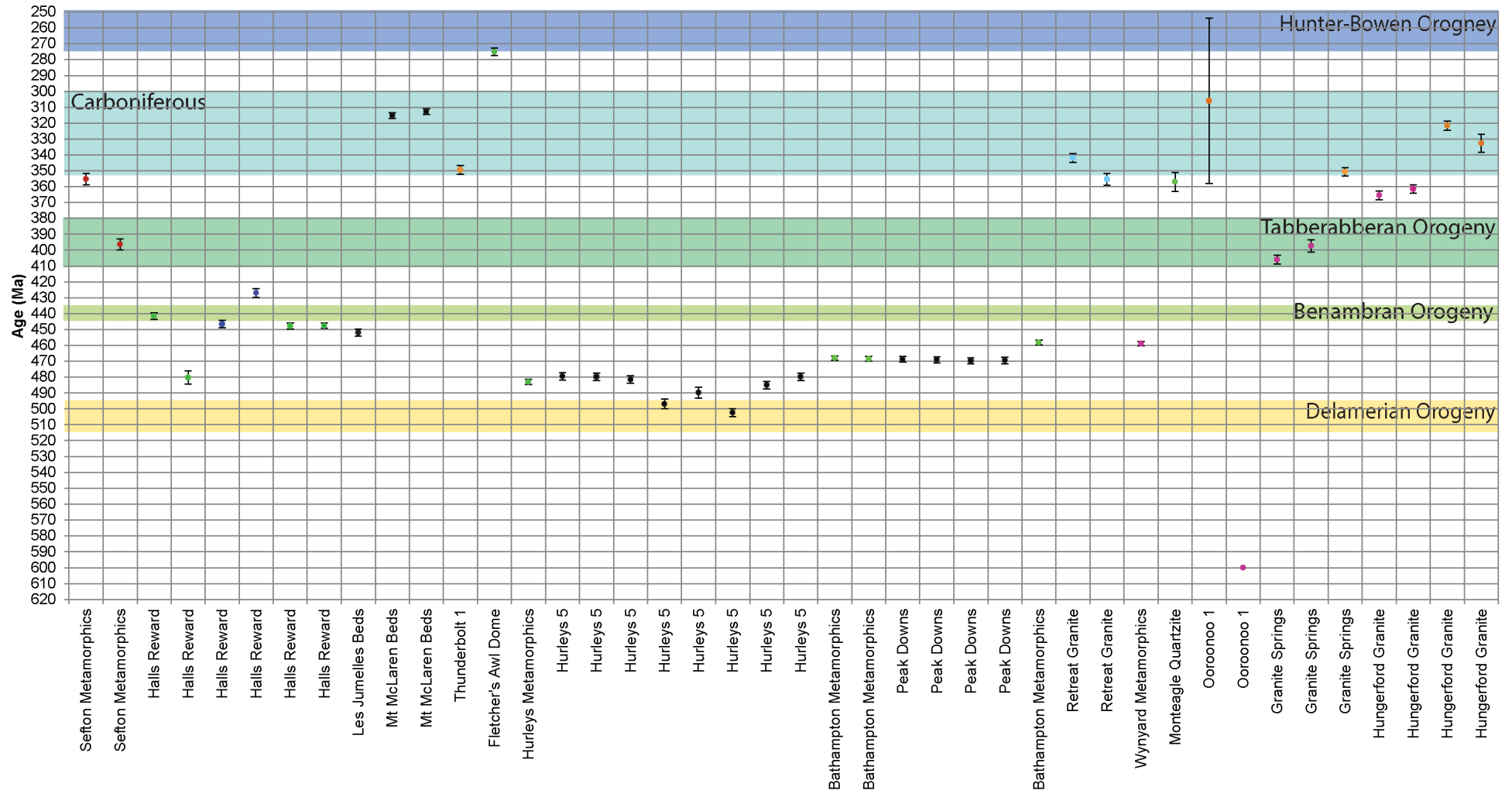


Figure 3.4: $^{40}\text{Ar}/^{39}\text{Ar}$ geochronology results and previous K-Ar and $^{40}\text{Ar}/^{39}\text{Ar}$ geochronology of Thomson Orogen rocks, with temporally relevant orogenic events. The minerals analysed are categorised by colour; amphibole in red, muscovite in green, biotite in dark blue, plagioclase in orange, potassium feldspar in light blue, biotite in pink, and whole rock analyses are in black.

3.4.1.2 Granite Springs Granite and Hungerford Granite

Comparison with previous zircon U-Pb dates suggest that $^{40}\text{Ar}/^{39}\text{Ar}$ results from granites in the southern Thomson Orogen are also cooling ages, as opposed to crystallization ages. U-Pb ages of zircons have previously been obtained from the Granite Springs Granite (sample 2122054) and Hungerford Granite (sample 2122055). Zircons from the Granite Springs Granite have a U-Pb age of 456.3 ± 3.9 Ma (Late Ordovician), but biotite and plagioclase $^{40}\text{Ar}/^{39}\text{Ar}$ ages of the Granite Springs Granite are 406.0 ± 2.8 Ma (Early Devonian) and 346.6 ± 4.2 Ma (early Carboniferous), respectively. Likewise, zircons in the Hungerford Granite have a U-Pb age of 419.1 ± 2.5 Ma (approximately the Silurian-Devonian boundary), but biotite in the granite has a $^{40}\text{Ar}/^{39}\text{Ar}$ age of 364.7 ± 2.6 Ma (Late Devonian), and the plagioclase $^{40}\text{Ar}/^{39}\text{Ar}$ age is younger still at 320.4 ± 2.7 Ma (late Carboniferous). In addition to illustrating that many of the prior K-Ar ages from intrusive rocks of the Thomson Orogen are potentially cooling ages, these combined datasets from the Retreat, Granite Springs, and Hungerford Granites also point toward periods of silicic to intermediate magmatism in the Thomson Orogen during the Late Ordovician to middle Devonian, followed by protracted cooling during the ensuing ~ 100 My.

3.4.1.3 Mooramin Granite

Seventy kilometres north-east of the Retreat Granite, and immediately to the east of the Anakie Inlier, lies Fletcher's Awl Dome. Zircons from the Mooramin Granite, which crops out in the center of the structural dome, have an age of 463 ± 15 Ma (Middle Ordovician; Mulqueeny, 2010). Unpublished $^{40}\text{Ar}/^{39}\text{Ar}$ data from muscovite in the Mooramin Granite at Fletcher's Awl Dome have a plateau age of 275.0 ± 2.3 Ma (mid-Permian; Verdel, pers. comm.). As with the examples of other granites of the Thomson Orogen described above, $^{40}\text{Ar}/^{39}\text{Ar}$ data from the Thomson Orogen therefore seem to reflect a period of cooling, though reheating during this time cannot be excluded. However, this particular period is ≥ 50 My younger at Fletcher's Dome than in Thomson Orogen rocks farther to the west.

3.4.1.4 Ooroonoo 1 drillcore

The oldest sample from this study was the Ooroonoo1 granite, located in the far west of the Thomson Orogen. Biotite from this drill core was previously dated by the K-Ar method at 860 Ma (Harding, 1969), but the new $^{40}\text{Ar}/^{39}\text{Ar}$ data from this study suggest that this age previous age was influenced by excess Ar, likely due to chloritisation of biotite, and should not be relied upon. The new $^{40}\text{Ar}/^{39}\text{Ar}$ age for plagioclase from the same sample is 306 ± 52 Ma, an age that is similar to the results from feldspars from other igneous rocks of this study. Importantly, granite from the

Ooroonoo 1 drill core is much younger than rocks of the Mesoproterozoic Mt. Isa Inlier. The plagioclase $^{40}\text{Ar}/^{39}\text{Ar}$ results suggest a common late Paleozoic thermal history with other parts of the Thomson Orogen.

3.4.2 Metamorphic rocks

The metamorphic samples from this study can be separated geographically by a NE – SW line that runs parallel to the boundary of the New England Orogen. Areas to the west have $^{40}\text{Ar}/^{39}\text{Ar}$ ages that fall within a ~80 My interval, whereas samples to the east of the line preserve $^{40}\text{Ar}/^{39}\text{Ar}$ evidence of cooling <315 Ma (i.e., late Carboniferous and younger).

3.4.2.1 Sefton Metamorphics

One aim of this study was to determine whether metamorphic rocks of the Iron Range Province in the far north of Queensland shared a common thermal history with those of the Thomson Orogen. Previous work on the Sefton Metamorphics of the Iron Range Province provided an estimated Paleozoic depositional age from fossils (Trail 1969 in Purdy et al., 2013), and U-Pb zircon dating of a metaconglomerate component of the Sefton Metamorphics provided a maximum depositional age of ~1200 Ma (late Mesoproterozoic; Blewett et al., 1998). Rocks of similar age found in the Cape River Province to the south (Blewett et al., 1998; Hutton, 2004). To test whether the Sefton Metamorphics share a similar thermal history with the Thomson Orogen, amphibole from the Sefton Metamorphics was dated by $^{40}\text{Ar}/^{39}\text{Ar}$ geochronology, with a resultant age of 397.6 ± 3.3 Ma. Although dissimilar to the metamorphic samples of the Thomson Orogen, it does share a similar age with igneous samples from this study.

3.4.2.2 Halls Reward Metamorphics

Samples of the Halls Rewards Metamorphics from the northern Thomson Orogen provided $^{40}\text{Ar}/^{39}\text{Ar}$ ages that contradict some past geochronology results. Monazite U-Pb data, in conjunction with Rb/Sr and K-Ar results, led Nishiya et al. (2003) to conclude that that metamorphism of the Halls Reward Metamorphics occurred around 510 Ma during the Cambrian Delamerian Orogeny. However the youngest detrital zircon from the same study had a U-Pb age 460 ± 90 Ma, which, although imprecise, warranted further investigation because it suggested that the K-Ar ages for muscovite (503 ± 13 and 504 ± 13 Ma) reported by Nishiya et al. (2003) could represent the ages of detrital muscovite. For this study, two samples of the Halls Reward Metamorphics from the northern Thomson Orogen were dated by $^{40}\text{Ar}/^{39}\text{Ar}$ geochronology. Muscovite produced ages of ~441 to 447 Ma, and biotite had an age of 446.6 ± 2.4 Ma, both considerably younger than the previous K-Ar results of Nishiya et al. (2003). Combined with the prior detrital zircon data, these

results suggest that the maximum depositional age of the Halls Reward Metamorphics is 460 ± 90 Ma, and the unit cooled through both the biotite and muscovite closure temperatures at ~ 446 Ma (latest Ordovician).

3.4.2.3 Les Jumelles and Mt. McLaren beds

The Les Jumelles beds, which are located between the towns of Mount Coolon and Charters Towers in central Queensland, are composed of sandstones and mudstones of early Paleozoic age. They are unconformably overlain by Early Devonian rocks (Fergusson and Henderson, 2013), and are intruded by the Middle Ordovician Coquelicot Tonalite, zircons from which have U-Pb ages of 471 ± 3.6 Ma (OZCHRON, 2007 in Purdy et al., 2013). Previous SHRIMP U-Pb geochronology on detrital zircons from the Les Jumelles beds established a maximum depositional age of 528 ± 9 Ma, though a single detrital zircon produced a younger age of 476 ± 12 Ma. The whole rock $^{40}\text{Ar}/^{39}\text{Ar}$ integrated age for the Les Jumelles beds of 452.0 ± 2.2 Ma (Late Ordovician) provides a minimum depositional age. Taken together, these data suggest that the Les Jumelles beds were deposited in the latest Cambrian to Early Ordovician, buried and intruded by the Coquelicot Tonalite shortly after burial, then subsequently cooled in the Late Ordovician.

The Mt. McLaren beds, which are located ~ 60 km north-east of Clermont in central Queensland, are comparable in lithology, depositional environment and age to the Les Jumelles beds. U-Pb detrital zircon ages from Mt. McLaren beds and lithostratigraphic correlations with the Puddler Creek Fm. and Les Jumelles beds, suggest that the Mt. McLaren beds were deposited in the late Cambrian to early Ordovician (Oorloff, 2014). Whole rock $^{40}\text{Ar}/^{39}\text{Ar}$ geochronology from this study produced an age of 312.8 ± 1.8 Ma (late Carboniferous) for cooling of the Mt. McLaren beds. This age likely represents a period of late Carboniferous extensional exhumation of the Mt. McLaren beds, as suggested by Oorloff (2014).

3.4.2.4 Anakie Metamorphic Group

One of the aims of this study was to re-date drill core of the Anakie Metamorphic Group that was previously dated by the K-Ar method. Previous K-Ar dating of the Peak Downs core provided ages of 499 ± 7 Ma and 500 ± 7 Ma, and Hurleys 5 drill core which yielded ages from 550 ± 7 Ma to 469 ± 6 Ma (Withnall et al., 1996). These previous results have been interpreted as evidence that deformation during the Cambrian Delamerian Orogeny, which is most prominent in southern Australia, extended as far north as the northern Thomson Orogen (Withnall et al., 1996). As described above, drill core was re-sampled at the same or similar intervals to facilitate a comparison of previous K-Ar and new $^{40}\text{Ar}/^{39}\text{Ar}$ results. Overall, the new $^{40}\text{Ar}/^{39}\text{Ar}$ results from the Peak

Downs drill core (Bathampton Metamorphics) are ~30 My younger than the K-Ar results of Withnall et al. (1996), and the new $^{40}\text{Ar}/^{39}\text{Ar}$ ages post-date the Delamerian Orogeny. Results from the Hurleys 5 drill core (Hurleys Metamorphics) are similar: sample MLH501 is ~20 My younger than the associated K-Ar sample, MLH502 is 40-60 My younger than the associated K-Ar sample, and the integrated age from MLH503 is ~20 My younger than the associated K-Ar age (although the plateau age is within error of the K-Ar age). In contrast, the shallowest sample from the Hurleys 5 drill core (sample MLH505) has an integrated $^{40}\text{Ar}/^{39}\text{Ar}$ age that is older than the associated K-Ar age.

Despite the K-Ar vs. $^{40}\text{Ar}/^{39}\text{Ar}$ discrepancies for the Anakie Metamorphic Group, the general conclusions of Withnall et al. (1996) seem to hold true; the Delamerian Orogeny is likely to have affected the Anakie Metamorphic Group. Age spectra from these samples show high temperature steps approaching 490 Ma, potentially being metamorphosed during this orogenic event which is estimated to have concluded by ~495 Ma (late Cambrian; Foden et al., 2006; Turner et al., 2009). In particular, the integrated age of 502.3 ± 2.5 Ma for one run from sample MLH502, in addition to the plateau age of 496.9 ± 3.0 Ma from sample MLH503, add further solidity to this hypothesis. The younger ages from these samples, seeming to record Middle and Early Ordovician events, are likely caused by argon loss. A comparison of the $^{40}\text{Ar}/^{39}\text{Ar}$ and K-Ar geochronology results for the Anakie Metamorphic Group are shown in Table 3.2.

3.4.3 Implications for the tectonic history of the Thomson Orogen

The $^{40}\text{Ar}/^{39}\text{Ar}$ ages obtained during this study range from Neoproterozoic to the Carboniferous-Permian boundary. The majority of $^{40}\text{Ar}/^{39}\text{Ar}$ ages from metamorphic rocks range from late Cambrian to Silurian, and the $^{40}\text{Ar}/^{39}\text{Ar}$ ages from igneous rocks range from Early Devonian to middle Carboniferous. As elaborated below, the new results facilitate comparison with previous results in other parts of eastern Australia.

3.4.3.1 Rodinia rifting

Rifting of the supercontinent Rodinia is believed to have occurred in two phases: the first at 800-750 Ma (Fergusson and Henderson, 2015), and the second at 600-580 Ma (Glen, 2013). Following rifting, the eastern margin of the Australian continent is approximated by the Tasman Line, which forms the western boundary of the Thomson Orogen. The Ooroonoo 1 drill core is located along the western border of the Thomson Orogen, and a previous K-Ar age for biotite from the granite produced an unreliable 840 Ma age, shown in this study as affected by excess argon as a result of chloritisation. Plagioclase from the same granite has an $^{40}\text{Ar}/^{39}\text{Ar}$ age of 306 ± 52 Ma. Given the

large uncertainties of the plagioclase age, it could be attributable to a variety of Carboniferous to Permian tectonic events that affected the Thomson Orogen.

3.4.3.2 Delamerian Orogeny

As described above, the previous K-Ar geochronology by Withnall et al. (1996) suggested that rocks of the Anakie Metamorphic Group were deformed during the Cambrian Delamerian Orogeny, which is characterized in southern Australia by E-W contraction from 514 to 495 Ma (Foden et al., 2006). The only samples from this study that are temporal equivalents to the Delamerian Orogeny are three samples from one drill hole into the Hurleys Metamorphics of the Anakie Inlier, although those ages are similar to previous $^{40}\text{Ar}/^{39}\text{Ar}$ and K-Ar results (Withnall et al., 1996; Wood, 2006; Wood and Lister, 2013). The remainder of these new $^{40}\text{Ar}/^{39}\text{Ar}$ data appear to show that the Anakie Metamorphic Group was affected by metamorphism during the Ordovician and, therefore, post-dates the Delamerian Orogeny, however these younger ages are likely affected by argon loss and should be used with caution. A study aiming to date micro-structures of the Anakie Inlier by $^{40}\text{Ar}/^{39}\text{Ar}$ geochronology, also showed Delamerian ages and an additional observation that ages decreased from NE to SW across the Anakie Inlier at Clermont (Wood, 2006).

Work on the Halls Reward Metamorphics from the northern Thomson Orogen by Nishiya et al. (2003) used Rb/Sr and K-Ar dates to conclude that peak metamorphism was reached before 490 Ma, however $^{40}\text{Ar}/^{39}\text{Ar}$ geochronology from this study show that the closure temperature for muscovite was reached at $\sim 441 - 447$ Ma, which is ~ 60 Ma later than previously thought. This places the latest metamorphism of the Halls Reward Metamorphics as occurring after the Delamerian Orogeny, and more akin to the Benambran Orogeny.

3.4.3.3 Benambran Orogeny

The Late Ordovician to Early Silurian Benambran Orogeny has been documented in the Lachlan Orogen (e.g., Glen, 2013) and Thomson Orogen (Kotischin, et al), but the extent to which it affected the Thomson Orogen is not well defined (Spampinato et al., 2015a). In the north, the Thomson Orogen has been delineated from the Silurian-Devonian Mossman Orogen (Withnall and Henderson, 2012). This separation represents a division of pre-Benambran rocks (i.e., the Thomson Orogen) from those that were deposited after the Benambran Orogeny (i.e., the Mossman Orogen; Glen, 2013).

$^{40}\text{Ar}/^{39}\text{Ar}$ cooling ages reported in this study from granites are similar to ages reported in metasediments of the Lachlan Orogen (Foster et al., 1999), suggesting that igneous intrusions into

the Thomson Orogen may be related to the Benambran Orogeny. The effects of the Benambran Orogeny may also be shown in the metamorphic rocks from this study, contrary to suggestions that deformation due to the Benambran Orogeny was minimal in the central Thomson Orogen (Spampinato et al., 2015a), re-dating of drill core from the Anakie Metamorphic Group has resulted in ages that are at least partly Benambran in affinity, and the Halls Reward Metamorphics also have $^{40}\text{Ar}/^{39}\text{Ar}$ ages coincident with the Benambran ages.

3.4.3.4 Tabberabberan Orogeny

Igneous rocks from the Thomson Orogen dated for this study show emplacement occurred prior to 400 Ma, with slow cooling over the subsequent ~90 My. This timing is similar to that of the Tabberabberan cycle (430-380 Ma; Glen, 2005), which affected the Lachlan Orogen, though this study has revealed no Tabberabberan Orogeny (395-380 Ma) ages, which marks the end of the Tabberabberan cycle, in the Thomson Orogen. Apart from one $^{40}\text{Ar}/^{39}\text{Ar}$ age from the Sefton Metamorphics in Cape York, there are no corresponding Tabberabberan ages from metamorphic rocks in this study.

