

# Environmental MAGNETISM

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# Preface

The scientist will be forced, in the unenthusiastic words of one of my scientific colleagues, 'to slosh about in the primordial ooze known as inter-disciplinary studies'.

John Passmore  
*Man's responsibility for nature*

The present text has arisen from some thirteen years of collaboration between the two authors. During that period, upwards of a dozen postgraduates in Edinburgh, the New University of Ulster and Liverpool have been closely involved in exploring many of the applications of magnetic measurements described in the second half of the book. Much of the text is based on their work, both published and unpublished. A great deal of the work summarised reflects extensive co-operation not only between the authors and among their postgraduate groups, but also involving colleagues in geology, geography, ecology, hydrology, meteorology, glaciology, archaeology, limnology, oceanography, chemistry and physics. It is from this wide range of collaborative, interdisciplinary work that the concept of the book has arisen. If indeed, as we hope to have shown, magnetic measurements have a growing rôle to play in many diverse and important areas of the environmental sciences, then there is a case for trying to bring together and present in an organised way, illustrations of as many applications as possible. The text also includes enough grounding in principles and techniques to encourage the interested research worker in any of the potential 'user' disciplines to understand the methods and results more fully as well as to approach the practical use of the techniques with more background, insight and confidence.

Progress in empirical science often grows from

advances in our perception, appraisal and creative use of order in natural systems. Out of this can come enhanced insight into processes, structures and systems interactions on all temporal and spatial scales and at all integrative levels from subatomic to cosmic. In the environment, elements of order are often difficult to appraise and analyse, not only because of intrinsic complexity, but as a consequence of our lack of techniques, instrumentation and suitable methodologies. Magnetic properties, whether natural or induced, reflect forms of order which, in recent years, have become dramatically more accessible to a growing range of instruments and techniques. Developments in electronics and computing have been vital elements in this trend, complementing and, at times, stimulating growing interest in and concern for the environmental studies to which magnetic measurements can contribute. Thus methodological advance, problem definition and hypothesis development have been mutually interactive at all stages in the work, each aspect giving the lead from time to time.

Much of the second half of the book has arisen out of work stimulated by the late F. J. H. Mackereth of the Freshwater Biological Association Laboratories in the English Lake District. His studies of the Flandrian sediments of Windermere showed that the stable natural remanent magnetisation locked into them gave a consistent record of secular variation which, once calibrated by  $^{14}\text{C}$  dating and through comparison

## PREFACE

with Observatory records and archaeomagnetic evidence, could provide a chronological framework for palaeolimnological studies. At the same time, studies there and elsewhere were showing that lake sediment chronologies for the last few millenia, based on  $^{14}\text{C}$  dates alone, almost always involved large errors arising from the inwash of old particulate carbon from persistent organic residues in terrestrial soils as a result of erosion following human activity. In the Lough Neagh sediments, which were the subject of a research project arising from serious aquatic pollution problems in the late 1960s, the 'old particulate carbon' error led to stratigraphically inverted  $^{14}\text{C}$  dates over the past 2000 years. Consequently, much of the initial palaeolimnological work designed to reconstruct the historical background for assessing the present problems of cultural eutrophication in the lake was vitiated by lack of a chronology of sedimentation for the period of maximum human impact. The possibility of identifying the 1820 AD westerly declination

maximum in the recent sediments prompted the application of Mackereth's palaeomagnetic approach to Lough Neagh. Not only did this exercise provide a suite of cores with stable, consistent and repeatable secular variation from a second lake (Thompson 1973), it played a crucial rôle in the development of the chronology of sedimentation (O'Sullivan *et al.* 1973) and led to a growing interest in the mineral magnetic properties of the sediment (Thompson *et al.* 1975). The realisation that the magnetic susceptibility variations provided a basis for rapid correlation and were a response to forest clearing and agriculture prompted first, a much wider range of catchment studies, and subsequently the extension of the approach to marine sediments and an interest in the magnetic properties of atmospheric particulates. Thus in a very real and direct sense, much of the work outlined in the second half of the book is a sequel to and consequence of the pioneering work of John Mackereth.

