

# **Guidelines on the Description and Classification of Rocks of the Tuen Mun Formation in the Tuen Mun Valley, Northwestern New Territories**

**GEO Report No. 327**

**K.W.F. So & R.J. Sewell**

**Geotechnical Engineering Office  
Civil Engineering and Development Department  
The Government of the Hong Kong  
Special Administrative Region**

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## **Preface**

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W.K. Pun  
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March 2017



## Foreword

Since the completion of earlier regional geological surveys in the northwestern New Territories, there have been difficulties among Hong Kong's geotechnical practitioners concerning the description and classification of rocks of the Tuen Mun Formation. Therefore, this report aims to provide guidelines on the description and classification of the rocks based on a comprehensive review of all known lithologies in the Tuen Mun Formation. A lexicon is also introduced to facilitate the proposed lithological classification scheme among practitioners.

This study was carried out by Mr K.W.F. So and Prof R.J. Sewell, based on an earlier research study completed by Dr D.L.K. Tang in 2007. Dr D.L.K. Tang and Mr K.W. Lai contributed significantly to collection of rock samples and preparation of thin sections in the Tuen Mun Valley area. Further contributions have been made by members of the Hong Kong Geological Survey, including Messrs C.W. Lee, P.C.S. Ho, S.S.C. Wong, E.Y.H. Ng, S.H.S. Leung, K.S.C. Mok and Ms P.N.Y. Lau at different stages, to the review of geology of the Tuen Mun Valley and the lithological classification scheme.

Helpful advice and review comments on the earlier draft were given by Dr D.L.K. Tang of the Planning Division and Dr K.C. Ng. All contributions are gratefully acknowledged.



Y.K. Ho  
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## **1 Introduction**

### **1.1 Background and Objectives of this Study**

Since the publication of Hong Kong Geological Survey (HKGS) Memoir No. 3 (Geology of Western New Territories) by Langford et al (1989), and HKGS Sheet Report No. 1 (Geology of Yuen Long) by Frost (1992), there has been a continual debate among Hong Kong's geotechnical practitioners on how best to describe and interpret the rocks of the Tuen Mun Formation. The formation underlies much of the Tuen Mun Valley in the northwestern New Territories. It is lithologically highly variable and has been locally subjected to metasomatism, hydrothermal alteration and dynamic metamorphism.

Recently, a comprehensive study of the Tuen Mun Formation has been carried out as part of the HKGS's 1:20,000-scale geological map updating programme. The objectives of this study are:

- (a) to propose a classification scheme and to recommend geological terms that enables the rocks of the Tuen Mun Formation to be described accurately and consistently according to published guidelines on rock description in Geoguide 3 (GCO, 1988a) and in alignment with international practice,
- (b) to review and classify all known key lithologies of the Tuen Mun Formation based on (i) literature review, (ii) field mapping, (iii) drill core logging, and (iv) examination of rock samples and thin sections, and
- (c) to introduce a lexicon which facilitates drill core logging and surface mapping in the Tuen Mun Valley to aid practitioners in the description and characterisation of rocks of the Tuen Mun Formation (Appendix A).

### **1.2 Methodology and Limitations**

A detailed review of all available geological and geotechnical information was carried out to gain a thorough understanding of the complexity of the Tuen Mun Formation. The information reviewed under this study includes:

- (a) published geological maps, memoirs, sheet reports, study reports, research theses and technical papers,
- (b) newly available ground investigation records from recent developments, and existing records from the Geotechnical Information Unit (GIU), and
- (c) available GEO in-house records and archival materials (e.g. photograph records, field description notes, core

logging notes and thin section petrography reports).

Despite having reviewed over 10,700 high-quality drillhole records, 400 rock samples and 100 thin sections, it should be emphasised that this study is not an exhaustive survey of all lithologies in the Tuen Mun Valley. The main purpose is to introduce a method to describe drill cores, rock samples and thin sections accurately and consistently so that experienced logging geologists can easily follow. This study does not attempt to interpret rock-forming processes, environments of deposition and the geological history of the Tuen Mun Valley. Inevitably, there will be lithologies that will not fit with the characteristics described in Section 4 of this report.

Whole rock geochemistry cannot be reliably applied to the classification of most lithic- or clast-bearing lithologies in the Tuen Mun Formation because these lithologies have been subjected to different types of metamorphism, which hinder the identification of original rock composition and textures.

## **2 Overview of Geology of the Tuen Mun Valley**

### **2.1 Previous Geological Surveys**

Allen & Stephens (1971) first divided the rocks of Tuen Mun and Tin Shui Wai areas into two formations, namely the Repulse Bay Formation (comprising mainly sedimentary and water-lain volcanic rocks) and the Lok Ma Chau Formation (comprising metasedimentary and volcanic rocks). Subsequently, Langford et al (1989) grouped the solid geology of the Tuen Mun Valley into three formations as shown on the 1:20,000-scale HKGS Solid and Superficial Geology Map Sheets 2 (San Tin), 5 (Tsing Shan) and 6 (Yuen Long) (GCO, 1988b, 1988c & 1989d):

- (a) Lok Ma Chau Formation - comprising mainly metasiltstone or phyllite, with subordinate metasandstone and quartzite between Tin Shui Wai and Ha Tsuen to the south.
- (b) Tsing Shan Formation - comprising a sequence of quartzitic sandstone, metasiltstone and phyllite, with subordinate tuff, tuffite and conglomerate in Tsing Shan (Castle Peak) area.
- (c) Tuen Mun Formation - comprising andesite lava and lapilli-bearing ash crystal tuff in the broad valley between Tsing Shan Wan (Castle Peak Bay) and Ha Tsuen to the north.

During the latter period of this survey, the discovery of extensive marble subcrops led to a number of detailed geological studies in Yuen Long and Tin Shui Wai areas (Darigo, 1989, 1990). Six 1:5,000-scale HKGS Solid Geology Maps (GCO, 1989a, 1989b, 1989c, 1989e, 1989f & 1989g) together with a report on the geology of Yuen Long and Tin Shui Wai area were also published (Frost, 1992). A new stratigraphic member of the Tuen Mun Formation, represented by a distinctive interbedded sequence of volcanoclastic rocks, was proposed by Darigo (1989 & 1990) and Frost (1992), and termed the Tin Shui Wai Member.

The 1:20,000-scale HKGS Solid Geology Map Sheet 2 was later published for the northernmost area of the Tuen Mun Valley (GEO, 1994).

During the late 1990s, a revision of the volcanic stratigraphy and plutonic rock classification of Hong Kong was proposed by Campbell & Sewell (1998) based on whole rock geochemical data (Campbell & Sewell, 1997) and U-Pb zircon ages (Davis et al, 1997). The Tuen Mun Formation, however, was excluded from this proposed classification system because of its distinctive geochemical composition in comparison with other volcanic formations in Hong Kong (Campbell & Sewell, 1998).

Based on a comprehensive review of all the previous surveys and available data, Sewell et al (2000) and Fyfe et al (2000) subsequently produced two geological reports and ten accompanying territory-wide maps, which together presented an up-to-date synthesis of the geology of Hong Kong. Sewell et al (2000) suggested that the Tsing Shan Formation should be incorporated within the Tuen Mun Formation, and that the Tuen Mun Formation should be divided into an upper dominantly volcanic unit, and a lower dominantly volcanogenic sedimentary unit.

## **2.2 Previous Geological Models of the Tuen Mun Valley**

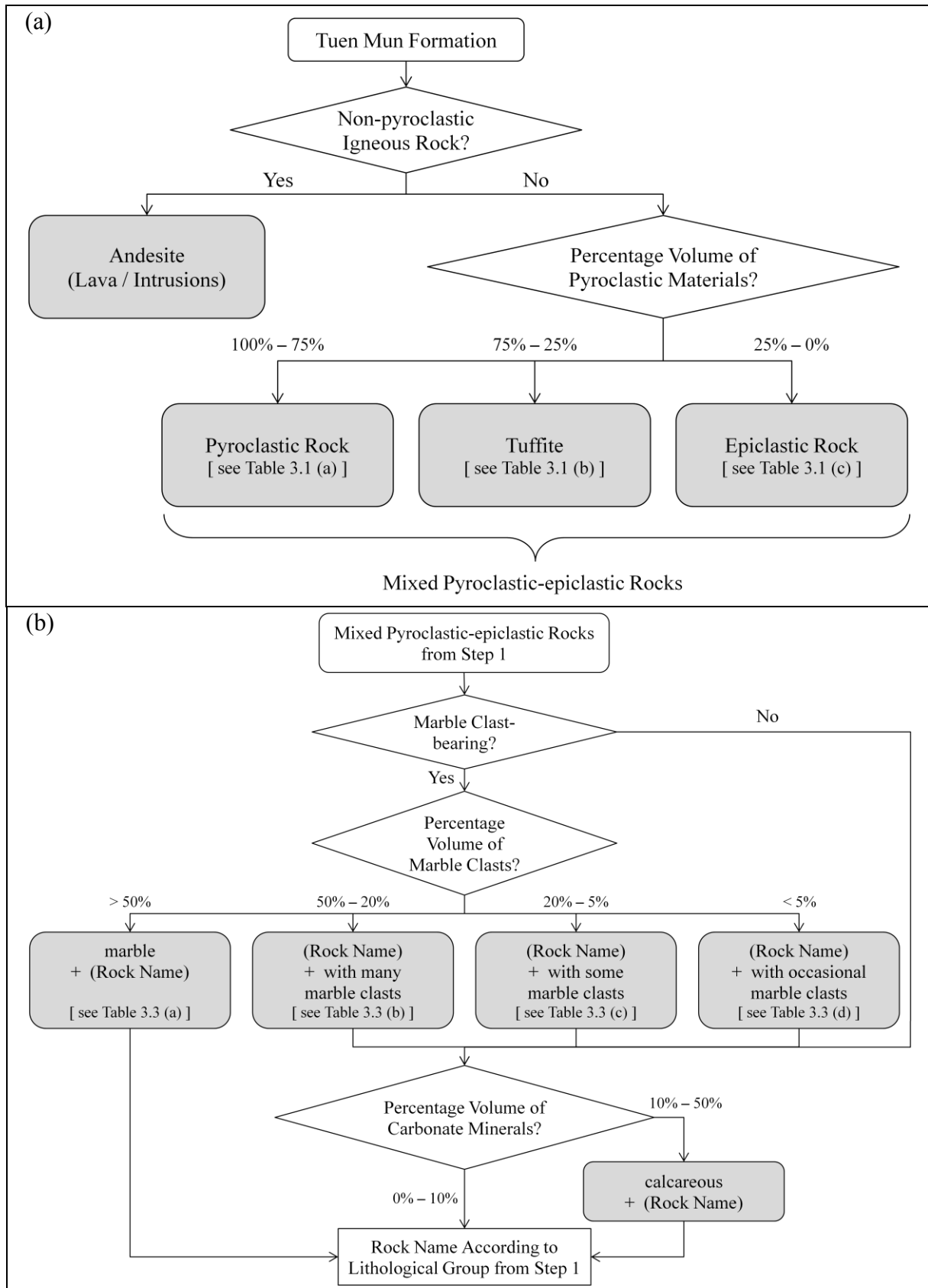
Since the 2000s, there have been two models proposed for the origin of the lower unit of the Tuen Mun Formation. One interpretation (e.g. Lai, 2004 & 2013; Lai et al, 2004; Lai & Chan, 2011; Li et al, 2014) suggested a magmatic origin for clast-bearing rocks, including the existence of palaeovolcanic vent-shaped plugs preserved in the Tuen Mun and Tsing Shan areas. Clast-bearing rocks were considered to be andesite lavas, tuff-breccias and vent breccias, in which rising magma had incorporated country rock lithologies.

An alternative interpretation (e.g. Campbell & Sewell, 2004; GEO, 2007a & 2007b; Tang, 2007) proposed that the lower unit was dominantly a volcanoclastic and epiclastic sequence of breccias, conglomerates, sandstones, siltstones and mudstones in the Tuen Mun Valley. The large variety of clast fragments was entrained and deposited by sedimentary processes, despite the fact that a major source of sediment originates from volcanic materials.

## **3 Proposed Lithological Classification Scheme of the Tuen Mun Formation**

At present, a number of high-quality core samples and drillhole records are available from recent developments in the Tuen Mun, Hung Shui Kiu and Tin Shui Wai areas where a large variety of lithologies, including intrusive, volcanic and metasedimentary rocks, has been identified. Since the classification schemes related to sedimentary and metamorphic rocks stipulated in GCO (1988a) are of limited use for a detailed description of the rocks of the Tuen Mun Formation, the following scheme is proposed in line with the guidelines in GCO (1988a) and also the recommendations given by the British Geological Survey (BGS) and the International Union of Geological Sciences (IUGS) (Figure 3.1; Gillespie & Styles, 1999; Hallsworth & Knox, 1999; Robertson, 1999; Le Maitre et al, 2002; Brodie et al, 2007; Rosen et al, 2007; Schmid et al, 2007; Zharikov et al, 2007).





**Figure 3.1 Workflow on the Lithological Classification of the Tuen Mun Formation.**  
**(a) Classification of Lithological Group (Step 1); (b) Classification of Carbonate- and Marble Clast-bearing Rocks (Step 2)**

### 3.1 Lithological Groups

In this lithological classification scheme, rocks of the Tuen Mun Formation can be assigned to four lithological groups, namely ‘andesite’, ‘pyroclastic rock’, ‘tuffite’ and ‘epiclastic rock’, based on, but not limited to, the following key criteria:

- (a) the rock colour and matrix composition,
- (b) the size, roundness, sorting, composition and percentage volume of clasts or rock fragments ( $> 2$  mm),
- (c) igneous textures or sedimentary structures, and
- (d) evidence of magma intrusion, magma-sediment mixing and/or metamorphism.

Compared with the other three lithological groups, ‘andesite’ is the group of non-pyroclastic igneous rocks of intermediate composition (57% – 63%  $\text{SiO}_2$ ), including both extrusive (i.e. lavas and autobrecciated lavas) and intrusive variants (e.g. dykes and sills). The andesitic composition has been confirmed by geochemical analysis (Langford et al, 1989).

Based on Schmid (1981), Gillespie & Styles (1999) and Le Maitre et al (2002), rocks comprising both pyroclastic and epiclastic materials (i.e. mixed pyroclastic-epiclastic rocks) are classified according to the percentage volume of pyroclastic materials and the grain size (Table 3.1). Pyroclastic materials refer to fragments that have formed as a direct result of volcanic activities and have not been reworked by sedimentary processes (Gillespie & Styles, 1999). These materials include, but are not limited to, juvenile (i.e. crystals, crystal fragments, glass fragments and/or rock fragments formed directly from cooling magma during transport prior to primary deposition), accidental and cognate fragments (i.e. rock fragments that are derived from either country rocks or volcanic rocks formed during earlier volcanic activities, and that are incidentally incorporated during a later eruption (McPhie et al, 1993; Gillespie & Styles, 1999)). On the other hand, epiclastic materials are fragments produced by weathering and erosion of pre-existing consolidated rocks as a direct result of surface sedimentary processes (GCO, 1988a; Gillespie & Styles, 1999).

GCO (1988a) defines ‘tuff’ as a general rock name for all lithified pyroclastic deposits composed of rock fragments of gravel or finer size ( $< 60$  mm). In this study, the term ‘tuff’ can be used for pyroclastic rocks only when the rocks are composed of at least 75% by volume of pyroclastic materials (Schmid, 1981; Gillespie & Styles, 1999; Le Maitre et al, 2002). According to dominant grain sizes, tuffs are subdivided into lapilli tuff (2 to 60 mm), coarse ash tuff (0.06 to 2 mm) and fine ash tuff ( $< 0.06$  mm) (GCO, 1988a).

GCO (1988a) defines ‘tuffite’ as a rock with roughly equal proportions of pyroclastic and sedimentary materials, and ‘tuffaceous’ as a prefix given before the name of sedimentary rocks containing up to 50% tuff material. In this study, the term ‘tuffite’ is defined as the group of some mixed pyroclastic-epiclastic rocks containing between 25% and 75% by volume of pyroclastic materials (Schmid, 1981; Gillespie & Styles, 1999; Le Maitre et al, 2002). The term ‘tuffaceous’ is incorporated in the rock names for the tuffite group.

**Table 3.1 Classification of Mixed Pyroclastic-epiclastic Rocks (modified from Schmid, 1981; GCO, 1988a; Gillespie & Styles, 1999; Le Maitre et al, 2002)**

Grain Size (in mm)	(a) Pyroclastic Rocks <sup>(1)(2)</sup>	(b) Tuffites <sup>(1)(3)</sup>	(c) Epiclastic Rocks <sup>(1)(3)</sup>
— 60 —	Pyroclastic Breccia, Agglomerate	Tuffaceous Breccia, Tuffaceous Conglomerate	Sedimentary Breccia, Conglomerate
— 2 —	lapilli Tuff		
— 0.06 —	coarse ash Tuff	Tuffaceous Sandstone	Sandstone
— 0.002 —	fine ash Tuff	Tuffaceous Siltstone	Siltstone
		Tuffaceous Claystone, Tuffaceous Shale	Claystone, Shale
Percentage Volume of Pyroclastic Materials	100% – 75%	75% – 25%	25% – 0%

- Notes:
- (1) Rock names under each lithological group are capitalised.
  - (2) ‘Tuff-breccia’, ‘ash-lapilli Tuff’ and ‘lapilli-ash Tuff’ can be used for poorly-sorted pyroclastic rocks given in Section A.3.2 and Figure A3 of Geoguide 3 (GCO, 1988a).
  - (3) ‘Tuffaceous Mudstone’ and ‘Mudstone’, both of which are composed mainly of both silt and clay, can be used for classification of tuffites and epiclastic rocks, respectively.

Epiclastic rocks in this study refer to volcanic and non-volcanic sedimentary rocks comprising less than 25% by volume of pyroclastic materials (Schmid, 1981; Gillespie & Styles, 1999; Le Maitre et al, 2002). When an epiclastic rock is classified as a breccia, the term ‘sedimentary breccia’ can be used to distinguish it from other genetic types (GCO, 1988a), such as pyroclastic breccia, tuff-breccia, tuffaceous breccia and fault breccia.

### 3.2 Carbonate- and Marble Clast-bearing Rocks

Marbles and calcareous (meta-)sedimentary rocks are the dominant carbonate and carbonate-bearing rocks in Hong Kong. In this study, these rocks are classified using the percentage volume of carbonate minerals (Table 3.2). Since no known continuous marble layers have been identified or are anticipated in the Tuen Mun Formation, pure and impure marbles are not included in the workflow on the lithological classification (Figure 3.1).

**Table 3.2 Classification of Marbles and Calcareous (Meta-)Sedimentary Rocks (after Hallsworth & Knox, 1999; Rosen et al, 2007)**

Percentage Volume of Carbonate Minerals (in Sand or Finer Grain Size)	Rock Name <sup>(1)</sup>	
100% – 95%	pure Marble <sup>(2)</sup>	(a)
95% – 50%	impure Marble <sup>(2)</sup>	(b)
50% – 10%	calcareous + (Rock Name) <sup>(3)</sup>	(c)

Notes: (1) Rock names are capitalised.  
(2) Pure and impure marbles are not anticipated in the Tuen Mun Formation.  
(3) Refer to Tables 3.1(c) and 3.4 for the classification of epiclastic and partially metamorphosed rocks, respectively.

