

# Triassic and jurassic lithostratigraphic units (Belgian Lorraine)

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(2 figures)

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**ABSTRACT.** A multidisciplinary study of some extensively cored boreholes together with the new 1/25,000 geological mapping of Wallonia led us to propose a new lithostratigraphic canvas for Belgian Lorraine. This area is located on the NE border of the Paris Basin, south of the Ardennes; the studied stratigraphic interval covers the Late Triassic to the Bajocian.

**KEYWORDS:** Mesozoic, stratigraphy, Belgium, Lorraine, Triassic, Jurassic, Paris Basin.

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## 1. Introduction

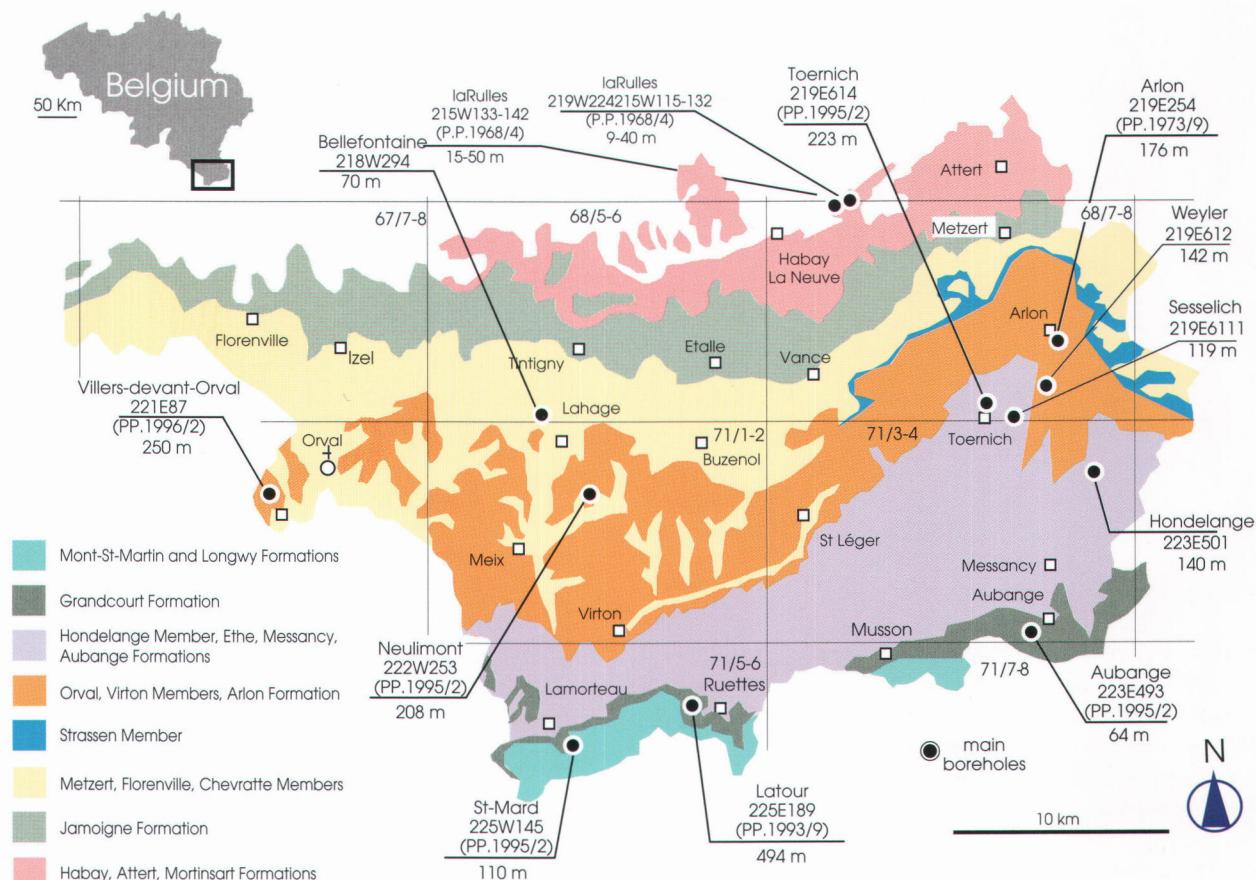
The Mesozoic formations of Belgian Lorraine, outcropping on approximately 800 km<sup>2</sup> (fig. 1), are a north-eastern dependence of the Paris Basin, forming the so-called Gulf of Luxembourg. The nature and the complex geometry of sedimentary bodies indicate a littoral environment characterized by a mixed sedimentation with a siliciclastic predominance. The sequential evolution of deposits was integrated in a globally retrograding sedimentary prism.