F. Oldfield  
R. Thompson

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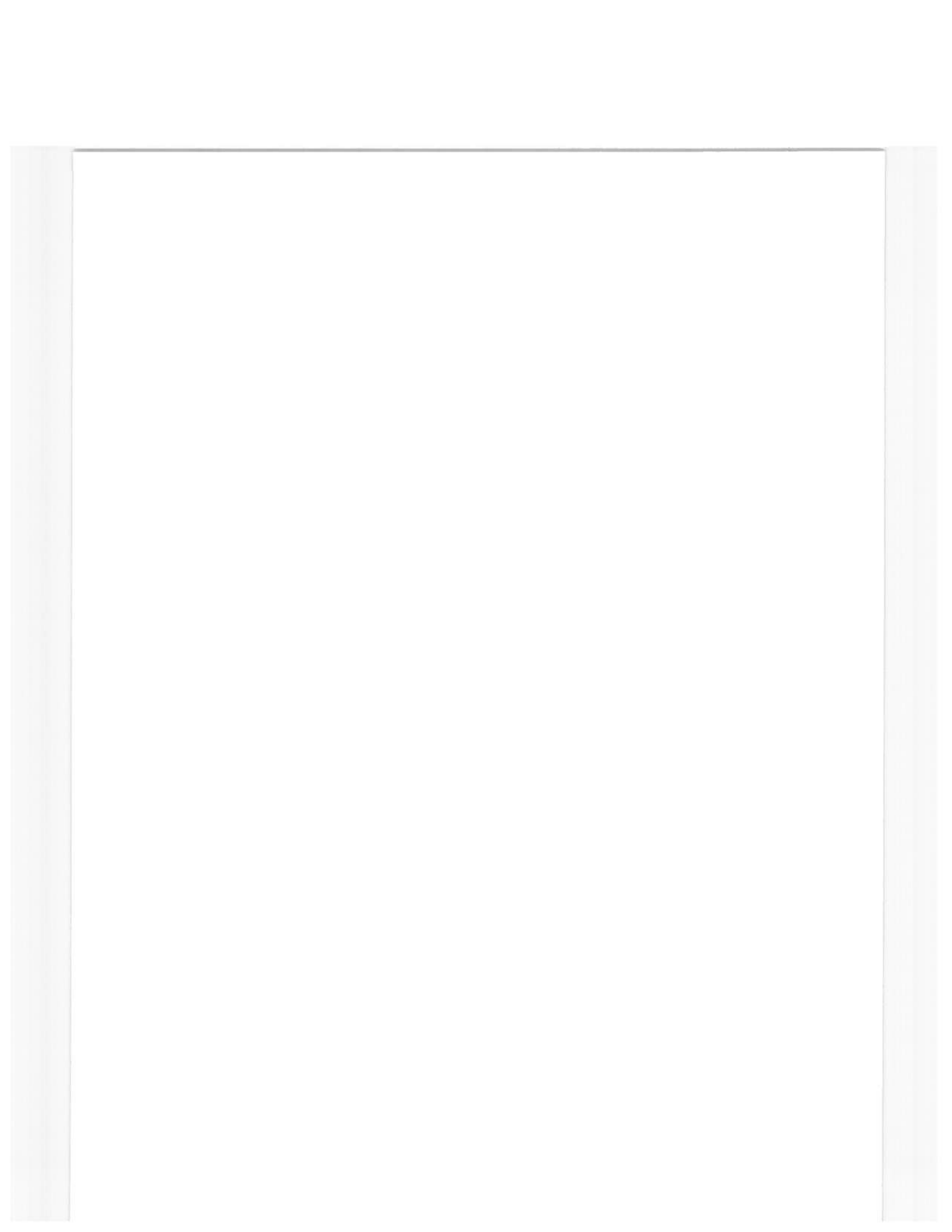
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The broad range of topics and disciplines covered in this book has been made possible by the help, advice and stimulation we have received from many friends and associates over the past two decades. Numerous colleagues have generously provided hard won, well characterised field

