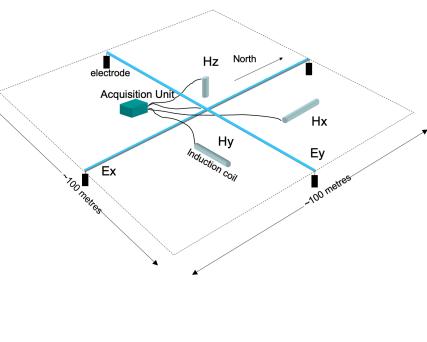
# MT Acquisition Best Practices: Survey Design and Field Procedures

Alan G. Jones **COMPLETE MT** SOLUTIONS

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Take-away message It all begins in the field!

### ...and there is a lot of lore (and some fables) about best practice!

The common truth though is that if you collect poor quality data you will be fighting to improve it in the lab through processing, then suffer the consequences during analyses and inversions, and end up with a model with poor resolution.

You will spend 10x as much time in the lab as it would have cost to collect higher quality data by taking your time in the field and being more focussed on quality acquisition.

I have seen poor data acquired particularly by academics. Generally, the major MT contractors do a consistently better job.



# Survey Design

Overarching question is:

- Why are you doing the survey???
  - Before you go into the field spend time thinking about this.
  - The answer to that question defines the instruments to use, the station spacing, the frequencies of primary interest, recording time, recording time of day, etc.
- Theoretical aspects
  - many of which you can control
- Practical aspects
  - some of which you have less (or no) control over



## Survey Design – Theoretical aspects

From an academic perspective:

• What overarching question are you trying to address? (Usually articulated in your proposal for funding.)

#### From an exploration perspective:

- Do you wish to <u>detect</u> or <u>delineate</u>?
  - Detect: As few stations as necessary
  - Delineate: As many stations as you can afford! (Perhaps don't need all 5 components?)
- If going into brownfields area, you know a lot about the likely conductivity structures...
- If going into a greenfields area, you know a lot about the <u>types</u> of structures you want to find...
  - Size of deposit
  - Deposit target/rocks
  - Host rocks



# Survey Design – Theoretical aspects

MT is an awful lot easier than CSEM for Survey Design. You don't have to think about the source (unless you are in auroral or equatorial regions).

Undertake a theoretical design study to assess:

- 1. Frequency range of measurements to optimally image your "target"
  - Are the AMT or MT deadband responses crucially important to detection/resolution?
  - What is the lowest frequency (shortest period) that you need?  $\rightarrow$  time of acquisition
- 2. Station spacing
  - Wide spacing for detection. Tight spacing for delineation
- 3. Types of measurements to make
  - Do you need all 5 components, or is it sufficient to measure only inline-E fields (EMAP or MIMDAS or Titan24) for example?



### Audio-magnetotellurics (AMT) for steeply-dipping mineral targets: Importance of multi-component measurements at each site

Alan G Jones

Geological Survey of Canada



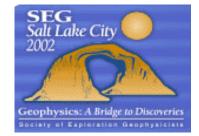
Gary McNeice

Geosystem Canada

# GEOSYSTEM

Society of Exploration Geophysicists 72<sup>nd</sup> Annual Meeting

Salt Lake City, October 6-11, 2002







Understand the response to a typical Canadian ore body in terms of EM <u>fields</u>, rather than in terms of <u>responses</u>

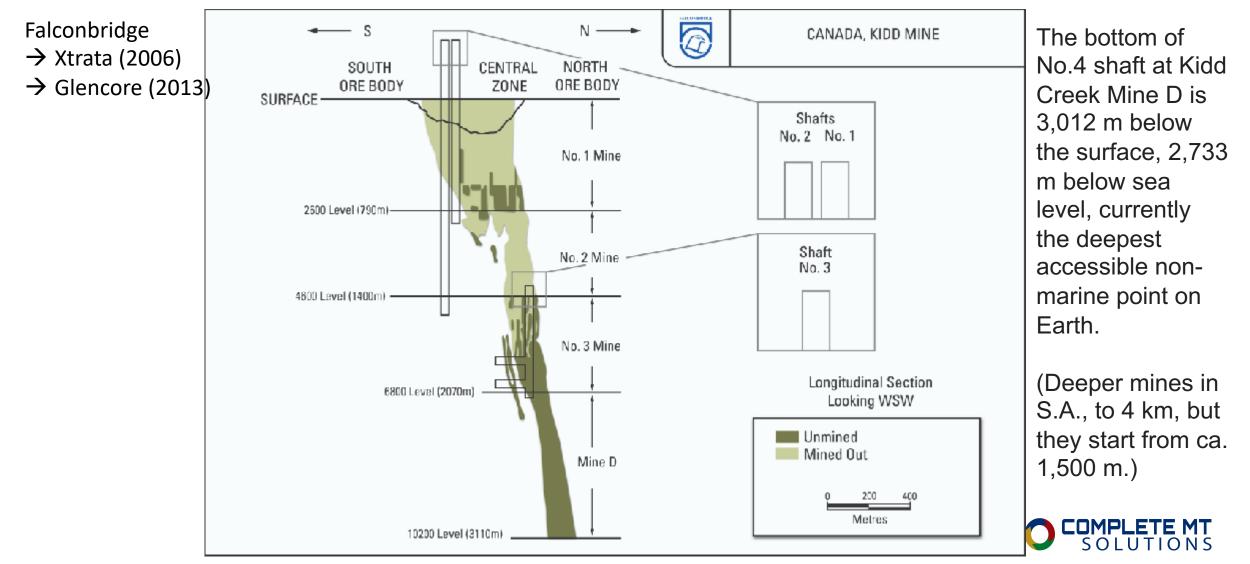
Efficient and effective survey design



### Representative Body: Kidd (Creek) Mine (world's deepest Cu-Zn-Ag mine)

### One of the world's largest VMS deposits

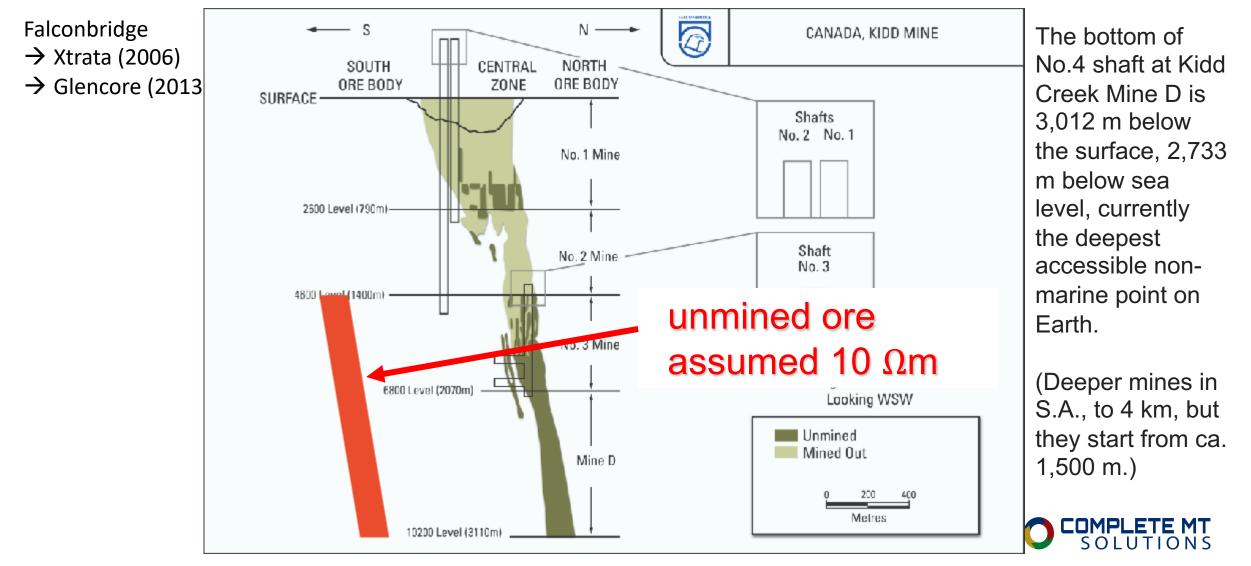
Image taken from Falconbridge's web site in 2002