Except for some famous sections, mainly located in the sandy Sinemurian, boreholes constitute the principal geological data source for Belgian Lorraine. Detailed lithological descriptions are provided in the following publications:

– Arlon borehole 219E254: Gulinck *et al.* (1973);

- Latour borehole 225E189: Boulvain and Monteyne (1993), Boulvain *et al.* (1995);
- Neulimont borehole 222W253, Saint-Mard borehole 225W145, Toernich borehole 219E614, Aubange borehole 223E493: Boulvain *et al.* (1995);
- Villers-devant-Orval borehole 221E87: Boulvain *et al.* (1996).

Since Dumont's (1842) precursory report and the synthesis by Maubeuge (1954), studies in Belgian Lorraine have been almost exclusively devoted to lithostratigraphy and biostratigraphy. Recent works concern sedimentological studies of the Sinemurian sandy body and the Aalenian "Minette" (i.e. Berners, 1983; Teyssen, 1984; Mergen, 1984; Muller & Steingrobe, 1988; Guerin-Franiatte *et al.*, 1991). Boulvain *et al.* (2001) propose a progress report on lithostratigraphy, sedimentology, mineralogy and palaeontology of Belgian Lorraine.



**Figure 1.** Simplified geological map of Belgian Lorraine.

This paper successively deals with the Habay, Attert, Mortinsart, Jamoigne, Luxembourg, Arlon, Ethe, Messancy, Aubange, Grandcourt, Mont-Saint-Martin and Longwy Formations (fig. 2).

## 2. Areas and formations

### 2.1. Habay Formation - HAB

**Authors:** Boulvain *et al.*, 2001.

**Description:** Alternation of conglomerate, sand, argillaceous sand, conglomeratic dolomite and clay, generally brick-red, sometimes greenish. This unit, with a marked continental character, rests unconformably on the Devonian basement. Its thickness is, consequently, locally variable.

**Stratotype:** Latour borehole.

**Area and thickness:** The formation outcrops in the north of Belgian Lorraine. It still appears westerly of the Rossignol meridian, down to the Chiny Forest. Its thickness increases gradually towards the east and the south to reach about 30 m at the meridian of Attert. Near the French border, the formation displays about the same thickness in subsurface (Latour borehole).

**Age:** Until now, no dating method has provided a specific age of the formation. Depending on the authors, it is assigned a Permian or a Triassic age.

### 2.2. Attert Formation - ATT

**Authors:** Boulvain *et al.*, 2001.

**Description:** Greenish or purplish marl and dolomitic marl ("marnolithes"), interbedded with decimetric white dolomitic lenses, some clay, conglomeratic argillaceous sandstone, and occasionally conglomerate with dolomitic cement. In boreholes, gypsum layers.

**Stratotype:** Access to the N4 road, close to Attert.

**Area and thickness:** The formation outcrops in the north-eastern part of Belgian Lorraine. Its thickness seems to increase regularly from west to east and from north to south, to reach a maximum of some 50 m in the neighbourhood of Attert. In the central area, at Habay, the formation is only 30 m thick. It disappears then west of Marbehan. In subsurface, in the Latour borehole, the Attert Formation reaches a hundred meters, bearing increasingly conglomeratic facies.

**Age:** The Attert Formation is dated from Late Triassic. The first miospore-rich bed below the Rhaetian Sand-

stone shows a Carnian assemblage as described in the "Grès à roseaux" (Biard, 1963; Van der Eem, 1974 *in Schuurman*, 1977). The vertebrate fauna discovered in the upper Bunte Mergel at Medernach favors a Late Triassic age (? Late Norian), as this assemblage closely resembles those found in the Knollenmergel in Germany (Duffin, 1993; Cuny *et al.*, 1995).

**Remarks:** In subsurface, in the Campine Basin, the Gruitrode, Bullen, and Bree Members consist of sandstone, conglomerate and siltstone with a continental facies. The "Muschelkalk" and the "Keuper" are characterized by limestone, dolomite and evaporite. Upwards, the Sleen and Aalberg Formations, dated from Rhaetian to Lias, consist of dark clay and marl with some argillaceous limestone levels (Dusar *et al.*, 1987, Wouters & Vandenbergh, 1994).