samples for us to indulge our magnetic whims on; others have unselfishly supplied us with their unpublished data; while others have patiently donated their time in order to guide us through the intricacies of their own disciplines and to reduce our confusions and misapprehensions. To all these friends, companies and colleagues we are extremely grateful. Sections of text have been read and much improved by the constructive comments of Rick Battarbee, Jan Bloemendal, David Collinson, John Dearing, Ed Deevey, Ken Gregory, Roy Gill, Andy Hunt, Jen Jones, Norman Hamilton, Barbara Maher, Malcolm Newson, Bill O'Reilly, Simon Robinson, Don Tarling and Des Walling. Our technical helpers and assistants have developed and maintained our field and laboratory equipment despite (intermittent) abuses while new or rushed experiments have been attempted, and have striven to sustain high levels of 'quality control' over the hundreds of thousands of magnetic measurements made at Edinburgh and Liverpool during the course of the past years. Our students in particular have generated much of the data described in the book, and provoked and vitalised new lines of enquiry, and to them special thanks are due.

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# Contents

Preface	page	v	3.6.1 Igneous rocks	18
Acknowledgements		vii	3.6.2 Metamorphic rocks	19
List of tables		xii	3.6.3 Sediments	19
			3.7 Summary	20
			Further reading	20
<b>1 Introduction</b>		<b>1</b>		
<b>2 Magnetic properties of solids</b>		<b>3</b>	<b>4 Magnetic properties of natural materials</b>	<b>21</b>
2.1 Introduction		3	4.1 Introduction	21
2.2 Basic magnetic properties		3	4.2 Units	22
2.2.1 Diamagnetism		3	4.3 Magnetic remanence	22
2.2.2 Paramagnetism		4	4.3.1 Natural magnetic remanences	22
2.2.3 Ferromagnetism		4	4.3.2 Laboratory-imparted remanences	24
2.2.4 Ferrimagnetism and antiferromagnetism		4	4.4 Magnetic susceptibility	25
2.3 Hysteresis		5	4.5 Anisotropy of susceptibility	26
2.4 Effects of crystal size, shape and structure		7	4.6 Magnetic hysteresis	27
2.4.1 Anisotropy		7	4.7 General magnetic properties of natural materials	28
2.4.2 Domains and domain walls		8	4.8 Temperature dependence of magnetic properties	34
2.4.3 Multidomain behaviour		9	4.9 Summary	38
2.4.4 Single-domain behaviour		9	Further reading	38
2.4.5 Superparamagnetism		10		
2.4.6 Critical grain sizes		10	<b>5 The Earth's magnetic field</b>	<b>39</b>
2.5 Time dependence of magnetisation		11	5.1 Geomagnetism	39
2.6 Grain interactions		11	5.1.1 Description of the geomagnetic field	39
2.7 Summary		12	5.1.2 Secular variation	40
Further reading		12	5.1.3 Origin of the geomagnetic field	42
			5.2 Palaeomagnetism	45
<b>3 Natural magnetic minerals</b>		<b>13</b>	5.2.1 Archaeomagnetism	45
3.1 Iron and its abundance		13	5.2.2 Palaeosecular variation	46
3.2 Iron oxides		13	5.2.3 Polarity timescale	46
3.2.1 The spinel group		14	5.2.4 Apparent polar wandering	47
3.2.2 The corundum group		15	5.3 Summary	48
3.3 Pyrrhotite and the iron sulphides		16	Further reading	48
3.4 Iron hydroxides and oxyhydroxides		17		
3.5 Other magnetic minerals		17	<b>6 Techniques of magnetic measurements</b>	<b>49</b>
3.6 Formation of natural magnetic minerals		18	6.1 Introduction	49
			6.2 Measurement of remanent magnetisation	50