3.4.3.5 Hunter-Bowen Orogeny

The Hunter-Bowen Orogeny (HBO) is characterized by E-W shortening during the late Permian to Triassic (265-230 Ma; Rosenbaum et al., 2012) and had a significant influence on the rocks of the New England Orogen. The earliest stages of the HBO overlap with the Kanimblan cycle in the Lachlan Orogen (Glen, 2013). $^{40}\text{Ar}/^{39}\text{Ar}$ ages of ~270 – 275 Ma, similar to those from the easternmost Thomson Orogen rocks (Fletcher's Awl Dome), have been widely reported from the New England Orogen (NEO), where they are attributed to the onset of the HBO (Shaanan et al., 2014). Considering the close proximity of the NEO, it is not unrealistic to suggest that the HBO may have affected at least the eastern portions of the Thomson Orogen. However, there seem to be no rocks within the Anakie Inlier that have $^{40}\text{Ar}/^{39}\text{Ar}$ ages as young as the HBO, though zircon (U-Th)/He ages from the Anakie Inlier may be attributable to the HBO (Verdel et al., 2016). These results therefore suggest a division between eastern Thomson Orogen rocks that were relatively strongly affected by the HBO, and central and western Thomson Orogen rocks that were less affected. This division roughly corresponds with a covered area between Fletcher's Awl Dome and the southern Anakie Inlier, and the existence of this division may hint at a major and unidentified structure in this area.

3.5 Conclusions

The Thomson Orogen was influenced by a number of orogenic events that affected other elements of the Tasmanides. In particular, new $^{40}\text{Ar}/^{39}\text{Ar}$ results reveal similarities with the New England, Lachlan, and, Delamerian Orogens. $^{40}\text{Ar}/^{39}\text{Ar}$ ages from Ordovician granite at Fletcher's Awl Dome in the eastern Thomson Orogen suggest that it was affected by late Permian deformation during the early Hunter Bowen Orogeny, as were many parts of the New England Orogeny. The new results illustrate a discrepancy in $^{40}\text{Ar}/^{39}\text{Ar}$ ages between Fletcher's Awl Dome and the southern Anakie Inlier <100 km to the west. Areas to the west seem to show no $^{40}\text{Ar}/^{39}\text{Ar}$ influence from the Hunter Bowen Orogeny. Instead, they preserve $^{40}\text{Ar}/^{39}\text{Ar}$ records of older tectonic events.

$^{40}\text{Ar}/^{39}\text{Ar}$ ages equivalent to the Delamerian Orogeny are recorded in the Hurleys Metamorphics of the Anakie Inlier, although elsewhere in the Thomson Orogen this study found no evidence of Delamerian deformation. The majority of new $^{40}\text{Ar}/^{39}\text{Ar}$ ages from metamorphic rocks of the Thomson Orogen are Ordovician to Silurian, and they likely record periods of deformation that correspond with the Benambran and Kanimblan Orogenies of the Lachlan Orogen. $^{40}\text{Ar}/^{39}\text{Ar}$ ages that may be attributable to the Benambran Orogeny were found in samples of the Anakie Metamorphics and Halls Reward Metamorphics, and igneous cooling ages from this study are similar to the age of the early Tabberabberan cycle. An open question is how these orogenic events of eastern Australia relate to the coincident Alice Springs Orogeny of central Australia, from which similar ages have been obtained (Haines et al., 2001; Quentin de Gromard, 2013).

Chapter 4: Summary

This project aimed to (1) improve understanding of the stratigraphy and thermal history of the Thomson Orogen and (2) place more accurate radiometric age constraints on rocks previously dated by the K-Ar method.

4.1 Cambrian-Ordovician stratigraphy of the northern Thomson Orogen

Neoproterozoic-Cambrian metasedimentary rocks of the Anakie Metamorphic Group, which are exposed in the Anakie Inlier of east-central Queensland, are the oldest part of the Thomson Orogen. They are overlain by late Cambrian to Early Ordovician metasediments, some of which were deposited in the Larapintine Sea, an inland seaway that may have stretched east-to-west across the Australian continent. Based on detrital zircon data, the Ross-Delamerian Orogen appears to have been a significant source of material for the Thomson Orogen Cambrian-Ordovician metasediments (e.g., Maidment et al., 2007; Fergusson and Henderson, 2015).

A newly described, ~2000 m-thick accumulation of metasediments at Mt. McLaren, which lies to the east of the Anakie Inlier, seems to correlate with previously described Cambrian-Ordovician strata in the northern Thomson Orogen. Deposited from a vast shallow, clastic sea, the Mt McLaren beds, Les Jumelles beds and Puddler Creek Fm. are similar in age and depositional environment (Oorloff, 2014; Lee et al., 2015). In addition to Thomson Orogen correlations, the Mt. McLaren beds also seem to have stratigraphic equivalents in the Centralian Superbasin, in particular the Pacoota Sandstone of the Amadeus Basin and the Tomahawk Formation of the Georgina Basin (Oorloff, 2014).

The first-order sedimentology of the Mt. McLaren beds suggests that they were deposited in a shallow-marine environment, possibly the precursor to the deeper marine environment in which Ordovician turbidites of the Lachlan Orogen were subsequently deposited (Oorloff, 2014; Lee et al., 2015). The Mt. McLaren beds contrast, therefore, with rocks that have been described in the southern Thomson Orogen and the Lachlan Orogen (Murray, 1994; Glen, 2005). The set of stratigraphic correlations described above suggest significant variation in depositional environments during Cambrian to Ordovician time in various components of the Tasmanides.

4.2 Thermal history of the Thomson Orogen

New $^{40}\text{Ar}/^{39}\text{Ar}$ results from this study help establish a broad thermal history of both intrusive and metamorphic rocks of the Thomson Orogen. Much of the Thomson Orogen was emplaced or deformed in the Devonian and Carboniferous, therefore post-dating the Cambrian Delamerian Orogeny. Previously considered as a major control on Thomson Orogen metamorphism and

deformation (Withnall et al., 1996; Nishiya et al., 2003), the Delamerian Orogeny is recorded in $^{40}\text{Ar}/^{39}\text{Ar}$ ages from this study obtained from rocks of the Anakie Metamorphic Group. Additionally, $^{40}\text{Ar}/^{39}\text{Ar}$ data from granites that were emplaced in the central and southern Thomson Orogen during Silurian to Devonian time illustrate that they underwent protracted cooling over a ~90 My period. $^{40}\text{Ar}/^{39}\text{Ar}$ results indicate that Thomson Orogen rocks to the east of the Anakie Inlier were strongly affected by mid to late Permian deformation, unlike most Thomson Orogen rocks to the west. These new results are therefore helpful in delineating a broad-scale division between eastern Thomson Orogen-New England Orogen rocks that were strongly affected by the Hunter-Bowen Orogeny, and western Thomson Orogen rocks that preserve $^{40}\text{Ar}/^{39}\text{Ar}$ records of older periods of deformation.

4.3 Summary of the stratigraphic and tectonic development of the Thomson Orogen

The earliest evidence of the origins of the Thomson Orogen is found in the detrital zircon record from the Anakie Inlier. The oldest component of the Thomson Orogen, these late Neoproterozoic to early Paleozoic sediments form the Anakie Metamorphic Group, and have been linked to the development of the Gondwanan margin after rifting of the supercontinent Rodinia (Fergusson et al., 2001). The breakup of Rodinia was the precursor to the development of the Terra Australis Orogen of Gondwana, with a ~600 – 580 Ma rifting event linked to clastic sedimentation (Fergusson and Henderson, 2015). In the far west of the Thomson Orogen a ~600 Ma $^{40}\text{Ar}/^{39}\text{Ar}$ age from this study is potentially due to Rodinia rifting. By the middle to late Cambrian Gondwana had assembled, with associated contraction during the late Cambrian to early Ordovician Delamerian Orogeny recorded as far north as the Anakie Inlier (Withnall et al., 1996; Wood, 2006).

Distinctly younger than the Anakie Metamorphic Group, the sediments which make up the northern Thomson Orogen were deposited in late Cambrian to Ordovician time (Oorloff, 2014; Cross et al., 2015), and are temporally similar to deposits from central Australia (Li and Powell, 2001; Haines and Wingate, 2007; Maidment et al., 2007). $^{40}\text{Ar}/^{39}\text{Ar}$ ages of this study, obtained from northern Thomson Orogen rocks, are Ordovician to Silurian in age, therefore post-dating the Delamerian Orogeny and are more inline with ages attributed to the Benambran Orogeny, which has been linked to the Mossman Orogenic event of north Queensland (Fergusson et al., 2013). In the southern Thomson Orogen and Lachlan Orogen a deeper marine environment resulted in turbidite deposition (Murray, 1994; Veevers, 2015), associated with the Ordovician to Silurian Benambran cycle (Glen, 2005). The shallower environment of the northern Thomson Orogen may have been a precursor to this deeper environment to the south. Contractile deformation during the latter stages of the Benambran Orogeny is associated with intrusions in the Lachlan Orogen (Draper, 2006; Kositcin et al., 2009), and marine sedimentation continued into the Silurian and early Devonian (Li and Powell,

2001).

The Tabberabberan Orogeny of the middle Devonian is recorded in the New England Orogen and resulted in intrusions throughout the Lachlan Orogen (Glen, 2005), and possibly the central and southern Thomson Orogen (Kositcin et al., 2009). $^{40}\text{Ar}/^{39}\text{Ar}$ ages from igneous rocks of the central and southern Thomson Orogen are attributed to cooling over ~90 My, with ages similar to those attributed to the Tabberabberan cycle (Glen, 2005), though no late Tabberabberan ages, which would be attributable to the Tabberabberan Orogeny, are recorded in this study. The Kanimblan Orogeny followed in the late Devonian to Carboniferous, however due to temporal overlap of the Benambran, Tabberabberan and Kanimblan Orogenies with the central Australian Alice Springs Orogeny there are difficulties in deciphering the influence of each of these events.

Carboniferous extension is recorded in the eastern Thomson Orogen, with $^{40}\text{Ar}/^{39}\text{Ar}$ ages from the Mt McLaren beds recording this much younger deformation event, which is not seen in rocks of the nearby Anakie Inlier, <100km to the west. Fletcher's Awl Dome records evidence of the subsequent Permian Hunter-Bowen Orogeny, with ages similar to those reported from the New England Orogen (Shaanan et al., 2014), which is the final tectonic event recorded in the Thomson Orogen.

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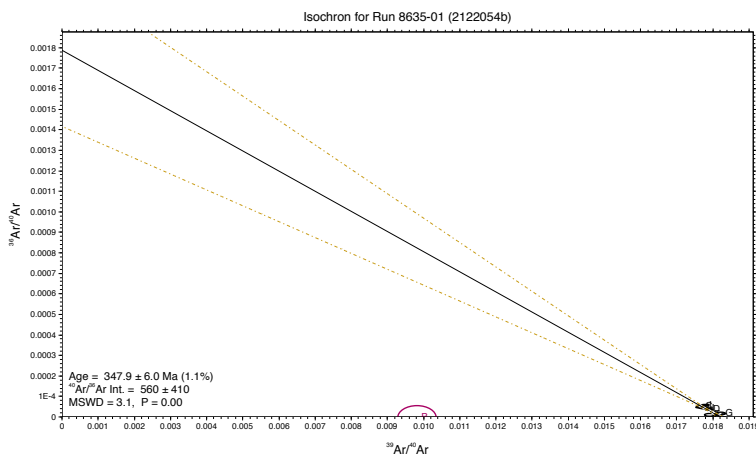
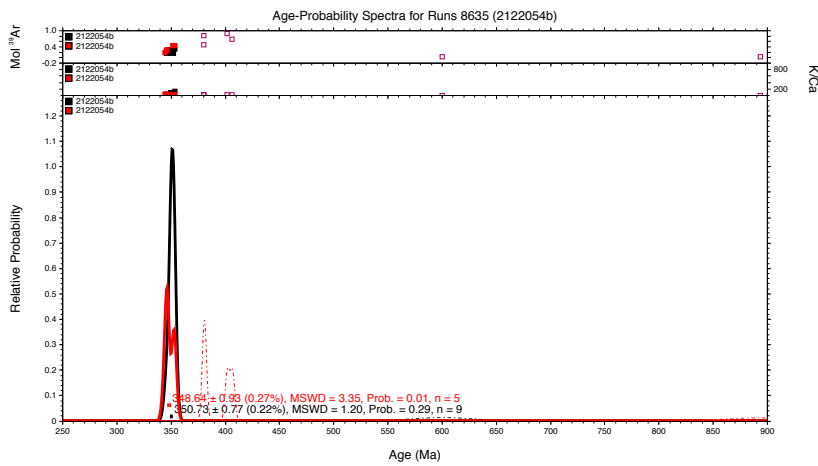
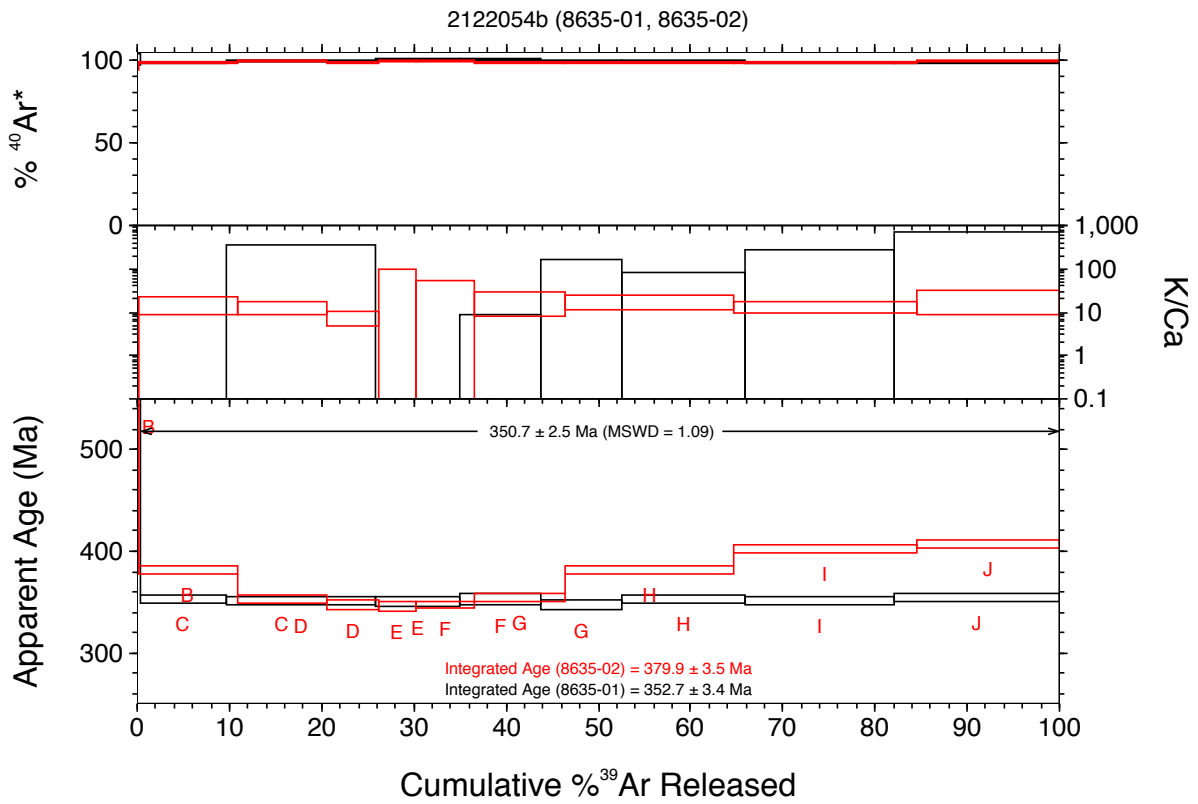
Appendix A: Sample location information, including coordinates.

Sample #	Name	Lat	Long	Sample Type	Depth	Rock Type
2122055	Hungerford Granite	-28.99578223	144.4615304	Surface		Monzogranite
2152164	Ooroonoo1	-23.17913543	141.5536758	Drill core	3849'- 3849.2'	Granite
2122054	Granite Springs Granite	-28.33065565	144.5473222	Surface		Monzogranite
2152166	Sefton Metamorphics	-12.6992	143.3039	Drill core	78.5-79.5m	Schist
2130084	Thunderbolt1	-22.36568611	145.0027972	Drill core	5282'-5285'	Rhyolitic Ignimbrite
MLRG01	Retreat Granite	-22.97414	147.54268	Surface		Granite
MLLJ06	Les Jumelles beds	-21.09137398	146.879378	Surface		Metasediments
MLHR02	Halls Reward Metamorphics	-18.94215502	144.976643	Surface		Schist
NQ37	Halls Reward Metamorphics	-18.96701045	144.9644444	Surface		Schist
AOM03	Mt McLaren beds	-22.34805	147.78633	Surface		Metasediments
MLPD01	Newmont Peak Downs DDH6N (bore # 51382)	-22.86570439	147.5982609	Drill core	490'8"	Metasediments
MLPD02	Newmont Peak Downs DDH6N (bore # 51382)	-22.86570439	147.5982609	Drill core	481'4"	Metasediments
MLH501	Hurleys 5 (bore #51814)	-22.72266089	147.4835687	Drill core	165.10m	Metasediments
MLH502	Hurleys 5 (bore #51814)	-22.72266089	147.4835687	Drill core	164.10m	Metasediments
MLH503	Hurleys 5 (bore #51814)	-22.72266089	147.4835687	Drill core	134.60m	Metasediments
MLH504	Hurleys 5 (bore #51814)	-22.72266089	147.4835687	Drill core	131.0m	Metasediments
MLH505	Hurleys 5 (bore #51814)	-22.72266089	147.4835687	Drill core	93.0m	Metasediments

8649-02B	MD2 GA1550 MD2	0.3	99.84894	0.6319592	0.0012269	0.0001655	0.0379223	0.0088974	0.0169356	0.0004668	15.06026	0.0828585	14.69693	0.095617	97.59015	0.412333	3.06E-15	4.60E-14	PPLLLL
8649-02C	GA1550 MD2	0.35	99.41318	0.5936328	0.0004191	0.0001678	-0.0072896	0.0100589	0.0151577	0.0004608	14.75727	0.0747483	14.63101	0.0897964	99.15029	0.4469499	3.00E-15	4.43E-14	PPLLLL
8649-02D	GA1550 MD2	0.4	100.6436	0.5921601	0.0001908	0.0001781	0.0065277	0.0102166	0.0164789	0.0004555	14.87394	0.0722017	14.8172	0.0896348	99.62343	0.5168256	3.06E-15	4.55E-14	PPLLLL
8649-02E	GA1550 MD2	0.45	98.58025	0.5083017	0.00043	0.0001513	0.0208417	0.0083221	0.0156314	0.0004646	14.63206	0.0622128	14.50504	0.0768533	99.13592	0.4290542	3.30E-15	4.83E-14	PPLLLL
8649-02F	GA1550 MD2	0.5	99.07929	0.5190344	0.000392	0.0001561	0.0076601	0.0085828	0.0153079	0.0003839	14.69736	0.0632971	14.58051	0.0784977	99.20982	0.3709338	3.38E-15	4.96E-14	PPLLLL
8649-02G	GA1550 MD2	0.6	99.17395	0.5164663	0.0000531	0.0001537	-0.0022594	0.0083355	0.0157329	0.0003574	14.6113	0.0632118	14.59482	0.0781134	99.89291	0.4015153	3.32E-15	4.85E-14	PPLLLL
8649-02H	GA1550 MD2	0.8	98.85857	0.5200011	0.0002454	0.0000797	0.0074265	0.004727	0.0158853	0.0002575	14.62015	0.0751156	14.54713	0.0786343	99.50548	0.2547213	6.37E-15	9.32E-14	PPLLLL
8649-02I	GA1550 MD2	1	97.90951	0.5843422	0.0009395	0.0001607	-0.0100279	0.0085217	0.0153386	0.00039	14.68549	0.0746893	14.40365	0.0883174	98.08685	0.4292654	3.43E-15	5.04E-14	PPLLLL
8649-02J	GA1550 MD2	2.5	103.6892	5.889131	0.0004364	0.0026268	-0.3483871	0.1453805	0.0105175	0.004657	15.4403	0.4311258	15.27859	0.8929389	98.98164	5.203596	1.86E-16	2.88E-15	PPLLLL