### 2.3. Mortinsart Formation - MOR

**Authors:** Dumont, 1842; Boulvain *et al.*, 2001.

**Description:** Alternation of grey to greenish sandstone, sand, silt and black or greenish clay.

Locally, some gravelly beds, bone-beds and lignite. This unit is capped in the east of Belgian Lorraine by wine-colour clays ("Argiles de Levallois") and in the western part of the area by a pebbly horizon.

**Stratotype:** Small stream close to Grendel (see Monteyne, 1969).

**Area and thickness:** North of Belgian Lorraine. The formation is a dozen m thick near Habay and Attert (central area). In the western area, west of Rossignol, it is transgressive on the Palaeozoic basement and is characterized by a reduced thickness. Thickness does not increase strongly towards the south since, close to the French border, in the Latour borehole, it remains less than 20 m. The Argiles de Levallois disappear westwards of a NNE-SSW line passing through Lischert.

**Age:** The formation is dated from Rhaetian sensu lato, on the basis of the presence of bivalve *Rhaetavicula contorta*, a characteristic fossil of the Mortinsart Formation. Rhaetian sensu lato on the basis of palynomorphs (Schurmann, 1977; Adloff & Doubinger, 1982; Roche, 1994; Rauscher *et al.*, 1995) and of vertebrates. The marine components of the vertebrate assemblage discovered in the Mortinsart Formation at Habay-la-Vieille (Duffin *et al.*, 1983) and Attert (Duffin & Delsate, 1993) closely resemble the typical Rhaetian vertebrate fauna from Holwell (Duffin, 1980) and Aust (Storrs, 1994) in England.

### 2.4. Jamoigne Formation - JAM

**Authors:** Dumont, 1842; Boulvain *et al.*, 2001.

**Description:** Bioturbated dark grey marl with decimetre-thick argillaceous-sandy limestone or sandstone beds (increasingly frequent towards the top of the unit). The Warcq Member, capping the formation at the contact with the Luxembourg Formation, consists of light grey argillaceous sand or sandstone. Locally, mica-

ceous sandstone and gravel beds are observed at the base of the Jamoigne Formation. Fauna and bioturbation are quite abundant.

**Stratotype:** Latour borehole.

**Area and thickness:** The formation outcrops in Belgian Lorraine, with a rather constant thickness of about 45 m. The thickness gradually increases towards the south to reach 70 m in boreholes close to the French border. In the west, the Jamoigne Formation is transgressive on the Rhaetian (Rossignol Member) and on the Palaeozoic basement (Muno Member) with a more arenaceous and fossiliferous facies.

**Age:** The Jamoigne Formation is only Hettangian in age in eastern Belgian Lorraine, covering the *Psiloceras planorbis*, *Alsatis liasicus* and *Schlotheimia angulata* ammonite Zones; in the western part, the formation also includes the Warcq Member (*Arietites bucklandi* Zone) and thus extends into the Lower Sinemurian (Maubeuge, 1954; Mergen, 1984; Guérin-Franiatte & Muller, 1986).

**Remarks:** This formation was subdivided as various "Assises" by Dumont and later authors on a biostratigraphic basis: namely the Helmsingen or Helmsange, Ansart, Jamoigne ss. and Warcq Assises. Some are not included here because of criteria for their definition; the Member of Warcq is redefined on a purely lithostratigraphic basis.

