

British Honduras – Colonial Geological Surveys 1947-1956

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From Dixey, F. 1957. [Colonial Geological Surveys 1947-1956: a review of progress during the past ten years](#). Colonial geology and mineral resources. Bulletin supplement No. 2. London: HMSO.



Scenes from British Honduras. Mules carrying Geological Survey equipment into the Maya Mts. Plate XXI.



Scenes from British Honduras. A Survey party stops for the night at a Maya Indian village. Plate XXI.



Scenes from British Honduras. Hawksworth Bridge, El Cayo. Plate XXI.



Scenes from British Honduras. Survey Office and Laboratory, Belize. Plate XXI.

British Honduras

Several early investigators have at various times written reports on the geology of different areas in British Honduras, but for the most part these reports are not readily available, as few copies exist. In 1879, Henry Fowler, the then Colonial Secretary, made the first crossing of the Maya Mountains in modern times. His report describes this journey and also contains descriptions of the rocks encountered by him. In 1886, G. H. Wilson wrote his notes on river traverses and surveys which formed a basis for all subsequent small-scale topographic maps of the Colony; the notes contain descriptions of rock exposures and the mileages along the river courses at which the exposures were found. The more detailed investigation of the geology of British Honduras really begins, however, with the work of C. Sapper, a coffee planter and engineer, who spent much time and money, to say nothing of energy, carrying out geological surveys all over Central America. His maps were published in 1937 and include the southern part of British Honduras. Most of Sapper's work on British Honduras was carried out just before, or just after, the beginning of the present century. The late L. H. Ower, working alone, carried out a survey of the whole of British Honduras between the years 1922 and 1926 and produced the first geological map of the Colony, which was a valuable basis for later work.

During the period under review a geological survey was carried out between 1950 and 1955, and was financed out of the Central Allocation for Geological Surveys from Colonial Development and Welfare Funds. A geological map was made of the country which lies south of the latitude of El Cayo, which includes nearly half of British Honduras. The primary purpose was to map and describe the geological formations and to investigate the possibility of mineral deposits, other than oil, that might occur in economic quantities. A survey of the ground-water supplies was also carried out. The senior geologist of the Geological Survey of British Guiana was seconded to carry out these surveys, and an office, laboratory and quarters were provided and paid for by C.D. and W. Funds. The geological formations of southern British Honduras were described and many age determinations were made on the basis of fossil evidence. Much was added to what was already known of the geological structure and history of the country, and some of this new knowledge has considerable bearing on geological problems of wider significance elsewhere in Central America and the Caribbean region.

Ower had already discovered tin and monazite, and these were further investigated between 1950 and 1955. Occurrences of dolomite and barytes were also examined. Gold had long been known to occur, and during the recent survey its source was located and the geological conditions under which it occurred were studied in some detail. The water-supply survey dealt mainly with the country north of the Maya Mountains, and a definite relationship between the quality of groundwater and the geological formations in which it occurs was established. Seasonal fluctuations in the level of the water table were measured. The results of this investigation should be of considerable value in relation to agriculture and rural settlement.

From 1951 to 1956 the British Honduras Gulf Oil Company Limited —formerly known as the Bahamas Exploration Company—carried out extensive explorations for oil, and drilling operations began in 1955. The results of the geological surveys carried out by these companies have been made available to the Government of British Honduras.

In 1952 representatives of the London Tin Corporation made a survey of North Stann Creek and carried out hand-drilling operations, but work was discontinued on account of the poor results obtained.

The following publications were issued during the review period, the first two by the Survey itself:

Notes on the Geology of British Honduras, by C. G. Dixon. (Belize: Government Printer, 1955.)

The Geology of Southern British Honduras, by C. G. Dixon. (Belize: Government Printer, 1955.)

Geology of Northern British Honduras, by G. Flores. *Bull. Amer. Ass. Petrol. Geol.*, 1952, Vol. 36, No. 2.

Mineral occurrences

Barytes

Dolomite

Gold

Monazite

Oil

Tin and tin ores

Water supply

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