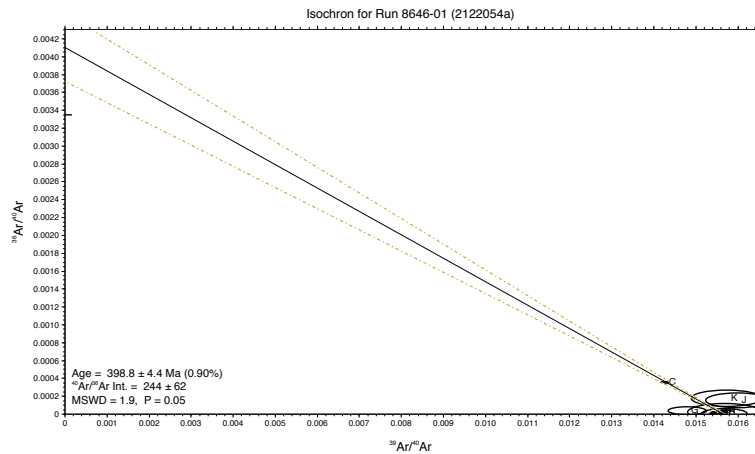
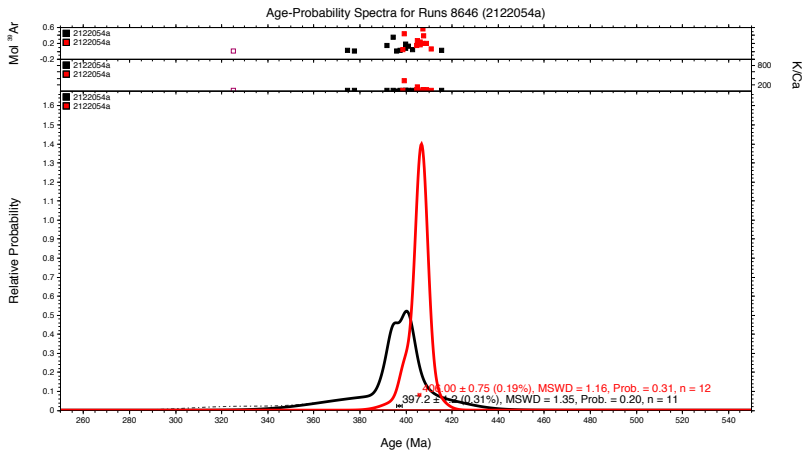
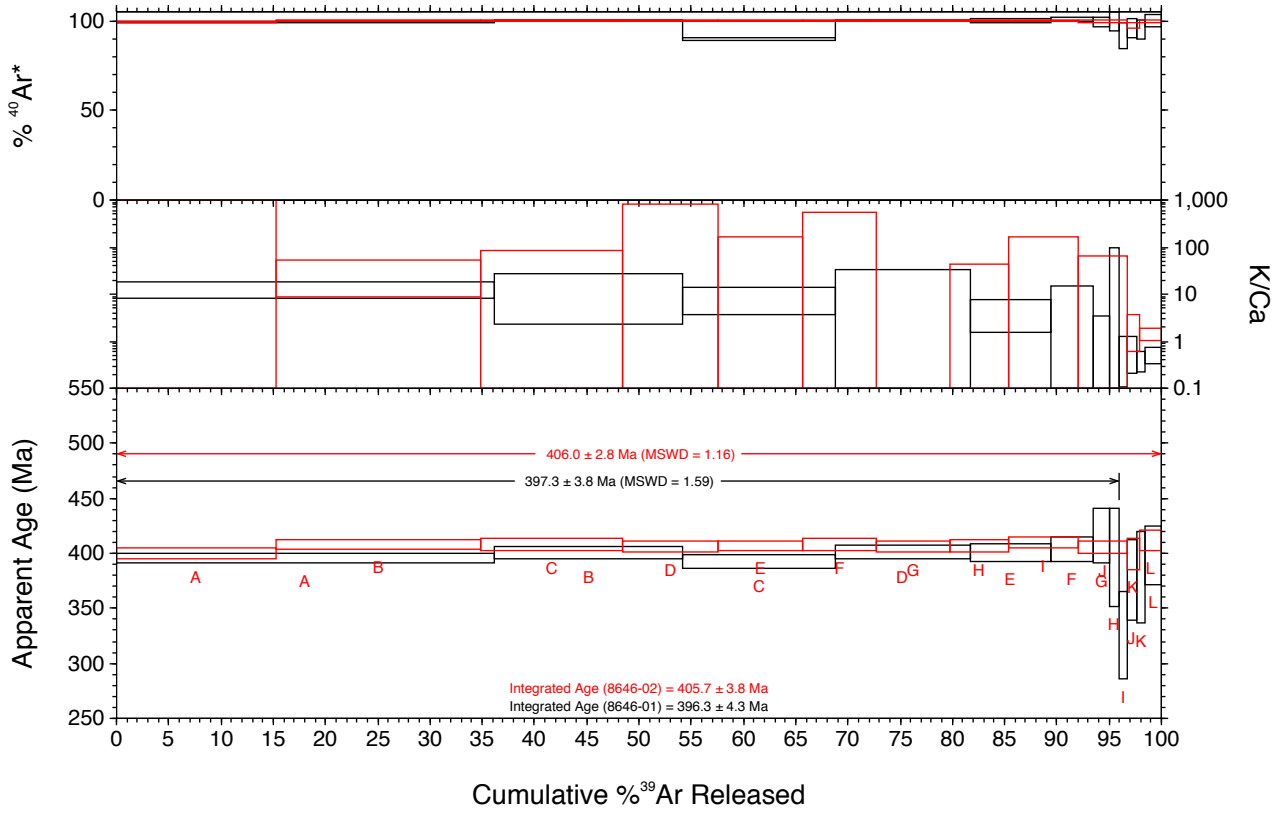
Appendix C: $^{40}\text{Ar}/^{39}\text{Ar}$ geochronology step-heating spectra, ideograms and isochrons.

Granite Springs Granite (2122054b - plagioclase)



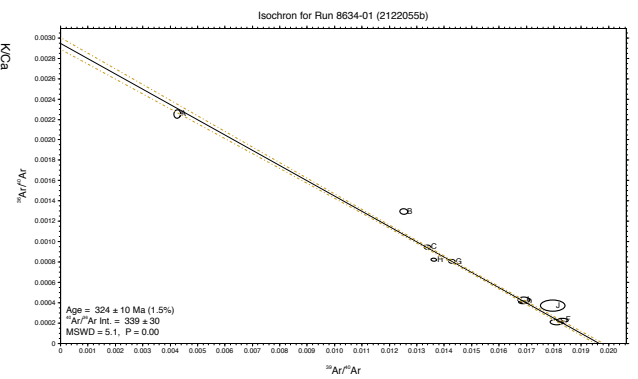
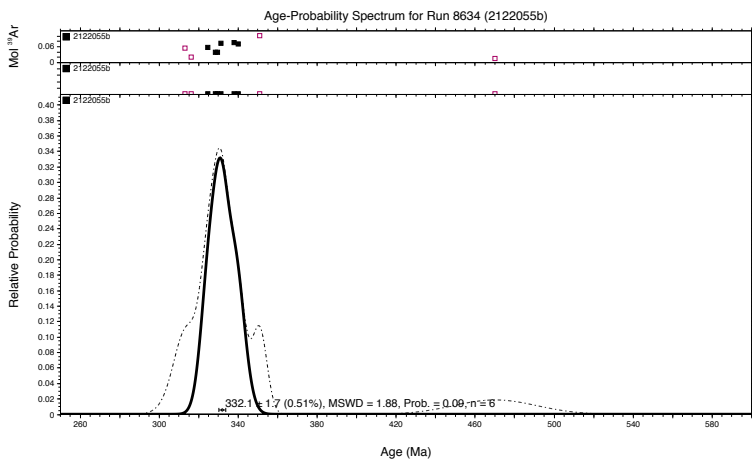
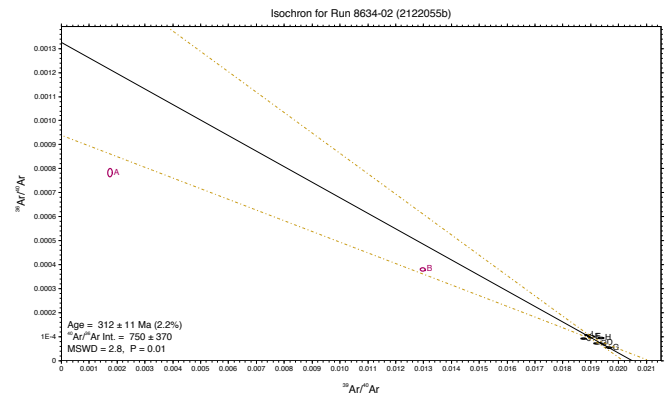
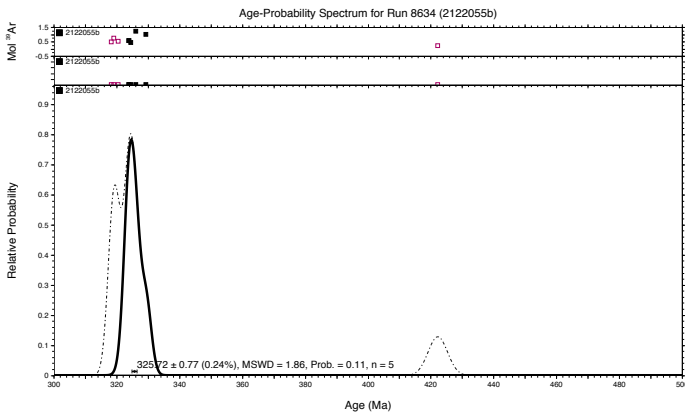
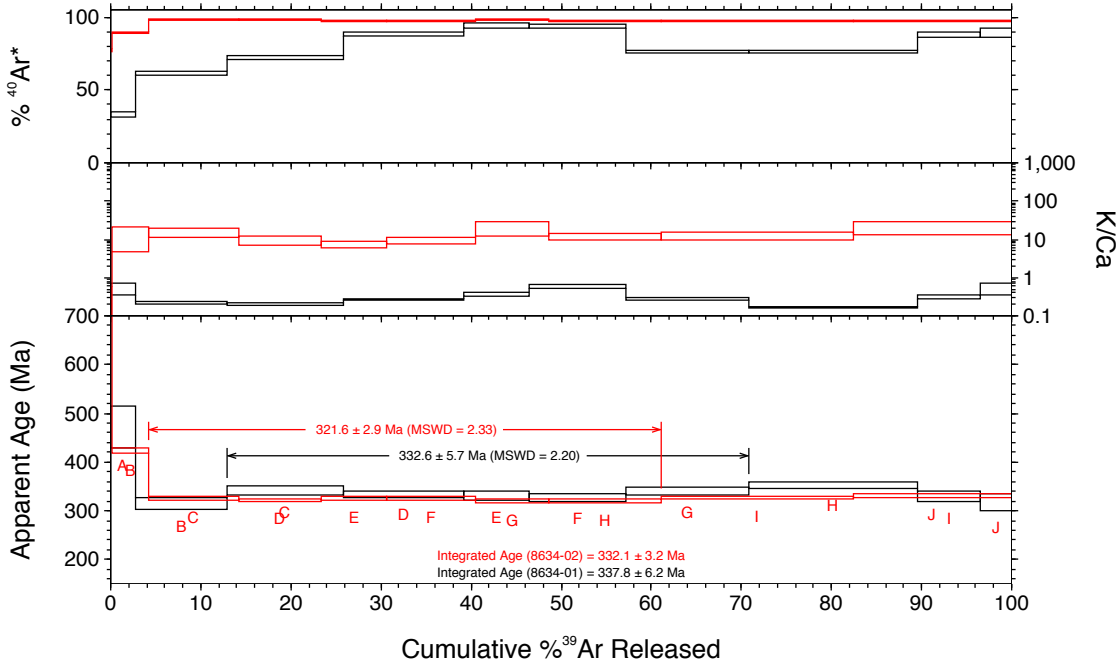
Granite Springs Granite (2122054a - biotite)

2122054a (8646-01, 8646-02)

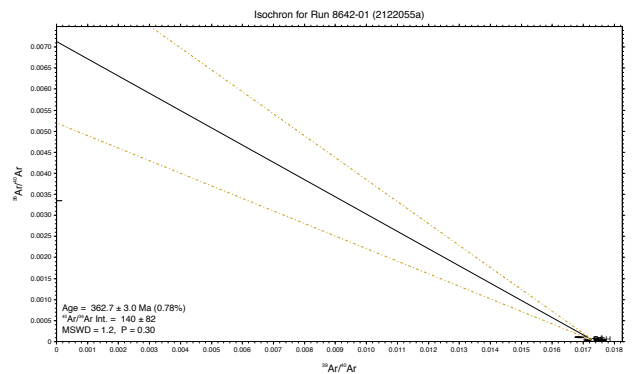
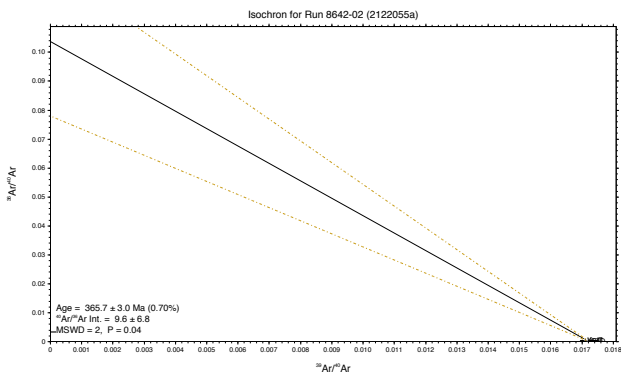
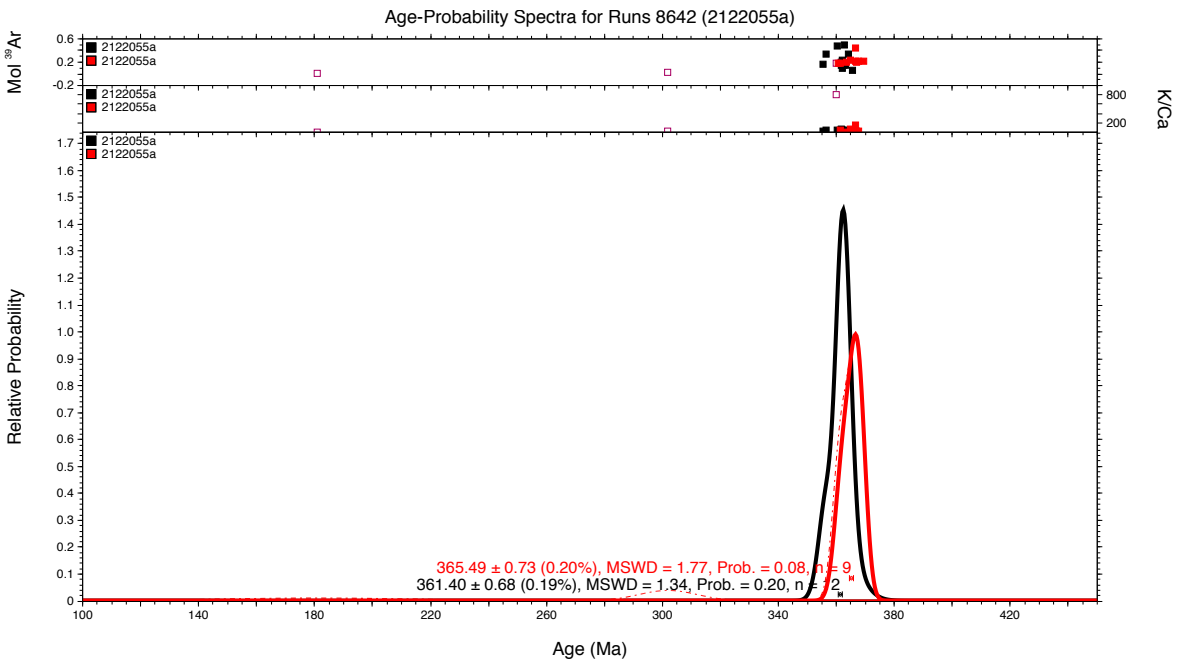
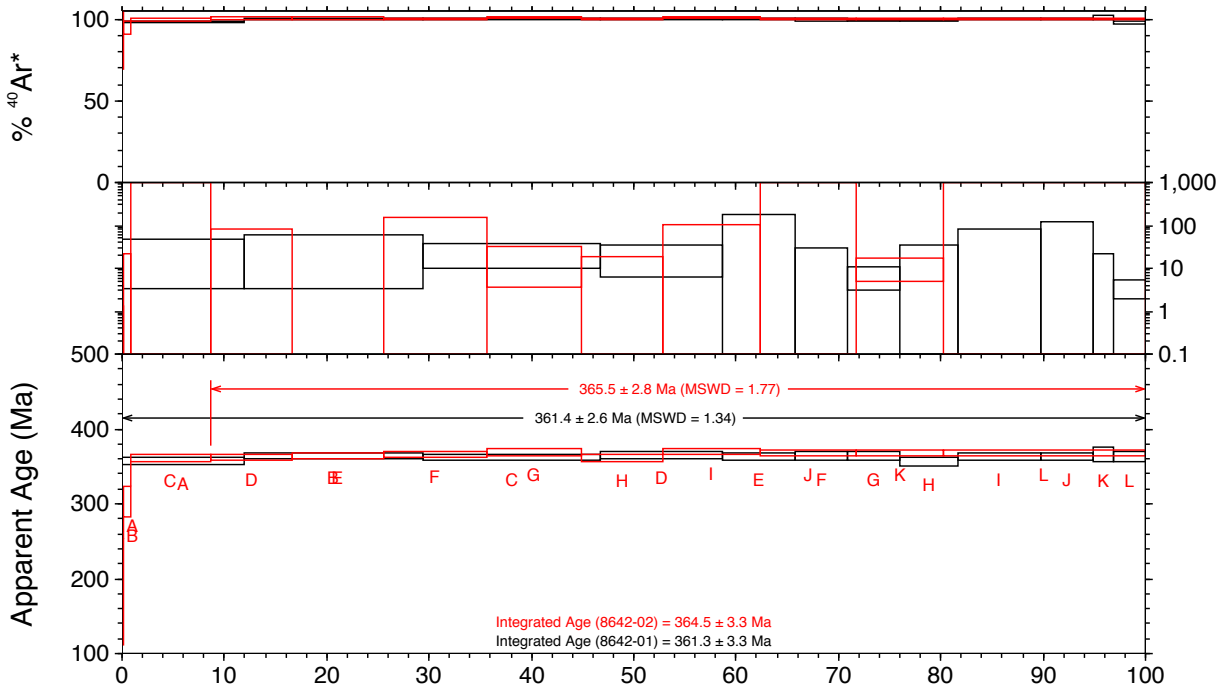


Hungerford Granite (2122055b - plagioclase)