## CONTENTS

6.2.1 Generator magnetometer	50	8.9 The persistence of magnetic oxides in the soil	82
6.2.2 Astatic and parastatic magnetometers	51	8.10 Soil magnetism and archaeology	83
6.2.3 Fluxgate magnetometer	52	8.11 Conclusions	87
6.2.4 Superconducting magnetometer	52		
6.3 Measurement of initial susceptibility	53		
6.3.1 The a.c. method	53	<b>9 Magnetic minerals and fluvial processes</b>	<b>88</b>
6.3.2 The direct method	54	9.1 Introduction	88
6.3.3 Anisotropy of initial susceptibility	55	9.2 Suspended sediment sources	89
6.3.4 Quadrature and frequency-dependent susceptibility	55	9.2.1 Suspended sediments in the Jackmoor Brook	89
6.4 Measurement of induced magnetisation	56	9.2.2 Other studies of suspended sediment sources	91
6.4.1 The force method	57	9.2.3 Prospects and problems	93
6.4.2 Ballistic magnetometer	57	9.3 Magnetic tagging and tracing of stream bedload	94
6.4.3 Vibrating sample magnetometer	57	9.3.1 The Plynlimon case study	94
6.4.4 Alternating field method	58	9.3.2 The prospects for magnetic tracing	97
6.5 Magnetic cleaning techniques	58	9.4 Magnetic measurements of stormwater-suspended solids	97
6.5.1 Alternating field demagnetisation	59	9.5 Conclusions	98
6.5.2 Thermal demagnetisation	59		
6.6 Magnetic fields	59		
6.6.1 Measurement	59	<b>10 Mineral magnetic studies of lake sediments</b>	<b>101</b>
6.6.2 Generation	60	10.1 Lake sediments and environmental reconstruction	101
6.6.3 Shielding	61	10.2 The origin of magnetic minerals in lake sediments	102
6.7 Portable instruments	61	10.3 Sampling and measurement	105
6.7.1 Magnetometers	61	10.4 Prospecting, core correlation and sediment accumulation rates	106
6.7.2 Gradiometers	62	10.5 Sediment resuspension and focusing	110
6.7.3 Pulsed induction	62	10.6 Sediment sources and ecological change	112
6.7.4 Induction balance	63	10.7 Magnetic measurements and fire	119
6.8 A basic environmental magnetic kit	63	10.8 Lake sediment magnetism and climatic change	121
6.9 Summary	64	10.9 Summary and conclusions	123
Further reading	64		
<b>7 Magnetic minerals and environmental systems</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>11 Magnetic minerals in the atmosphere</b>	<b>124</b>
7.1 Surface processes and magnetic minerals	65	11.1 Introduction	124
7.2 Primary and secondary magnetic minerals	66	11.2 Sources of magnetic minerals in the atmosphere	124
7.3 Magnetic minerals and material flux	66	11.3 Magnetic properties and aerosol modes	126
7.4 Natural remanence and mineral magnetic properties	68	11.4 Magnetic-heavy metal linkages	126
7.5 Sampling and measurement	70	11.5 Peat magnetism and the history of atmospheric particulate deposition	127
7.6 Summary	71	11.6 Contemporary particulate pollution monitoring	133
		11.7 Magnetic particulates in ice and snow	136
<b>8 Soil magnetism</b>	<b>72</b>	11.8 Global dust studies	137
8.1 Introduction	72	11.9 Summary and conclusions	139
8.2 Magnetic properties of soil minerals	73		
8.3 Weathering and magnetic properties	73	<b>12 Mineral magnetism in marine sediments</b>	<b>141</b>
8.4 The magnetic enhancement of surface soils	74	12.1 Introduction	141
8.5 Particle size relationships	76	12.2 The origin and flux of marine magnetic minerals	141
8.6 Some representative soil profiles	79	12.3 Core correlation in marine sediments	144
8.7 The effects of gleying on magnetic properties	81		
8.8 Soil magnetism and slope processes	82		