The term ‘marble clast-bearing’ is adopted in this study to describe mixed pyroclastic-epiclastic rocks containing angular to rounded marble clasts, as large as boulder size, set in a finer matrix. To indicate the percentage volume of marble clasts (less than 50% of the total rock volume) in the rocks, the description ‘with occasional/some/many marble clasts’ using the most suitable qualifier is added following the rock name (GCO, 1988a). If the percentage volume of marble clasts is over 50%, the qualifier ‘marble’ should be added before the rock name instead of adding the above description (e.g. marble agglomerate, marble tuffaceous conglomerate and marble conglomerate; Table 3.3; Hallsworth & Knox, 1999). Should any marble fragments be present in rocks of the andesite group as xenoliths (less than 50% of the total rock volume), the description ‘with occasional/some/many marble fragments’ using the most suitable qualifier can be added following the rock name.

**Table 3.3 Classification and Description of Marble Clast-bearing, Mixed Pyroclastic-epiclastic Rocks (modified from GCO, 1988a; Hallsworth & Knox, 1999)**

Percentage Volume of Marble Clasts (in Gravel or Larger Grain Size)	Rock Name and Description	
> 50%	marble + (Rock Name) <sup>(Note)</sup> (a)	
50% – 20%	(Rock Name) <sup>(Note)</sup>	with many marble clasts (b)
20% – 5%		with some marble clasts (c)
< 5%		with occasional marble clasts (d)

Note: Refer to Table 3.1 for the classification of mixed pyroclastic-epiclastic rocks.

When some mixed pyroclastic-epiclastic rocks are composed of various types of clasts (e.g. marble, quartzite, andesite, tuff, rhyolite, sandstone and/or mudstone), each of which occupies less than 50% of the total rock volume, similar descriptions can be added following the rock name if found necessary (e.g. tuffaceous conglomerate with many marble clasts, some quartzite clasts and occasional mudstone clasts).

### 3.3 Metamorphism

As described in Section 1.1, most rocks of the Tuen Mun Formation have been partially metamorphosed. The types of metamorphism include, but are not limited to, metasomatism, hydrothermal alteration and dynamic metamorphism. Therefore, in addition to the lithological classification, some descriptive terms based on GCO (1988a), Brodie et al (2007) and Schmid et al (2007) are also adopted for metamorphic features commonly identified in the lithologies in the Tuen Mun Valley (Table 3.4).

**Table 3.4 Proposed Descriptive Terms Used for Metamorphic Features (modified from GCO, 1988a; Brodie et al, 2007; Schmid et al, 2007)**

Type of Metamorphism	Term	Description
All Types	Meta-	A prefix used with an intrusive, volcanic or sedimentary rock name (e.g. metagranite, metatuff and metasiltstone) to indicate that the rock has been partially metamorphosed, without specifying the type of metamorphism.  The prefix should only be applied when the original rock can be identified.
Metasomatism or Hydrothermal Alteration	Altered	A qualifier used with an intrusive, volcanic or sedimentary rock name (e.g. altered granite/tuff/siltstone) to indicate that the rock has undergone metasomatism or hydrothermal alteration (see Table 3.5 for details).
Dynamic Metamorphism	Mylonitic	A qualifier used with an intrusive, volcanic or sedimentary rock name (e.g. mylonitic granite/tuff/siltstone) to indicate a cohesive fault rock, characterised by a well developed foliation resulting from tectonic reduction of grain size during faulting.

#### 3.3.1 Metasomatism and Hydrothermal Alteration

Metasomatism and hydrothermal alteration (or hydrothermal metamorphism) are metamorphic processes which involve mineralogical, chemical and textural changes resulting from the interaction of the rock with hot mineralised aqueous fluids, and during which the rock remains in a solid state (Smulikowski et al, 2007; Zharikov et al, 2007; Pirajno, 2009).

The fluids may be heated up as a result of igneous intrusion in the vicinity, penetrate along weakness planes (e.g. bedding, joints, foliations and microfractures) within country rocks or previously solidified intrusions, and alter the surrounding rocks.

Most rocks of the Tuen Mun Formation, in particular those in the vicinity of igneous intrusions and within fault zones, have undergone metasomatism and/or hydrothermal alteration to variable degrees. Known types of metasomatism and hydrothermal alteration identified in the Tuen Mun Formation in this study are given in Table 3.5. In addition, garnet, which is one of the major alteration minerals of calc-silicate rocks (i.e. skarn) formed by contact metasomatism, is commonly identified in marble clast-bearing (tuffaceous) metasedimentary rocks.

**Table 3.5 Known Types of Metasomatism and Hydrothermal Alteration in the Tuen Mun Formation (modified from Fletcher, 2004; Pirajno, 2009)**

Type of Metasomatism/ Hydrothermal Alteration	Original Mineral	New Main Mineral Assemblage	Example of Colour of Altered Rock
Propylitic Alteration (Figure A38 in Appendix A)	hornblende, biotite, pyroxene	epidote, chlorite, albite, K-feldspar, calcite, pyrite	greyish green to dark greenish grey
Sericitic Alteration	feldspar	sericite, quartz, pyrite, clay minerals	dark grey
Greisenisation (Figure A39 in Appendix A)	feldspar, biotite	muscovite, quartz	dark brownish grey
Chloritisation	hornblende, biotite	chlorite	light green to dark green
Silicification (by replacement)	-	quartz	light grey to white

### 3.3.2 Dynamic Metamorphism

Dynamic metamorphism used in this study is also known as dislocation metamorphism of local extent which is associated with fault zones or shear zones (Smulikowski et al, 2007). Mylonite, fault breccia and/or fault gouge are fault rocks commonly formed by dynamic metamorphism (GCO, 1988a; Brodie et al, 2007; Schmid et al, 2007).

Intense dynamic metamorphism has occurred mainly in the northern Tuen Mun Valley area close to contacts between the Tuen Mun Formation and other rock formations (Tang, 2005). Strained crystals (e.g. quartz) and sedimentary clasts (e.g. marble), recrystallisation (e.g. quartz and calcite), subgrain development (e.g. quartz), and preferably orientated

alteration minerals (e.g. sericite) are the typical features of dynamically metamorphosed rocks of the Tuen Mun Formation.

### **3.3.3 Partially Metamorphosed Rocks**

For a rock, e.g. granite, which has undergone dynamic metamorphism only, it can be termed either ‘mylonitic granite’ (specifying the type of metamorphism) or ‘metagranite’ (without specifying the type of metamorphism), but not ‘mylonitic metagranite’ as the latter term implies the rock has undergone at least two phases of metamorphism. The similar case can be applied to a rock which has undergone metasomatism or hydrothermal alteration only.

## **4 Distribution and Detailed Description of Key Lithologies**

A summary of known key lithologies of the Tuen Mun Formation assigned to the four lithological groups is shown in Table 4.1. Typical characteristics and diagnostic features of the key lithologies are discussed in this section.

### **4.1 Andesites**

#### **4.1.1 Andesite Lava**

Andesite lava mainly crops out in the southern Tuen Mun Valley and is closely associated with coarse ash tuff. Fresh andesite lava is typically strong to very strong, dark grey spotted white and black, massive but locally flow-banded, aphanitic with plagioclase, hornblende and/or pyroxene phenocrysts, and with very few quartz xenocrysts if present. However, andesitic lava may sometimes be autobrecciated comprising subangular to subrounded andesite lithic blocks (Figure A1 in Appendix A). In places, andesite lava has been pervasively altered, and usually displays dark greenish grey spotted black and white colour, with secondary biotite, epidote, chlorite and pyrite mineralisation (Figures A2 and A3 in Appendix A). Secondary calcite veins are sometimes present. Upon complete weathering, meta-andesite lava typically becomes reddish brown or yellowish brown, clayey silt (Figure A4 in Appendix A).

#### **4.1.2 Andesitic Intrusions**

Andesitic intrusions, commonly in the form of dykes and sills (up to a few metres in apparent thickness in vertical drillholes) are generally restricted to the southern and central Tuen Mun Valley. Fresh andesitic intrusions are usually strong to very strong, dark grey, massive, aphanitic with sharp intrusive contacts and chilled margins with country rocks (e.g. tuffaceous sandstone and breccia; Figures A5 & A6 in Appendix A). In some cases, andesitic magma has intruded into semi-consolidated or unconsolidated pyroclastic and epiclastic sediments, resulting in a chaotic mixture of magma and altered tuffaceous sediments with fused intrusive contacts (Figure A7 in Appendix A). Pervasive propylitic alteration is common in these mixed assemblages.

**Table 4.1 Distribution of Known Key Lithologies of the Tuen Mun Formation**

Lithological Group	Rock Name and Description	Typical Locality <sup>(3)</sup>
Andesites	Andesite Lava	Southern Tuen Mun Valley
	Andesitic Intrusions	<i>Tuen Mun Area 52</i>
Pyroclastic Rocks	Coarse Ash Tuff	Southwestern Tuen Mun Valley <i>Castle Peak Hospital</i>
	Tuff-breccia	<i>Tuen Mun Area 54 Sites 1 and 1A</i>
Tuffites	Tuffaceous B/C/S with marble clasts <sup>(1)(2)</sup>	<i>Tuen Mun Area 52</i> <i>Central Hung Shui Kiu</i>
	Tuffaceous B/C/S with various clasts <sup>(1)(2)</sup>	<i>Tuen Mun Area 54 Site 2</i> <i>Western Hung Shui Kiu</i>
Epiclastic Rocks	Sandstone and Siltstone	<i>Northern Tuen Mun Valley</i>
	B/C/S with marble clasts <sup>(1)(2)</sup>	<i>Eastern Hung Shui Kiu</i> <i>Southwestern Tin Shui Wai</i>
	B/C/S with various clasts <sup>(1)(2)</sup>	<i>Northwestern Tin Shui Wai</i> <i>Mai Po</i>
	marble Breccia/Conglomerate	<i>Northeastern Hung Shui Kiu</i> <i>Tin Shui Wai Areas 3, 8 and 27</i>

- Notes:
- (1) B/C/S = (Sedimentary) Breccia, Conglomerate, Sandstone.
  - (2) ‘With marble clasts’ and ‘with various clasts’ refer to the rocks comprising marble clasts and various types of clasts respectively. Each type of the clasts occupies less than 50% of the total rock volume (see also Section 3.2).
  - (3) Typical localities in italic represent subcrop identified from drillholes (Figure A40 in Appendix A).

## 4.2 Pyroclastic Rocks

### 4.2.1 Coarse Ash Tuff

Coarse ash tuff dominantly crops out in the southwestern Tuen Mun Valley. Fresh coarse ash tuff is typically very strong, dark grey to dark greenish grey, massive with variable proportion of quartz and feldspar crystals, crystal fragments, devitrified glass fragments and lithic fragments (Figures A8 and A9 in Appendix A). The whole rock geochemical composition of coarse ash tuff probably varies from andesite to dacite (Lai & Chan, 2011).



Secondary biotite, epidote, chlorite and pyrite may be present in coarse ash metatuff. Upon complete weathering, coarse ash tuff usually turns into light red to light brownish yellow, slightly clayey silt (Figure A10 in Appendix A).

#### **4.2.2 Tuff-breccia**

Tuff-breccia appears to be generally restricted to the southwestern portion of Tuen Mun Area 54, where it is associated with andesite lava and coarse ash tuff. In this area, the tuff-breccia contains many angular, lapilli- and block-sized fragments of light grey coarse ash tuff set in a dark grey, fine ash matrix (Figures A11 and A12 in Appendix A).

#### **4.3 Tuffites**

Due to considerable degrees of recrystallisation, the tuffaceous nature of some partially metamorphosed, mixed pyroclastic-epiclastic rocks in the Tuen Mun Valley may be difficult to confirm in hand specimen and even thin section. A relatively feldspar-depleted but quartz-rich microcrystalline matrix in some of these rocks may suggest an epiclastic protolith (e.g. siltstone) instead of a pyroclastic protolith (e.g. fine ash tuff). However, it is possible that feldspar crystals and crystal fragments in such rocks have been replaced by micaceous minerals (e.g. sericite) during metamorphism.

Nevertheless, where mixed pyroclastic-epiclastic rocks have undergone compaction and/or alteration to an extent that the nature of the original constituent fragments cannot be determined with confidence, these rocks should be classified as either tuffites or epiclastic rocks (Gillespie & Styles, 1999; Le Maitre et al, 2002). The following criteria can be used to differentiate tuffites from epiclastic rocks in the Tuen Mun Valley:

- (a) Evidence of possible pyroclastic materials of andesitic or dacitic composition in the matrix, e.g. an abundance of feldspar crystals and crystal fragments, an abundance of epidote and chlorite, and a relatively minor amount of quartz.
- (b) Evidence of andesite lava clasts or coarse ash tuff clasts (i.e. intraclasts), which likely indicate reworking and redeposition of consolidated or semi-consolidated pyroclastic materials of the Tuen Mun Formation.

##### **4.3.1 Tuffaceous Sedimentary Rocks with Marble Clasts**

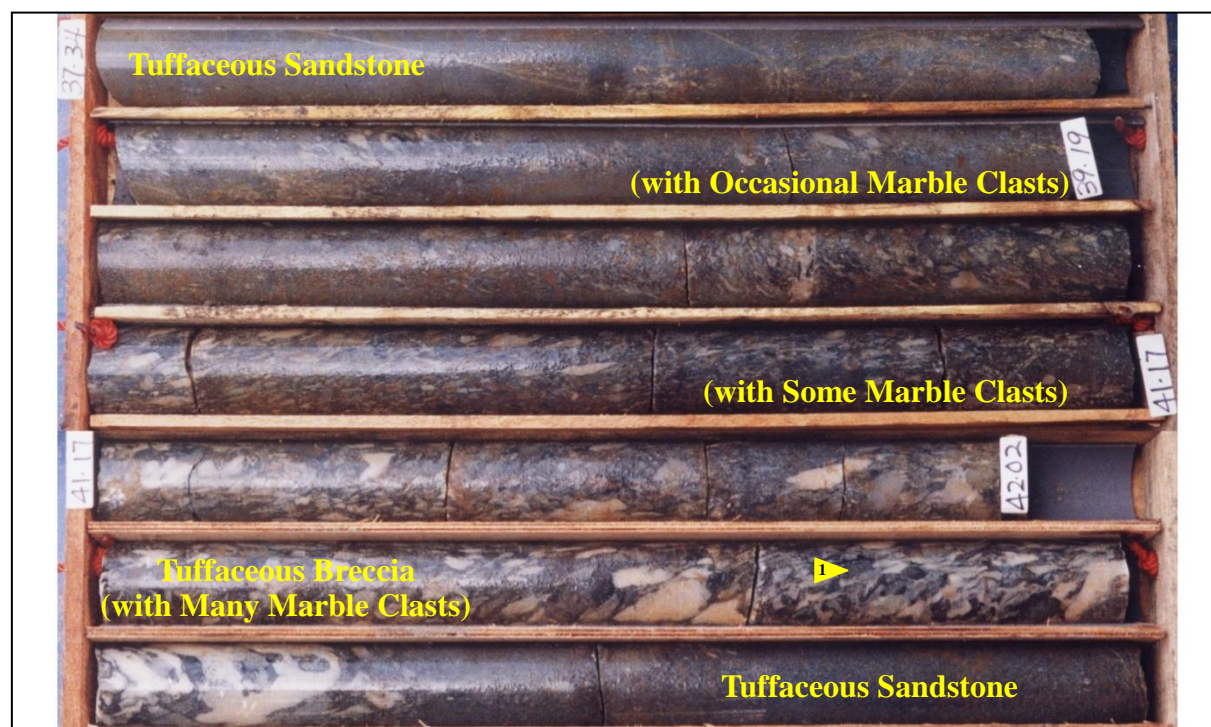
In the Tuen Mun Valley, tuffaceous sedimentary rocks (predominantly breccias, conglomerates and sandstones) with marble clasts were first identified as ‘marble clast-bearing volcanic rocks’ by Darigo (1989 & 1990), and subsequently assigned to the Tin Shui Wai Member of the Tuen Mun Formation by Frost (1992).

In this study, these rocks dominantly occur as subcrops beneath the east-central Tuen

Mun Valley area. Fresh marble clast-bearing tuffaceous breccia is usually strong, dark grey mottled white, matrix supported, massive but occasionally normally graded, calcareous, locally foliated and altered (Figures A13 to A15 in Appendix A). The breccias, conglomerates and sandstones may also contain a minor proportion of other clast varieties, including quartzite and andesite. Occasionally, a normally-graded tuffaceous sedimentary sequence is revealed by decreasing grain size and proportion of marble clasts with decreasing depth (Table 4.2 and Figure 4.1).

**Table 4.2 Description of a Normally-graded Tuffaceous Sedimentary Sequence in a Drillhole No. 35413/DD200/DH/007, Central Hung Shui Kiu**

Depth	Description
37.34 m	calcareous, tuffaceous sandstone
	calcareous, tuffaceous sandstone with occasional gravel-sized marble clasts
	calcareous, tuffaceous sandstone with some gravel-sized marble clasts
c. 43.20 m (Base)	calcareous, tuffaceous breccia with many gravel- to cobble-sized marble clasts and occasional gravel-sized possible andesite clasts



**Figure 4.1 Normally-graded, Slightly Foliated, Calcareous, Tuffaceous Breccia-Sandstone Sequence with an Apparent Thickness of at least 5.8 m. (Occasional possible andesite clasts (arrow 1) are evident) (Central Hung Shui Kiu, Drillhole No. 35413/DD200/DH/007, Boxes 4 and 5)**

In general, marble clasts in tuffaceous sedimentary rocks are not interconnected. Dissolution of these clasts is localised and typically leads to honeycomb structures of the rocks only, but not to the development of karst features (Figure A16 in Appendix A; GEO, 2005).