### 2.5. Luxembourg Formation - LUX

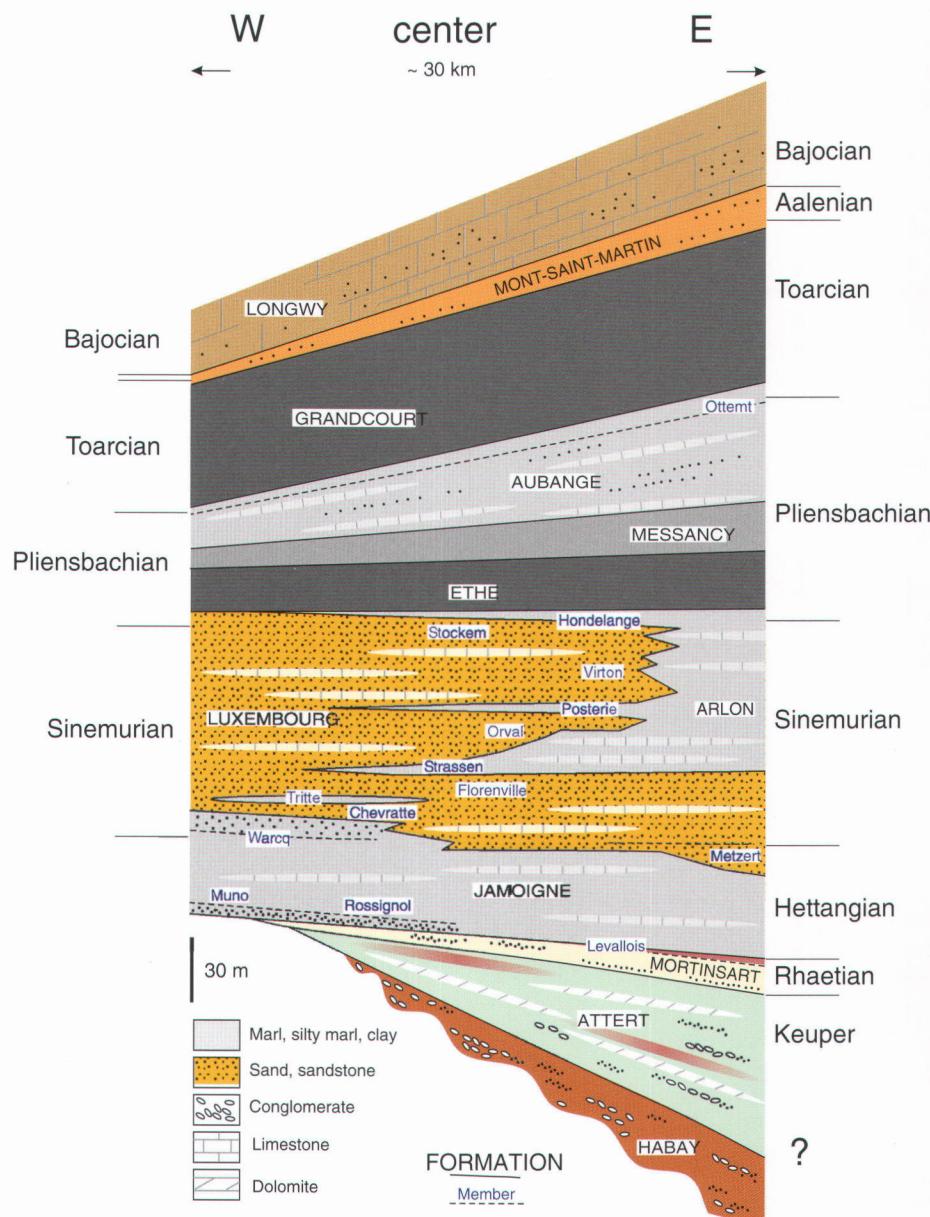
**Authors:** Steininger, 1828; Guérin-Franiatte *et al.*, 1991; Boulvain *et al.*, 2001.

**Description:** Alternation of sandy limestone and sand with cross-bedded stratifications; locally, homogeneous sand, sandstone and coquinas ("lumachelles").

**Stratotype:** Large quarry along the N4 road, at Côte rouge.

**Area and thickness:** Belgian Lorraine and Luxembourg. The formation, a hundred metres thick, comprises five members: at the base, the Metzert Member, a grey to yellow sandy unit (locally sandstone: "Clairefontaine facies"); then, above a slight angular unconformity, the Florenville, Orval and Virton Members, consisting of alternating yellow to orange sand and sandy limestone. These members are differentiated from one another only when separated by marl horizons (respectively, the Strassen and Posterie Members). West of the meridian of Prouvy, these marl horizons become thin layers very difficult to correlate. Near Virton, a third marl horizon (Trite Member) occurs near the base of the formation, separating Florenville and Chevratte Members. On the other hand, at the east of the meridian of Arlon, the same marl horizons thicken quickly and grade into the Arlon Formation. The Stockem Member which consists of clear sand is probably a weathering facies of Virton or Honnelange Members.