CONTENTS

12.4 Mineral magnetism and palaeoclimate in deep-sea sediments	145	15.3 Pneumomagnetism	182
12.5 Particulate pollution monitoring in coastal waters	151	15.4 Cardiomagnetism	183
12.6 Summary and conclusions	152	15.5 Neuromagnetism	183
		15.6 Summary	184
<b>13 Reversal magnetostratigraphy</b>	153	<b>16 The Rhode River, Chesapeake Bay, an integrated catchment study</b>	185
13.1 Introduction	153	16.1 Physical setting	185
13.2 Geomagnetic signatures	153	16.2 Sediment sources	188
13.2.1 Origin of remanent magnetisation in igneous rocks	153	16.3 Study aims	189
13.2.2 Origin of magnetisation in sediments	156	16.4 Methods	190
13.3 The geomagnetic polarity timescale	160	16.5 The magnetic mineralogy of the Rhode River catchment	191
13.4 Polarity transitions	163	16.6 Suspended sediment samples	194
13.5 Summary	165	16.7 Estuarine sediment cores: mineral magnetic characteristics	195
		16.8 Chronology and links with land-use change	195
<b>14 Secular variation magnetostratigraphy</b>	166	16.9 Summary and implications	196
14.1 Introduction	166	<b>17 Prospects</b>	198
14.2 Experimental methods	167	17.1 Palaeomagnetism of recent sediments	198
14.3 Magnetic dating and magnetostratigraphy	169	17.2 The mineral magnetic approach	199
14.4 Origin of palaeolimnomagnetic secular variation	174		
14.5 Palaeomagnetic pitfalls	175	Glossary of magnetic terms	203
14.6 Excursions and the reinforcement syndrome	176	References	206
14.7 Summary	177	Index	220
<b>15 Biomagnetism</b>	178		
15.1 Introduction	178		
15.2 Magnetic navigation	178		

# List of tables

3.1	Major minerals of the Earth's continental crust	<i>page</i> 13
3.2	Spinel group iron oxides	14
3.3	Magnetic properties of remanence-carrying natural minerals	17
3.4	Specific magnetic susceptibilities of various minerals	18
4.1	Units in magnetism and their relationships	22
4.2	Magnetic properties of magnetite and haematite in SI and CGS units	23
4.3	General hysteresis properties	27
4.4	Average hysteresis properties of 1000 natural samples	29
6.1	Uses of instrumentation	50
9.1	Magnetic properties of sediment samples from the Jackmoor Brook catchment	90
10.1	Magnetic minerals in lake sediments: types and sources	102
10.2	Maximum $\chi$ values from late-glacial sediments	103
10.3	Erosion rates calculated from lake sediment influx studies	111
11.1	Estimates of direct global particle production for potentially magnetic components	125
11.2	Mineral magnetic parameters for fly-ash and roadside particulates	134
11.3	Barbados dusts mean values	139
13.1	Terminology for magnetostratigraphic polarity units	158
14.1	Ages of magnetostratigraphic features	172
16.1	Mineral magnetic parameters for potential sediment sources from the Rhode River	191

[1]

# Introduction

**Its purpose is to be suggestive to him rather than didactic; to put him in the way of intelligently observing for himself.**

Archibald Geikie 1879  
*Outlines of field geology*  
London: Macmillan

Such is the scope and versatility of magnetic studies that the same apparatus can be used, within the span of a single day, to probe the orienting behaviour of living organisms, trace the origin of suspended stream sediments, provide estimates of particulate pollution, and explore, through measurements of palaeomagnetic intensities and pole positions, the dynamics of the Earth's fluid core. This very diversity presents us with a formidable challenge at the outset, the more so since in most of the disciplines touched on, few workers are familiar with either the principles of magnetism involved or with the methods of study employed.

The text of this book seeks to introduce research workers and advanced students to the range of applications of magnetic measurements in their own and related disciplines, as well as to provide a theoretical and practical background should this be required. Chapters 2–5 are concerned mostly with the properties, definitions, concepts, principles and theories which are used in later chapters. In so far as possible, the level of explanation and discussion chosen has been designed to allow non-physicists to understand and appreciate the magnetic properties which are inherent or may be induced in natural materials, and which form the basis for the wide range of applications illustrated later. For any interested readers unfamiliar with basic concepts in physics, we hope in the early chapters to raise their knowledge of magnetism, at least in an intuitive or qualitative sense,

to the minimum level needed for making use of either the techniques directly or the results arising from their use.