#### **4.3.2 Tuffaceous Sedimentary Rocks with Various Clasts**

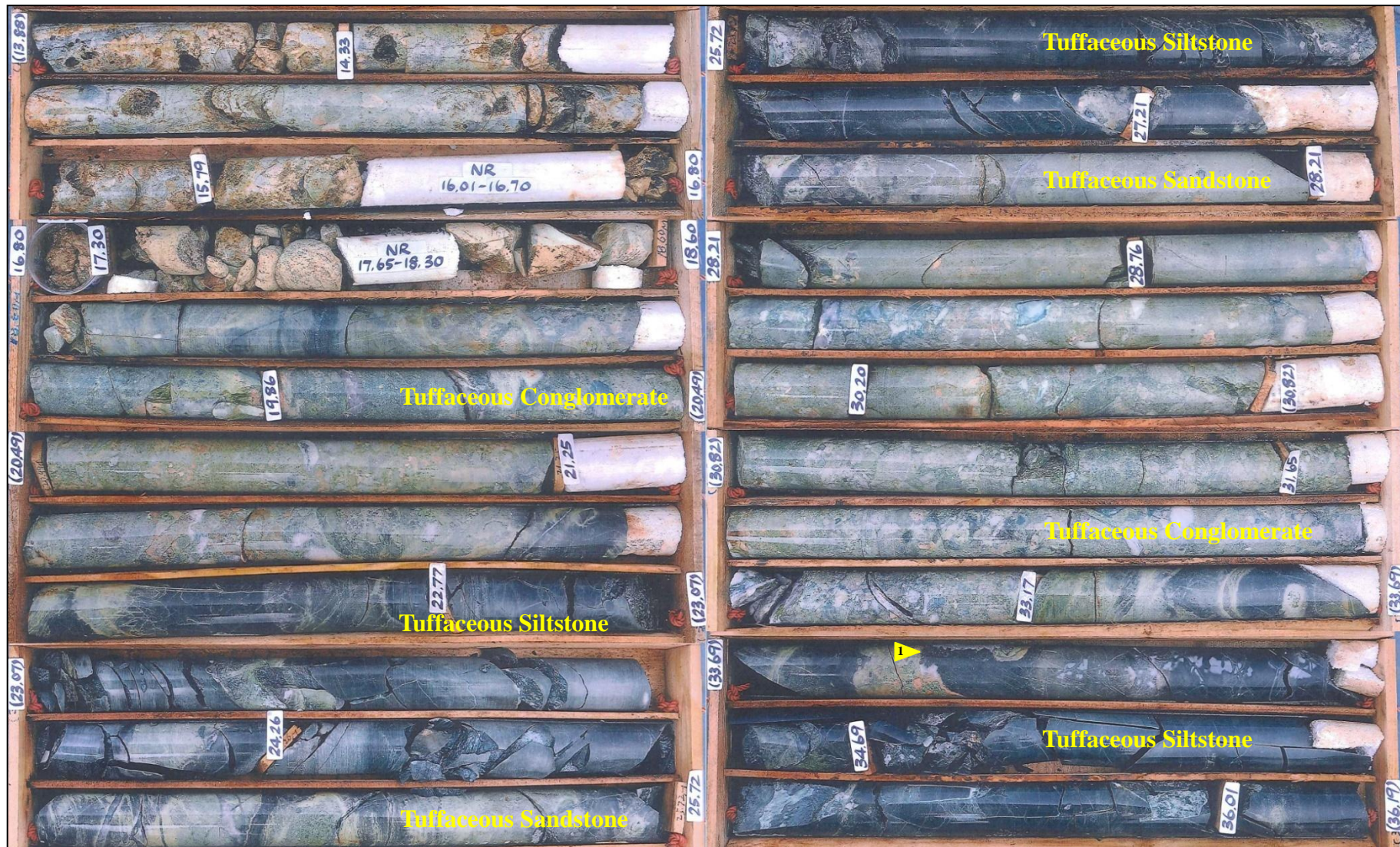
In these tuffaceous lithologies (predominantly breccias, conglomerates and sandstones), the proportion of various types of clasts can be highly variable. Some of these rocks were also originally identified as ‘marble clast-bearing volcanic rocks’ by Darigo (1989 & 1990), and assigned to the Tin Shui Wai Member of the Tuen Mun Formation by Frost (1992).

In this study, outcrops and subcrops of these rocks have been identified mainly in the west-central Tuen Mun Valley area (Figures 4.2 and 4.3). The material characteristics and the degree of metamorphism of these rocks can be locally highly variable. Fresh tuffaceous breccia and conglomerate may have the following characteristics:

- (a) strong to very strong,
- (b) (i) dark grey dappled light grey, or  
(ii) greyish green and dark grey, mottled pink and white, spotted brown and grey,
- (c) matrix supported but occasionally clast supported,
- (d) massive but occasionally normally graded, and
- (e) pervasively altered (e.g. propylitic alteration and skarn mineralisation; Figures A18 to A23 in Appendix A).

The abundance of rounded cobbles and boulders of coarse ash tuff in a tuffaceous conglomerate suggests a mature degree of abrasion of these clasts, by means of surface transport processes, prior to lithification (Figure A17 in Appendix A). Metamorphic minerals, such as epidote, garnet, chlorite and andalusite, are common in some tuffaceous metabreccias and metaconglomerates with various clasts (Figure A18 in Appendix A; Tang, 2007). As described in Section 4.3.1, dissolution of marble clasts in tuffaceous metabreccias and metaconglomerates is localised and typically leads to honeycomb structures of the rocks only (Figure A23 in Appendix A).





**Figure 4.2 Graded and Repeated Sequences of Altered Tuffaceous Conglomerate-Sandstone-Siltstone.** (Highly contorted sedimentary contacts (arrow 1) between the underlying siltstone and the overlying conglomerate likely indicate high-energy transport processes) (Siu Hang Tsuen, Drillhole No. 54157/BH3, Left: Boxes 2 to 5, Right: Boxes 6 to 9)





**Figure 4.3 Tuffaceous Conglomerate with Occasional Sandstone (arrow 1) and Feldsparphyric Rhyolite (arrow 2) Clasts. (Both the sandstone and feldsparphyric rhyolite are older than the tuffaceous conglomerate) (Southwest of Por Lo Shan, E813690 N828804)**

#### 4.4 Epiclastic Rocks

In this study, all epiclastic rocks including sedimentary breccias, conglomerates, sandstones and siltstones have been partially metamorphosed. As described in Section 4.3, the epiclastic nature of these rocks is revealed by the feldspar-depleted but quartz-rich composition of the microcrystalline matrix. Outcrops and subcrops of epiclastic rocks beneath the northernmost Tuen Mun Valley area were previously assigned to the Carboniferous Lok Ma Chau Formation by Langford et al (1989) and Frost (1992), and subsequently incorporated within the Tuen Mun Formation by GEO (1994) and Sewell et al (2000).

##### 4.4.1 Sandstone and Siltstone

Metamorphosed sandstone and siltstone are widespread beneath the northern Tuen Mun Valley area. Fresh metasandstone and metasilstone are typically strong, dark greenish grey, foliated, altered and sometimes calcareous. In some cases, metasandstone and metasilstone display a number of planar discontinuities including cleavages, mylonitic foliations and tectonic joints, suggestive of at least two phases of metamorphism (Figure A24 in Appendix A). Upon weathering, these rocks disintegrate along the discontinuities and may be recovered during drilling as highly fractured and non-intact cores (Figure A25 in Appendix A).

#### 4.4.2 Sedimentary Rocks with Marble Clasts

Similar to the lithologies described in Sections 4.3.1 and 4.3.2, metamorphosed sedimentary rocks (predominantly breccias, conglomerates and sandstones) with marble clasts in the Tuen Mun Valley were first identified as ‘marble clast-bearing volcanic rocks’ by Darigo (1989 & 1990), and subsequently assigned to the Tin Shui Wai Member of the Tuen Mun Formation by Frost (1992). In this study, these rocks occur as subcrops beneath the northeastern Tuen Mun Valley area.

Fresh marble clast-bearing metasedimentary breccia and metasandstone are typically strong, grey to dark grey mottled white and green, matrix supported, calcareous, foliated and altered (Figures A26 to A29 in Appendix A). Weathering characteristics of these rocks are comparable with those lithologies described in Section 4.3.1.

#### 4.4.3 Sedimentary Rocks with Various Clasts

Metamorphosed sedimentary rocks (predominantly breccias, conglomerates and sandstones) with various clasts occur mainly as subcrops but also isolated outcrops in the northwestern Tuen Mun Valley area. Similar to the tuffaceous metabreccia and metaconglomerate described in Section 4.3.2, fresh metasedimentary breccia and metaconglomerate may have the following characteristics:

- (a) strong to very strong,
- (b) (i) dark greyish green, mottled white and light yellow, spotted pink, or  
(ii) light greenish grey, mottled white and pink, spotted brown and light grey,
- (c) matrix supported but occasionally clast supported,
- (d) massive but occasionally normally graded (Figure 4.4), and
- (e) intensely altered (e.g. silicification and chloritisation; Figures A30 to A33 in Appendix A).

#### 4.4.4 Marble Breccia/Conglomerate

‘Marble breccia/conglomerate’ is the term used for ‘marble breccia or marble conglomerate’ (see Section 3.2 for lithological classification) because the original angularity of marble clasts in this lithology in the Tuen Mun Valley is almost always obscured by extreme flattening and elongation due to intense dynamic metamorphism. Since the discovery of marble clast-bearing rocks in the 1980s, various terms including ‘tuff-breccia’, ‘tuffaceous breccia’ and ‘impure marble’ have been used to describe marble breccia/conglomerate.



**Figure 4.4 Normally-graded Metasedimentary Breccia-Metasandstone-Metasiltstone Sequence with an Apparent Thickness of c. 5 m (from 38.45 m to 33.40 m). (The metasedimentary breccia comprises many intensely altered clasts (arrow 1) with garnet mineralisation. The strata were previously assigned to Carboniferous Lok Ma Chau Formation by Langford et al (1989) and Frost (1992)) (Tin Shui Wai Area 115, Drillhole No. DH14, Box 3)**

Marble breccia/conglomerate is known to occur only as subcrops within restricted areas beneath the northeastern Tuen Mun Valley area. Fresh marble breccia/conglomerate is typically very strong, white streaked greenish grey and bluish grey, dappled light grey, unsorted, clast supported, very thickly bedded and mylonitised, with some quartzite clasts (Figures A34 and A35 in Appendix A). Mylonitic marble breccia/conglomerate strata are commonly intercalated with marble clast-bearing calcareous metasedimentary rocks (refer to Section 4.4.2), from which the foliation orientation and the vertical thickness of bedding can be determined from the contacts. Occasionally, for example in drillhole no. 29625/TH1, the vertical thickness of interbedded strata of mylonitic marble breccia/conglomerate and marble clast-bearing calcareous metasedimentary rocks can exceed 75 m. The unsorted and very thickly-bedded characteristics of marble breccia/conglomerate suggest a high-energy, gravity-induced depositional process (e.g. mass wasting event).

Both mylonitic marble breccia/conglomerate and impure marble contain over 50% by volume of carbonate components. However, mylonitic marble breccia/conglomerate strata usually interdigitate with metasedimentary rocks and, as a result, the weathering susceptibility of these strata is less severe compared with that of continuous marble layers. It is reiterated that dissolution of these interbedded strata rarely results in the formation of sizeable cavities and related infill deposits. However, skeletal residuum and/or 'residual soil' is commonly developed and defined as follows:

- (a) Skeletal residuum refers to an intact skeleton of residual soil/rock material derived from dissolution of a significant proportion of carbonate components (e.g. marble clasts) within the rock (Figure A36 in Appendix A).
- (b) ‘Residual soil’ represents in-situ weathered, residual soil/rock material that may be recovered as:
  - (i) intact, soft or stiff, silty or clayey soil, or
  - (ii) non-intact, angular, gravel- to cobble-sized rock fragments, from drilling (Figure A37 in Appendix A).

## 5 Summary

As part of the Hong Kong Geological Survey’s 1:20,000-scale geological map updating programme, this study has:

- (a) proposed a lithological classification scheme for rocks of the Tuen Mun Formation and recommended geological terms for accurate and consistent descriptions according to Geoguide 3 (GCO, 1988a) and in alignment with international practice,
- (b) reviewed and classified all known key lithologies of the Tuen Mun Formation based on all available information, and
- (c) introduced a lexicon to help practitioners in the description and characterisation of rocks of the Tuen Mun Formation during drill core logging and surface mapping.

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## Appendix A

Lexicon of Terms Used for Drill Core Logging and Surface Mapping in  
the Tuen Mun Valley

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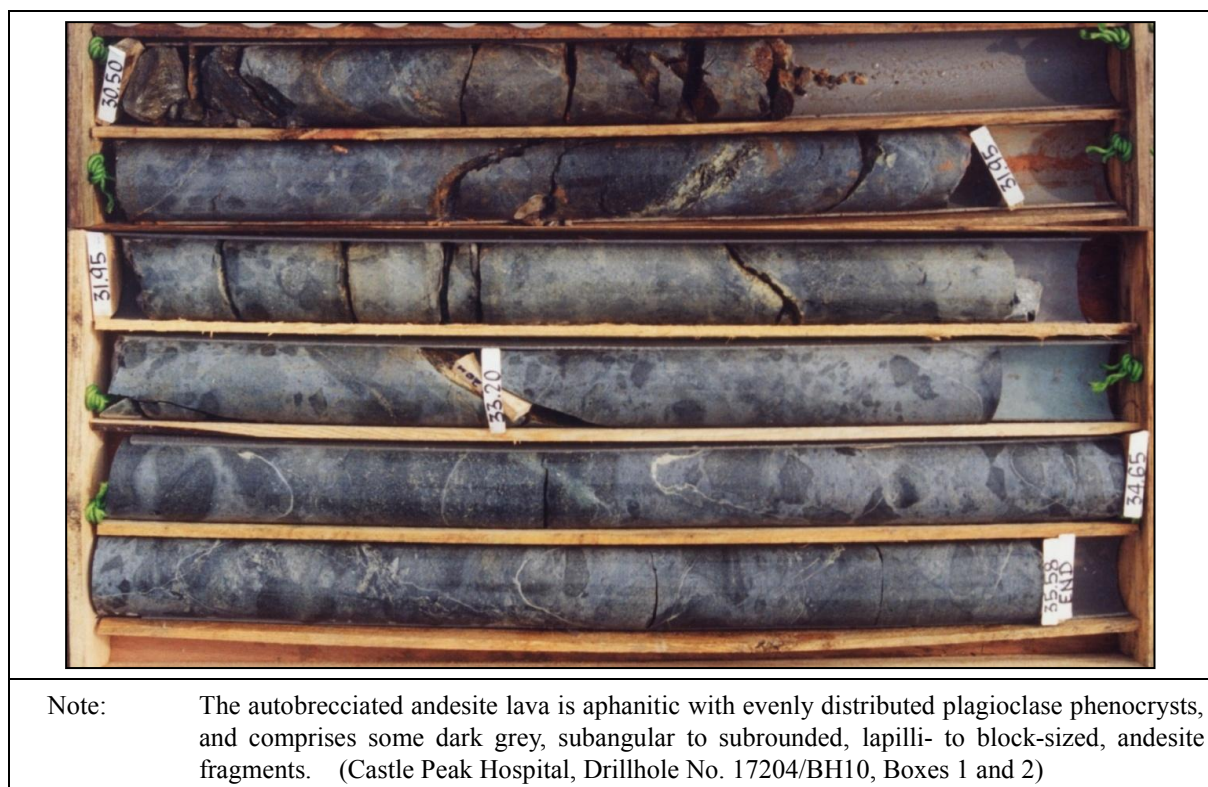
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## A.1 Andesite (Lava)