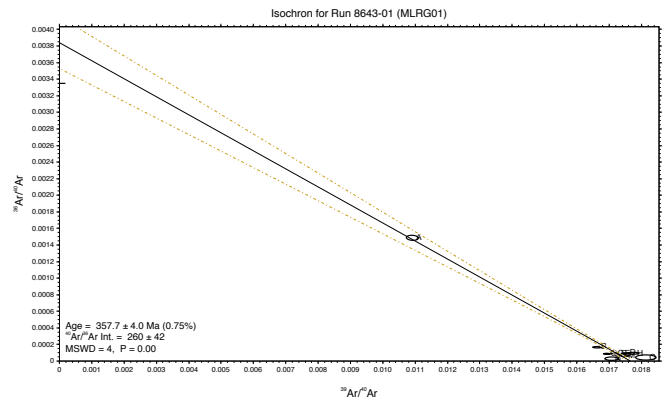
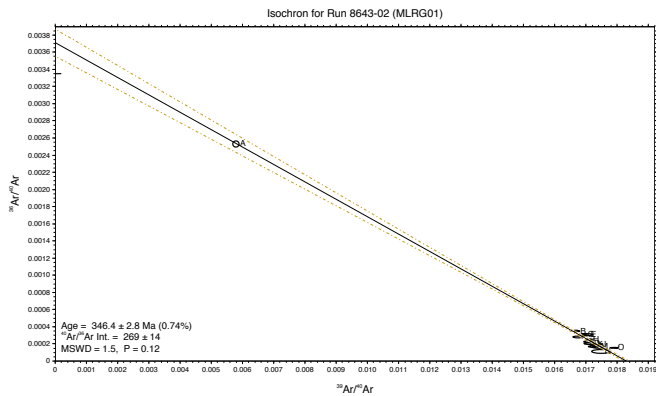
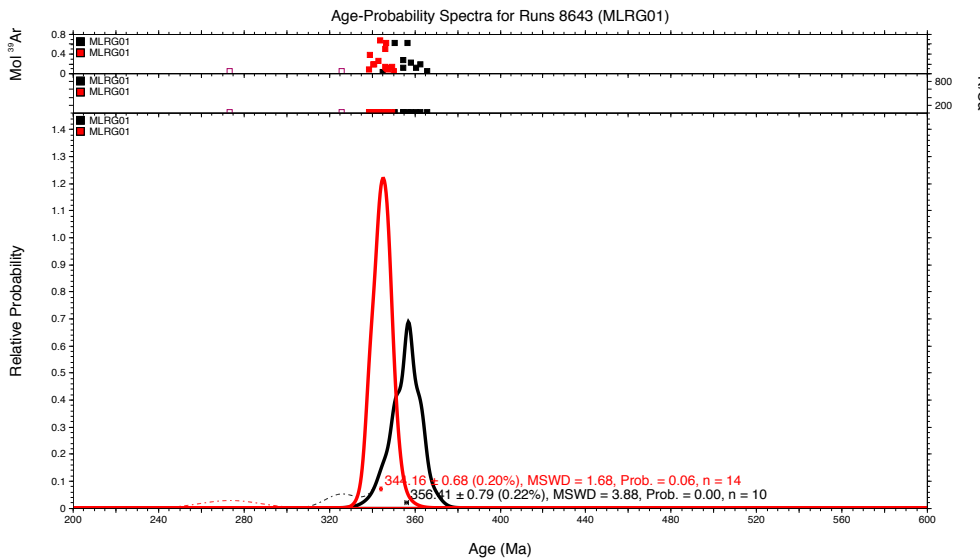
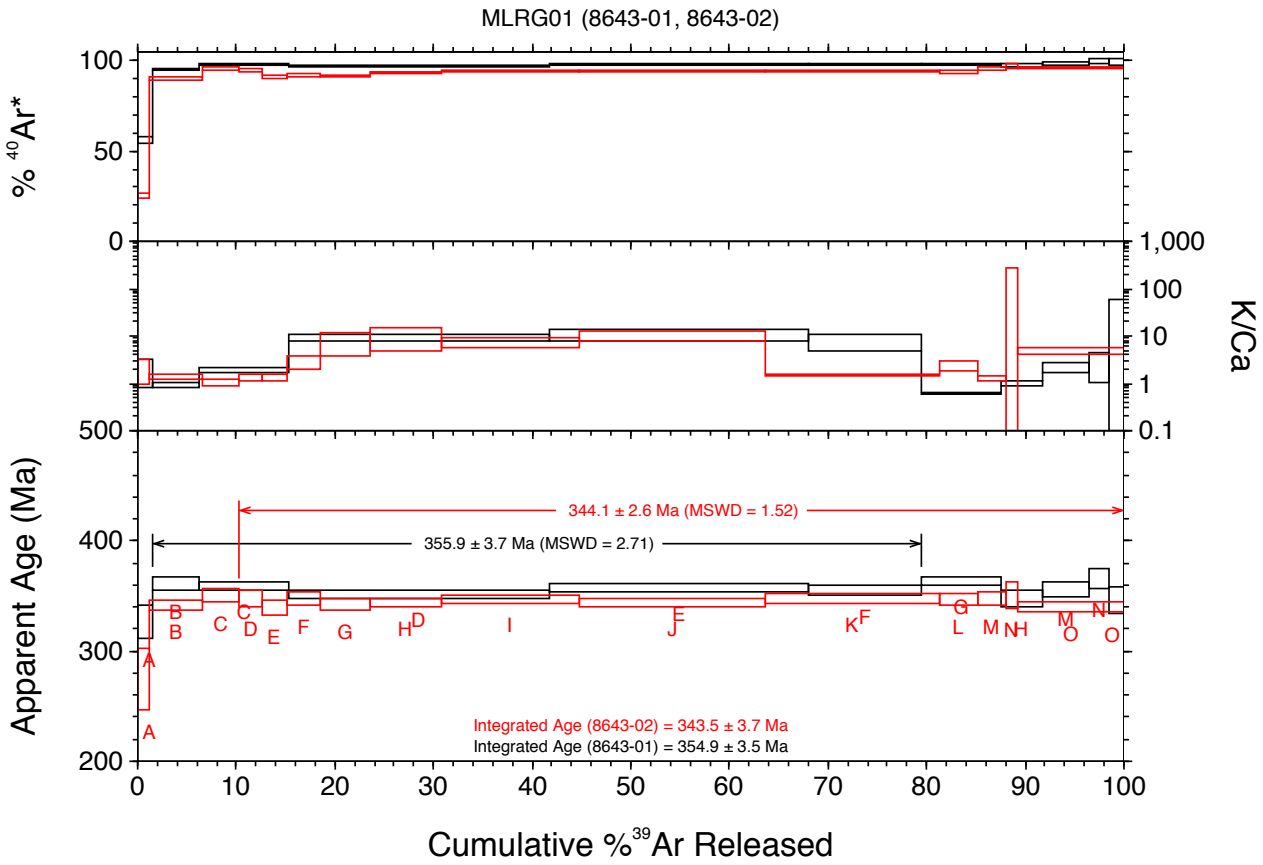
2122055b (8634-01, 8634-02)



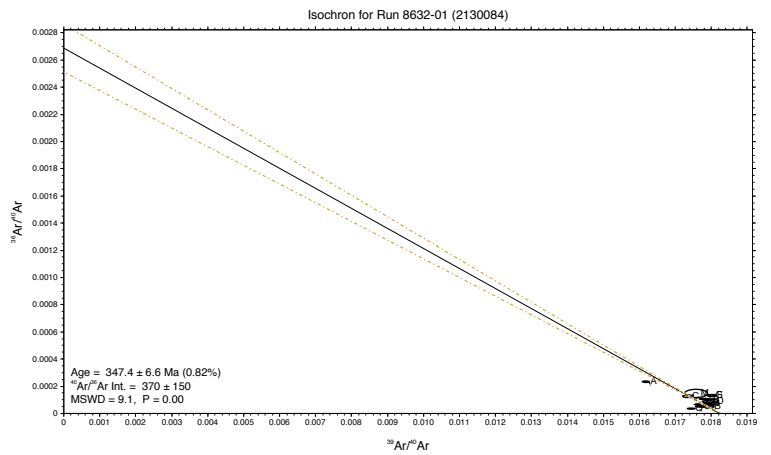
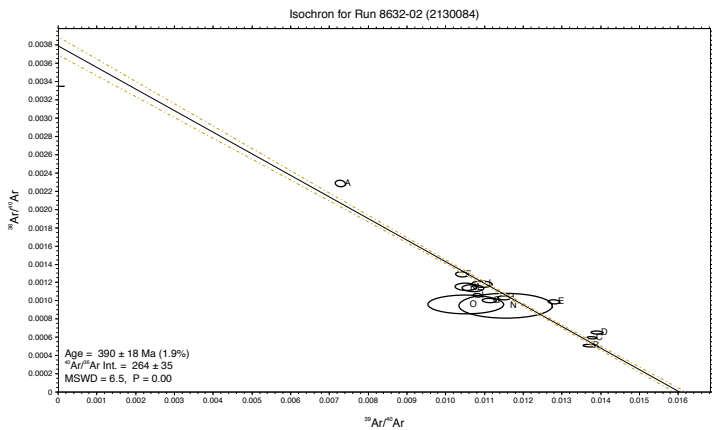
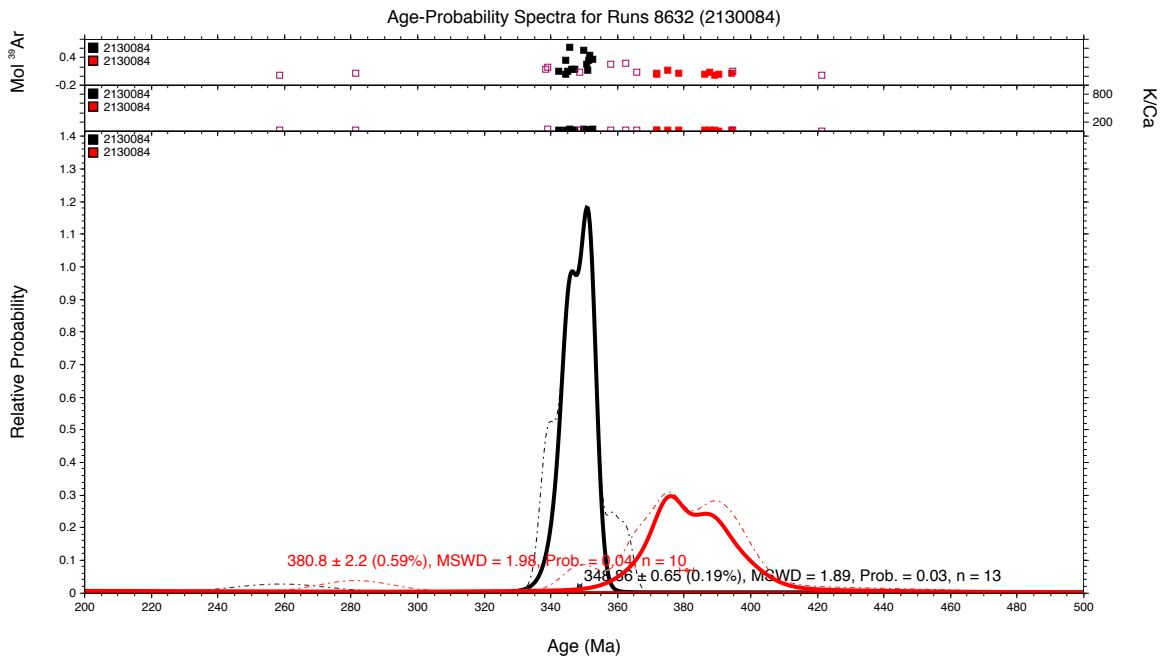
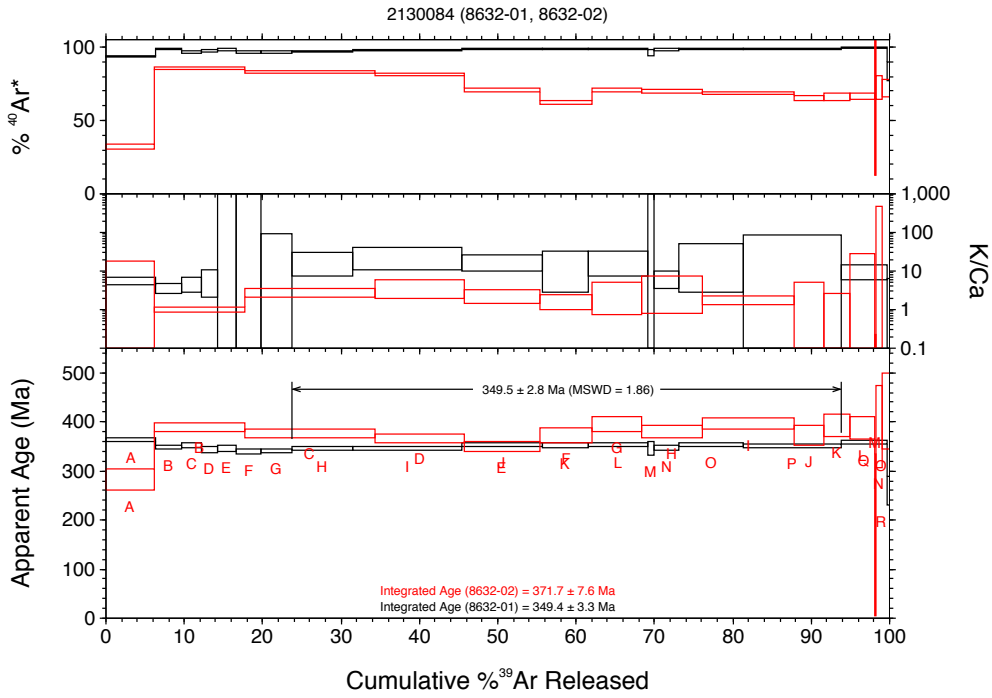
Hungerford Granite (2122055a - biotite)



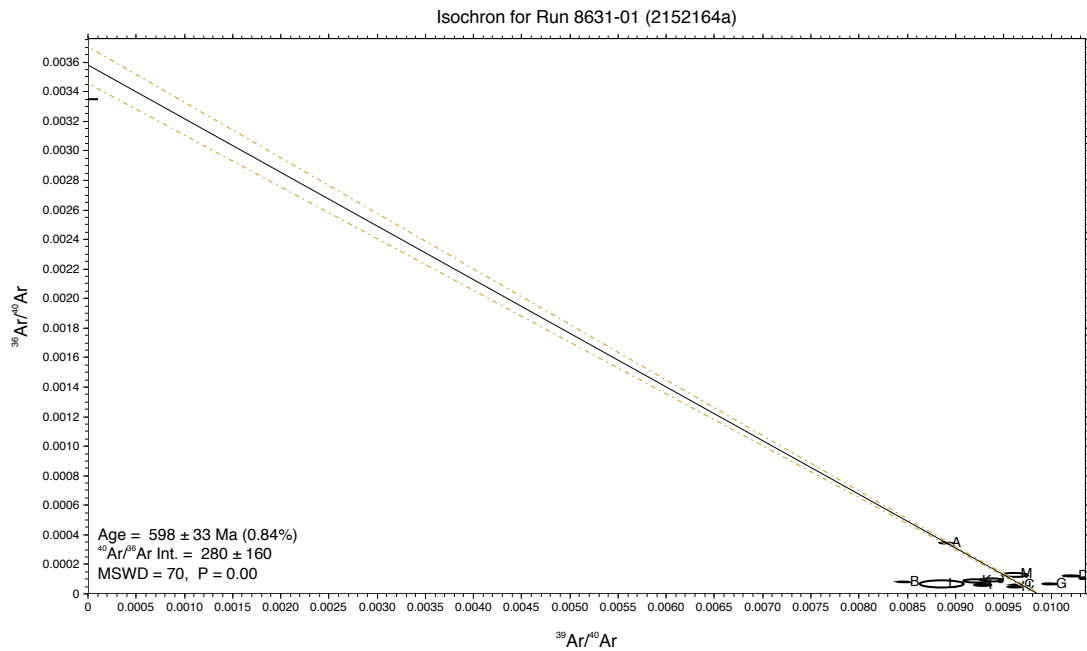
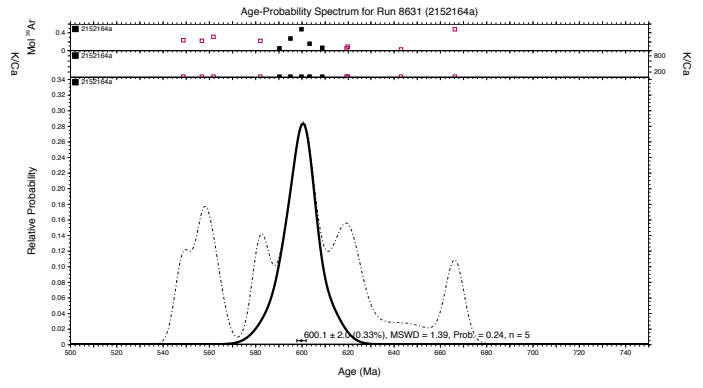
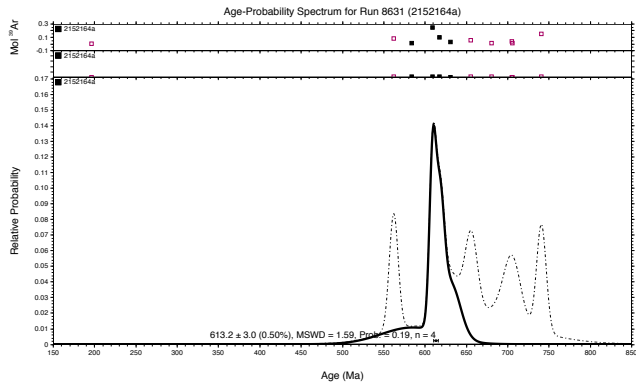
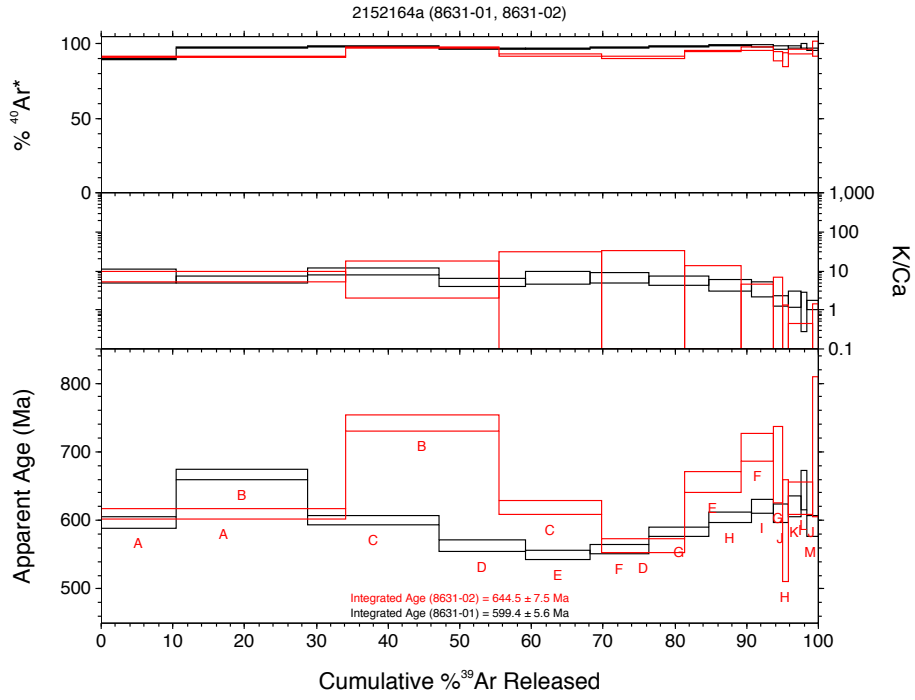
Retreat Granite (MLRG01 - *k*-feldspar)