**Age:** The Luxembourg Formation is clearly diachronic (Maubeuge, 1965; Guérin-Franiatte & Muller, 1986;



**Figure 2.** E-W schematic lithostratigraphic section of Belgian Lorraine.

Guérin-Franiatte *et al.*, 1991). In eastern Belgian Lorraine, it encompasses the Upper Hettangian and the base of the Sinemurian, from *Schlotheimia angulata* to *Arietites bucklandi* ammonite Zones; in the western part of the area, this formation extends from the Lower to the Uppermost Sinemurian, from *Arietites bucklandi* to *Echioceras raricostatum* ammonite Zones.

**Remarks:** This formation was introduced in Belgium by Dumont (1842). Because of its diachronic character, it was later subdivided in various “Assises” on a biostratigraphic basis. The unitary character of the formation was redefined by Guerin-Franiatte *et al.* (1991). Some units, corresponding partially to old “assises”, were redefined as members with new lithostratigraphic limits (Members of Metzert, Florenville, Orval, Virton, Stockem). The other “assises” are abandoned.

## 2.6. Arlon Formation - ARL

**Authors:** Dewalque, 1902; Monteyne, 1958; Boulvain *et al.*, 2001.

**Description:** Grey marl, silty marl, bioturbated argillaceous-silty to sandy limestone. Abundant fauna.

**Stratotype:** Toernich borehole.

**Area and thickness:** Belgian Lorraine. The formation has a thickness of about 60 m close to Arlon. More to the west, its thickness decreases very quickly, the formation being represented only by marl beds in the Luxembourg Formation (corresponding successively to Trite, Strassen and Posterie Members). A late western extension of the marly-sandy facies constitutes the Hondelange Member, which overlies the Luxembourg Formation.

**Age:** In eastern Belgian Lorraine, in the Arlon area, the Arlon Formation extends from the Lower Sinemurian (*Arnioceras semicostatum* ammonite Zone) to the top of the Lower Pliensbachian (*Prodactylioceras davoei* Zone) (Maubeuge, 1954; Mergen, 1984). In the western part of the area, the Trite Member is in the *Arietites bucklandi* Zone, the Strassen Member in the *Arnioceras semicostatum* Zone and the Posterie Member in the *Asteroceras obtusum* Zone.

**Remarks:** All authors have highlighted the difficulty to establish, east of Arlon, in this sandy-argillaceous-limestone unit (Lorraine facies), other subdivisions than biostratigraphic ones. We thus use the name of Arlon Formation here as a global unit and subdivide it into members whenever possible to do so on a lithostratigraphic basis (see intercalations in the Luxembourg Formation)

## 2.7. Ethe Formation - ETH

**Author:** Dewalque, 1854.

**Description:** Grey marl and silty clay, often laminar. Locally, limonitic nodules.

**Stratotype:** Latour borehole; good outcrop in a old brick-factory, Toernich street, Arlon.

**Area and thickness:** Belgian Lorraine. The thickness of the formation varies between 20 and 25 m in the west of the Belgian Luxemburg. In the eastern area, it can reach about 50 m.

**Age:** Ethe Formation is limited to Pliensbachian, and generally corresponds to the *Prodactylioceras davoei* Zone (Maubeuge, 1954).

## 2.8. Messancy Formation - MES

**Author:** Dormal, 1894.

**Description:** Grey silty or silty-sandy laminar marl. The boundary between Ethe and Messancy Formations corresponds to the first sandy bed.

**Stratotype:** Latour borehole.

**Area and thickness:** Belgian Lorraine. In the area of Messancy, the formation reaches approximately 35 m in thickness. In the west of Belgian Lorraine, Messancy and Aubange Formations together total between 35 and 40 m. In Latour borehole, Messancy Formation has a thickness of 8 m.

**Age:** Messancy Formation is dated from Upper Pliensbachian *Amaltheus margaritatus* ammonite Zone (Maubeuge, 1954, 1971).

## 2.9. Aubange Formation - AUB

**Authors:** Dumont, 1842; Dewalque, 1854; Boulvain *et al.*, 2001.

**Description:** Grey sandy marl with centimetric to pluri-decimetric lenses of limestone and argillaceous-sandy

limestone. Locally, limonitic crusts or conglomerate. Fauna is relatively abundant and bioturbation generally high. A pluri-decimetric coquina bed is almost always present near the top of the formation, under the Ottemt Member. The extreme top of the formation is locally constituted by bluish marls with blue-grey limestone nodules (Ottemt Member, see Boulvain *et al.*, 1995), or by blue-grey marly limestone beds (Saint-Mard), towards the west.