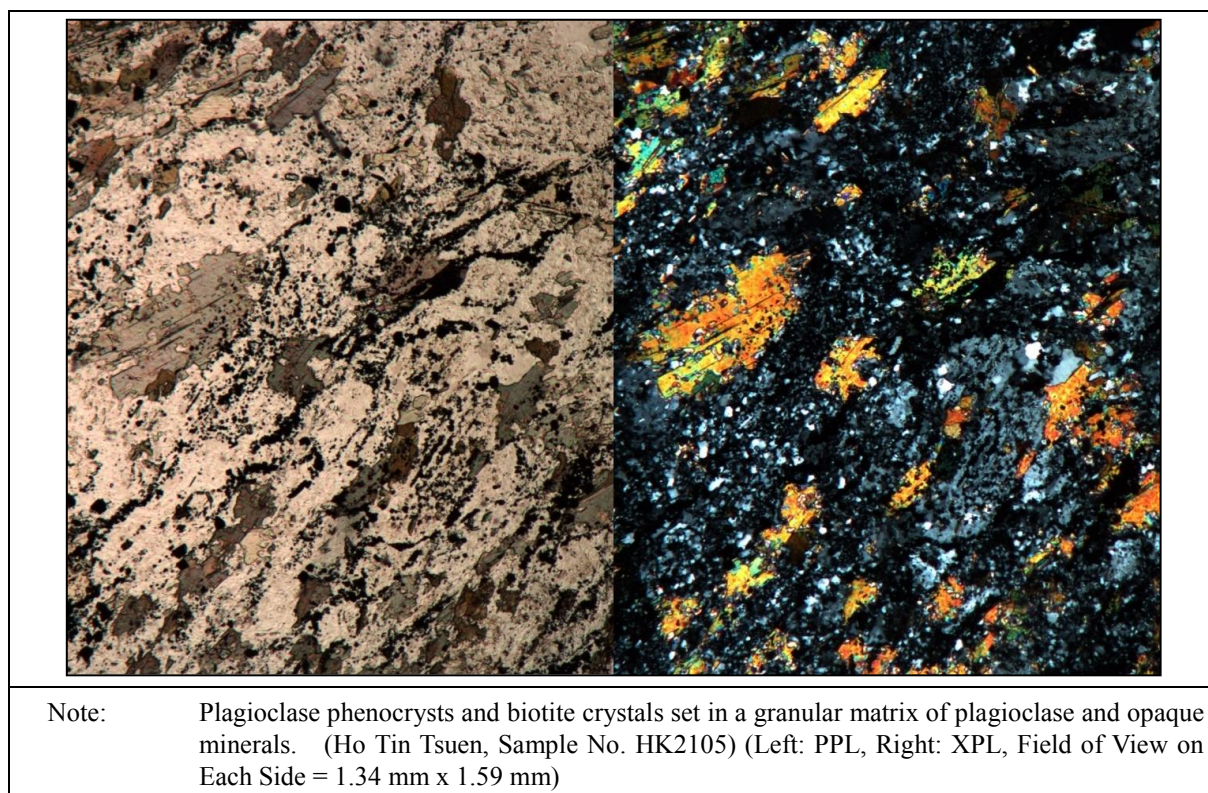


**Figure A1 Andesite**

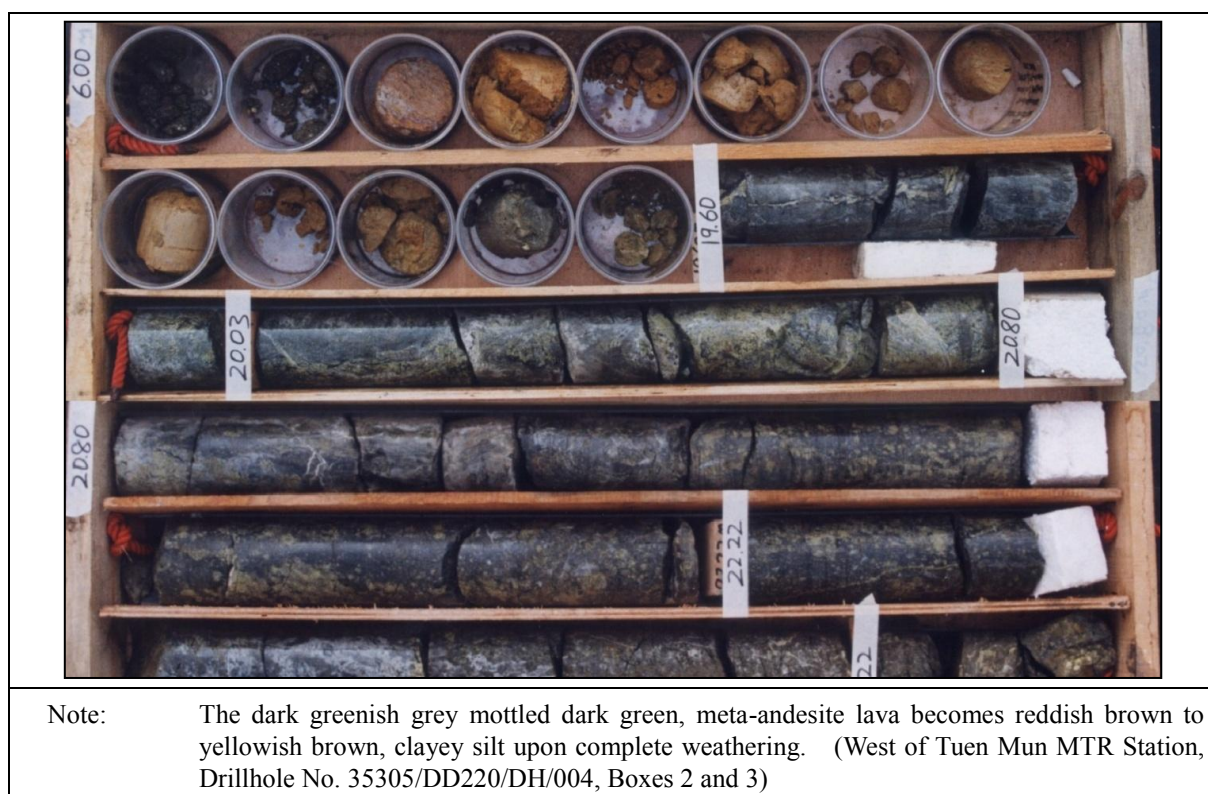


**Figure A2 Meta-andesite**





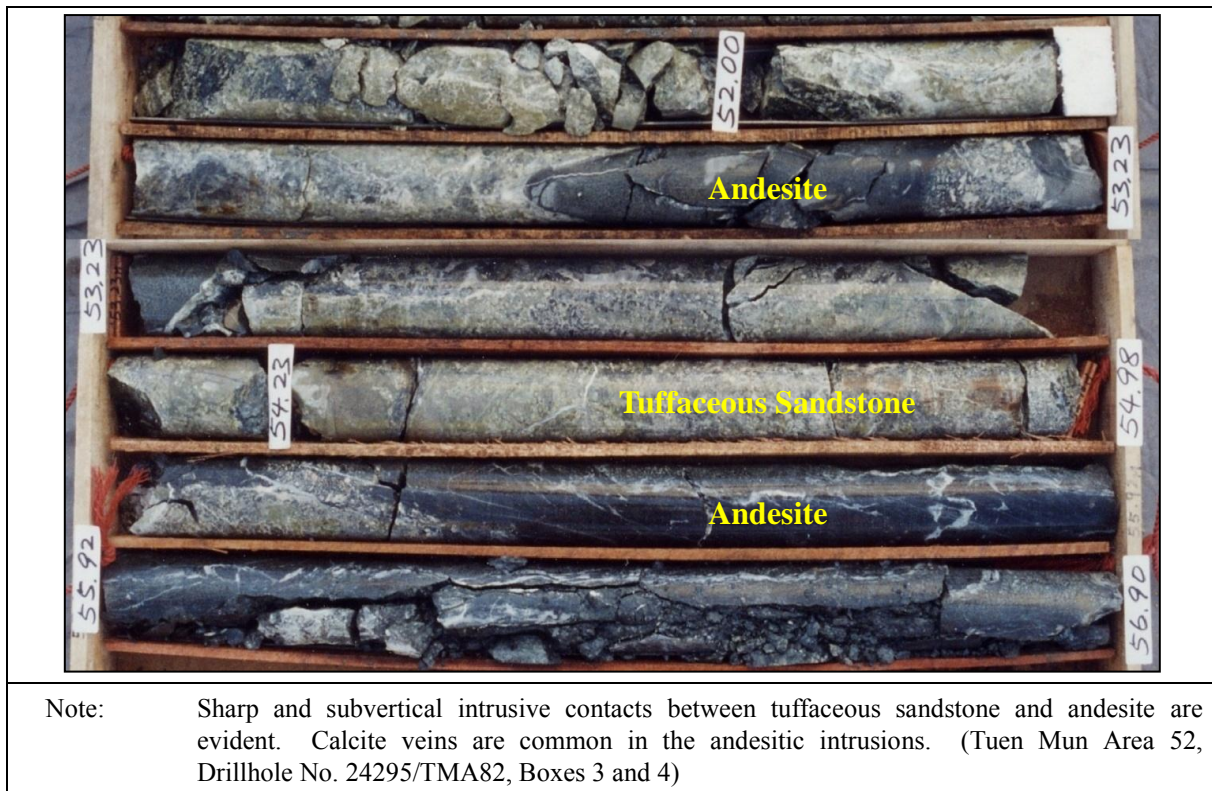
**Figure A3 Photomicrograph of Meta-andesite**



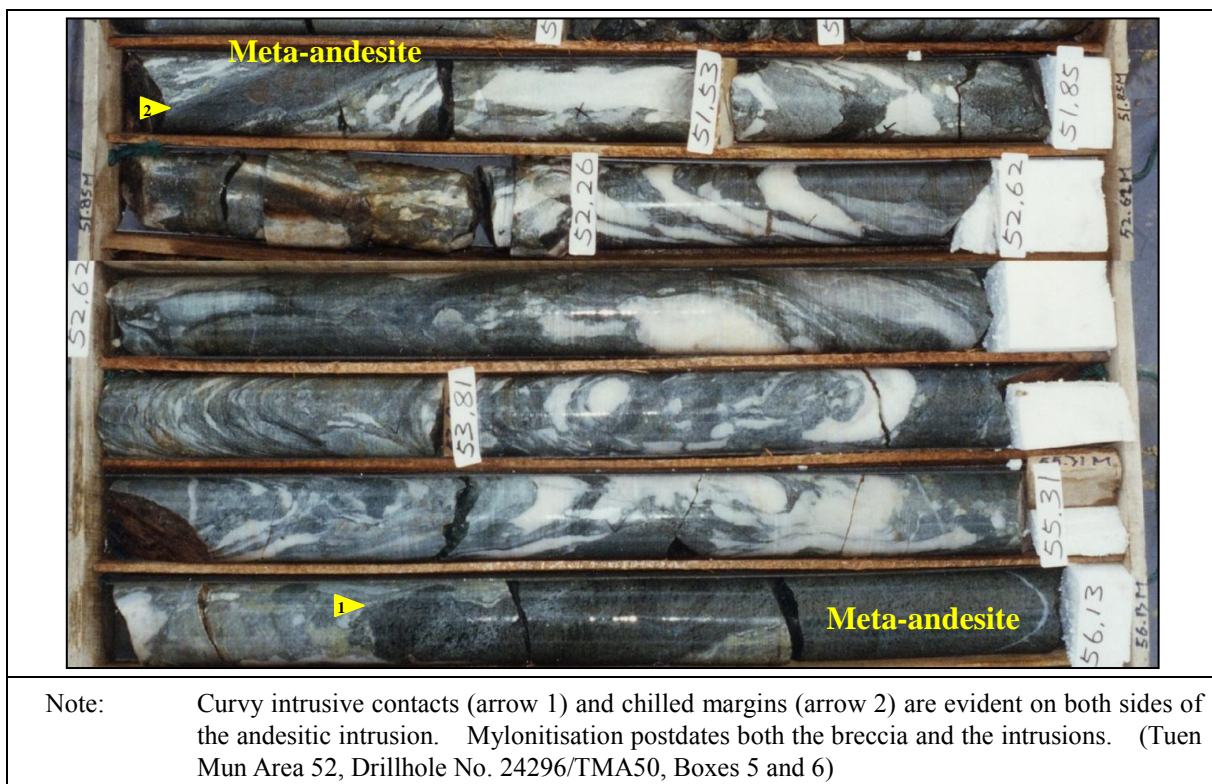
**Figure A4 Meta-andesite**

## A.2 Andesite (Dyke and Sill)

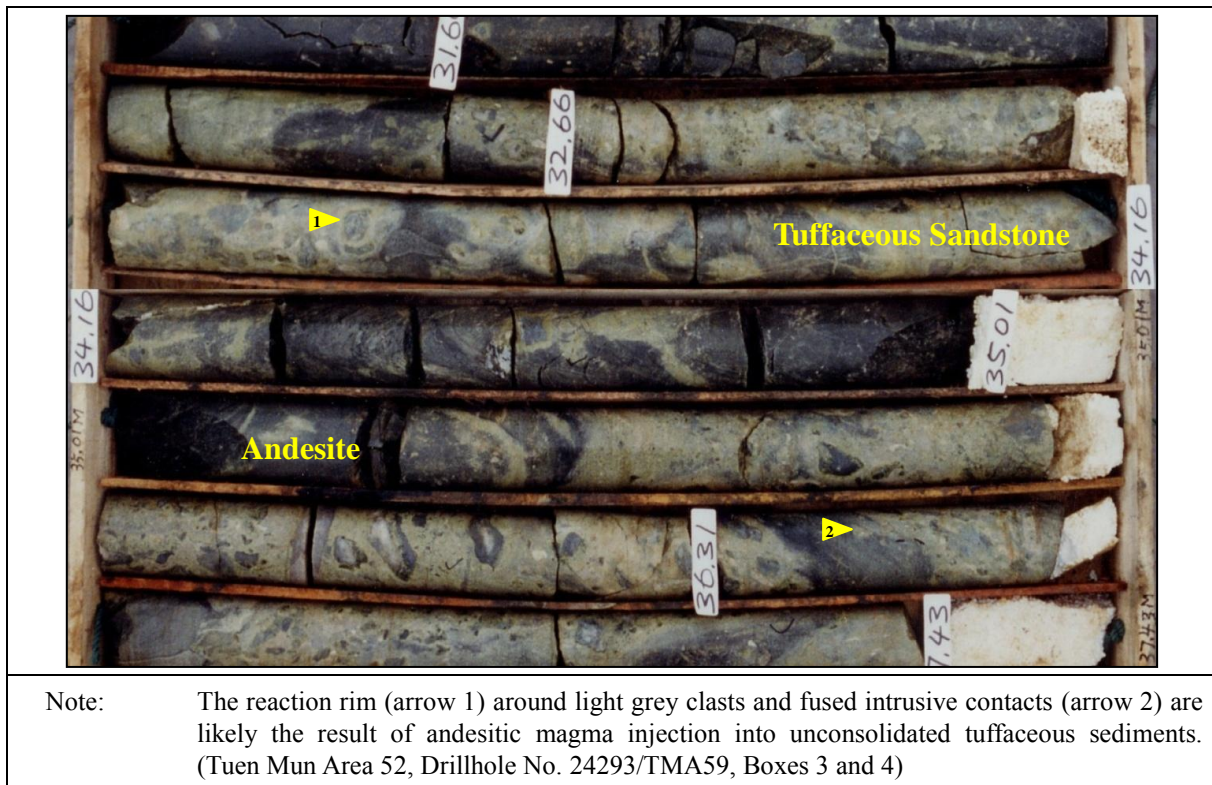




**Figure A5 Altered Tuffaceous Sandstone, and Andesite**



**Figure A6 Mylonitic Tuffaceous Breccia with Many Marble Clasts, and Meta-andesite**



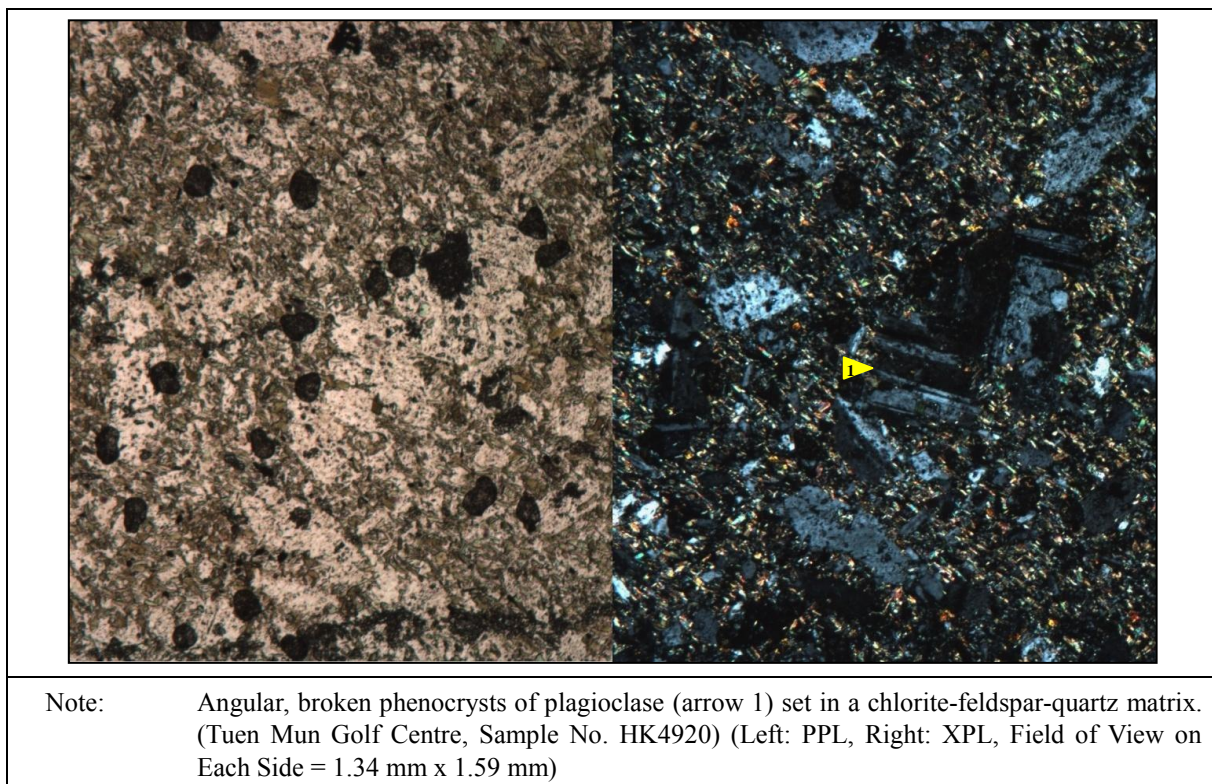
**Figure A7 Altered Tuffaceous Sandstone, and Andesite**

### A.3 Coarse Ash Tuff





**Figure A8 Coarse Ash Tuff**



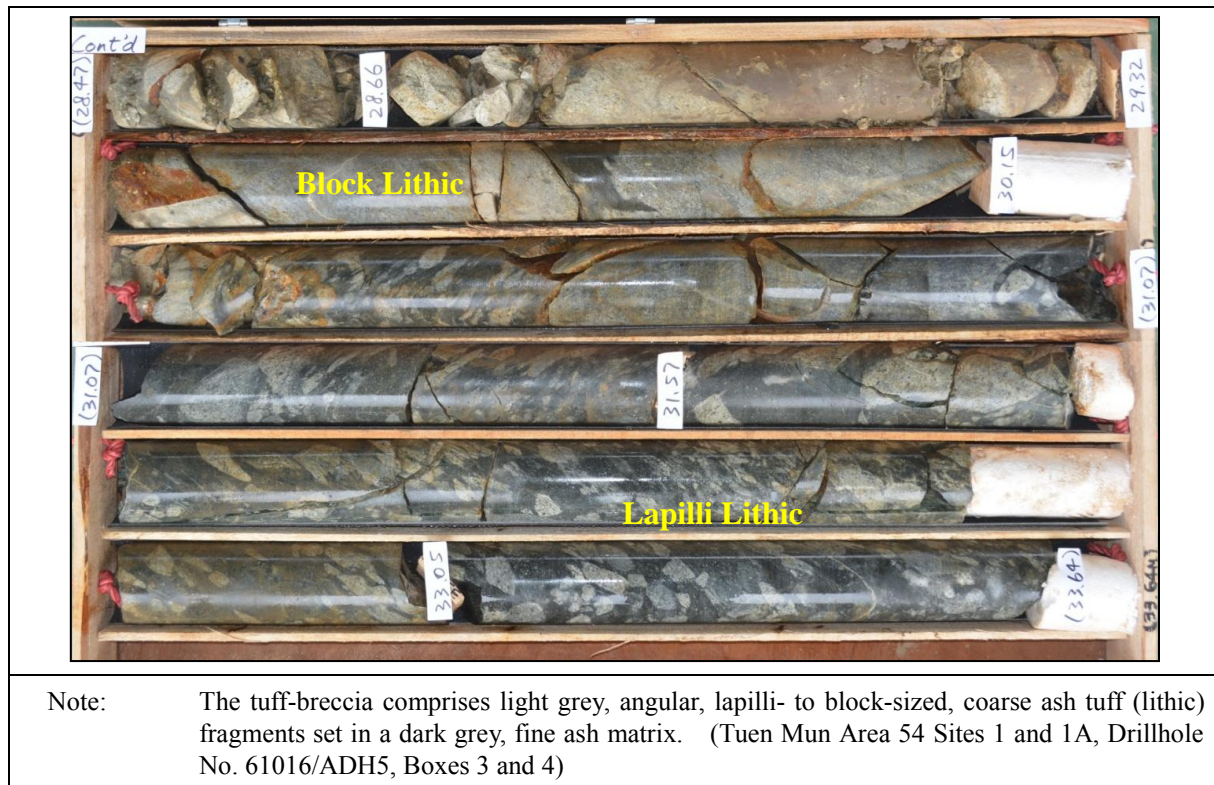
**Figure A9 Photomicrograph of Coarse Ash Tuff**