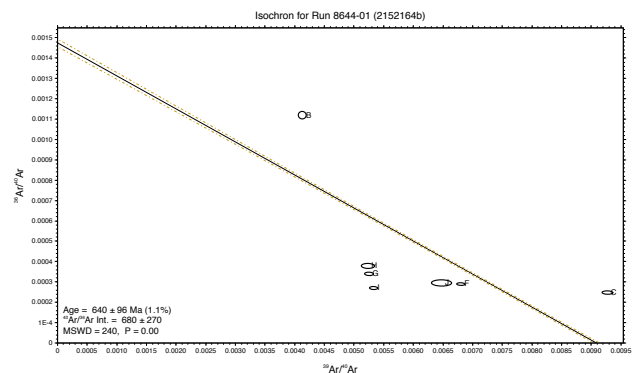
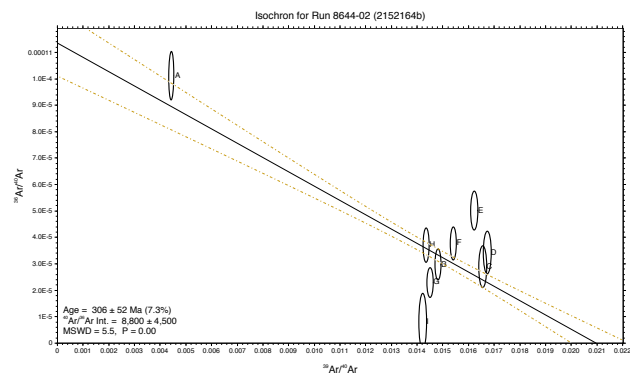
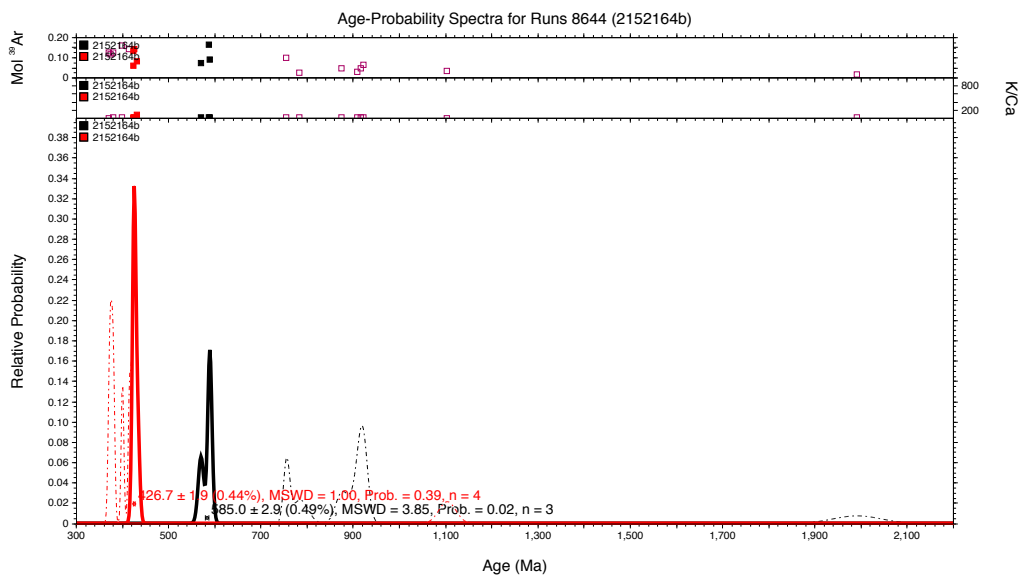
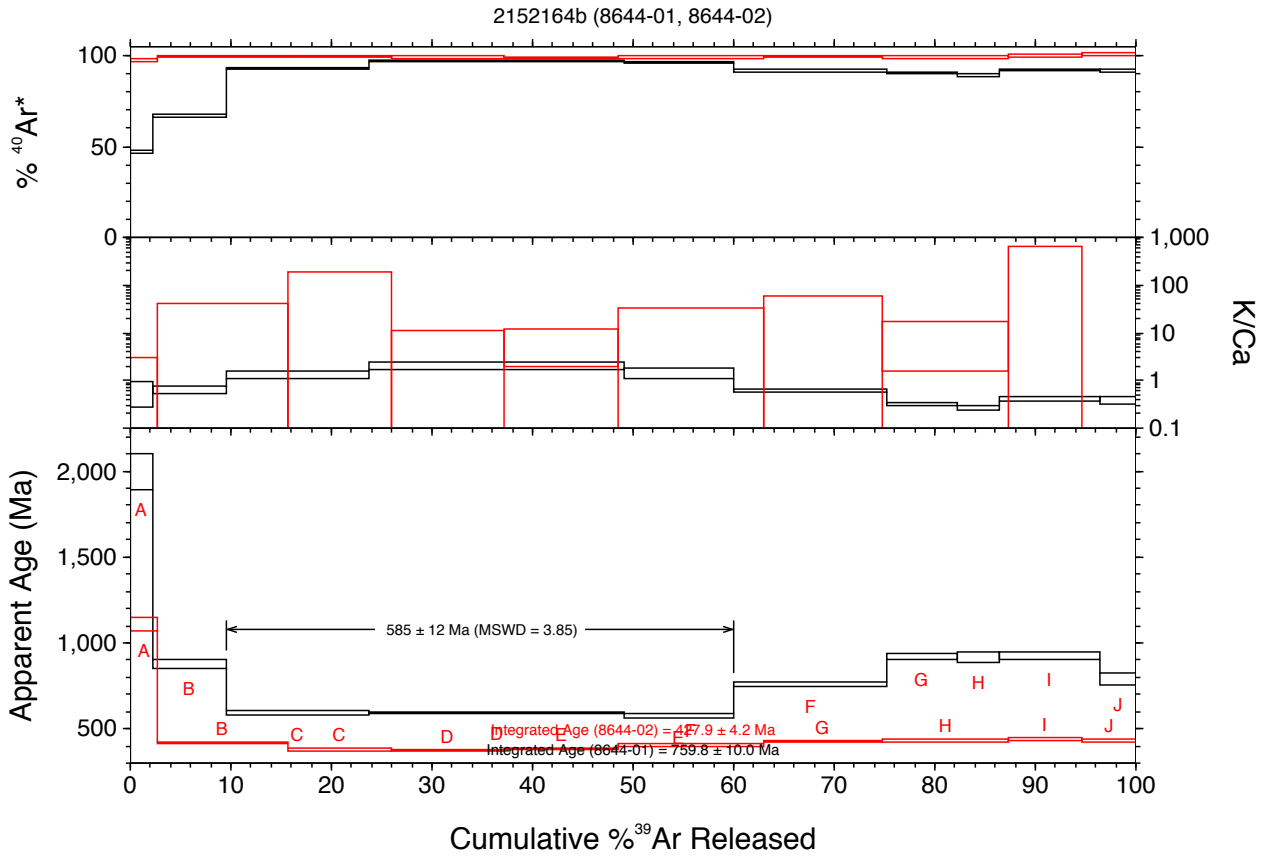
Thunderbolt 1 (2130084 - plagioclase)



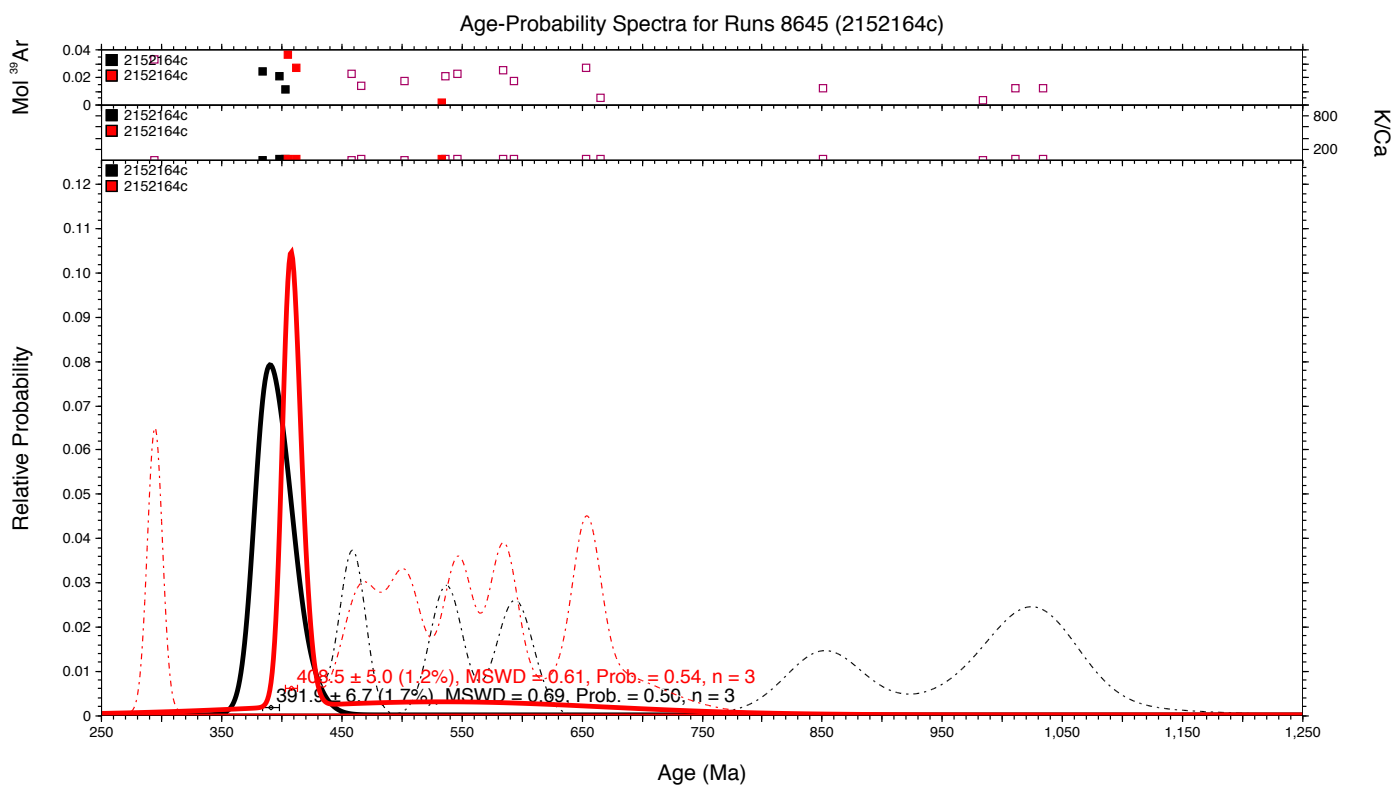
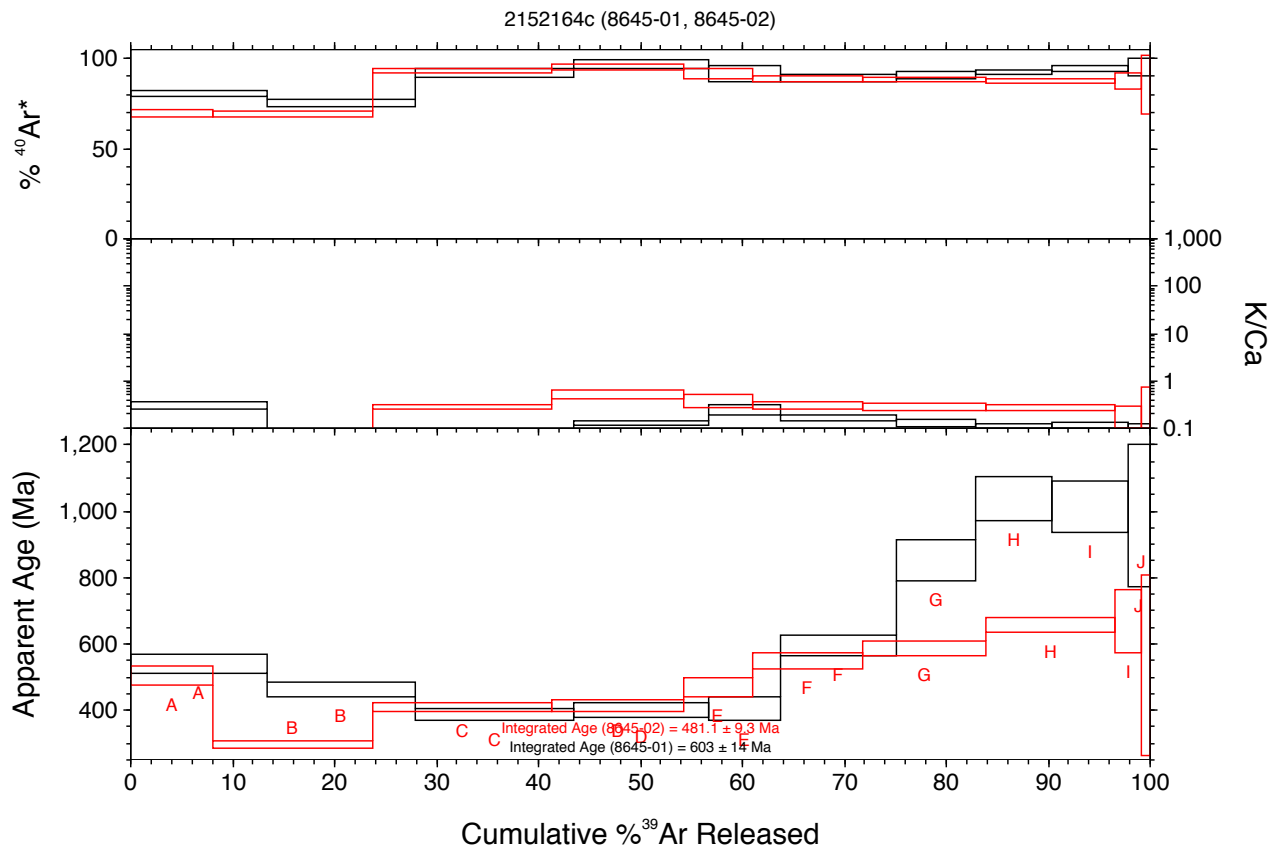
Ooroonoo 1 (2152164a - biotite)



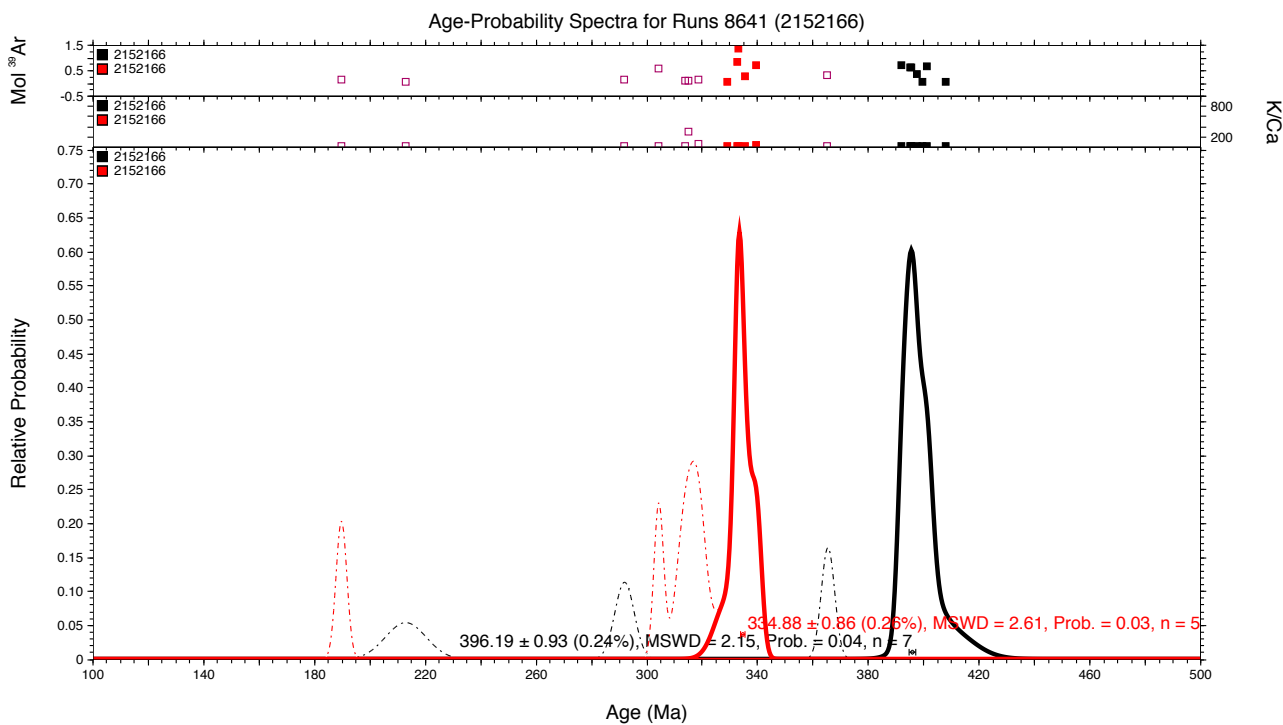
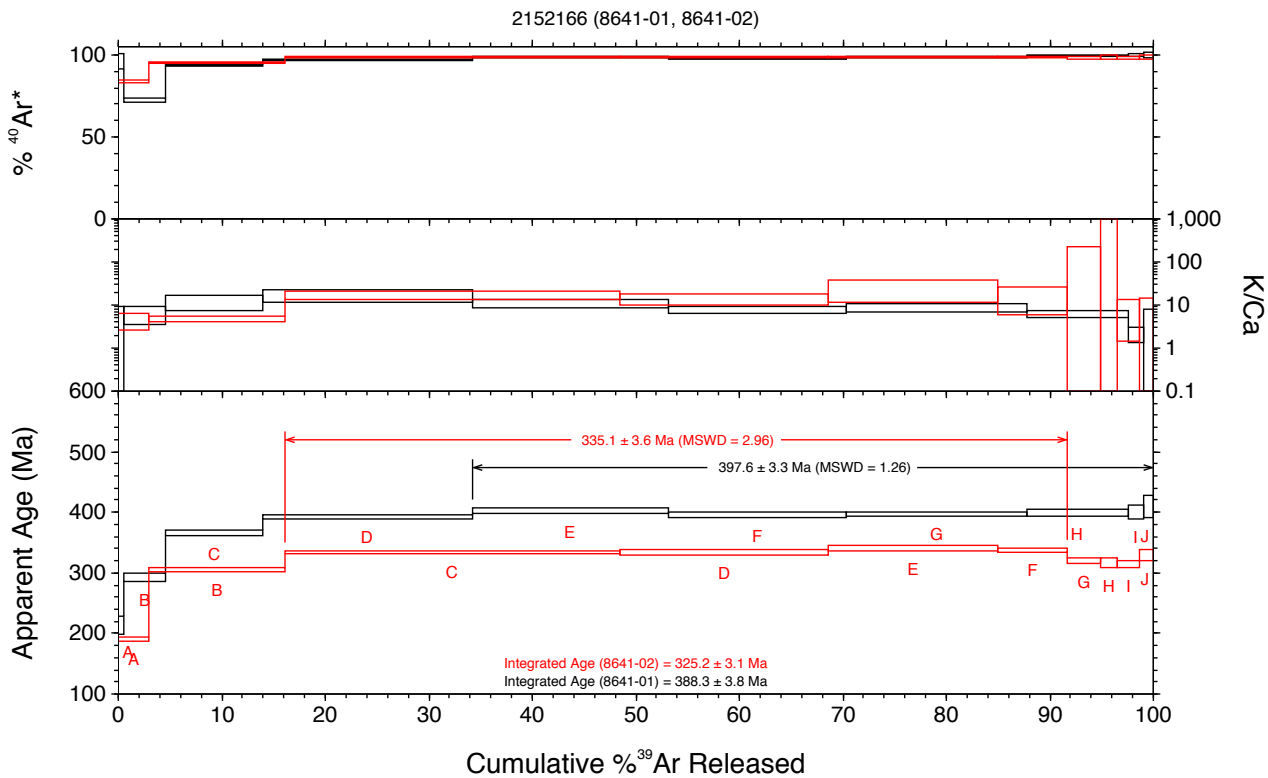
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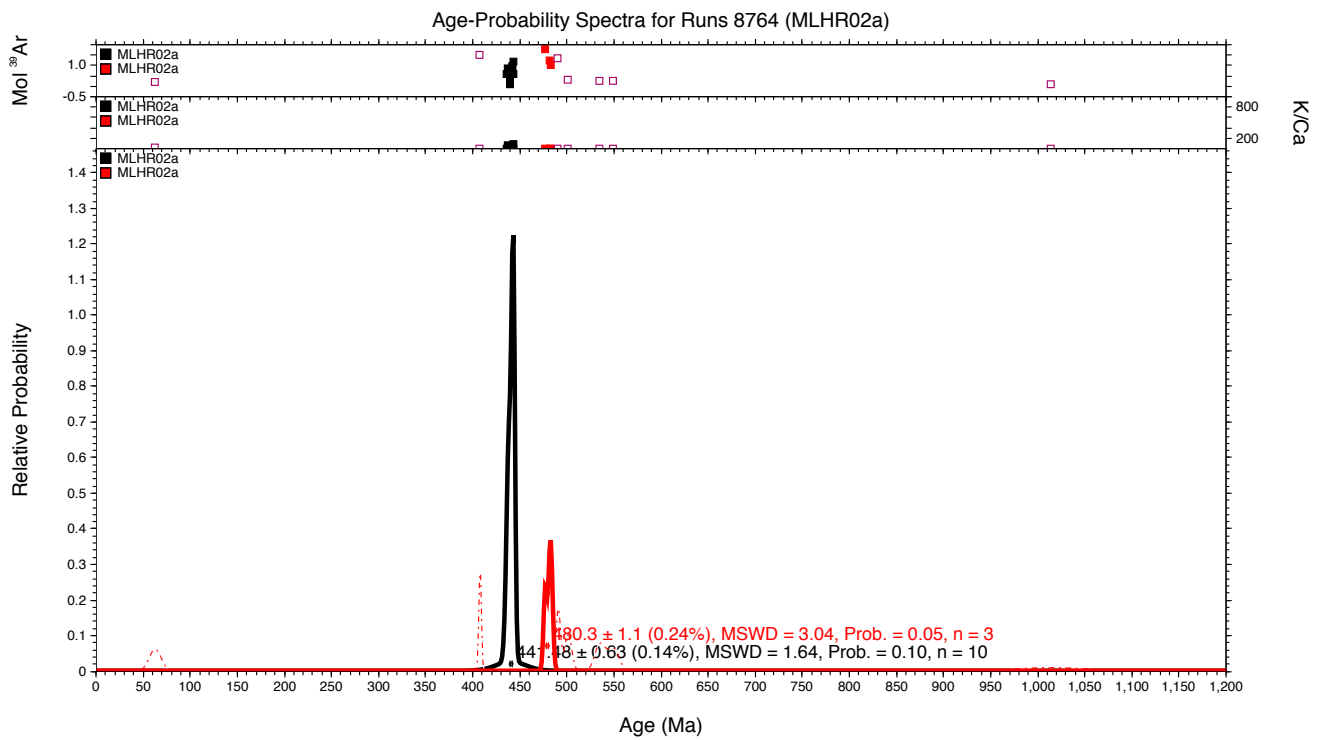
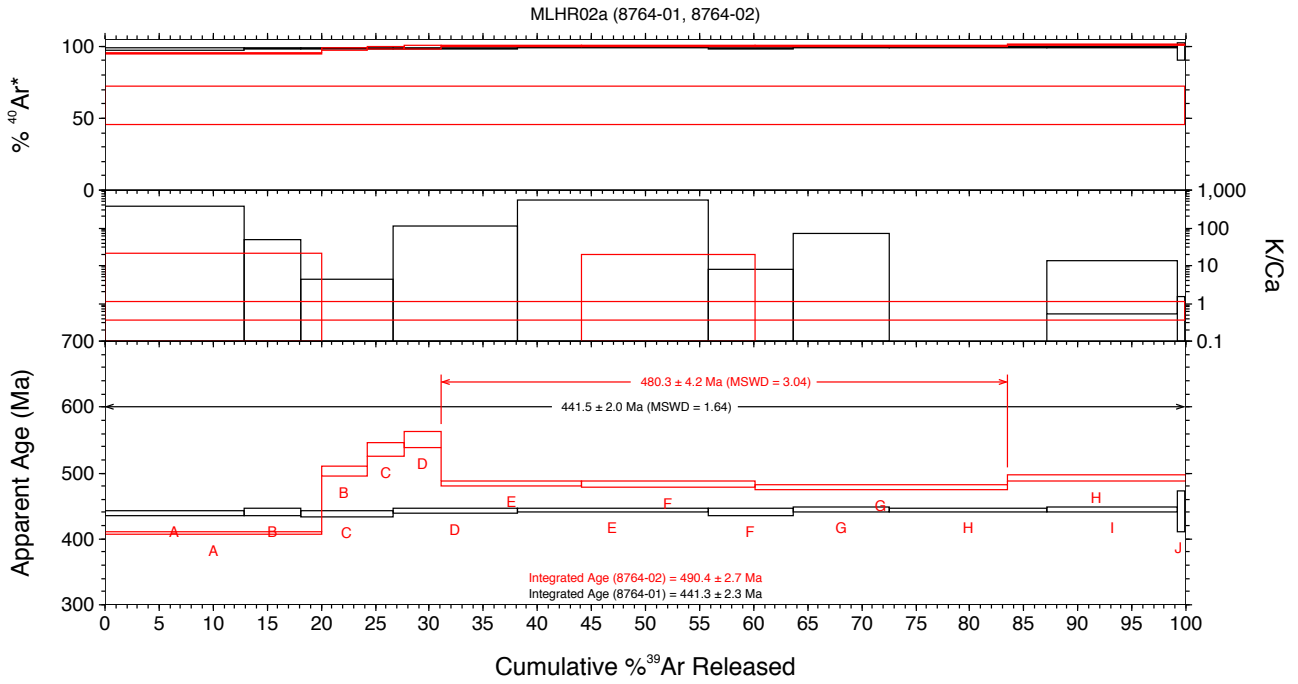
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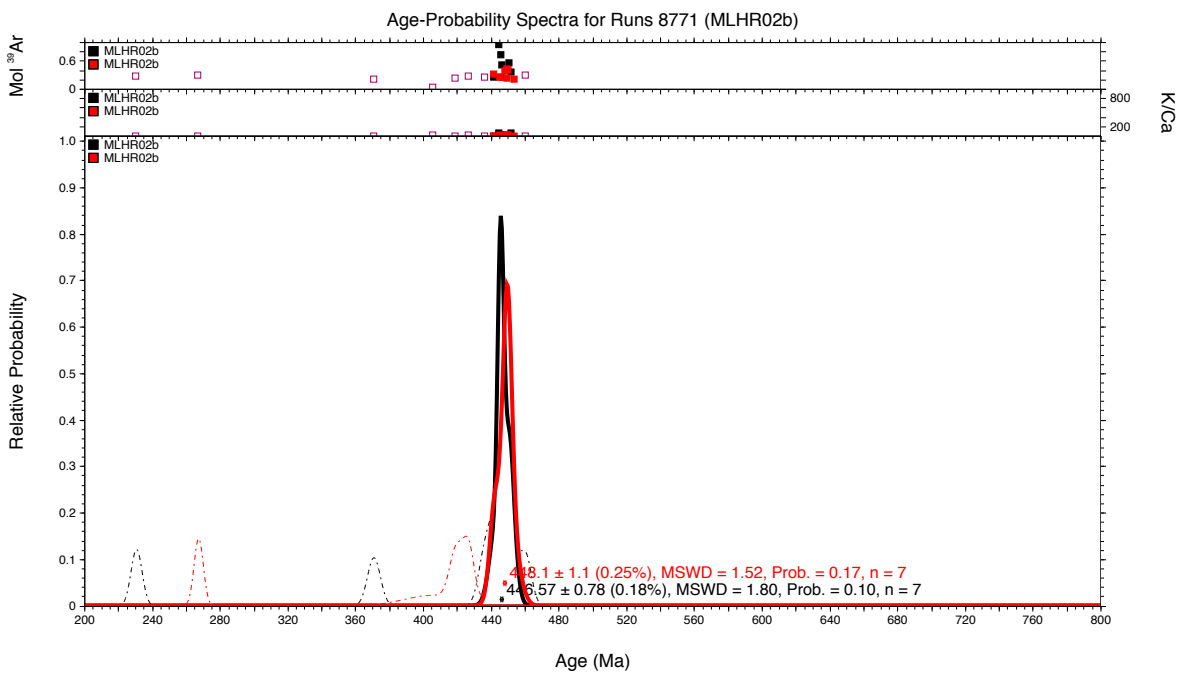
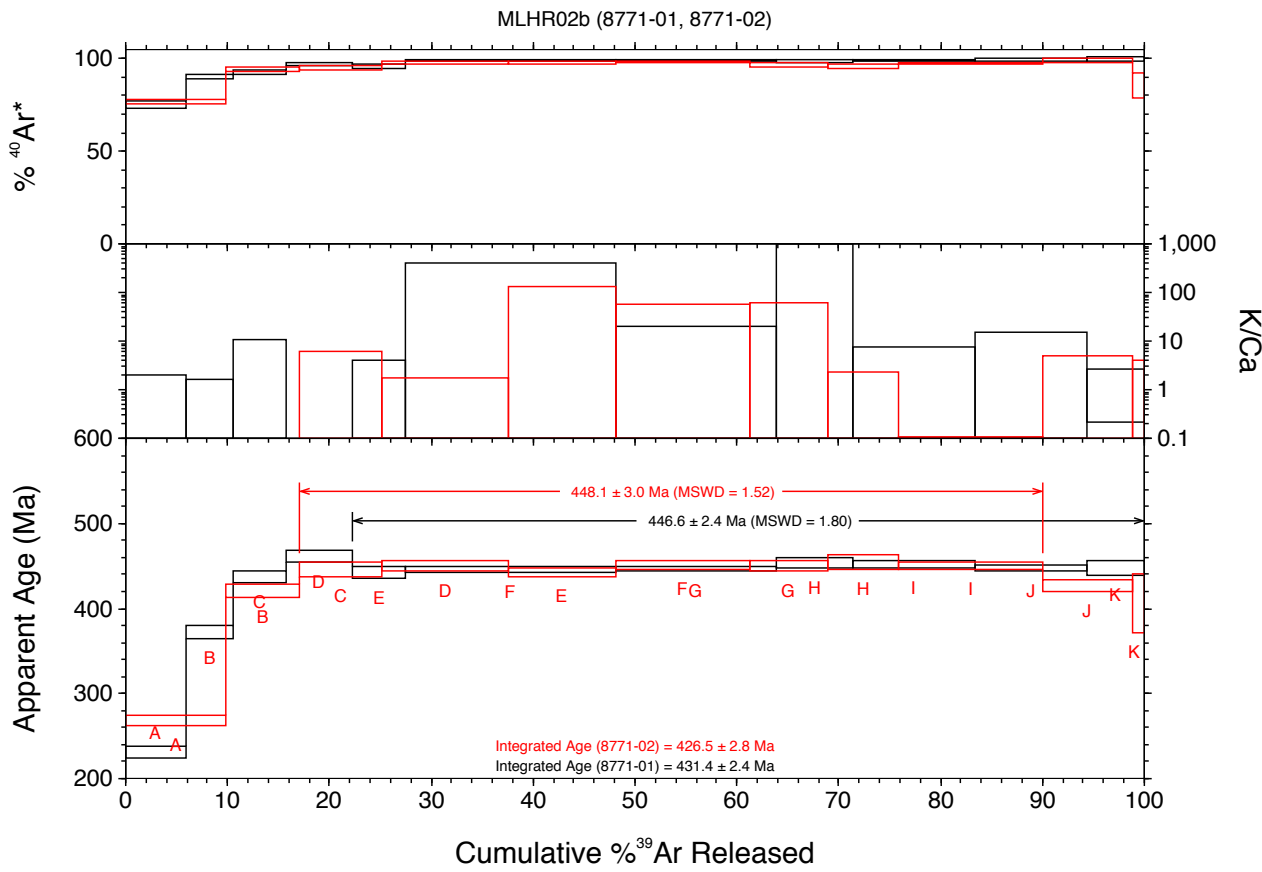
Sefton Metamorphics (2152166 - amphibole)