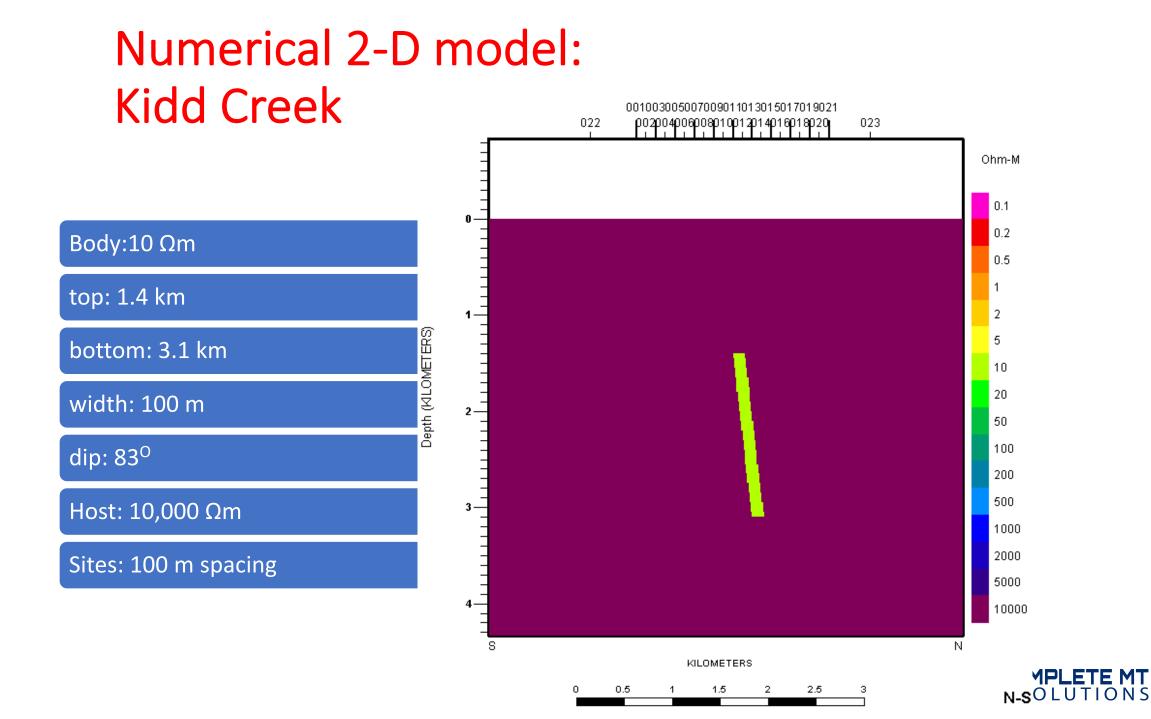


### Representative Body: Kidd (Creek) Mine (world's deepest Cu-Zn-Ag mine)

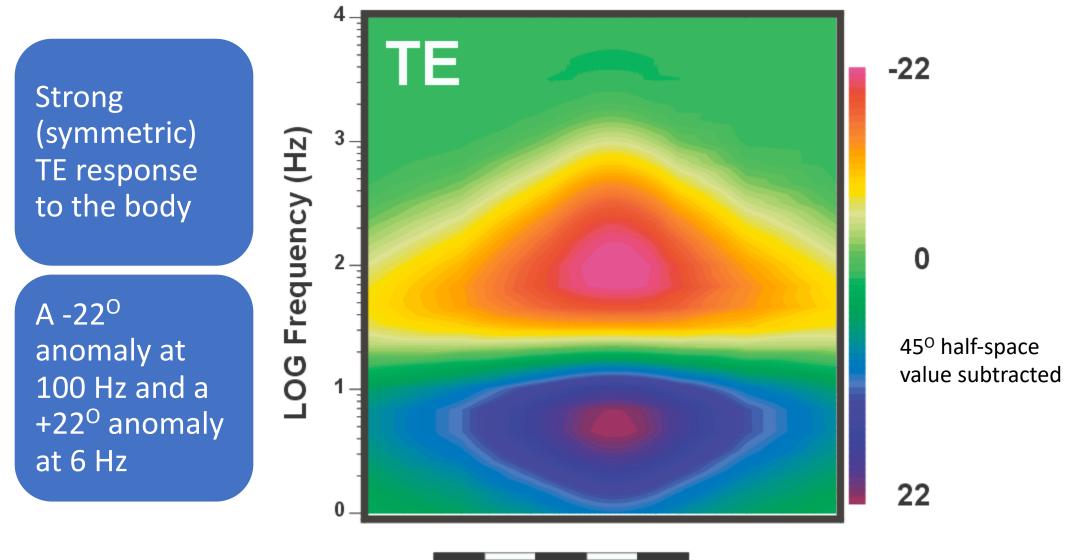
### One of the world's largest VMS deposits

Image taken from Falconbridge's web site in 2002





### MT responses: TE phases

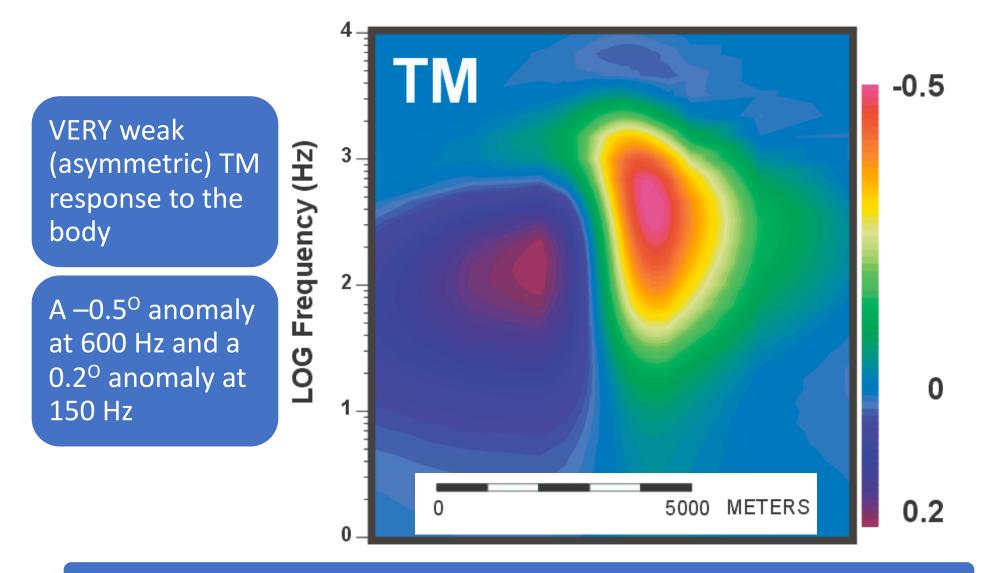


O COMPLETE MT SOLUTIONS

METERS

5000

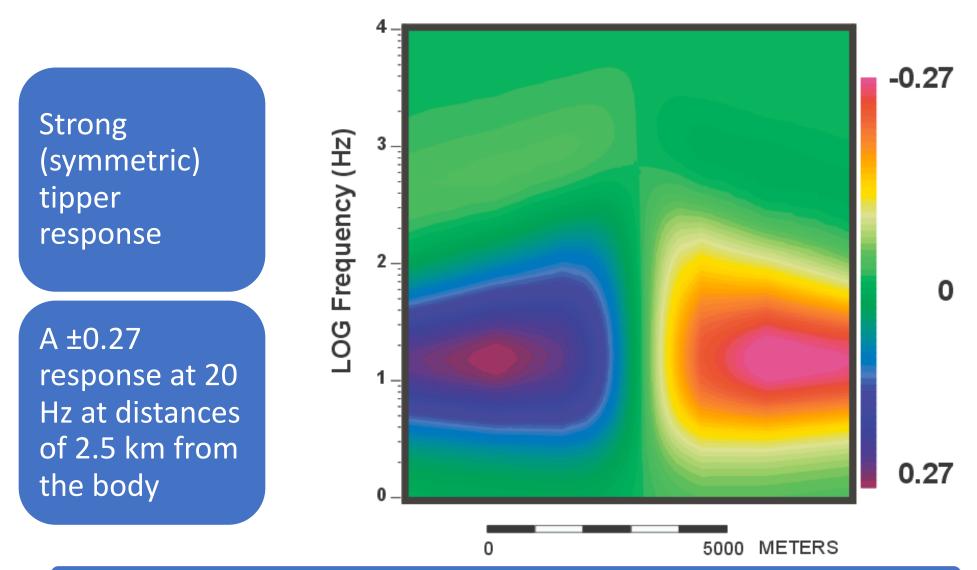
### MT responses: TM phases



-> In-line E-fields (EMAP-like) insensitive to body!