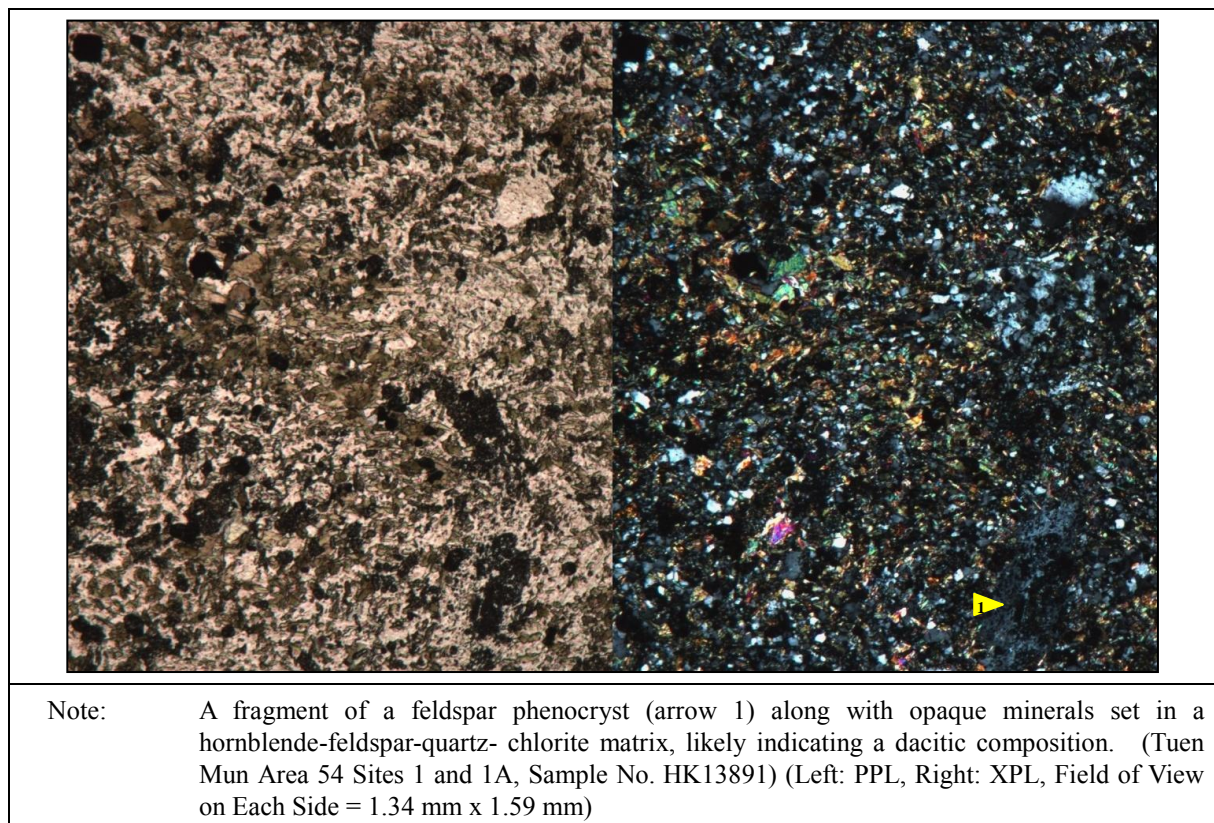
**Figure A10 Coarse Ash Tuff**

#### A.4 Tuff-breccia





**Figure A11 Tuff-breccia**



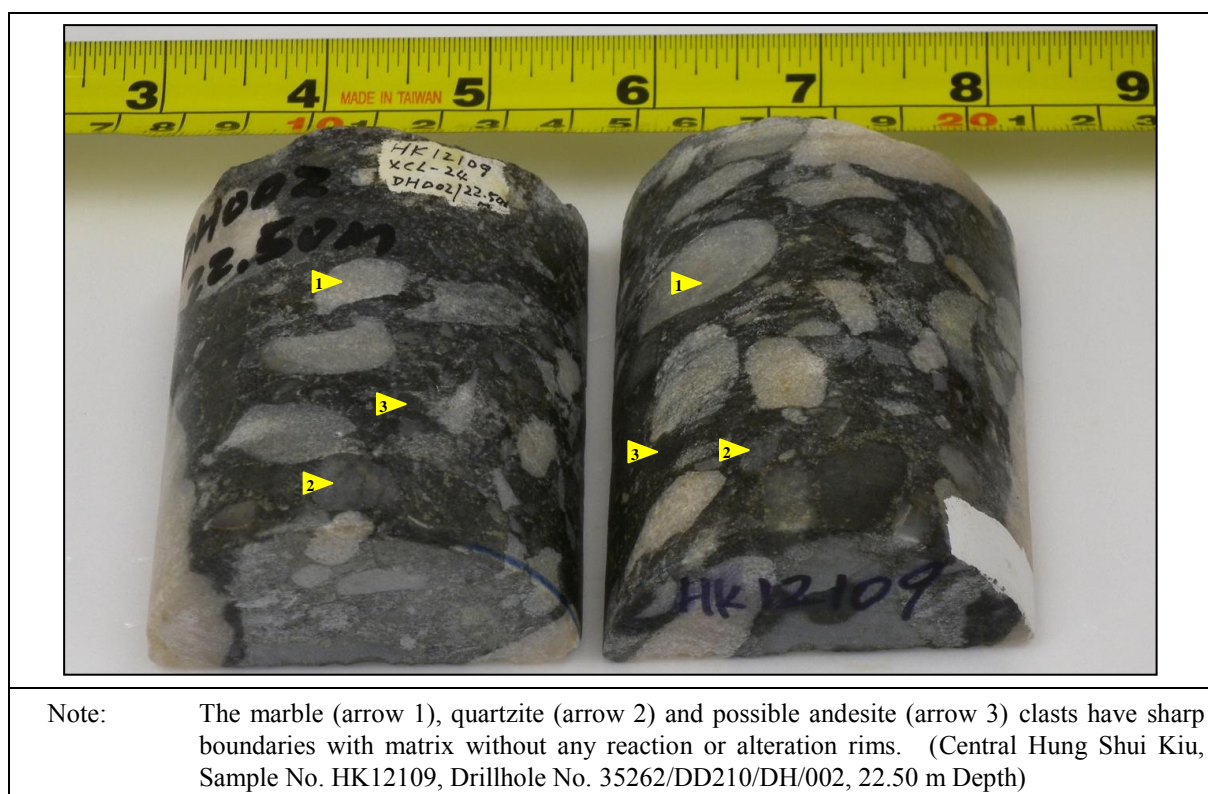
**Figure A12 Photomicrograph of Tuff-breccia**