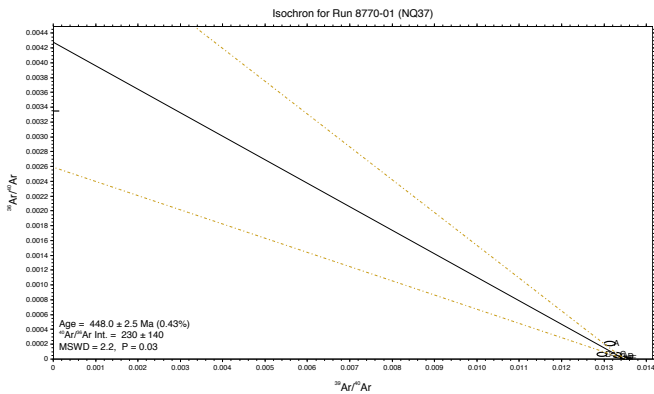
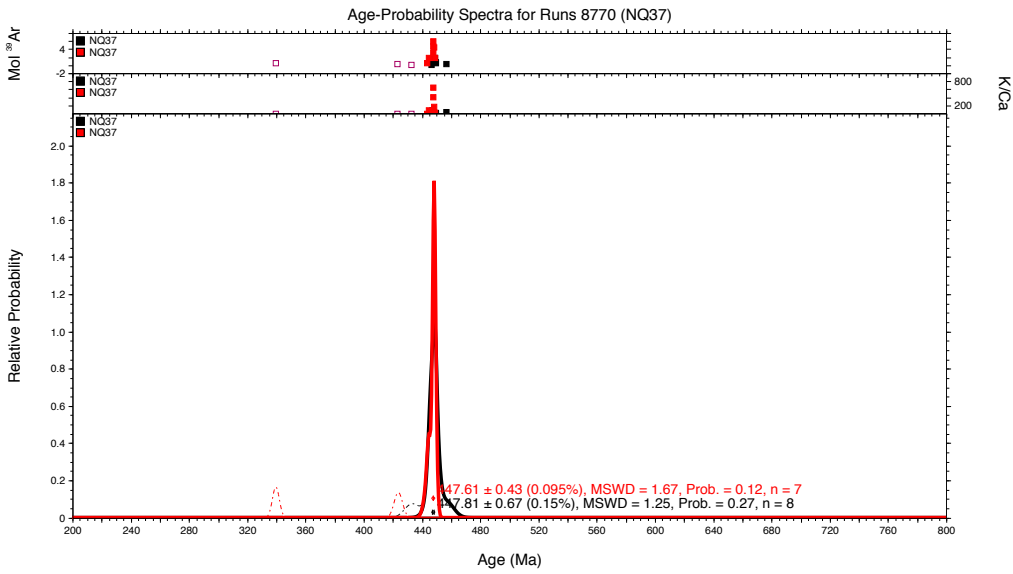
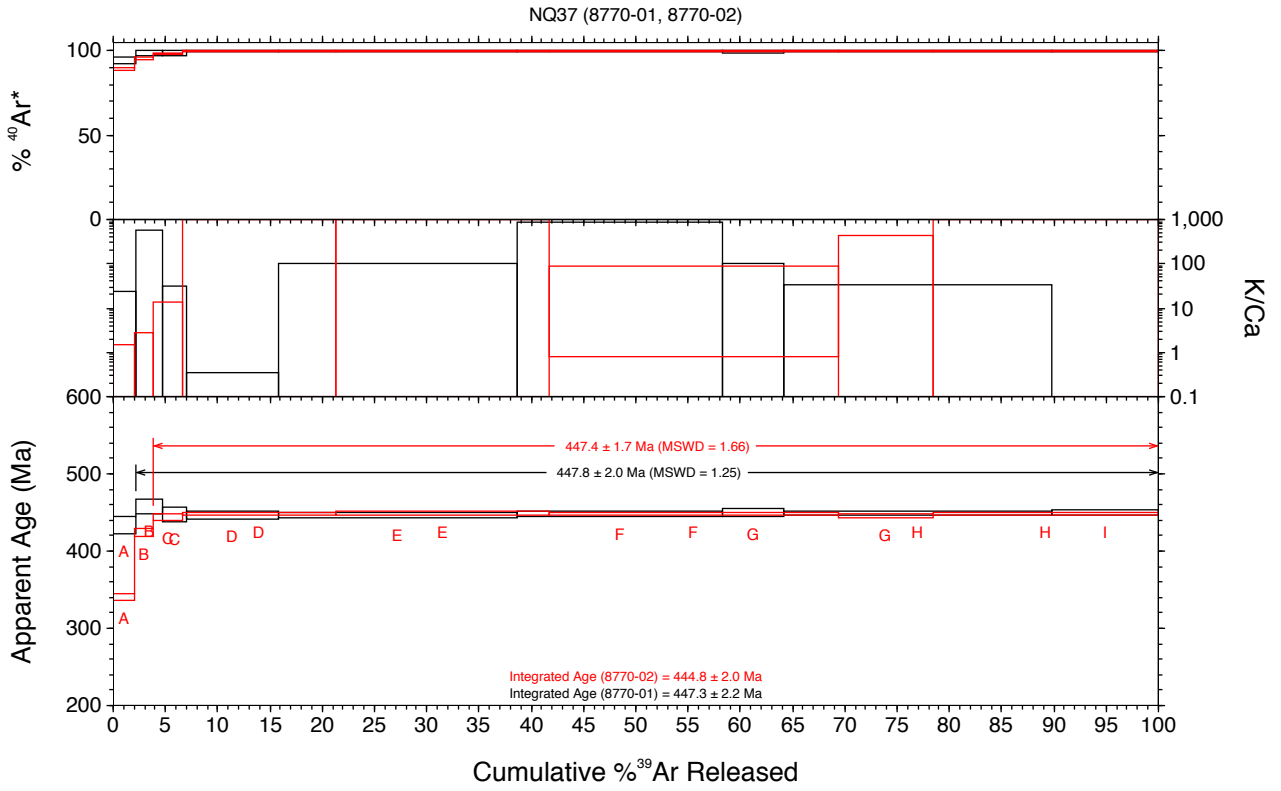
Halls Reward Metamorphics (MLHR02a - muscovite)



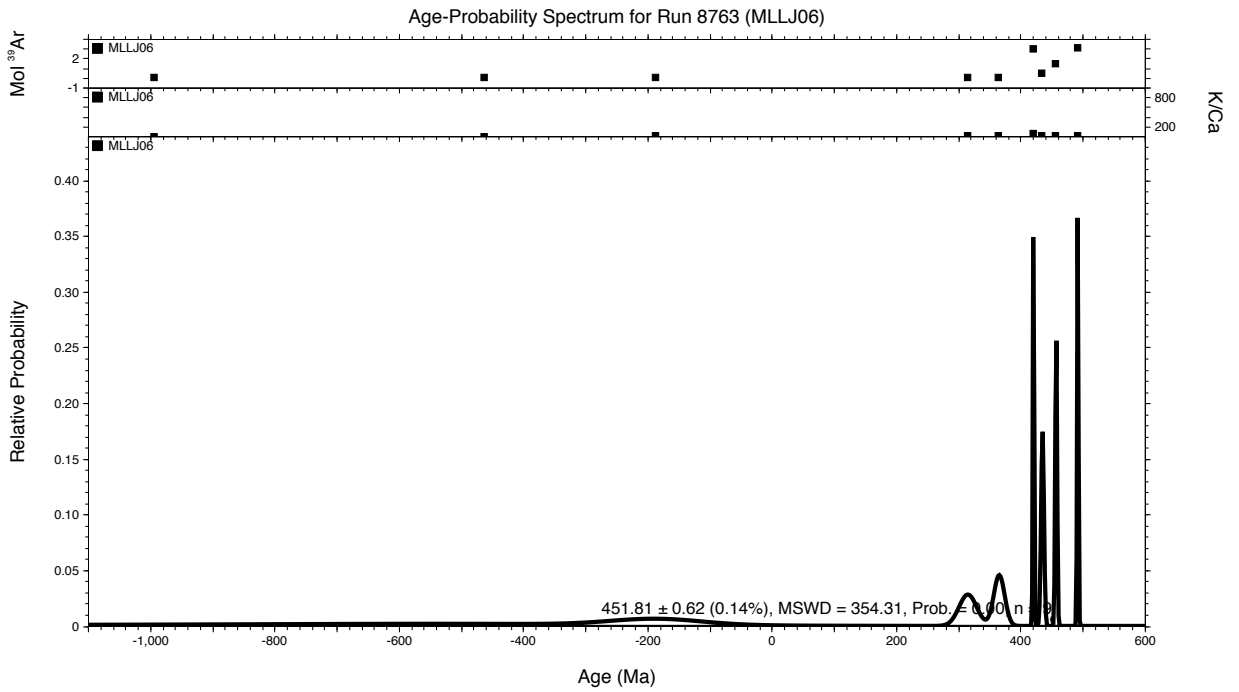
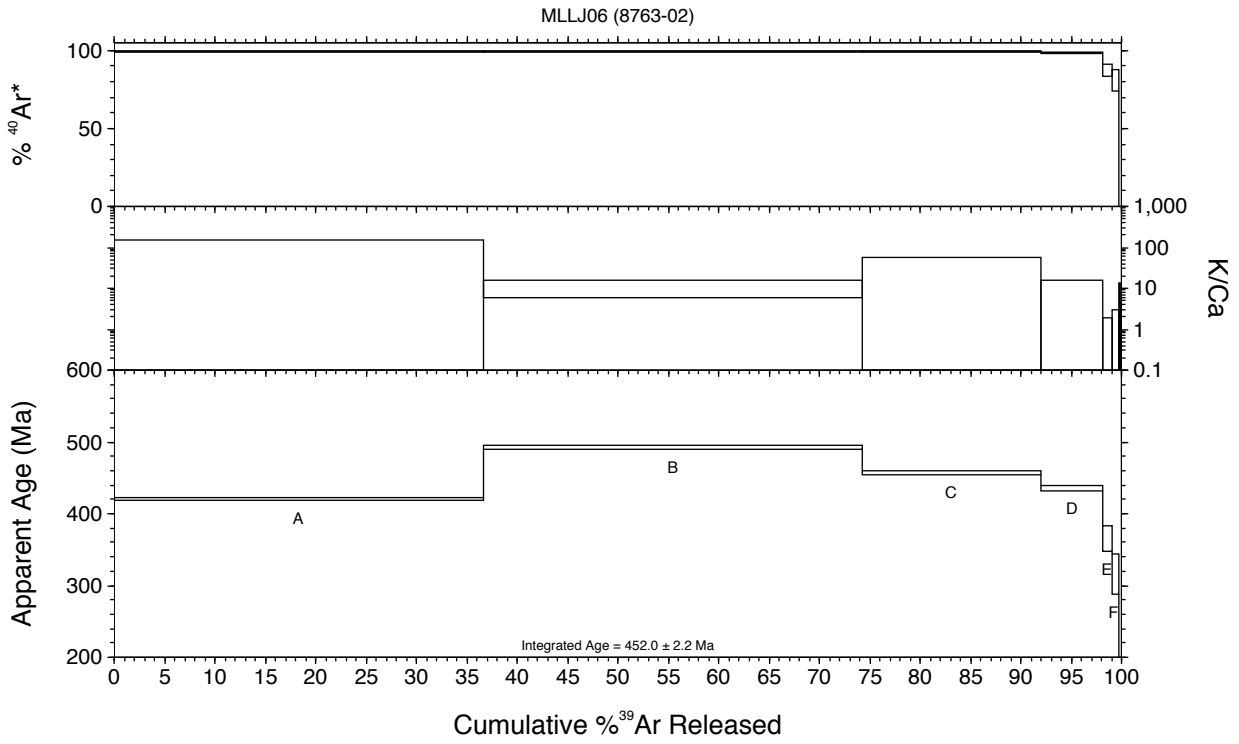
Halls Reward Metamorphics (MLHR02b - biotite)