Chapter 2 describes the various types of magnetic behaviour characteristic of natural materials. These categories of behaviour can be identified from relatively simple experiments which involve recording the response of specimens to changes in variables such as magnetic field and temperature. Many of the responses can be related to the properties of crystal structure and to the effects of crystal size and shape. These properties, along with others related to the concentration of magnetic minerals, form the basis for the magnetic differentiation of soils, sediments, peats and dusts (Chs 8–12 & 16) as well as for the property of natural magnetic remanence upon which magnetostratigraphy depends (Chs 13 & 14). Chapter 3 concentrates on naturally occurring minerals and sets out their different magnetic characteristics in terms of the magnetic properties and categories of behaviour outlined in Chapter 2. Chapter 4 deals with the magnetic parameters which we actually measure and use in the later chapters of the book in more detail. Some of these parameters are related to properties of the Earth's magnetic field, past or present (4.3.1), and others are quite independent of this and are instead a function of magnetic mineralogy, grain size and shape (4.3.2–4.8). These magnetic parameters can be diagnostic of mineral type and origin; they are sensitive to chemical and thermal transformations and

## INTRODUCTION

can reflect the ambient magnetic field at certain critical stages in processes such as sediment deposition, rock cooling or crystal growth. Used in combination, they provide a powerful new approach to the study of environmental systems. Chapter 5 considers the Earth's magnetic field at the present day and in the past. The definition of terms and concepts, the brief outline of sources of evidence and the introduction to the nature of variation in the Earth's field on a wide range of timescales all form a link with Chapters 13 and 14 dealing with magnetostratigraphy. Chapter 6 is devoted to methods of measurement and hence to instrumentation. Its main sections are designed to provide a practical guide to available techniques and appropriate equipment, largely for the benefit of prospective practitioners inexperienced in magnetic measurements. Chapters 2–6 as a whole serve both as an introduction to essential aspects of theory and practice and as a reference text once magnetic measurements and the appraisal of results are under way.

Chapter 7 introduces in general terms those environmental systems which involve the movement of material, including magnetic minerals. It develops the linking concept of particulate flux and foreshadows the use of magnetic minerals to explore, quantify and characterise this flux. In addition, some general points are noted regarding methods of sampling and sample preparation. In Chapters 8–12, the magnetic characterisation of particulate flux is considered in the full range of environmental contexts studied so far. Each chapter first considers the nature of mineral particles in general and magnetic minerals in particular in the environmental system considered, then briefly outlines their origin, movement and transformation. Suitable methods of sampling and measurement particular to the problems and processes involved are also outlined. Finally, case studies are summarised and these are designed to illustrate the applications of mineral magnetic studies, discuss areas of particular interest or future relevance, and identify crucial problems and uncertainties for further study. The range of mineral

magnetic studies completed so far varies very much with the environmental system under consideration and this is reflected in the chapters themselves. Some are based on a wide range of empirical studies (e.g. Ch. 10) and others are necessarily more speculative (e.g. Ch. 11). Whereas Chapters 8–12 deal with 'artificial' *mineral* magnetic properties and their uses, Chapters 13 and 14 deal with natural remanent magnetisation and attempt to summarise the full range of palaeomagnetic measurements in the many environmental contexts where they have been studied. Chapter 15, on Biomagnetism, is concerned with the way in which animals make use of iron minerals, with emphasis on detecting the Earth's magnetic field as a directional aid. Chapter 16 is an integrative study based on the Rhode River, a tidal arm of Chesapeake Bay. It provides, amongst other things, an opportunity to develop more fully the themes of systems linkage and the scope for integrated magnetic studies especially within watershed-based interdisciplinary research programmes. The final chapter attempts a preliminary appraisal of the future rôle of magnetic measurements in environmental science.

Depending on initial training, experience and motivation, the reader may either begin with the early Chapters (2–6) or any one of the later ones (7–16) most closely related to his or her academic interests and research programme. We hope that for the geophysicist/palaeomagnetist approaching the book, the later chapters will encourage an interest in the wide range of only partly explored and potentially exciting environmental applications of magnetic measurements touched on. Perhaps in this way more scholars with the appropriate geophysical background and expertise will become interested in collaboration with non-geophysicists in other disciplines. Equally, we hope that the non-geophysicist, led to the book by an interest in particular areas of application, will feel stimulated to seek out opportunities to develop and extend the contribution of magnetic measurements to studies in his own field, through collaboration and a growing direct personal involvement in the techniques and the results obtained.