### **TF responses: TZ-Real**



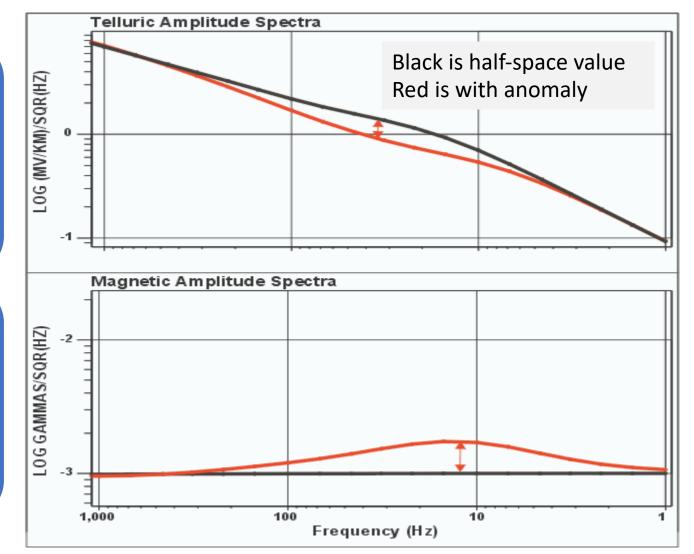
-> Superior lateral sensitivity than in TE responses!



## TE fields at central site

Parallel E-field (Ex) shows maximum anomaly (28%) at 33 Hz.

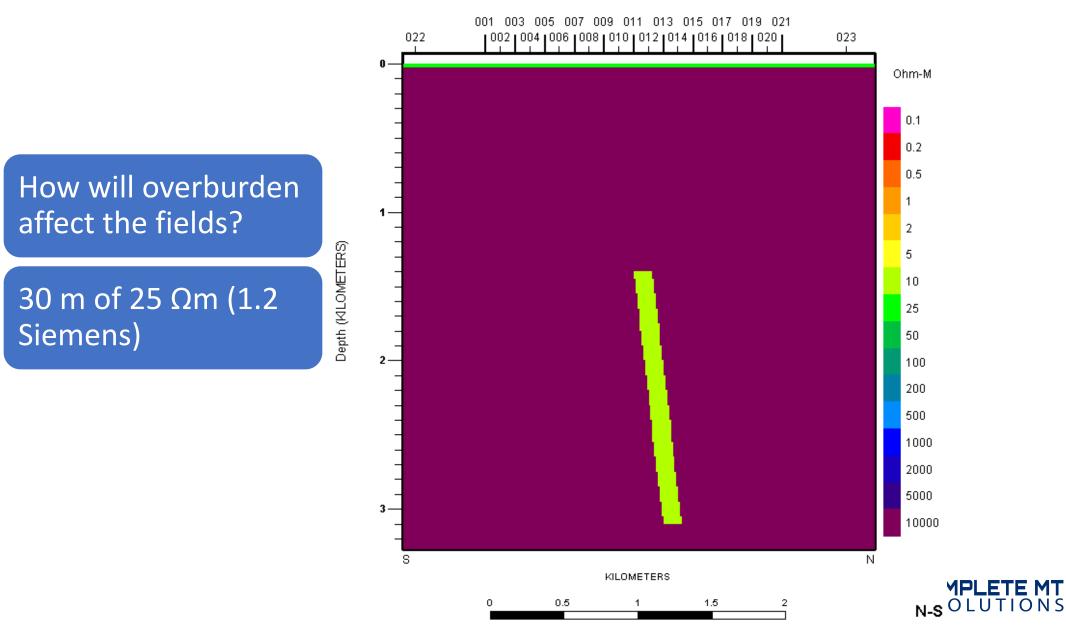
Perpendicular Hfield (Hy) shows maximum anomaly (74%) at 12 Hz



-> Greater MT response due to Hy (3/4) than to Ex (1/4)



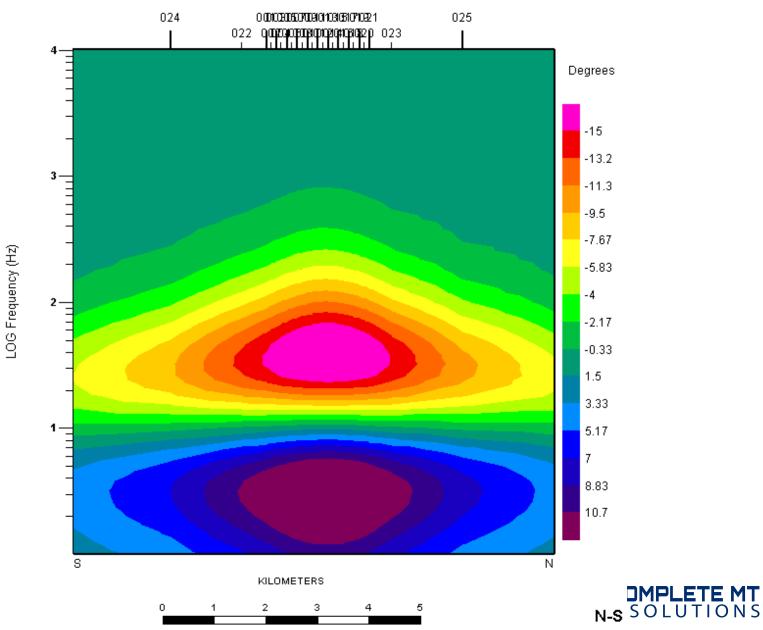
## Overburden: 30 m of 25 $\Omega$ .m



### **Overburden:** TE phases

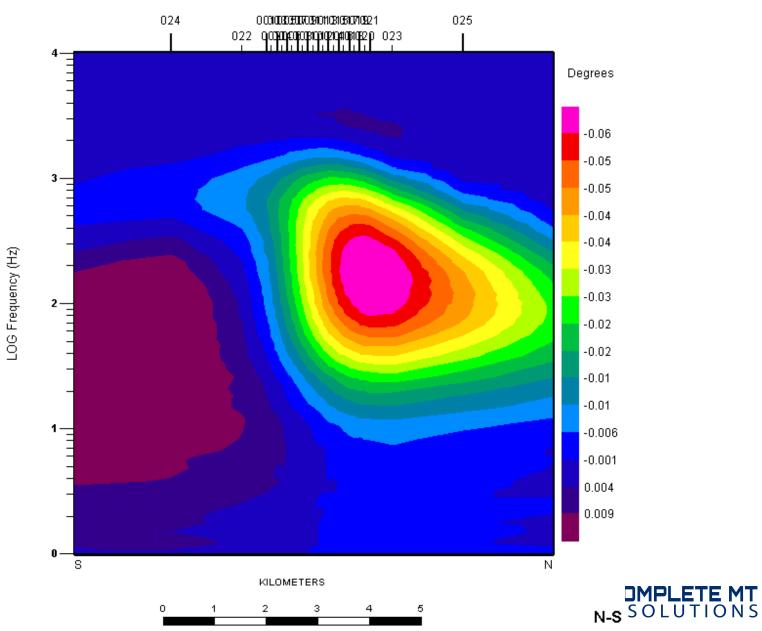
TE phase anomaly reduced to +15<sup>o</sup>/-11<sup>o</sup> from ±22<sup>o</sup>