## A.5 Tuffaceous Breccia and Conglomerate



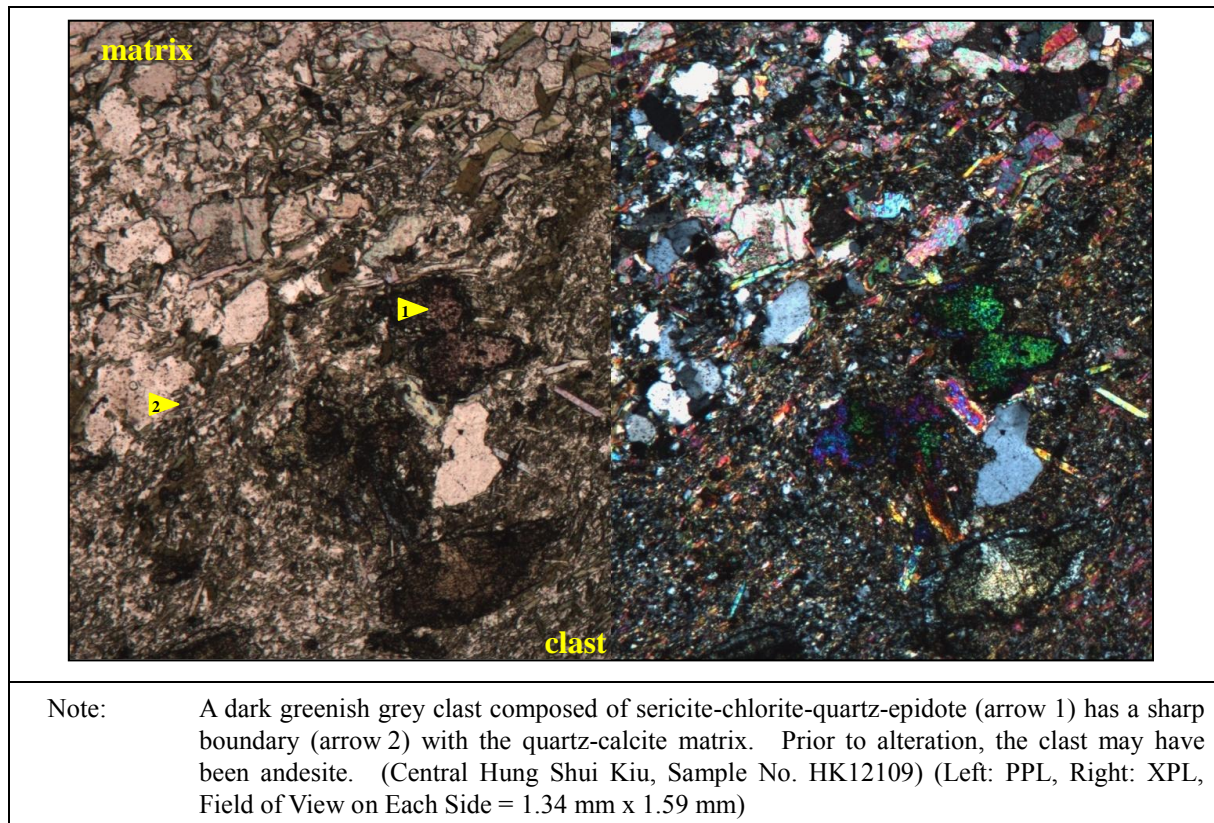


**Figure A13 Altered, Calcareous, Tuffaceous Breccia with Many Marble Clasts**

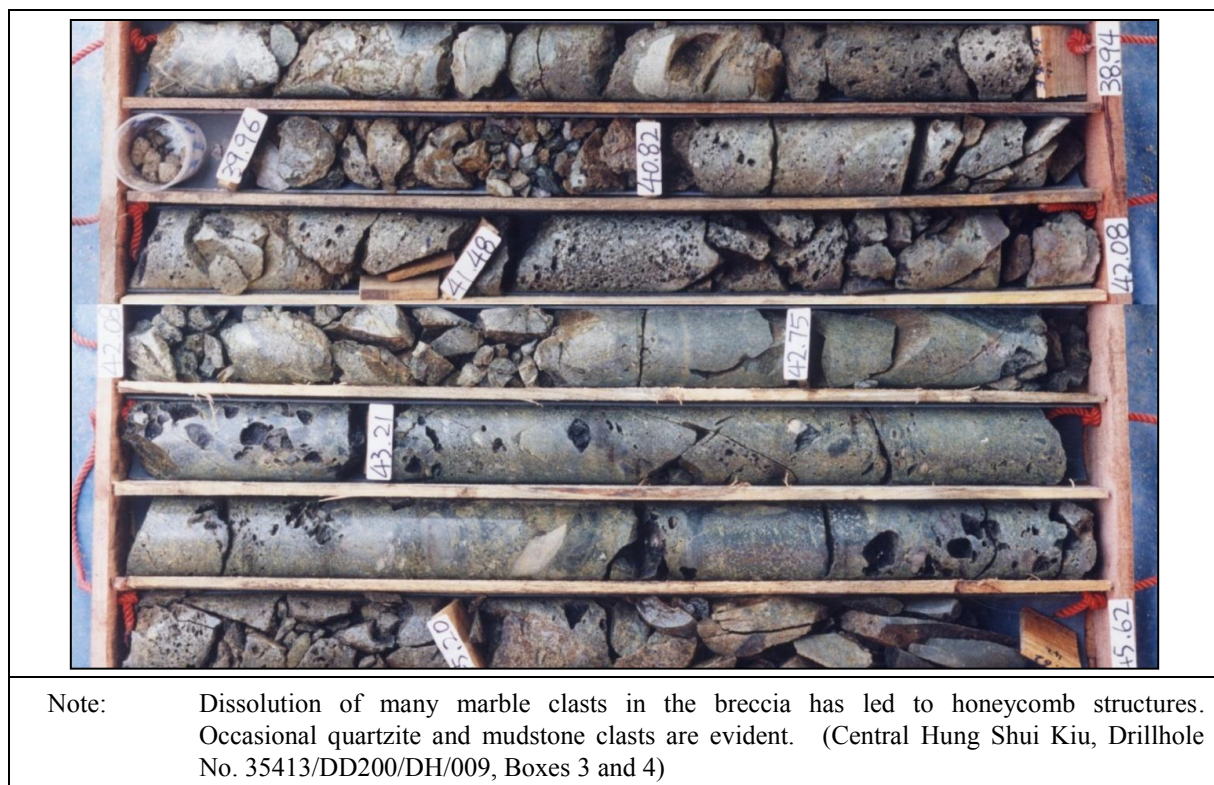


**Figure A14 Altered, Calcareous, Tuffaceous Breccia with Many Marble Clasts**



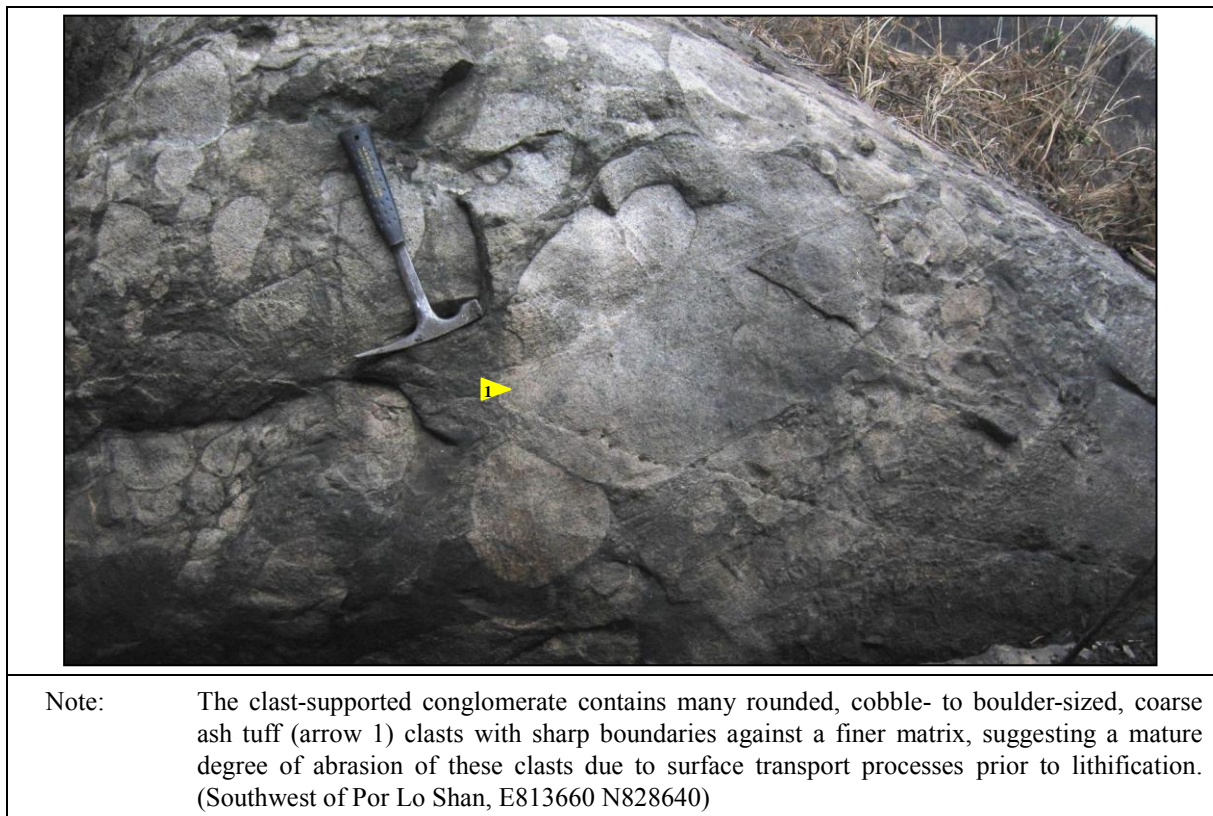


**Figure A15 Photomicrograph of Altered, Calcareous, Tuffaceous Breccia**

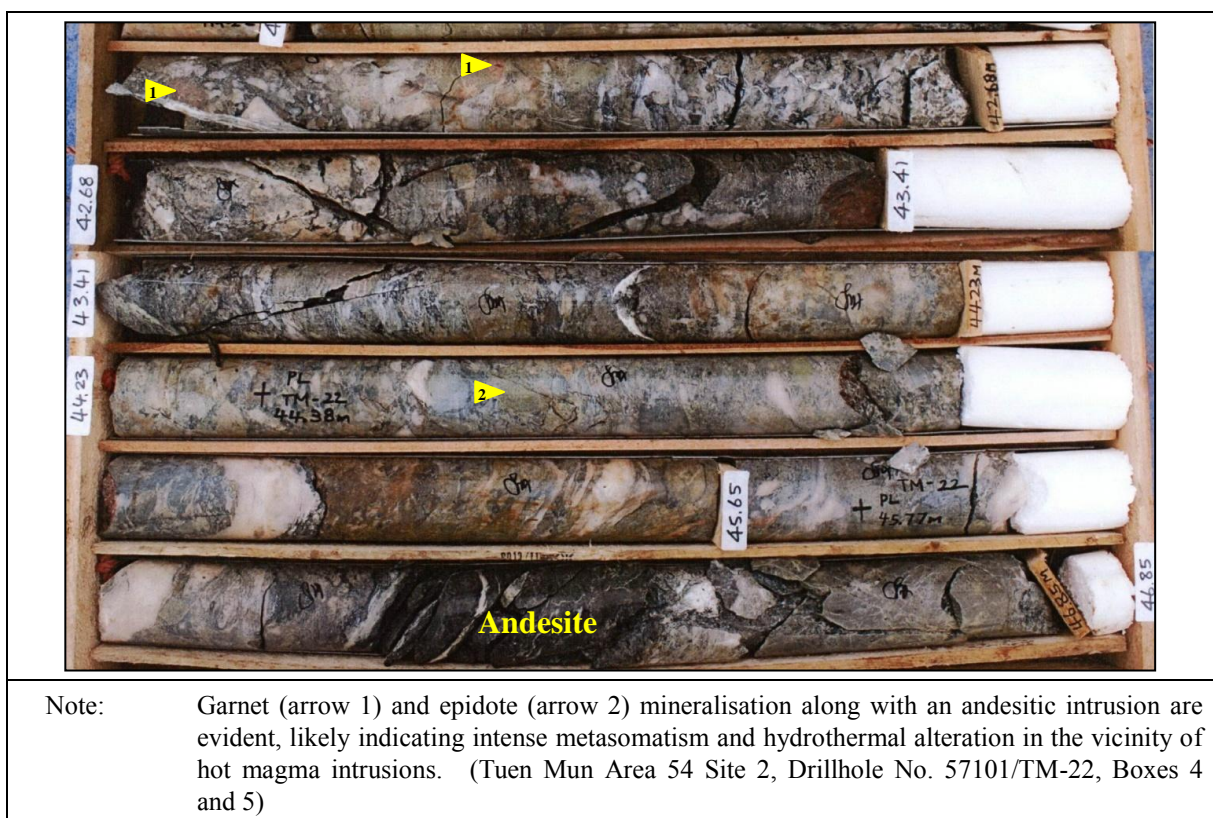


**Figure A16 Altered, Calcareous, Tuffaceous Breccia with Honeycomb Structures**



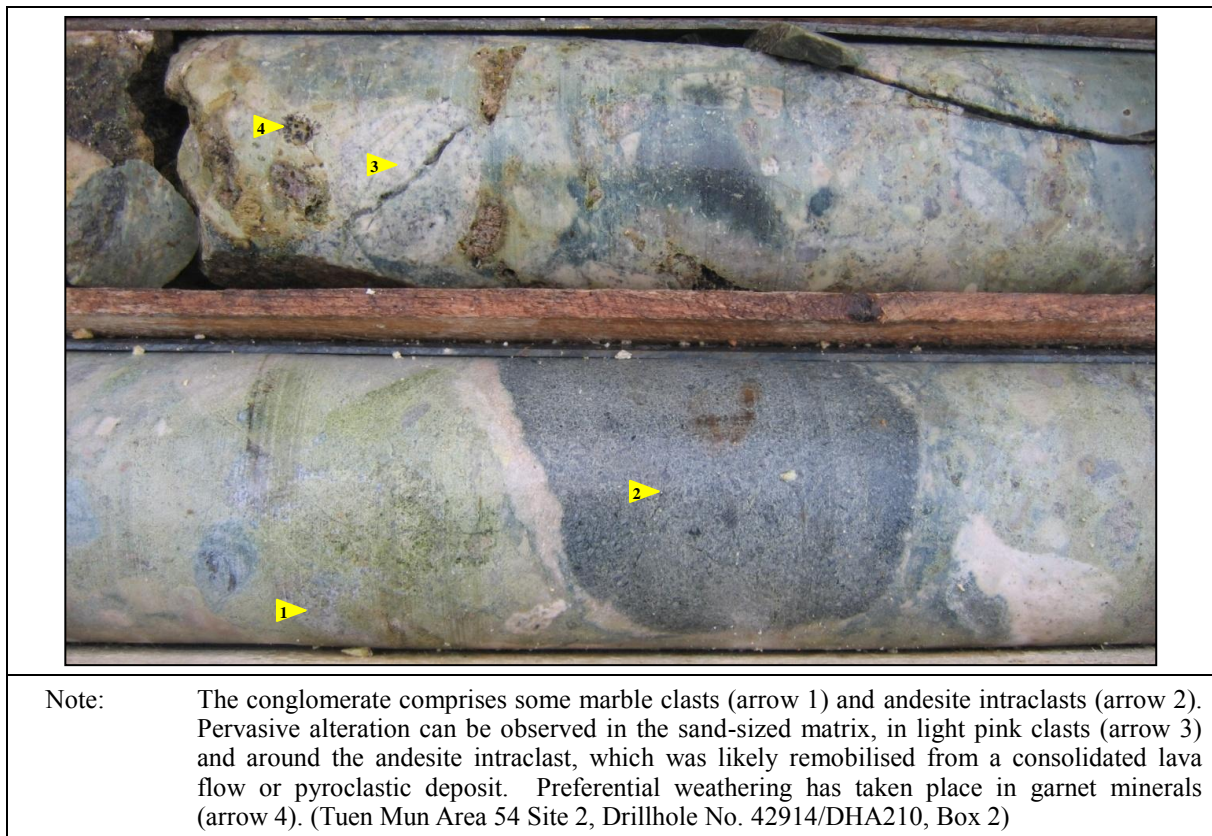


**Figure A17 Tuffaceous Conglomerate**

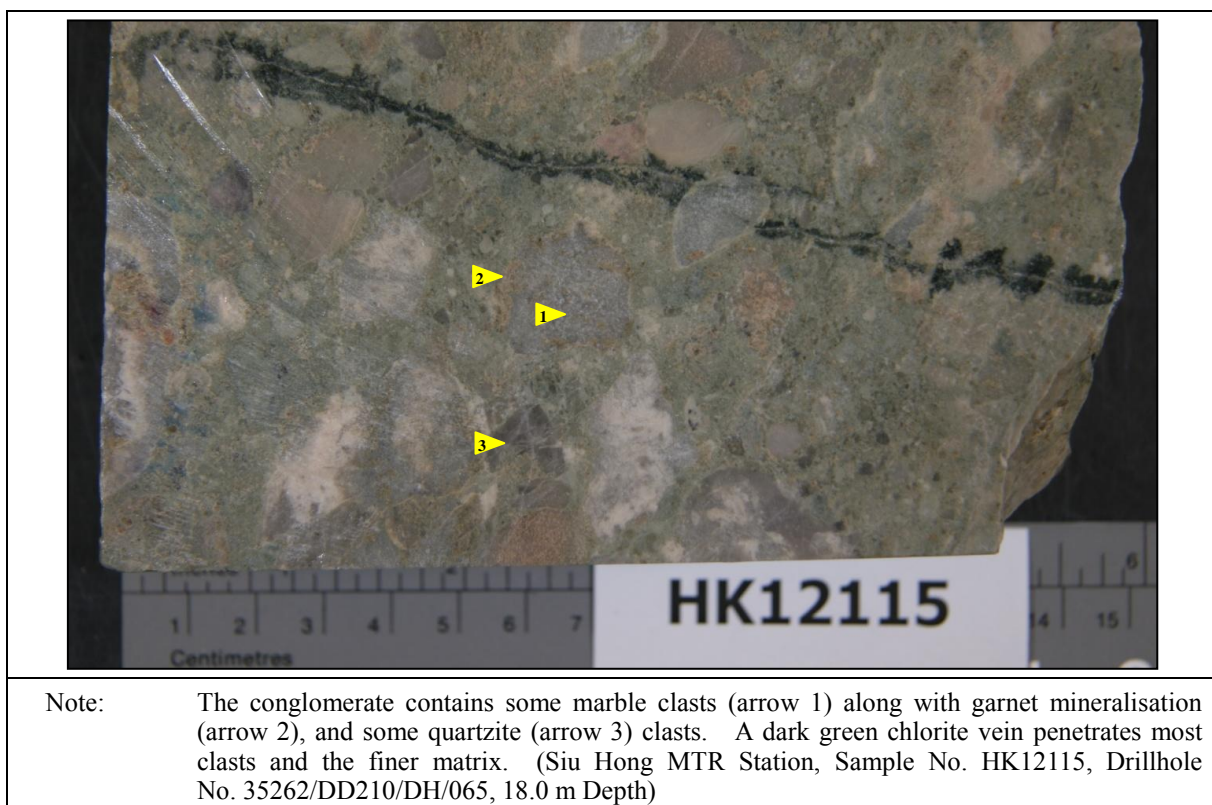


**Figure A18 Altered Tuffaceous Conglomerate with Many Marble Clasts, and Andesite**



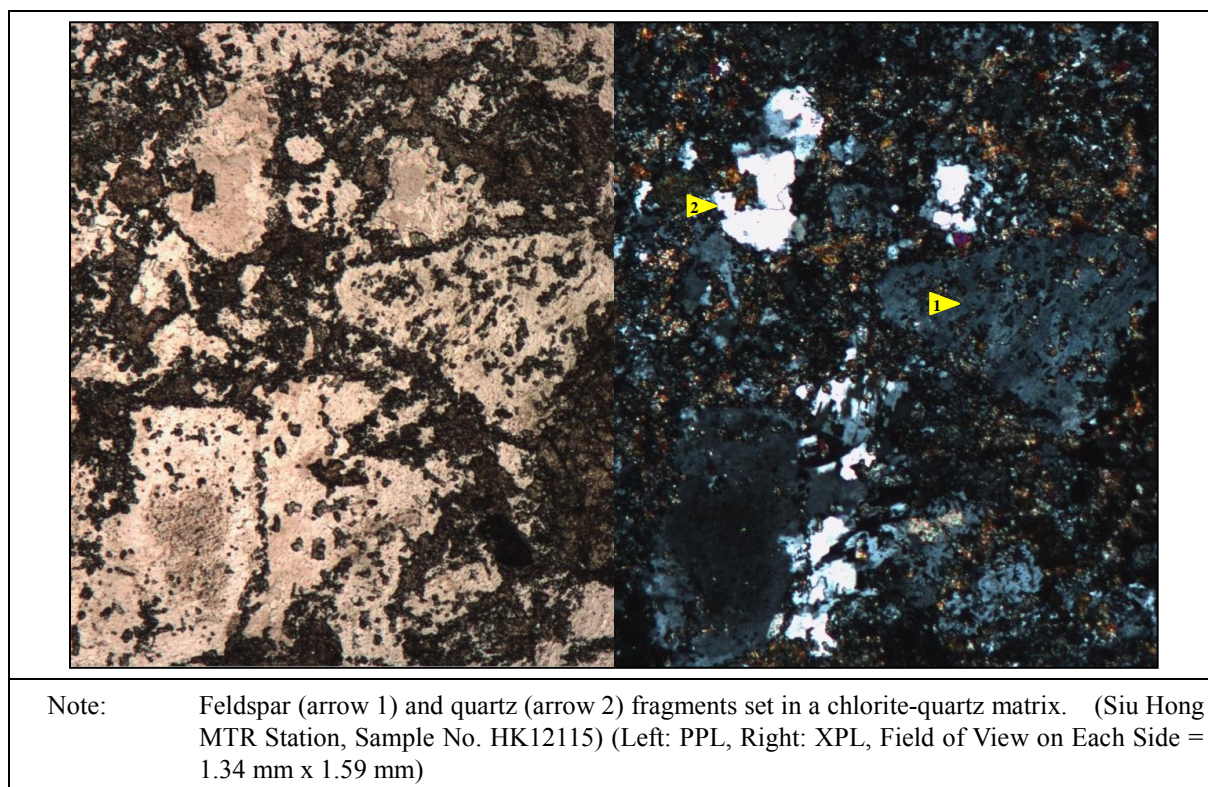


**Figure A19 Altered Tuffaceous Conglomerate with Some Marble Clasts**

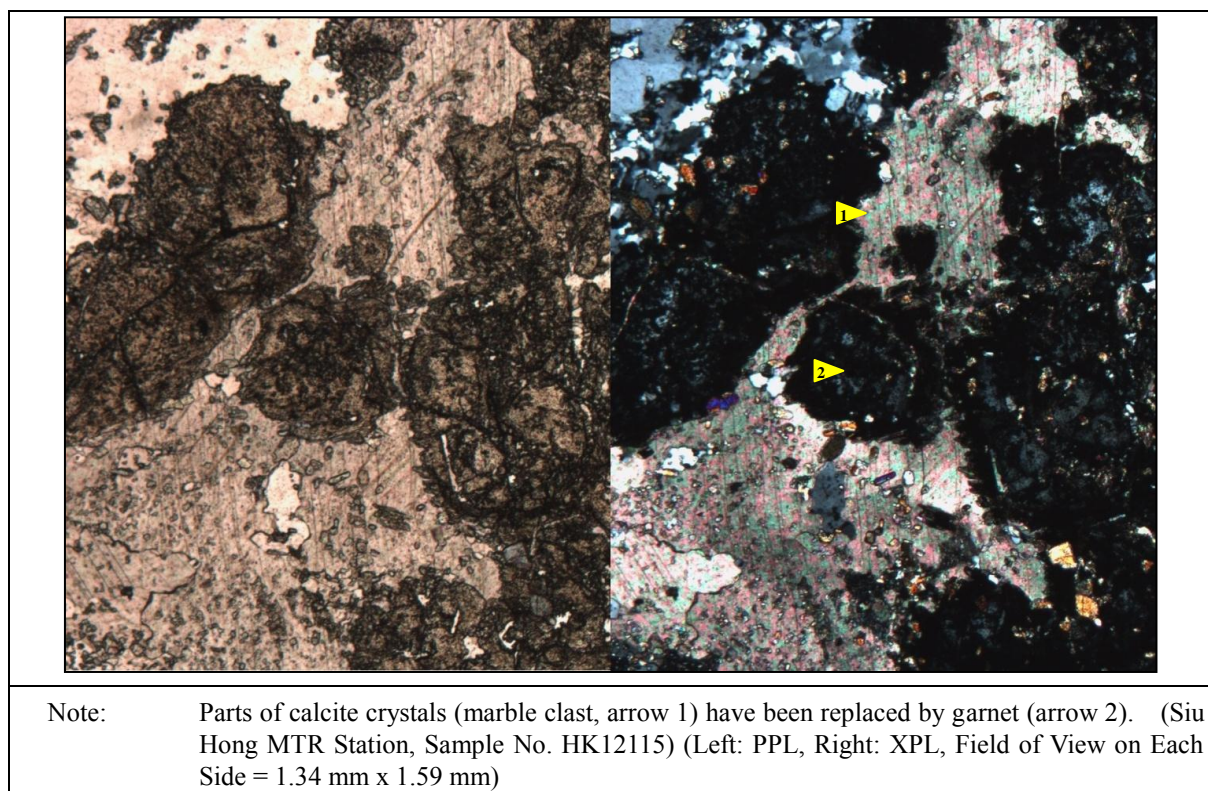


**Figure A20 Altered Tuffaceous Conglomerate with Some Marble Clasts**

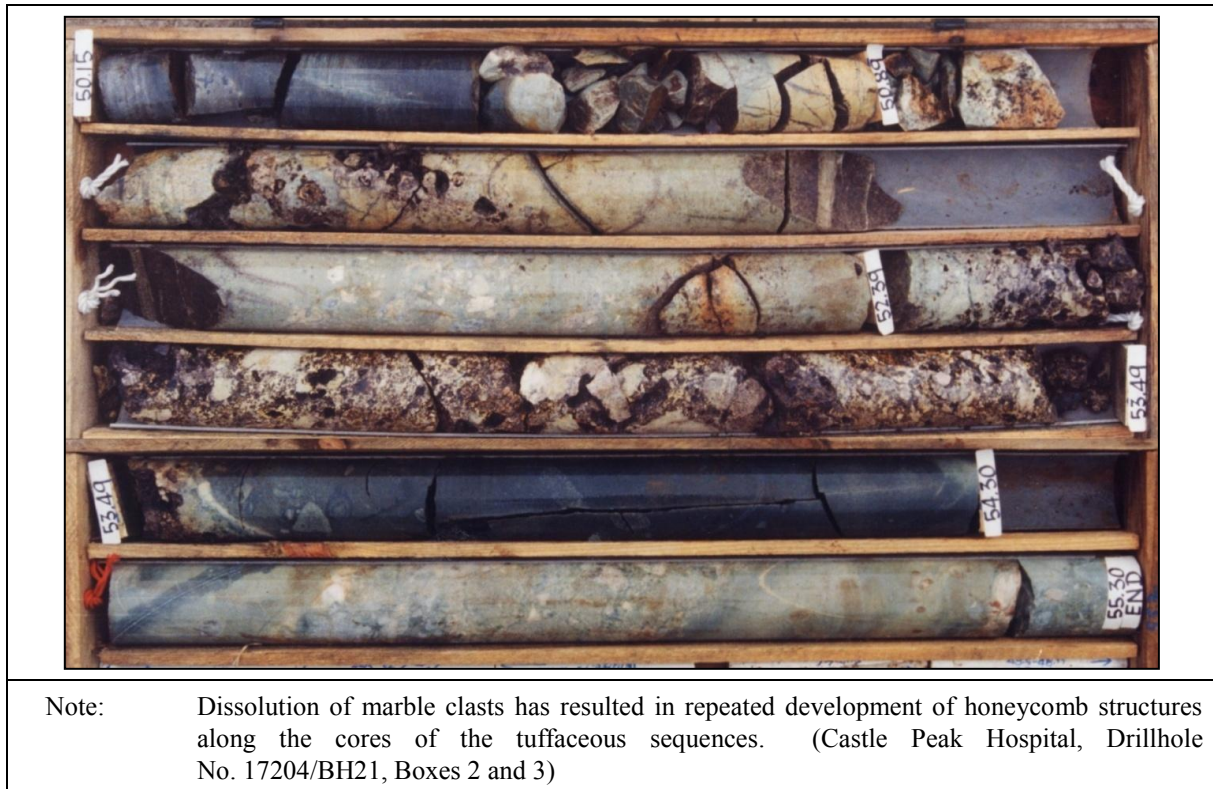




**Figure A21 Photomicrograph of Altered Tuffaceous Conglomerate**



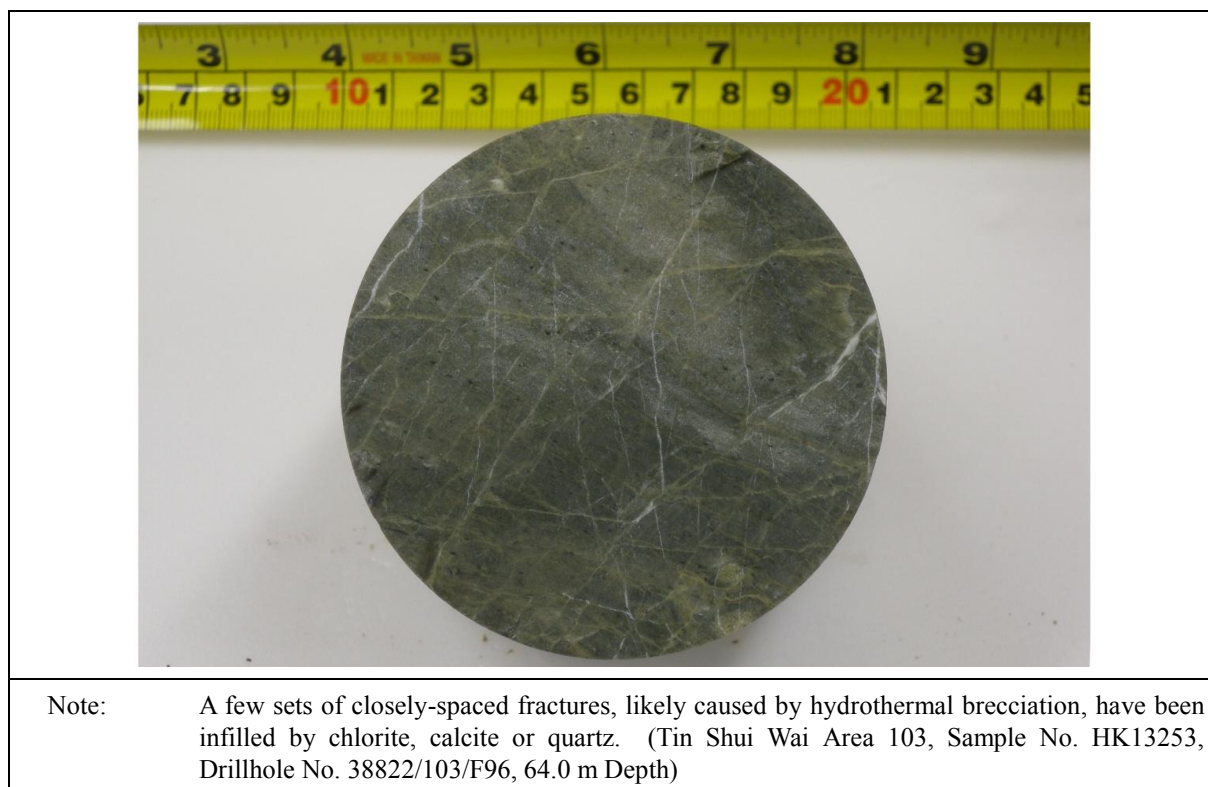
**Figure A22 Photomicrograph of Altered Tuffaceous Conglomerate**



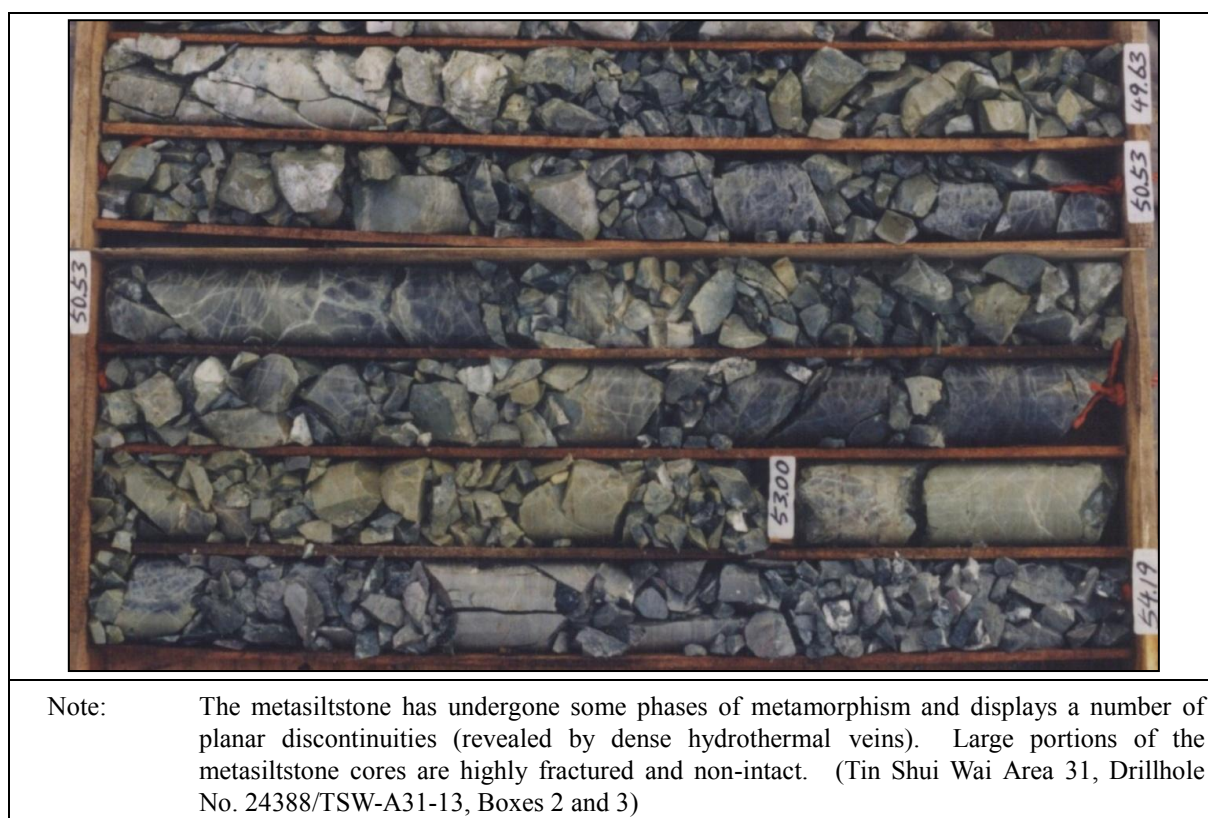
**Figure A23 Altered Tuffaceous Conglomerate with Honeycomb Structures**