**Stratotype:** Latour borehole.

**Area and thickness:** In the western part of Belgian Lorraine, the thickness of Aubange and Messancy Formations varies between 35 and 40 m. It reaches approximately 45 m for Aubange Formation alone towards the east.

**Age:** Aubange Formation is dated from Upper Pliensbachian to Lower Toarcian *Pleuroceras spinatum* Zone to *Dactylioceras tenuicostatum* Zone (Maubeuge, 1954, 1971; Delsate, 1990).

## 2.10. Grandcourt Formation - GRT

**Author:** Dumont, 1842.

**Description:** Generally bituminous grey clay and marl with a thin silty-calcareous lamination, and laminar limestone nodules ("Schistes Cartons" Member), passing toward the top to sandier laminated marl, rich in septaria. Occurrences of centimetric to decimetric limestone beds.

**Stratotype:** Latour borehole.

**Area and thickness:** The formation outcrops in the south of Belgian Lorraine, with a thickness of approximately 40 m in the western area. It thickens towards the east to reach about 60 m near the Luxemburg border.

**Age:** The Grandcourt Formation is dated from Toarcian, from *Harpoceras falciferum* Zone to *Grammoceras thouarcense* Zone (Delsate, 1990; Laenen, 1991).

## 2.11. Mont-Saint-Martin Formation - MSN

**Authors:** Dumont, 1842; Boulvain *et al.*, 2001.

**Description:** Argillaceous sandstone ("Supralasic Sandstone"), followed by ferruginous marl including several iron oolite beds, and ending with sandy marl. Locally, coquina beds.

**Type area:** Bois de Musson, to the west of Mont-Saint-Martin.

**Area and thickness:** The formation crops out in the extreme south of Belgian Lorraine. It presents a thickness of approximately 40 m in the eastern area but is strongly reduced towards the west.

**Age:** Mont-Saint-Martin Formation is dated from Upper Toarcian to Lower Bajocian *Grammoceras thouarcense* Zone to *Hyperlioceras discites* Zone (Maubeuge, 1947, 1972).

## 2.12. Longwy Formation - LGW

**Authors:** Dumont, 1842; Boulvain *et al.*, 2001.

**Description:** Orange yellow sandy limestone, followed by shelly limestone with locally conglomeratic layers with bioclastic limestone clasts. The base of the formation corresponds to the first limestone deposit superposed on Mont-Saint-Martin or, towards the west, on Grandcourt Formation. Its top coincides with the base of the "Marnes de Longwy".

**Stratotype:** Old quarries near the village of Tellancourt and road Ruette-Tellancourt, close to the French border.

**Area and thickness:** Longwy Formation crops out in the extreme south of Belgian Lorraine and the north-east of French Lorraine. The formation is about 50 m thick in the eastern area. Its thickness gradually thins towards the west, with no possibility of giving any value.

**Age:** Longwy Formation is dated from Lower Bajocian *Hyperlioceras discites* Zone to *Stephanoceras humphriesianum* Zone (Maubeuge, 1951, 1954).

## 3. Conclusions

The Habay Formation is a fluvial unit, with immature channel conglomerate and paleosoils. The Attert Formation (dolomitic marl with gypsum and pseudomorphs) exhibits an evaporitic trend. The Mortinsart Formation (sand and marl) corresponds to a restricted marine unit, evolving towards an alluvial plain (Levallois Member). The Jamoigne Formation (bioturbated marl and limestone) is a marine subtidal restricted unit, evolving towards a more sandy series (Metzert Member). The Luxembourg Formation corresponds to a superposition of sand waves. The Ethe Formation (laminar clay and marl) marks a deepening of the basin, and the outset of marine dysaerobic conditions. The Aubange Formation (bioturbated marl with sandstone and limestone) is characterized by the reappearance of a normal benthic fauna. The Grandcourt Formation (laminar clay and marl) marks a return to open marine dysaerobic conditions. The Mont-Saint-Martin Formation (marl, sandy marl and oolitic ironstone) is a highly regressive unit, while the Longwy Formation (limestone) marks the initiation of a carbonate platform.

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