Both anomalies moved down in frequency



### **Overburden:** TM phases

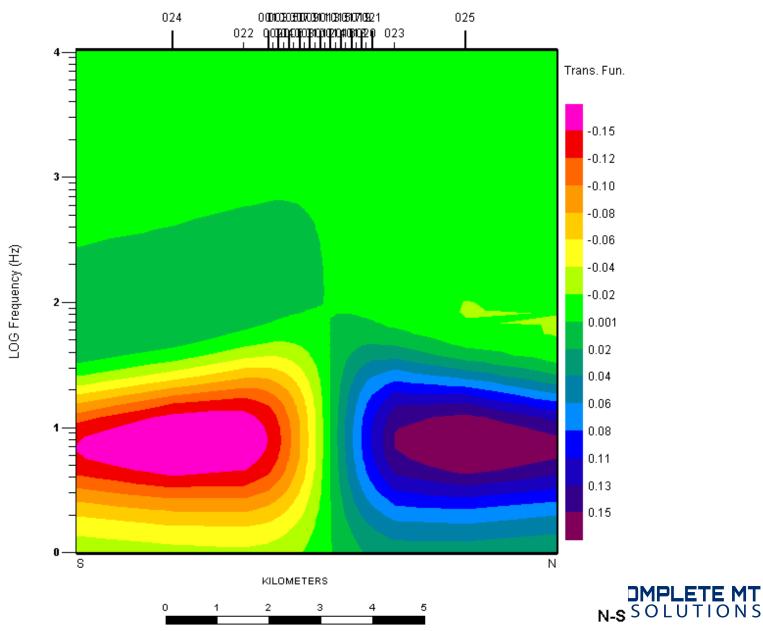
TM phase anomaly below 0.1<sup>0</sup>!



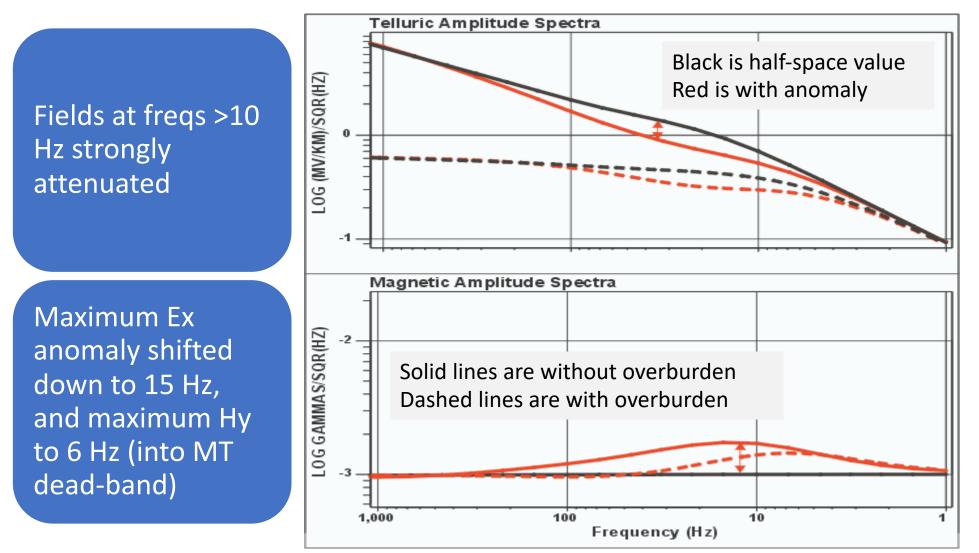
### **Overburden:** TZ-Real

Still observable strong tipper response

A ±0.15 response at 9 Hz at distances of 2.5 km from the body



## TE fields at central site



-> Need very broad frequency range of acquisition



### Conclusions – Kidd Creek

Steeply-dipping, electrically-thin, mineralized targets pose a problem for AMT detection and delineation

No measurable TM-response!

Strong TE and TF responses

For TE, in 2-D most of anomalous response in (lower frequency) across-strike magnetic field (Hy) rather than in (higher frequency) along-strike electric field (Ex)

For TF, have greater lateral detection and sensitivity than TE, but at lower frequencies

-> Measure all 5-components at each site !!!

-> Conduct survey design !!!



### DEEP ELECTROMAGNETIC IMAGING OF THE BATHURST No. 12 DEPOSIT:

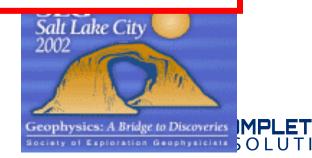
GEOPHYSICS, VOL. 72, NO. 2 (MARCH-APRIL 2007); P. F85–F95, 12 FIGS., 1 TABLE. 10.1190/1.2437105

Electromagnetic imaging of a complex ore body: 3D forward modeling, sensitivity tests, and down-mine measurements

Pilar Queralt<sup>1</sup>, Alan G. Jones<sup>2</sup>, and Juanjo Ledo<sup>1</sup>



Society of Exploration Geophysicists 72<sup>nd</sup> Annual Meeting, Salt Lake City October 6-11, 2002



# Main objectives

#### Methodology:

- Construct a realistic 3-D model
- Study of AMT responses of 3-D structures

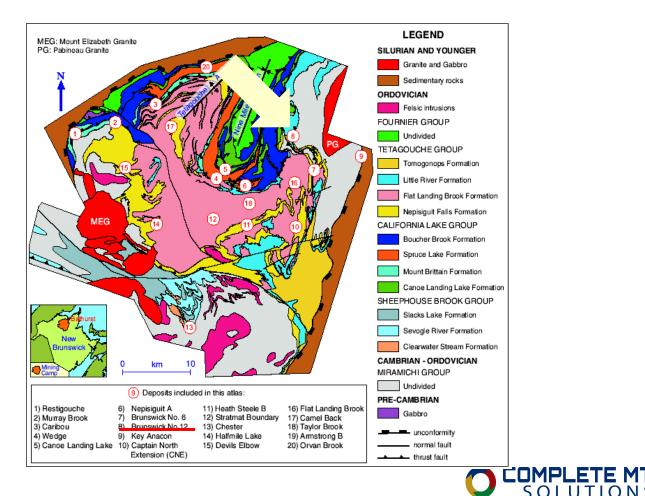
#### Application:

Experimental design of AMT survey for detecting and delineating conductive target ore bodies within resistive host background



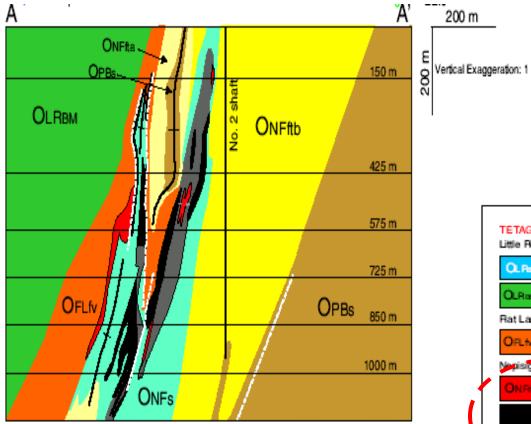
### Brunswick n.12 deposit, Bathurst mining camp (New Brunswick, Canada)

- Complex geometry of the ore bodies -> a realistic body
- The biggest deposit in this mining camp
- Rich geological and geophysical information