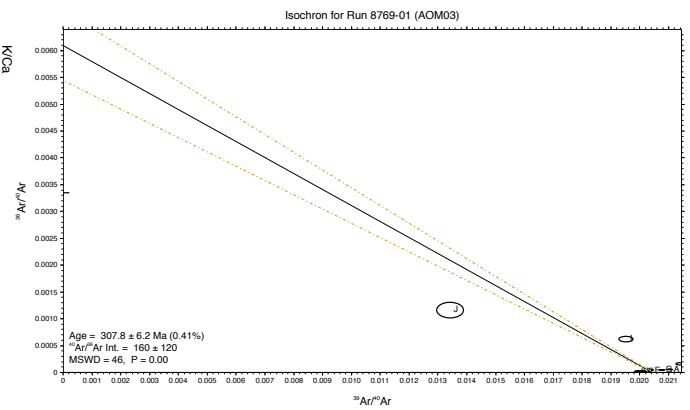
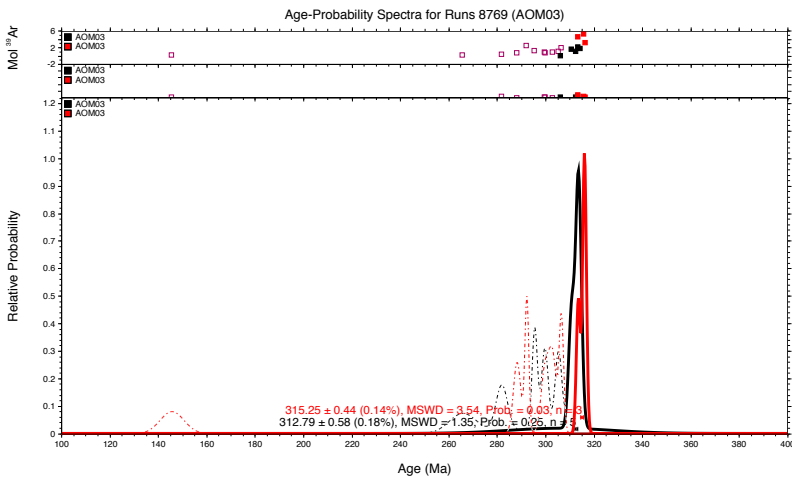
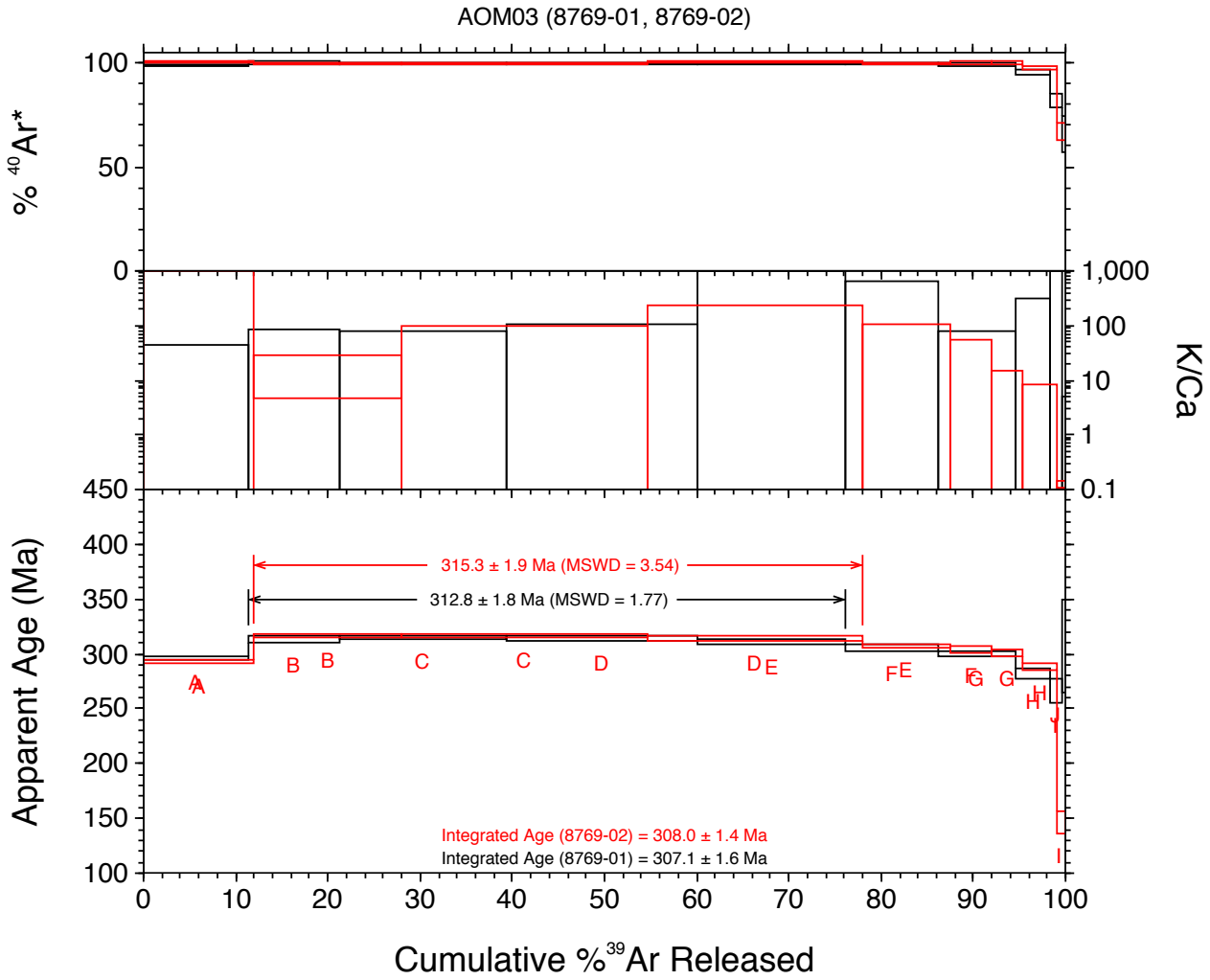
Halls Reward Metamorphics (NQ37 - muscovite)



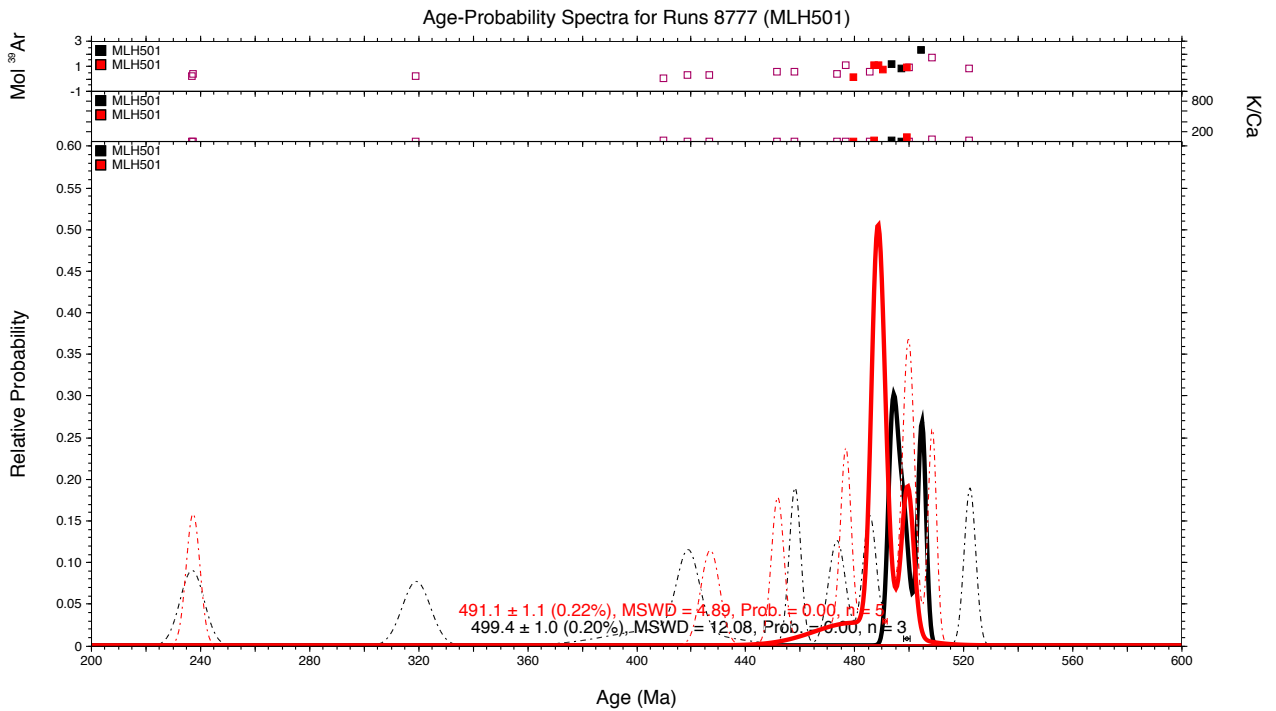
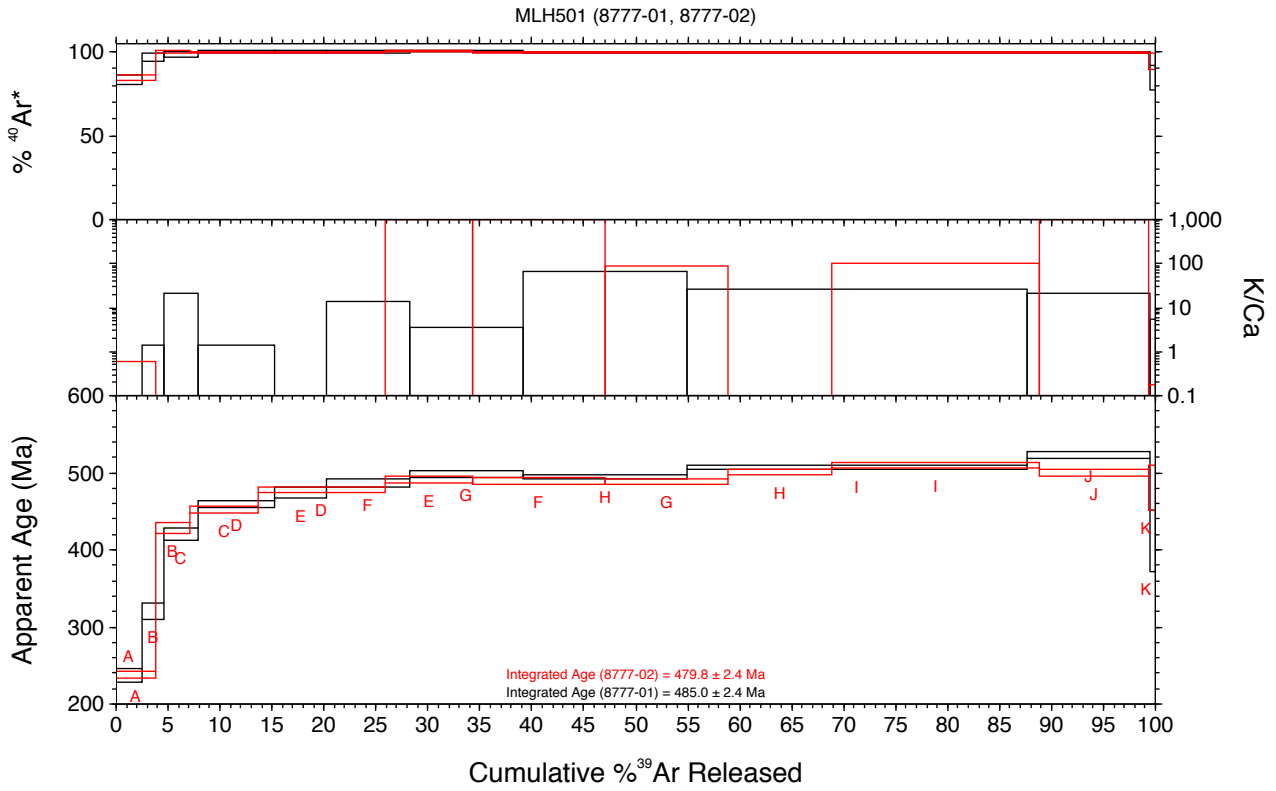
Les Jumelles beds (MLLJ06 - WR)



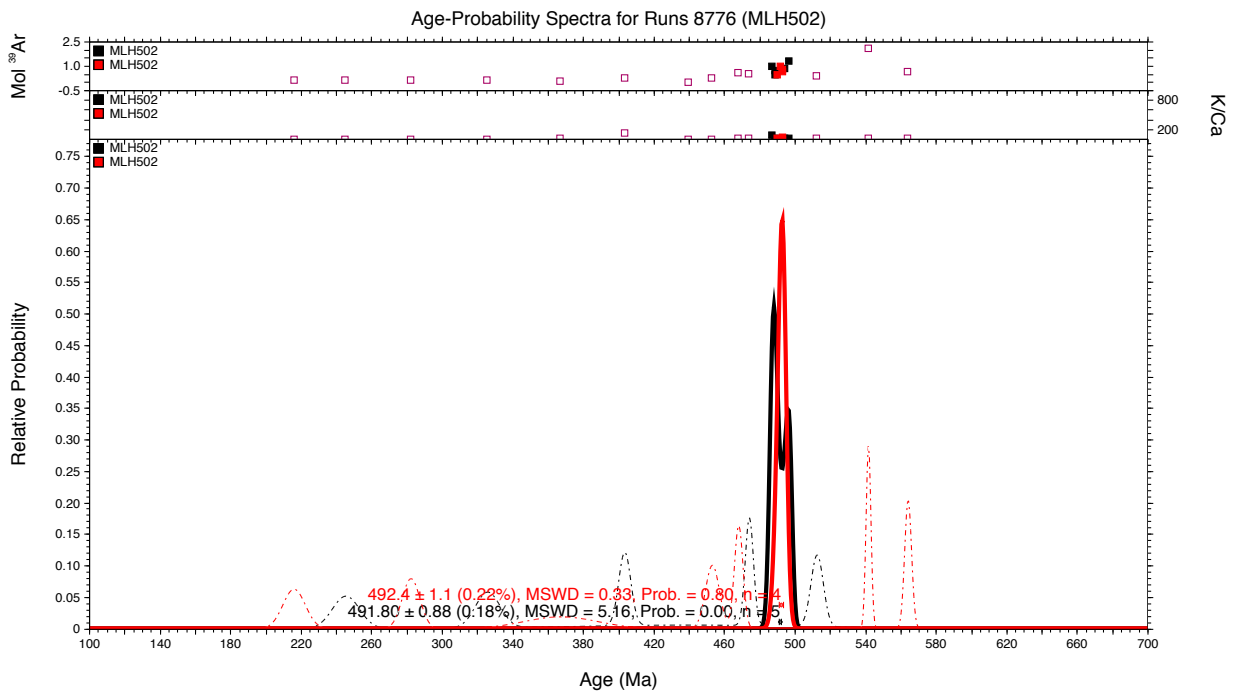
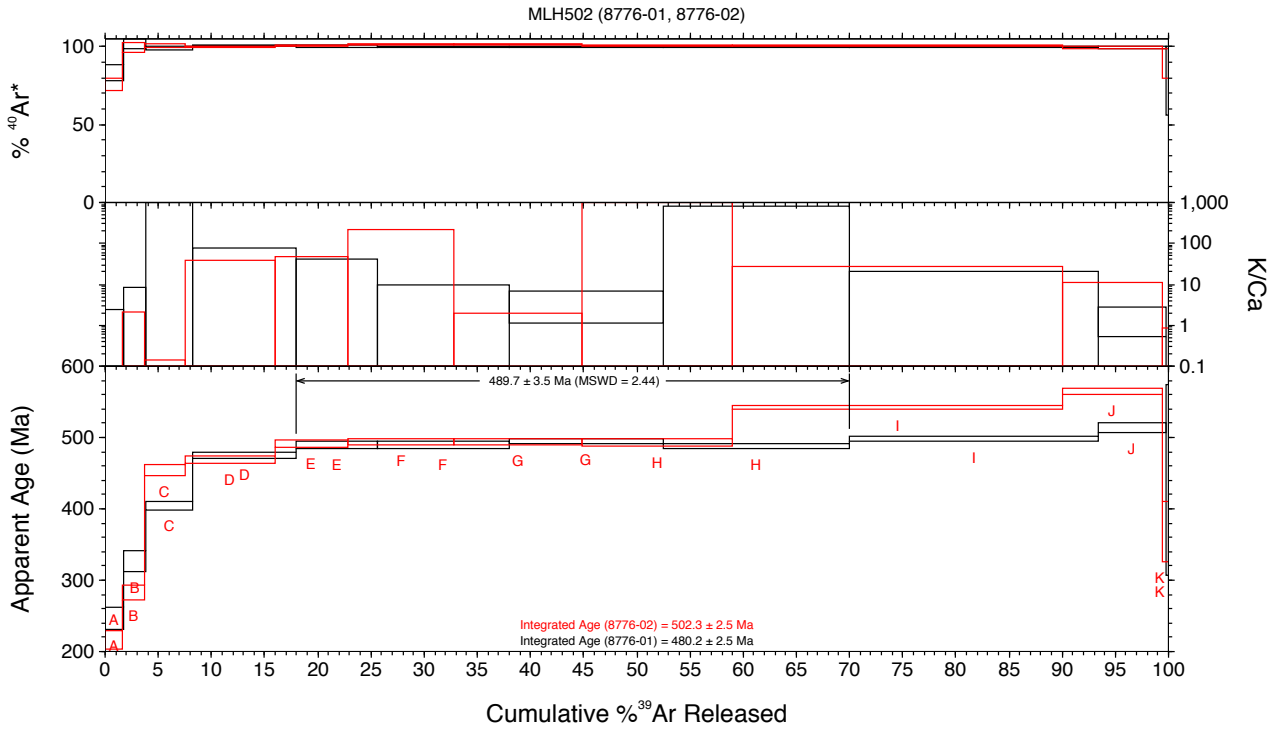
Mt. McLaren beds (AOM03 - WR)