## A.6 Sedimentary Breccia, Conglomerate, Sandstone and Siltstone

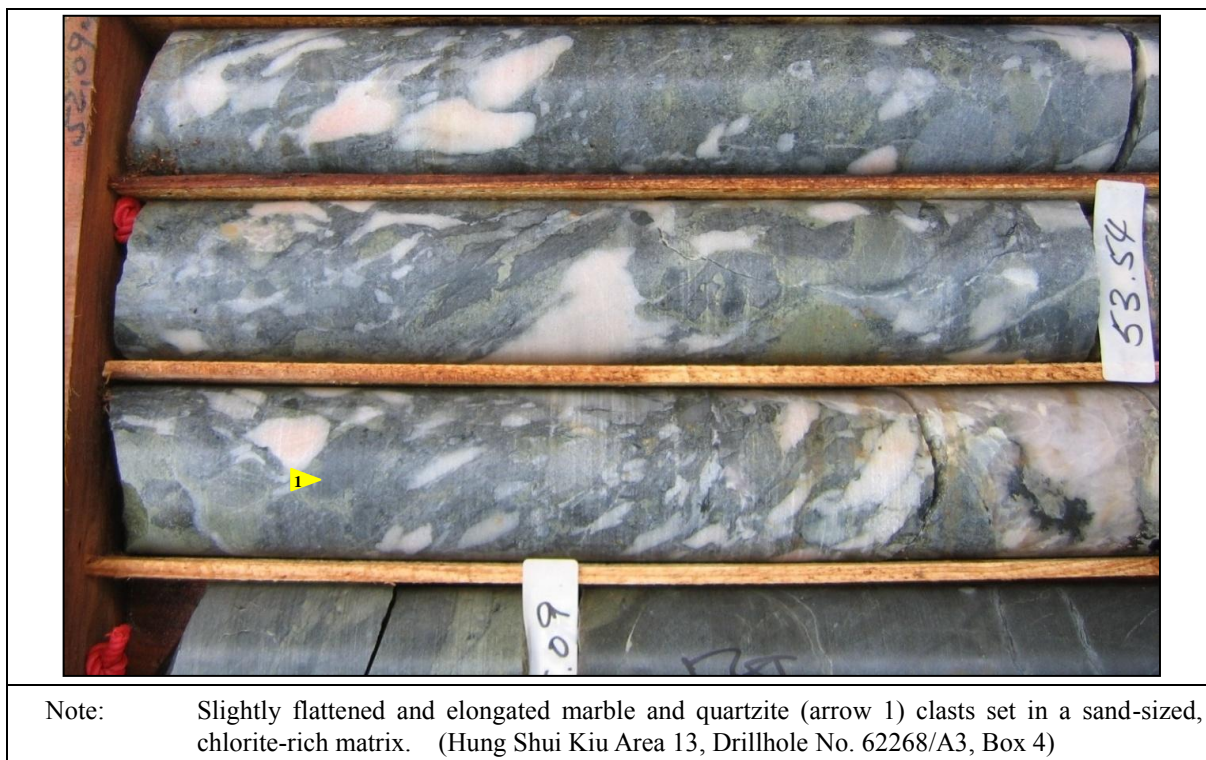




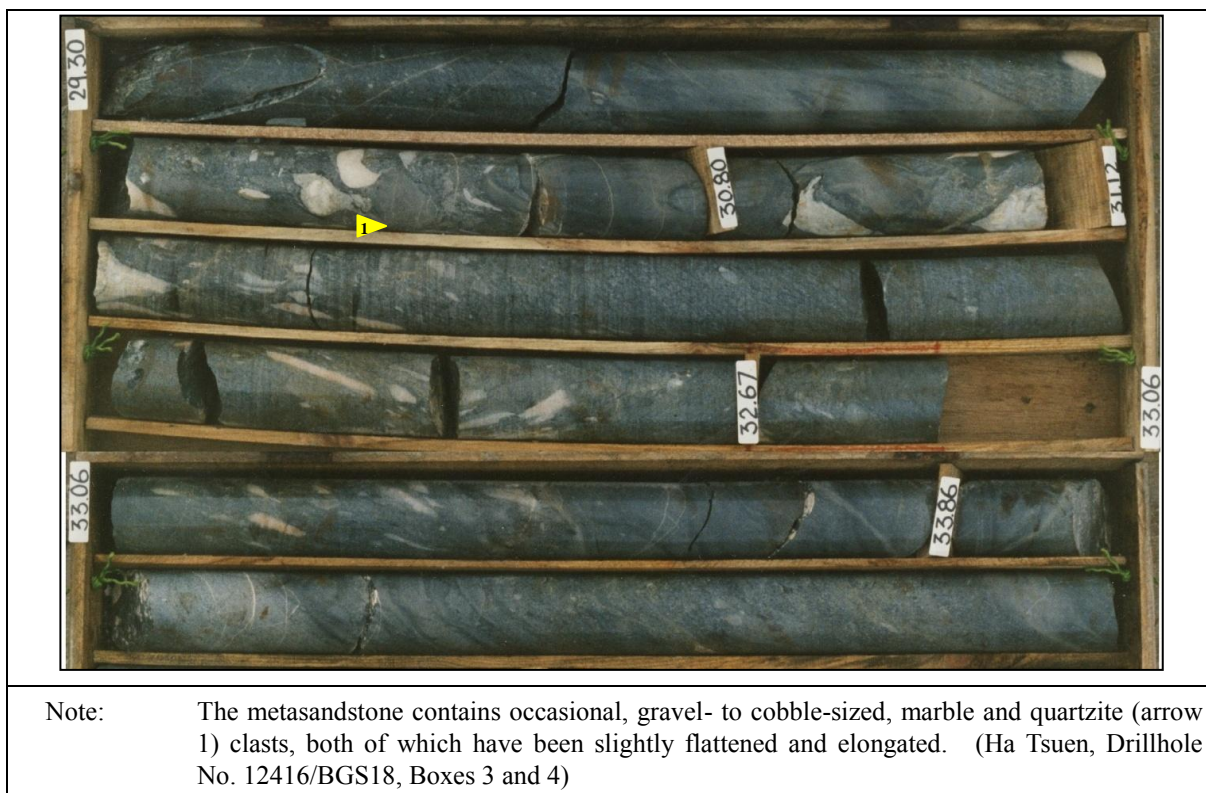
**Figure A24 Metasiltstone**



**Figure A25 Metasiltstone**

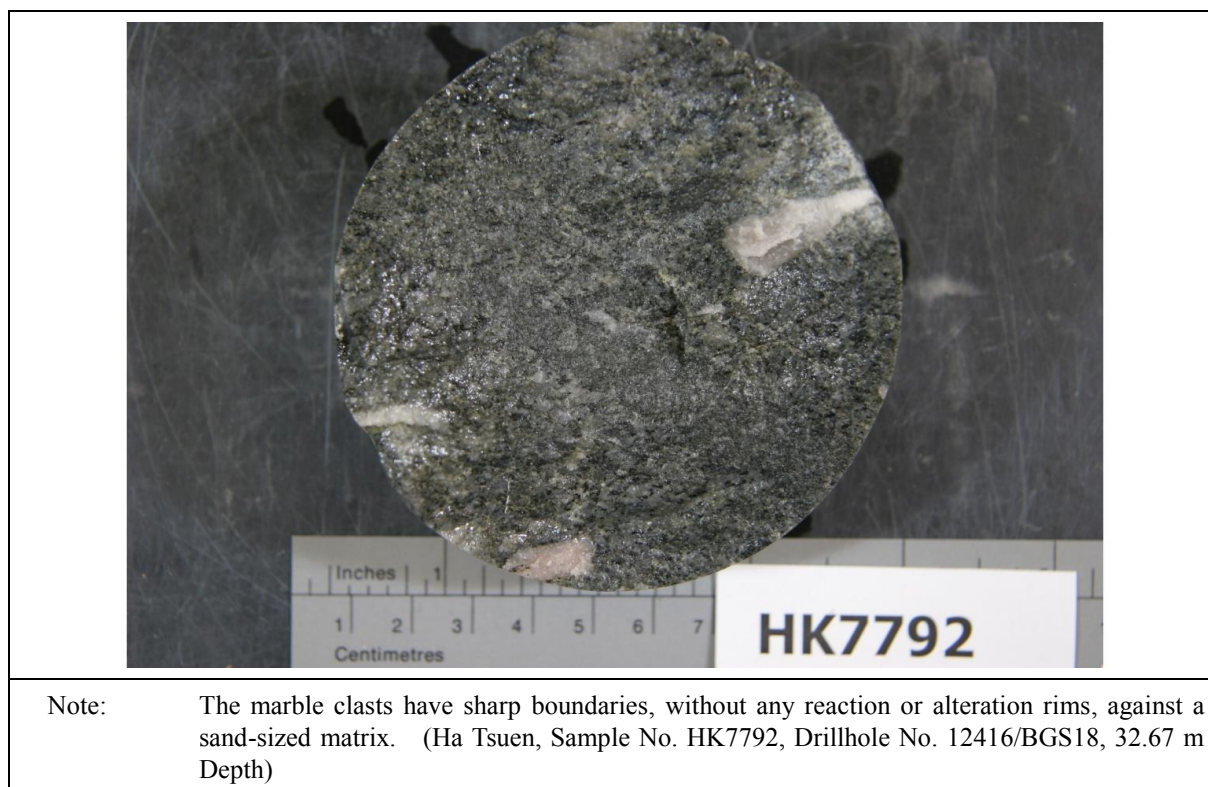


**Figure A26 Calcareous Metasedimentary Breccia with Many Marble Clasts**

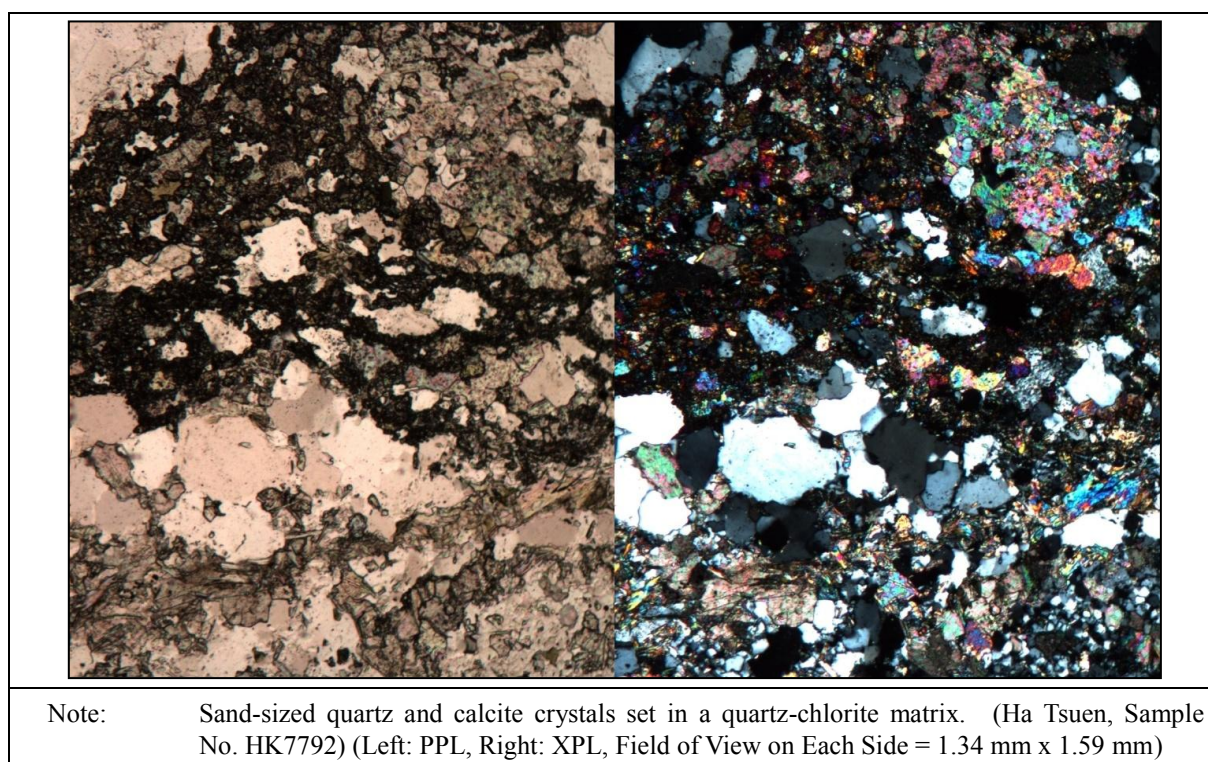


**Figure A27 Calcareous Metasandstone with Occasional Marble Clasts**





**Figure A28 Calcareous Metasandstone with Occasional Marble Clasts**

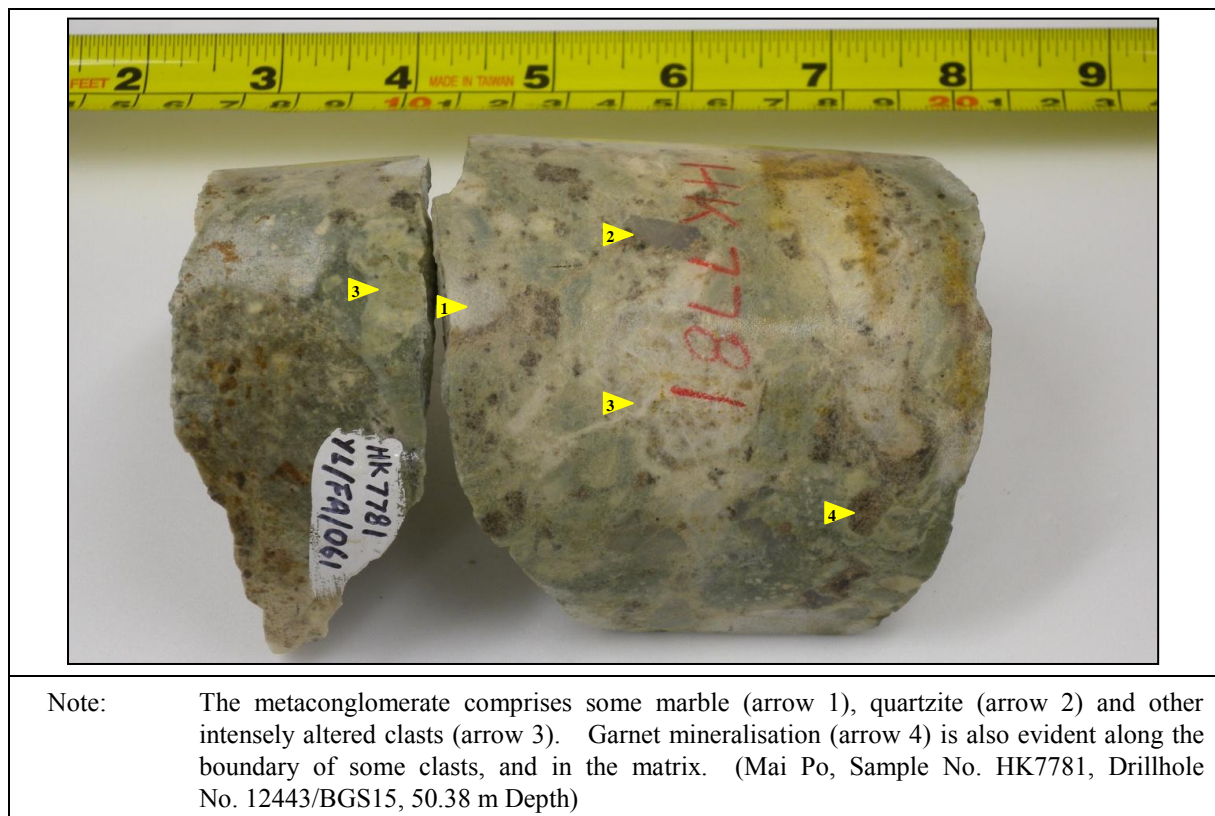


**Figure A29 Photomicrograph of Calcareous Metasandstone**



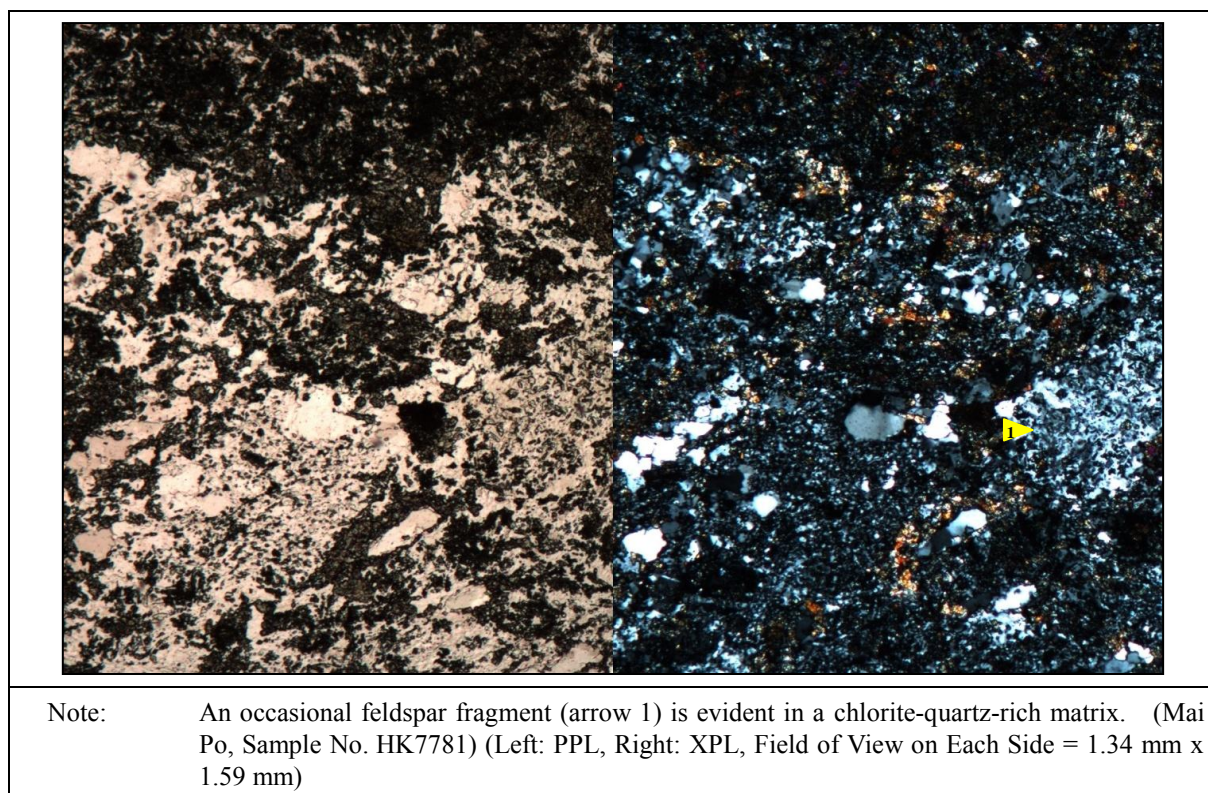


**Figure A30 Metaconglomerate with Some Marble Clasts**

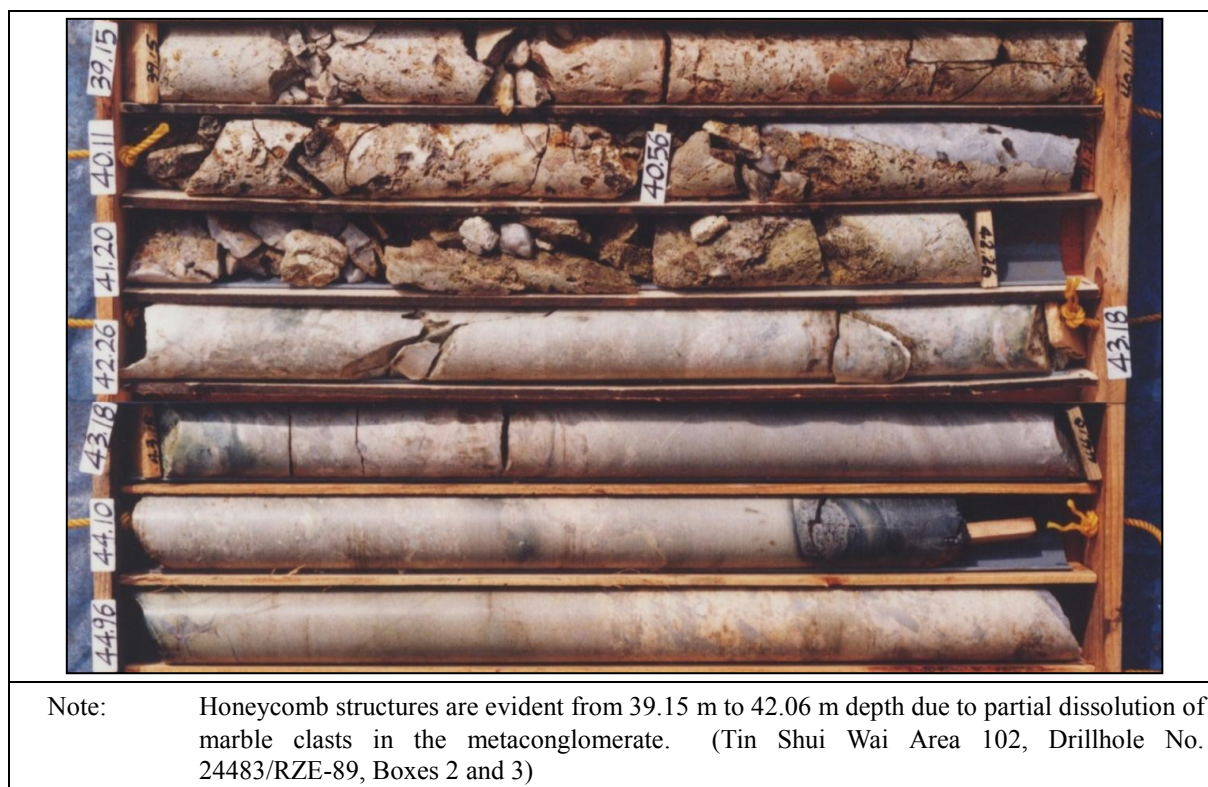


**Figure A31 Metaconglomerate with Some Marble Clasts**





**Figure A32 Photomicrograph of Metaconglomerate**



**Figure A33 Metaconglomerate with Some Marble Clasts and Honeycomb Structures**

## A.7 Marble Breccia/Conglomerate





**Figure A34 Marble Metabreccia/Metaconglomerate**



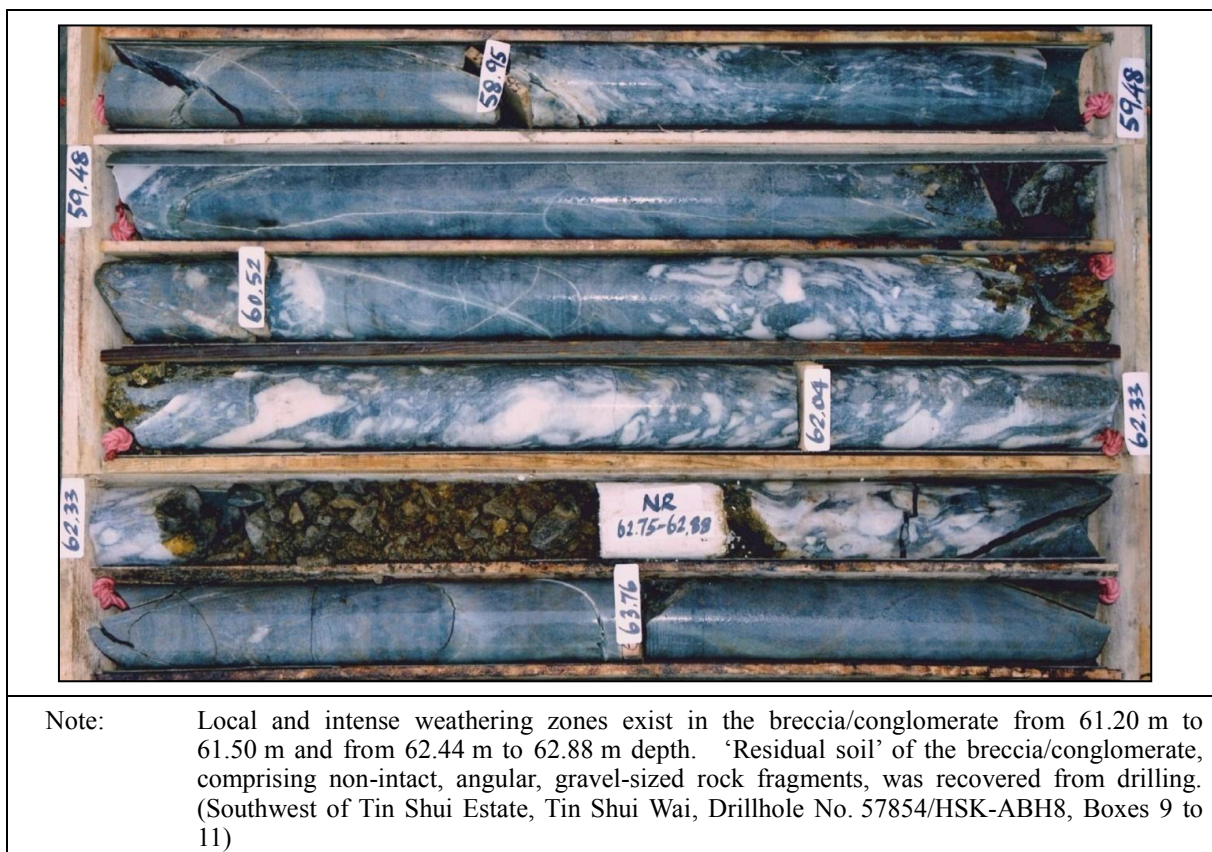
**Figure A35 Mylonitic Marble Breccia/Conglomerate**

A.8 Skeletal Residuum and 'Residual Soil' derived  
from Marble Breccia/Conglomerate





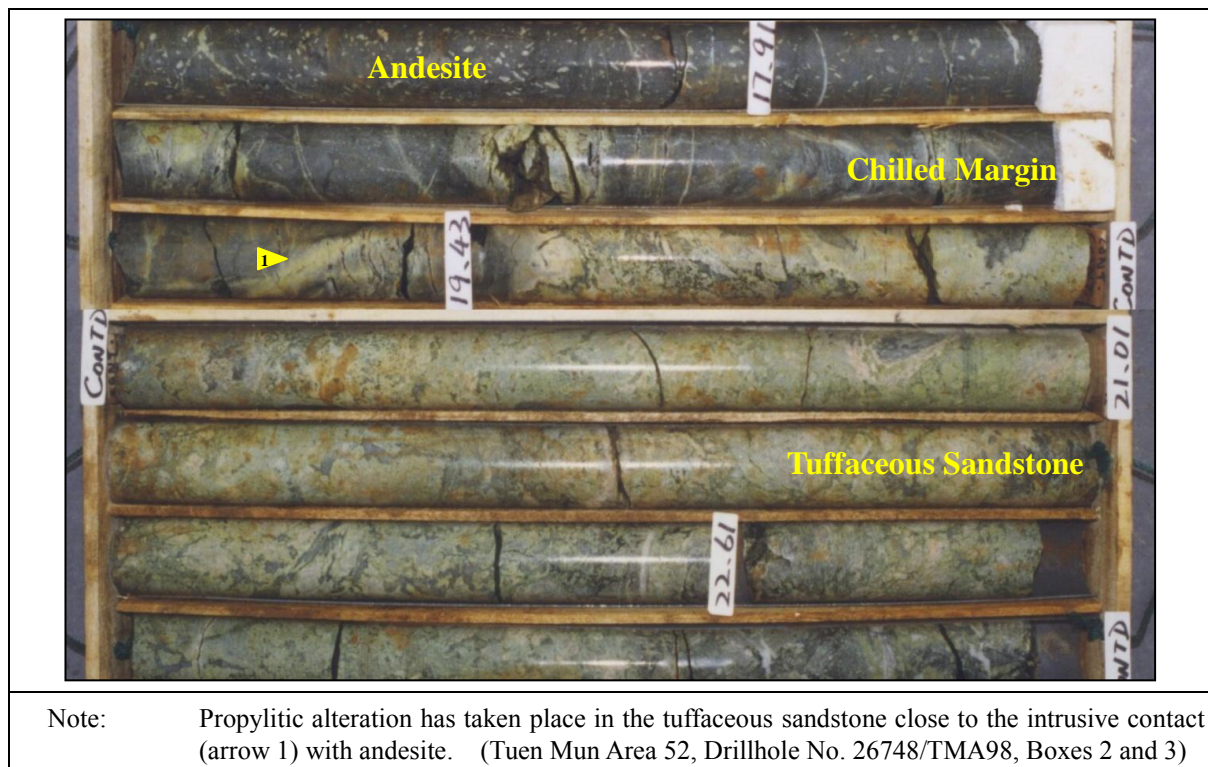
**Figure A36 Mylonitic Marble Breccia/Conglomerate with Skeletal Residuum**



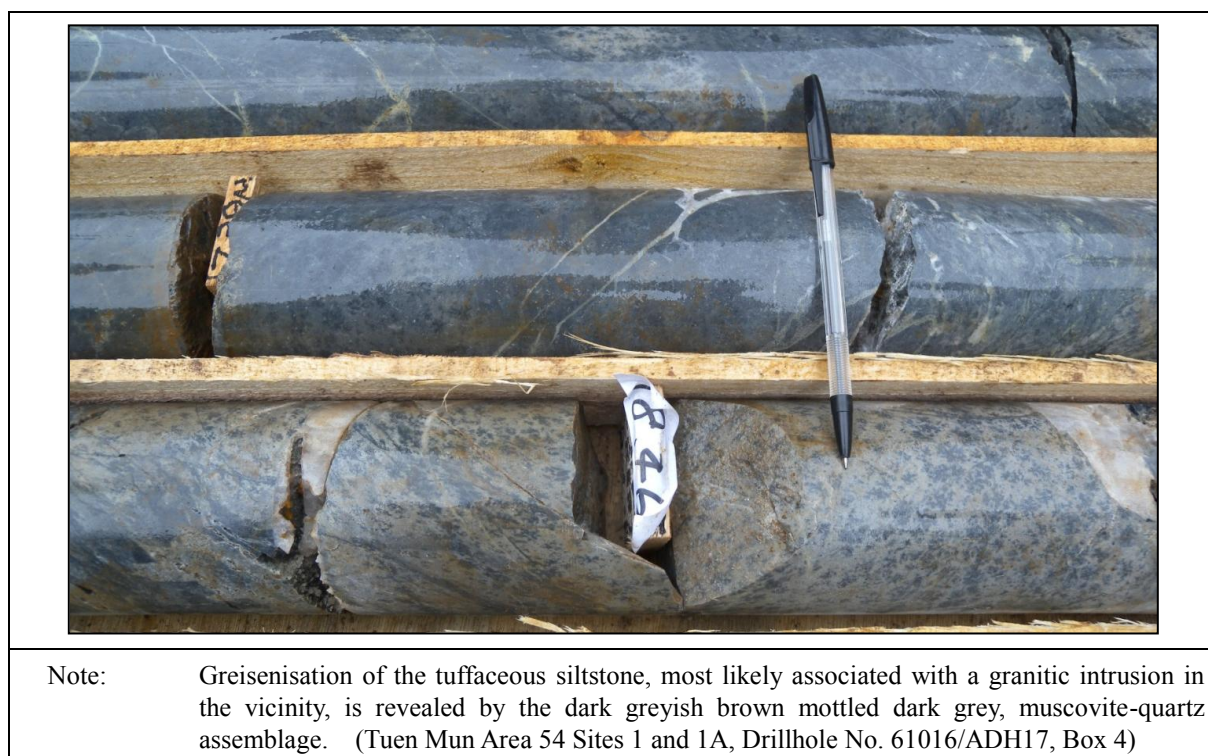
**Figure A37 'Residual Soil' of Mylonitic Marble Breccia/Conglomerate**

## A.9 Propylitic Alteration and Greisenisation





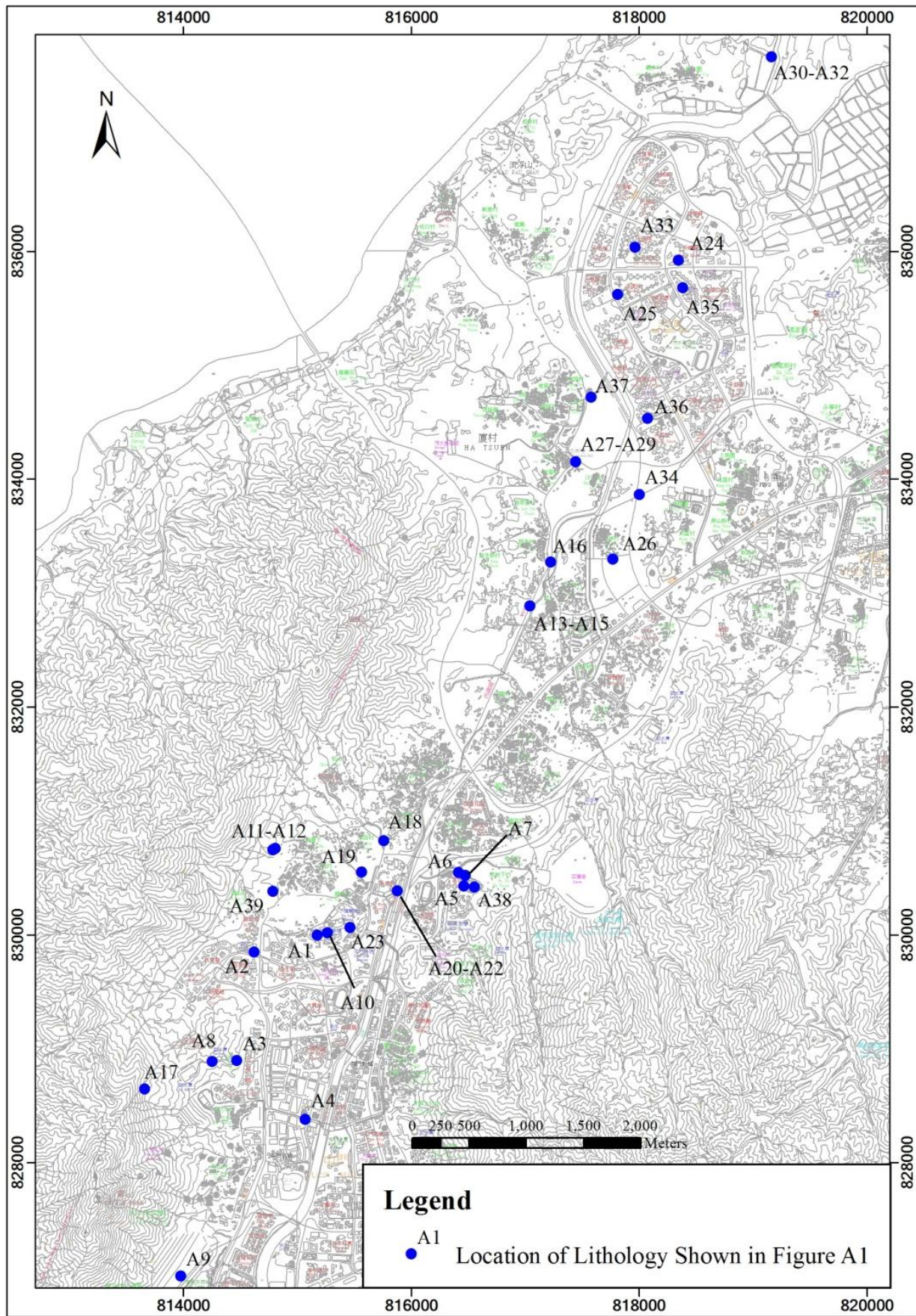
**Figure A38 Altered Tuffaceous Sandstone, and Andesite**



**Figure A39 Altered Tuffaceous Siltstone**

## A.10 Distribution of Key Lithologies of the Tuen Mun Formation





**Figure A40 Distribution of Key Lithologies of the Tuen Mun Formation**

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North Point Government Offices,  
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#### **GEOTECHNICAL MANUALS**