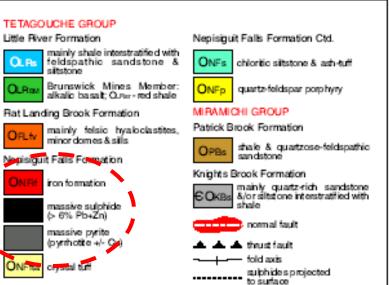


### Brunswick n.12 deposit

#### GEOLOGICAL SECTION A-A'



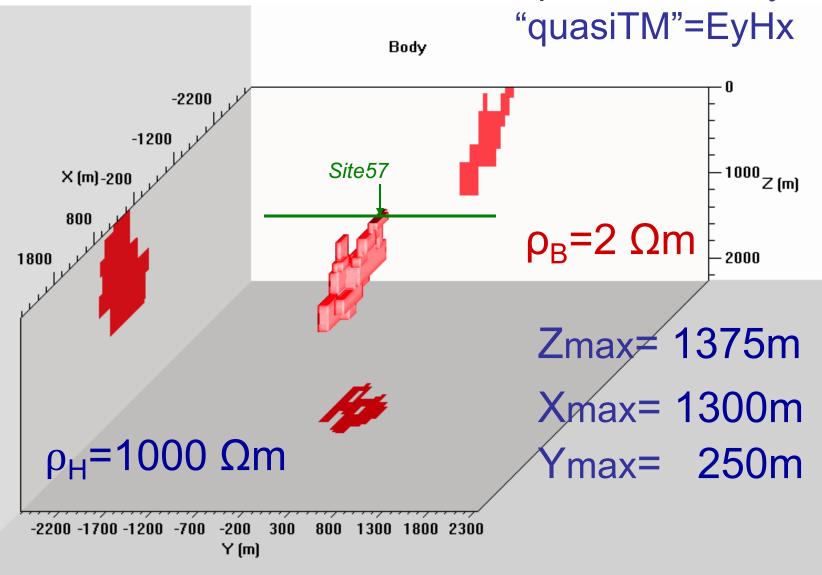
#### GEOLOGICAL LEGEND



**MPLETE MT** OLUTIONS

### Outline of the 3-D body





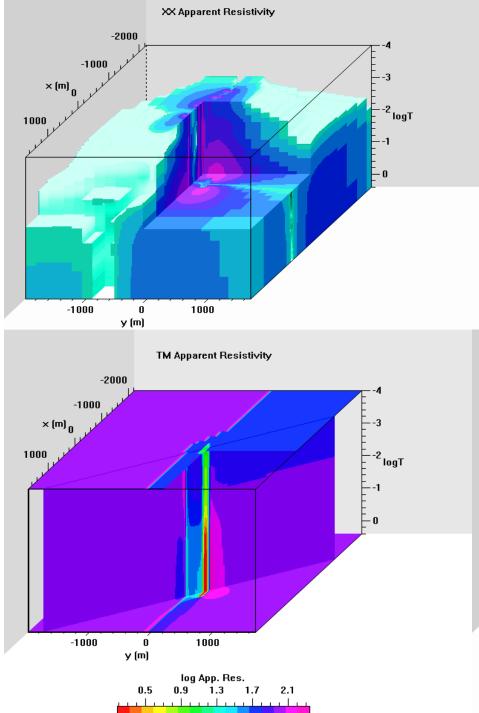
X:Y=4:1 - 5:1 **COMPLETE** 

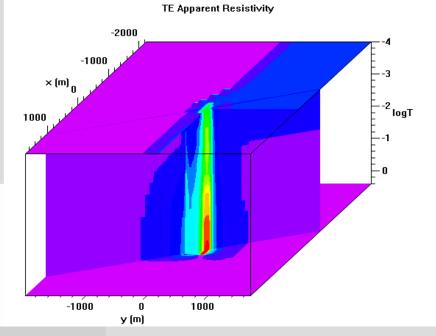
Dip angle: 80<sup>0</sup>

### 3-D modelling

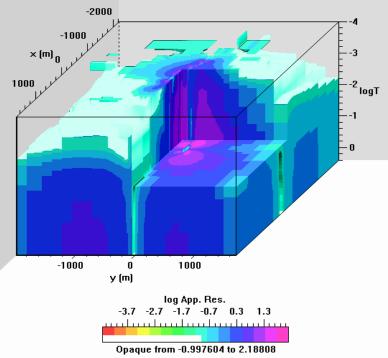
- Mackie et al. (1999, 2001)
- ▶ Mesh size 99x86x50 ∆x= 12.5m
- ▶ 10<sup>4</sup> Hz 3.8 10<sup>-1</sup> Hz , 11 frequencies
- ▶ 1.5 Gb RAM, 48 h. SUN ULTRA
- Generated synthetic data for inversion by adding 1% noise and scatter



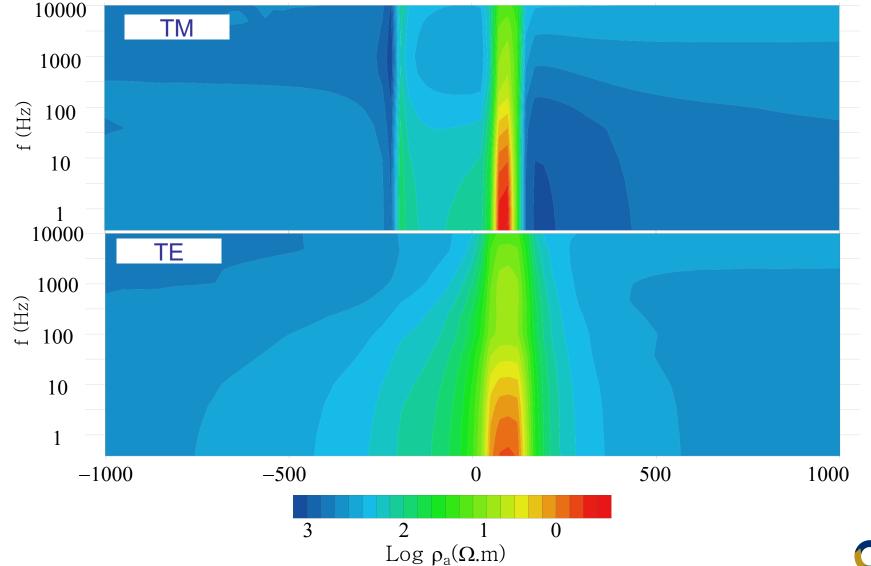




YY Apparent Resistivity

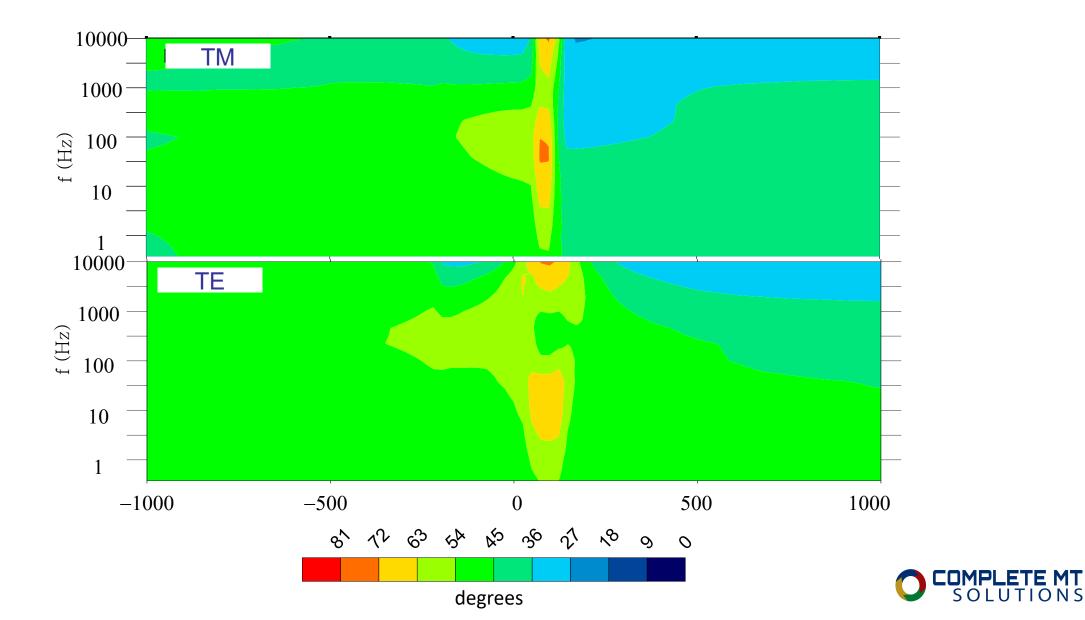


### "2D" Model responses – Apparent Resistivity



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### "2D" Model responses – Phases