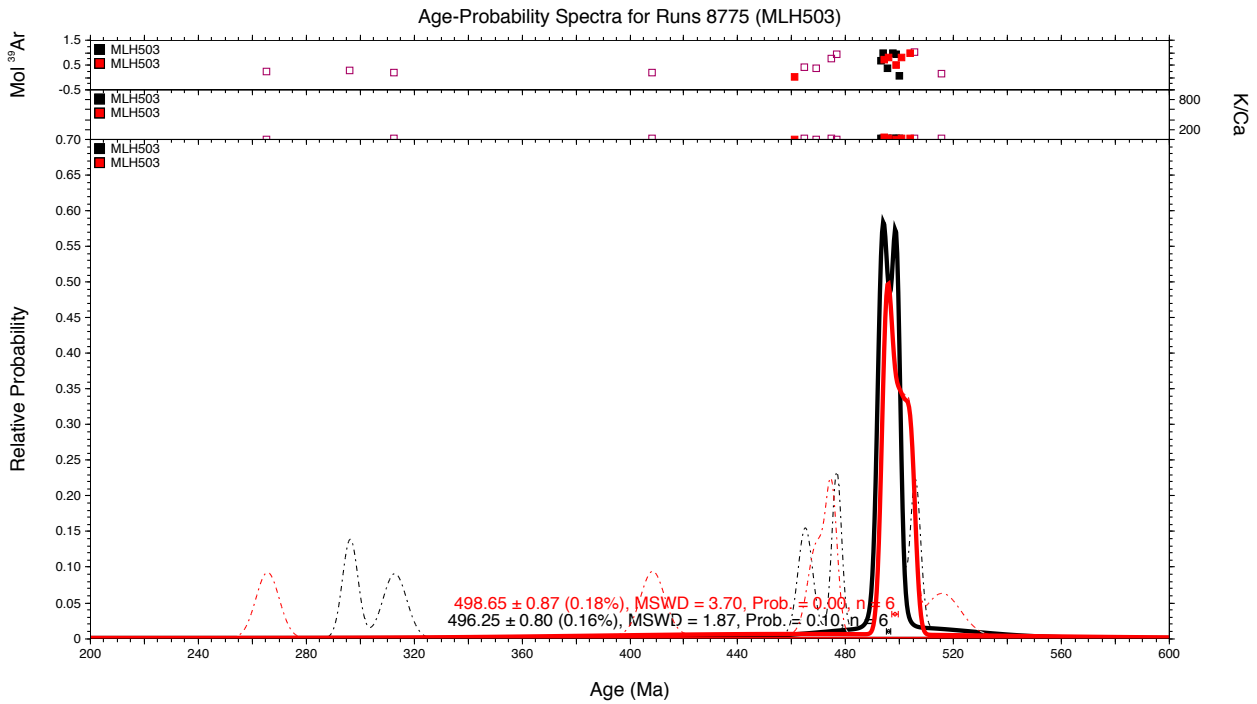
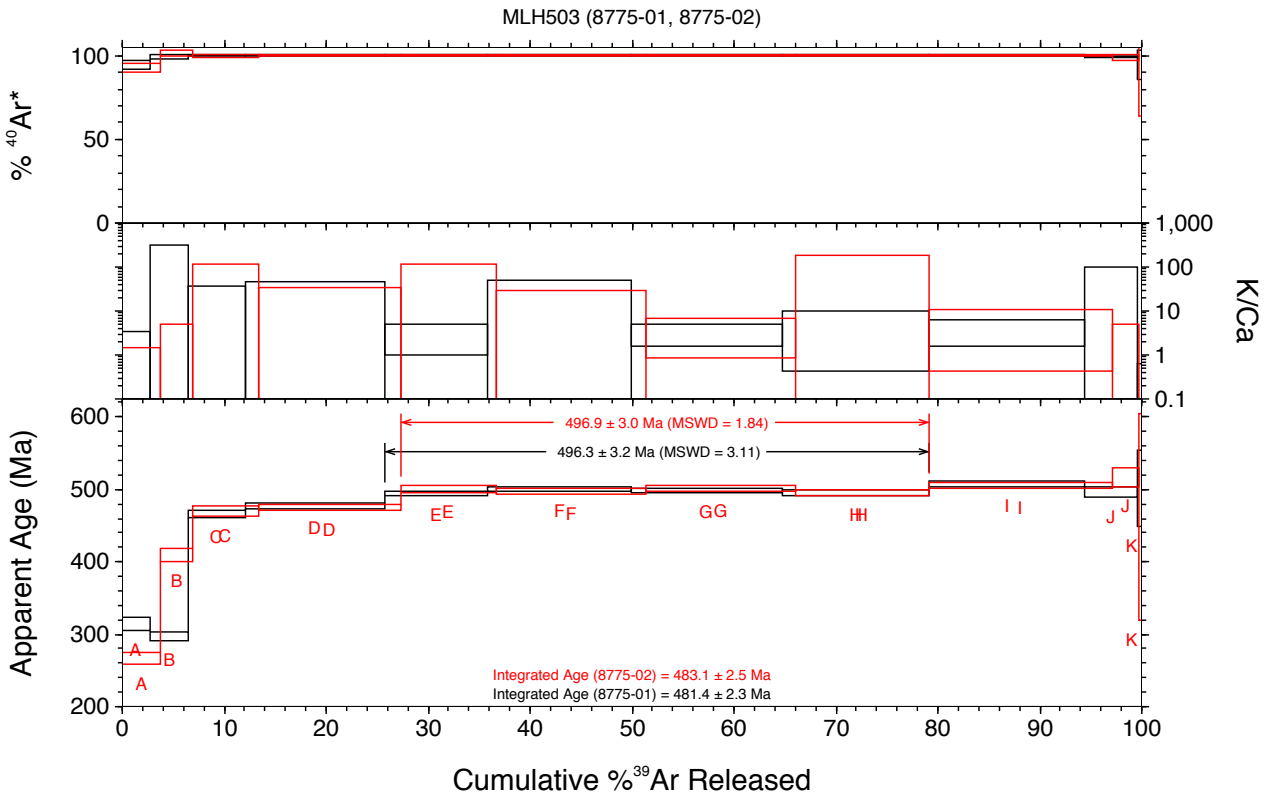
Anakie Metamorphic Group (MLH501 - WR)



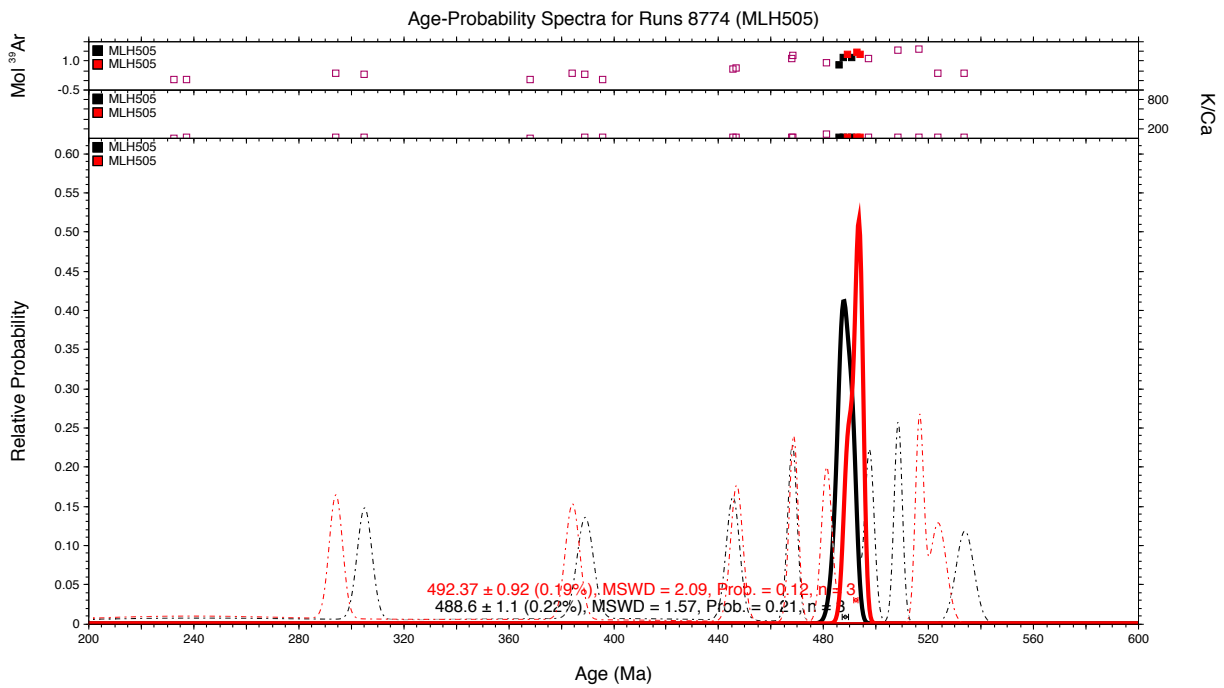
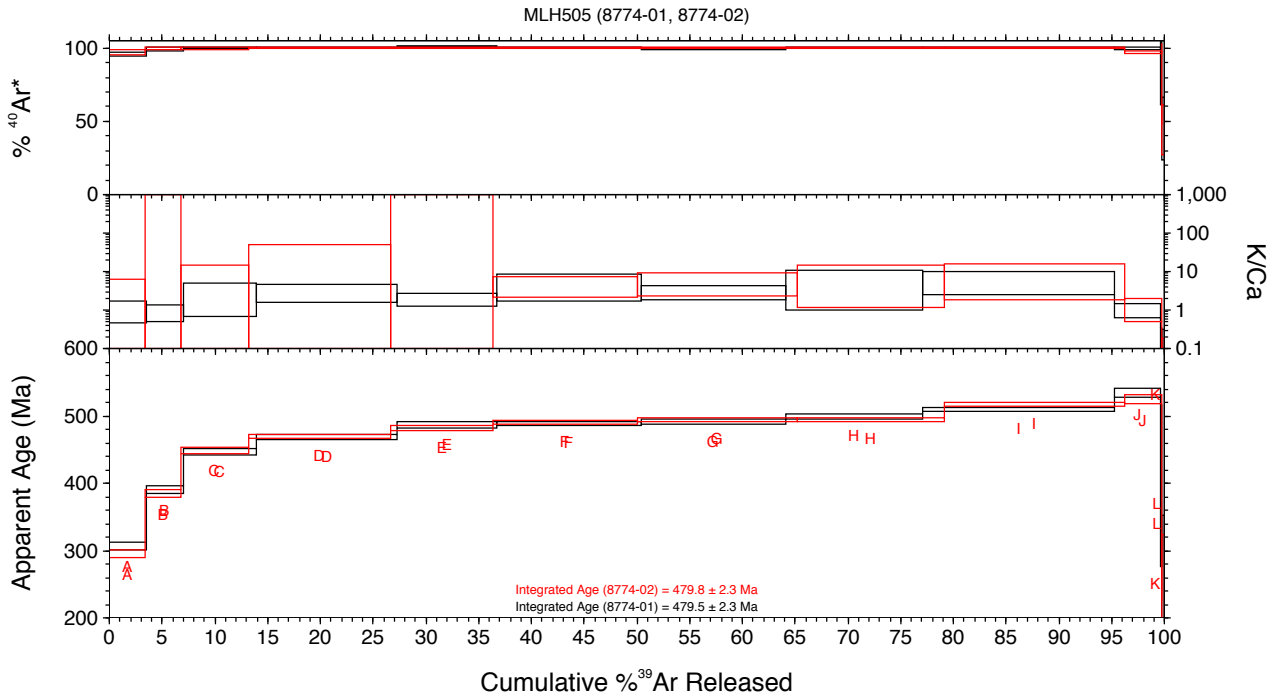
Anakie Metamorphic Group (MLH502 - WR)



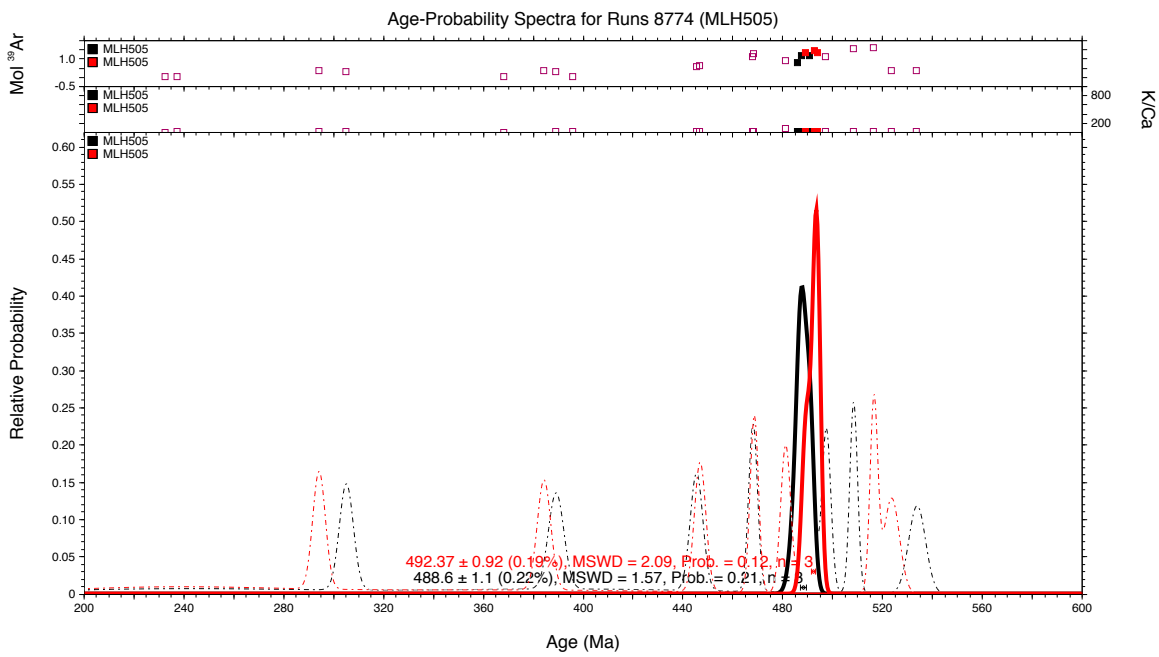
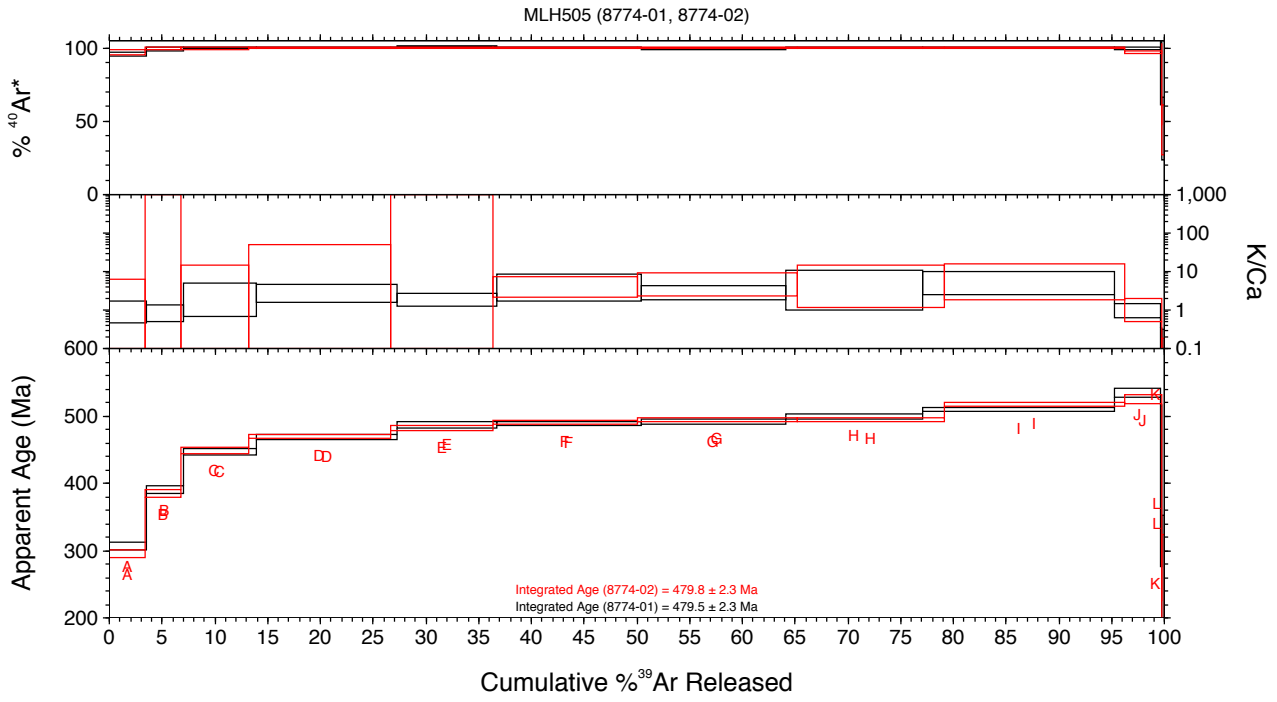
Anakie Metamorphic Group (MLH503 - WR)



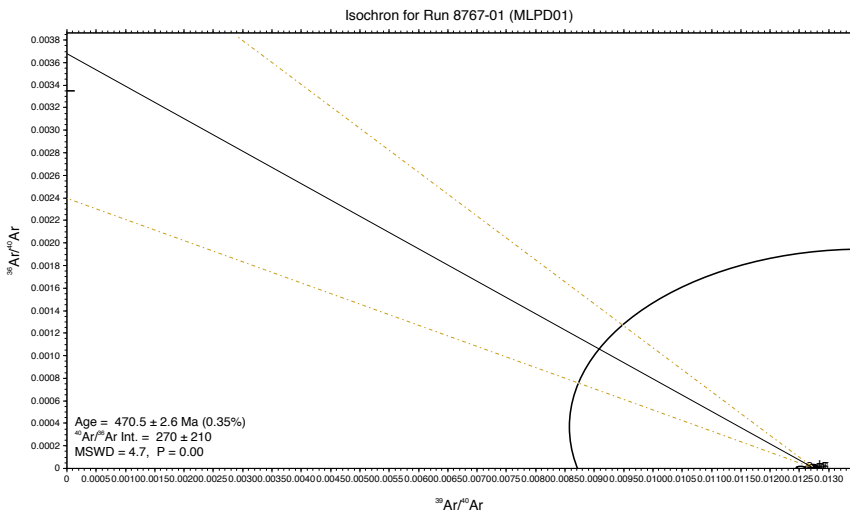
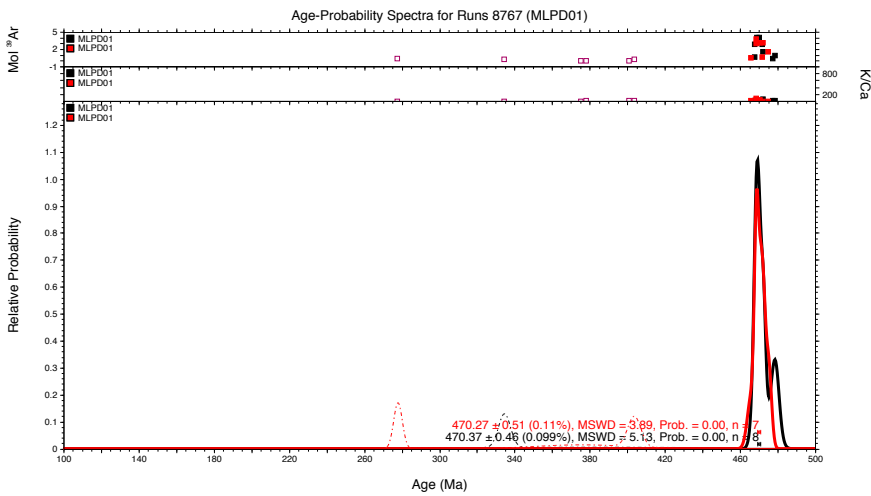
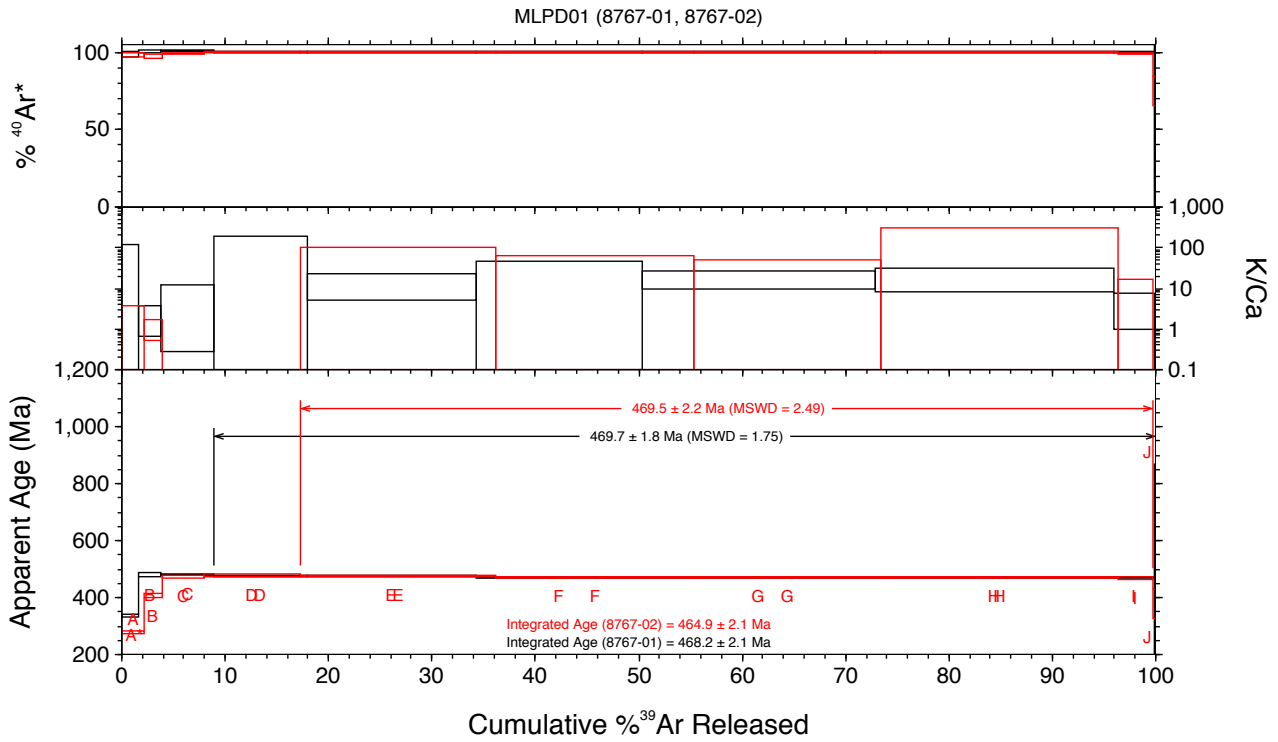
Anakie Metamorphic Group (MLH505 - WR)



Anakie Metamorphic Group (MLH505 - WR)



Anakie Metamorphic Group (MLPD01 - WR)



Anakie Metamorphic Group (MLPD02 - WR)