Geotechnical Manual for Slopes, 2nd Edition (1984), 302 p. (English Version), (Reprinted, 2011).

斜坡岩土工程手冊(1998)，308頁(1984年英文版的中文譯本)。

Highway Slope Manual (2000), 114 p.

#### **GEOGUIDES**

Geoguide 1 Guide to Retaining Wall Design, 2nd Edition (1993), 258 p. (Reprinted, 2007).

Geoguide 2 Guide to Site Investigation (1987), 359 p. (Reprinted, 2000).

Geoguide 3 Guide to Rock and Soil Descriptions (1988), 186 p. (Reprinted, 2000).

Geoguide 4 Guide to Cavern Engineering (1992), 148 p. (Reprinted, 1998).

Geoguide 5 Guide to Slope Maintenance, 3rd Edition (2003), 132 p. (English Version).

岩土指南第五冊 斜坡維修指南，第三版(2003)，120頁(中文版)。

Geoguide 6 Guide to Reinforced Fill Structure and Slope Design (2002), 236 p.

Geoguide 7 Guide to Soil Nail Design and Construction (2008), 97 p.

#### **GEOSPECS**

Geospec 1 Model Specification for Prestressed Ground Anchors, 2nd Edition (1989), 164 p. (Reprinted, 1997).

Geospec 3 Model Specification for Soil Testing (2001), 340 p.

#### **GEO PUBLICATIONS**

GCO Publication No. 1/90 Review of Design Methods for Excavations (1990), 187 p. (Reprinted, 2002).

GEO Publication No. 1/93 Review of Granular and Geotextile Filters (1993), 141 p.

GEO Publication No. 1/2006 Foundation Design and Construction (2006), 376 p.

GEO Publication No. 1/2007 Engineering Geological Practice in Hong Kong (2007), 278 p.

GEO Publication No. 1/2009 Prescriptive Measures for Man-Made Slopes and Retaining Walls (2009), 76 p.

GEO Publication No. 1/2011 Technical Guidelines on Landscape Treatment for Slopes (2011), 217 p.

#### **GEOLOGICAL PUBLICATIONS**

The Quaternary Geology of Hong Kong, by J.A. Fyfe, R. Shaw, S.D.G. Campbell, K.W. Lai & P.A. Kirk (2000), 210 p. plus 6 maps.

The Pre-Quaternary Geology of Hong Kong, by R.J. Sewell, S.D.G. Campbell, C.J.N. Fletcher, K.W. Lai & P.A. Kirk (2000), 181 p. plus 4 maps.

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TGN 1 Technical Guidance Documents