### **Conclusions – Bathurst**

- The whole frequency range of AMT is required to detect and to delineate the geometry of the 3D body (Need very high quality AMT "dead-band" responses!)
- 2-D inversion can be considered for all the "quasiTM" data, but only for the high frequency "quasiTE" data.
- The "quasiTE" behaviour in the 3-D responses is very different from the 2-D case, and is highly sensitive to the length of the strike.
- For this 3-D body the anomalous horizontal magnetic field components are small compared to the 2-D model. Most of the anomalous response is in the electric field components.
  - $\rightarrow$  To optimise data acquisition, stationary magnetic sensors and multiple electric field measurements can be considered



- What magnetometers are best for imaging your target?
- What electrodes should you use?
- Do you need to record AMT deadband (5 kHz 800 Hz) or MT deadband (8 Hz – 10 s) or very low (< 0.001) frequencies?</li>
- What will the cultural noise likely be like?
- Where should the remote be sited?



- What magnetometers are best for imaging your target?
  - Answer depends on the frequencies that are best for imaging your target
    - Coils for high frequencies > 0.001 Hz (1,000 s)
    - SQUIDS not in common use in MT, but are used for e.g. airborne EM
    - Ring-core fluxgates for long periods > 1,000 s

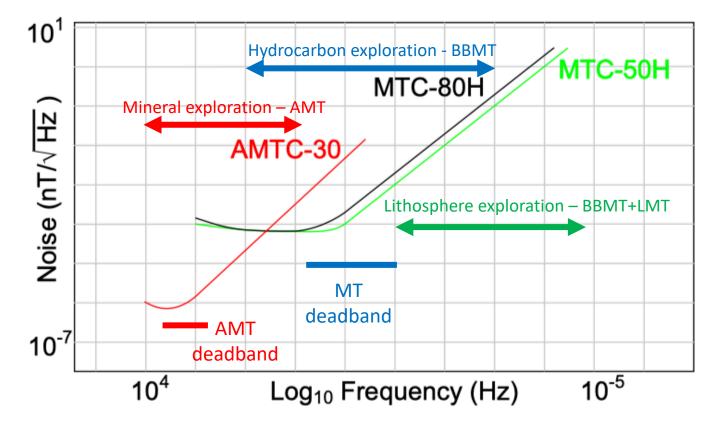
Coil design is a trade—off between:

- lots of turns over a large magnetically permeable core (=greater sensitivity at low freqs) and large eddy currents in the core (=high frequency noise), against
- a smaller core with fewer coils (=lower sensitivity at low freqs) and low eddy currents in the core (=lower noise at high freqs)



• What coils are best for imaging your target?

Examples of Phoenix's conventional coils:



AMTC-30 for AMT, CSAMT, FDEM

- 82 cm x 6 cm dia., 3 kg
- Frequency range: 10 000 Hz to 0.1 Hz



- 144 cm x 6 cm dia., 8.2 kg
- Frequency range:

400 Hz to 50 000 seconds

Magnetic signal and magnetometer noise

Lithosphere exploration – BBMT+LM

Bx

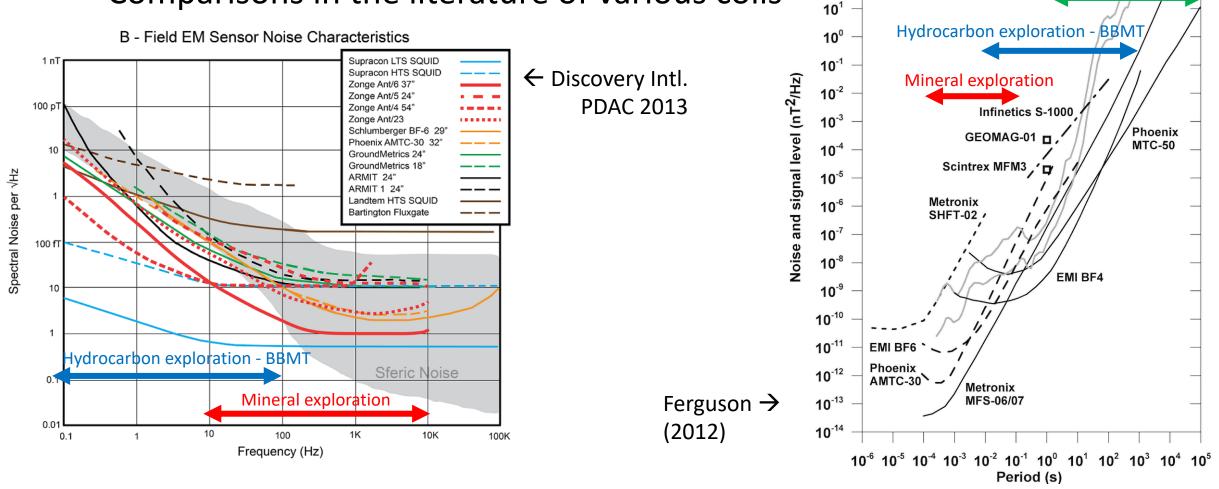
By

10<sup>4</sup>

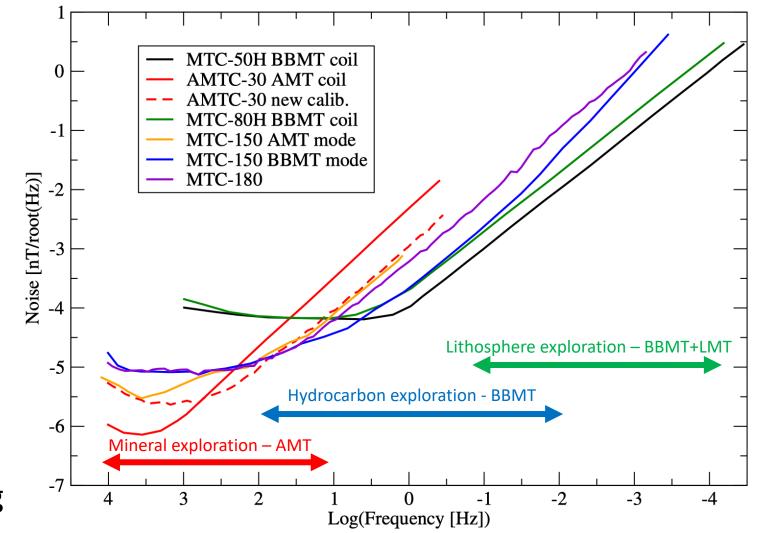
**10**<sup>3</sup>

10<sup>2</sup>

What coils are best for imaging your target?
Comparisons in the literature of various coils



- What coils are best for imaging your target?
- Hybrid coils appearing: MTC-150/MTC-180
- Not as good at high freqs > 200 Hz
- Not as good at low freqs < 3 Hz
- Superior in the band 200 3 Hz
- Advantage is one coil not two. Both AMT and BBMT can be done in one overnight recording



- What electrodes should you use?
  - Answer depends on the frequencies that are best for imaging your target
    - Metal plates/rods for high frequencies > 100 Hz
    - Capacitive electrodes/antennas for very high frequencies >300 Hz
    - Non-polarizing electrodes for low frequencies < 100 Hz
    - Active electrodes at low frequencies < 300 Hz for very high contact resistance



- What electrodes should you use?
  - Metal plates/rods for high frequencies > 100 Hz
- Advantages:
  - Low cost
  - Low maintenance
  - Quick to deploy

- Disadvantages:
  - May still have polarization charge noise even at high freqs



- What electrodes should you use?
  - Capacitive electrodes/antennas for very high frequencies >300 Hz
- Advantages:
  - Quick to deploy
- Disadvantages:
  - Low signal:noise possible up to 1 kHz





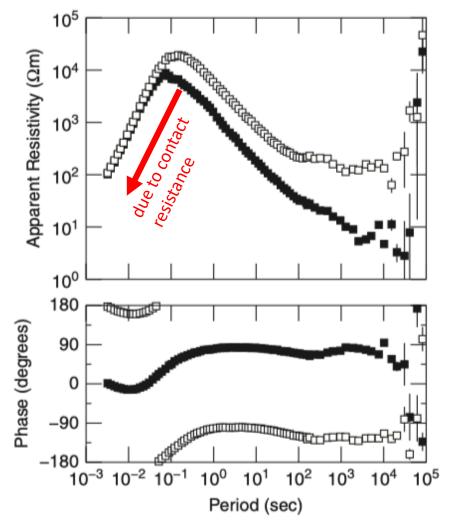
- What electrodes should you use?
  - Non-polarizing electrodes for low frequencies < 100 Hz
- Advantages:
  - Very low noise for BBMT and LMT applications
- Disadvantages:
  - Slow to deploy need to dig a deep hole
  - Expensive
  - Need maintenance between sites and between surveys
  - Need maintenance during acquisition (hole has to be kept wet)





- What electrodes should you use?
  - Active electrodes at low frequencies < 300 Hz for very high contact resistance (John Stodt pre-amplifiers)
    - The problem is when the contact resistance approaches the input impedance of the receiver – that sets up an RC circuit and attenuates the high frequencies
- Advantages:
  - Can be used in very resistive areas glaciers, snow cover, exposed rock
- Disadvantages:
  - Expensive
  - Need a second cable with power to the electrode for the pre-amp

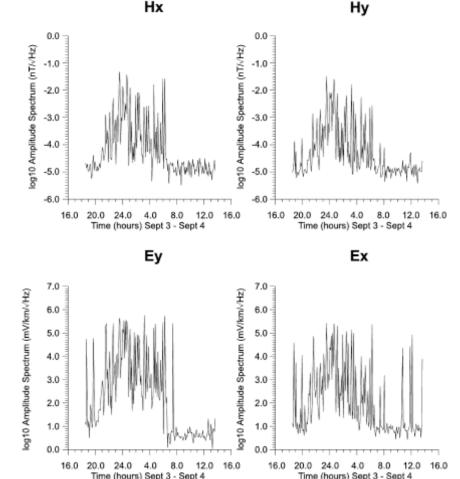
Station on Baffin Island with 2  $\mbox{M}\Omega$  contact resistance



Do you need to record AMT deadband (5 kHz – 800 Hz) or MT deadband (8 Hz – 10 s) or very low (< 0.001) frequencies?</li>

For either of these, you will need to plan for overnight acquisition. Yes, you only need 10 mins of AMT data, but it's getting the right 10 mins! Daytime atmospheric attenuation of the propagating EM fields means virtually no signal at AMT deadband frequencies.

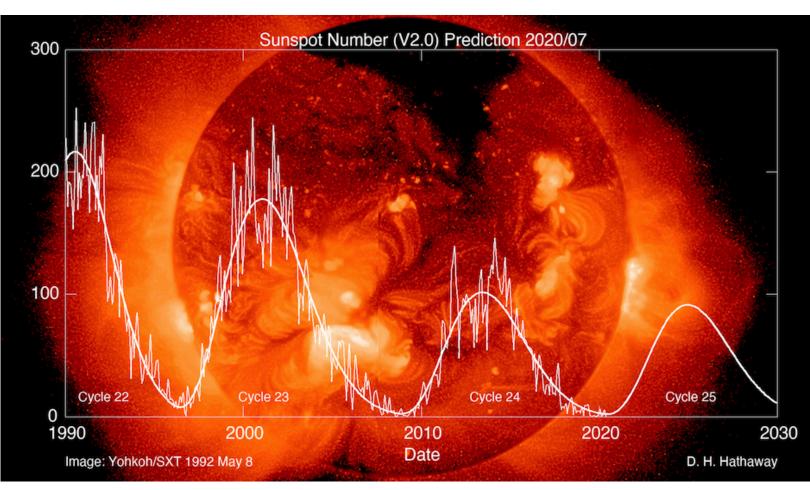
24h of 1 kHz spectral amplitude at a site near Sudbury, Canada Garcia & Jones (2002)



 Do you need to record AMT deadband (5 kHz – 800 Hz) or MT deadband (8 Hz – 10 s) or very low (< 0.001) frequencies?</li>

For BBMT data at freqs <8 Hz (Schumann resonance) then you do have to think about the solar cycle

Good news is that we look to be at the low, and activity will increase for the next few years



- What will the likely cultural noise be like?
- Dirty powerlines? Unstable main harmonic and/or broad side-lobes
- DC trains?
- Mining power at 1/3 of main power frequency?
- Wells?
- Pipelines carrying DC noise generated tens to hundreds of km away
- Pipelines with cathodic protection
- Cow fences analogue worse than digital
- Radar



#### Noise Solutions - Cultural

- Avoid or minimize
- Filters remove much of 60Hz/harmonics
- Record at off peak
- Request that noise be "turned off"
- Use remote reference at whatever distance necessary
- Robust or other processing



#### Noise Solutions - Natural

- Bury coils
- Ensure E-lines are close to ground
- Protect cables from animals sprays
- Monitor gear in high-traffic areas
- Stop recording/disconnect during severe thunderstorms
- Shift recording schedule to avoid storms/people/animals



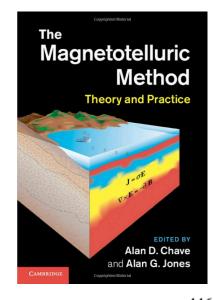
- Where should the remote be sited?
  - The answer depends on frequencies of interest and cultural noise.
    - If AMT then should be within 25 km
    - If BBMT then can be much further away (1,000 km)
  - If there is the potential for correlating noise over long distances, think of using two remotes



#### MT Acquisition – Ferguson (2012)!!!

Ferguson, I. J. (2012), Instrumentation and field procedures, in *The Magnetotelluric Method: Theory and Practice*, edited by A. D. Chave and A. G. Jones, pp. 421-479, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK.

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	Ian J. Ferguson					
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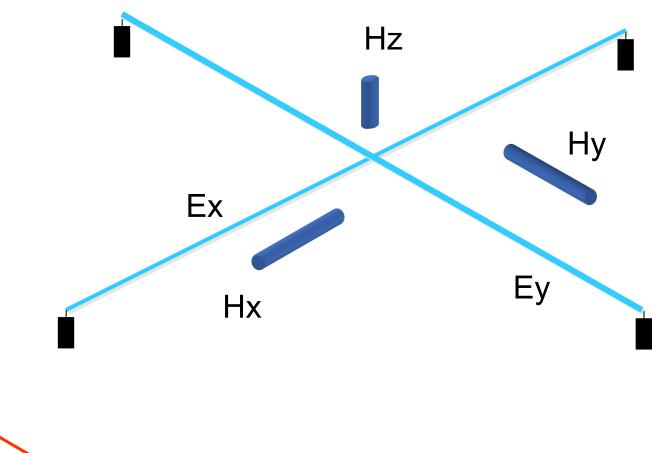
#### MT Acquisition

- Normally, record five channels at each station
  - Ex Ey Hx Hy Hz
  - Hz is harder to acquire (needs a deep hole!)
  - Recording the time series; processing will convert data to frequency domain
- Best statistically if x and y directions are orthogonal
- Orientation does not usually matter x and y can be any direction
- But best if one axis is along the strike of the target conductor



#### MT - Five components

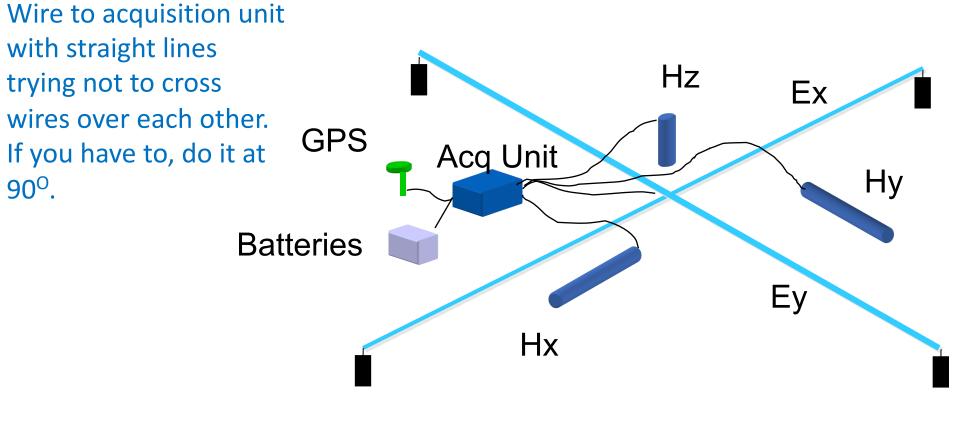
Place each of the coils in a different quadrant so no cross-talk between them







#### MT - Five components

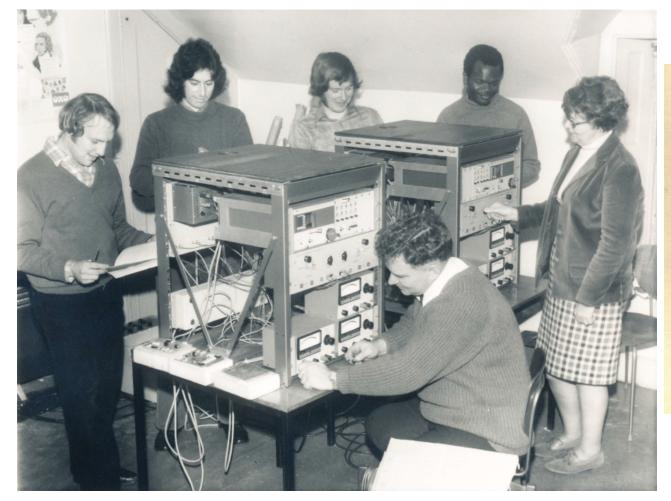




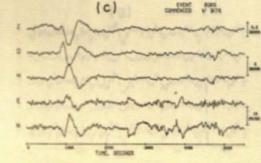


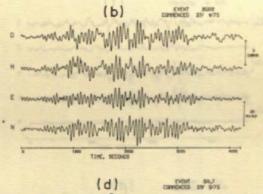
# MT – the early days

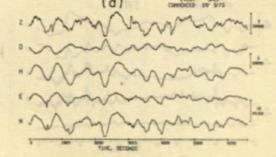
Technological developments slow during 1950s to 1970s...



(a) <u>server</u> <u>s</u>







Events recorded on paper and hand digitized (by Jones)



Edinburgh MT systems – 1972 vintage Dr. Rosemary Hutton on right

#### State of the Art MT Systems 1

- Low weight (5kg);
- Low power consumption (0.6A)
- Wide frequency range (DC to 30 KHz)
- Wide dynamic range (120db, 32-bit A/D)
  - better S/N; less risk of saturation
- Internal recording
  - (32MB flashcard, 1GB hard disk)
- Recording schedule downloaded from PC
- Latest innovation has recorders accessible through cell phone network





## State of the Art MT Systems 2

- GPS-synchronized (130ns accuracy)
  - no cables or radios
- 2 to 8-channel units, all independent
- High reliability (ISO9001 std), etc.
- Fast set-up and deployment
  - increased production
- Operating from -40 to +75C; waterproof;
  - lightning protected

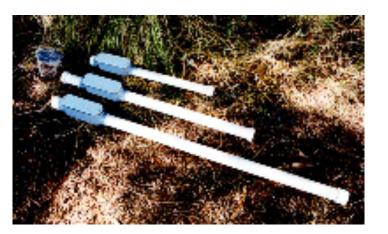






#### Coils









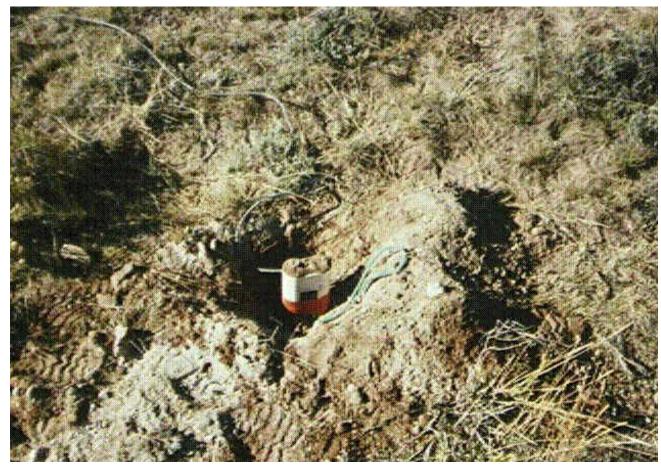
#### Coils - installation

- Buried to stabilize
  - deeper for MT deadband
- Avoids wind noise
- Must be placed away from large tree roots – roots couple wind to ground movement
- $\bullet$  Orientation within 1 or 2  $^\circ$
- Should be as level as possible
- Make sure coil cable buried, or held down every 0.5m, if recording MT deadband



#### Hz – vertical coil

• Buried vertically as deep as possible





## Coil tripods?

- Quicker deployment of magnetometers, esp. for AMT use
- Never been a fan of them
  - Tried the Metronix one in 1989...
- Too much sensitivity to wind and ground motion, even at high freqs.

What might be feasible is an ARMIT-like tri-axial magnetometer system for AMT use – has close to the same specs as AMT-30 coil

For lower freqs for BBMT use then will need to shield it from wind vibration

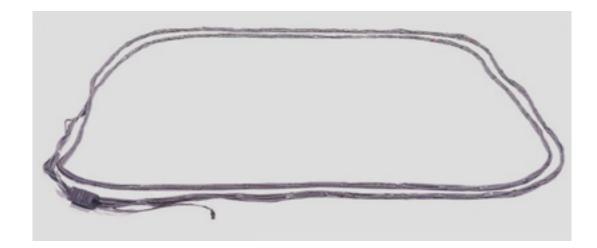






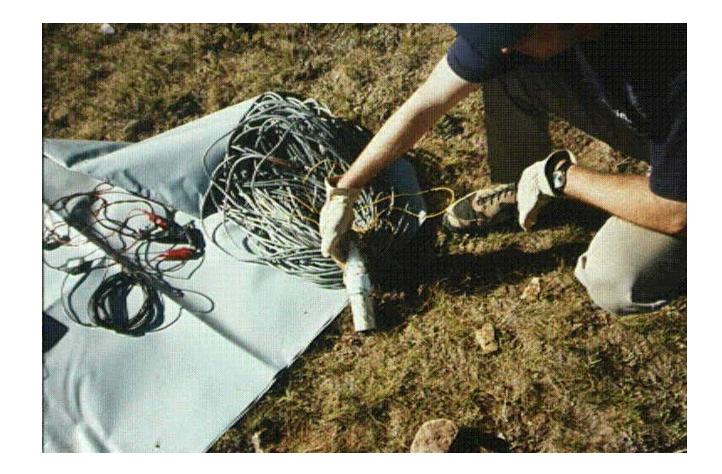
#### Hz – horizontal air loop

- Easier to install than a vertical coil
- MUST be held down every 0.5m
- Only good for AMT frequencies poor data for freq < 10 Hz.</li>





#### Electrode with cable





## Polarizing solid metal Electrodes

- Can have high contact resistance
- A metal rod of length *L*, diameter *a*, in a half-space of *ρ* will have an intrinsic Faradaic contact resistance *R* of →

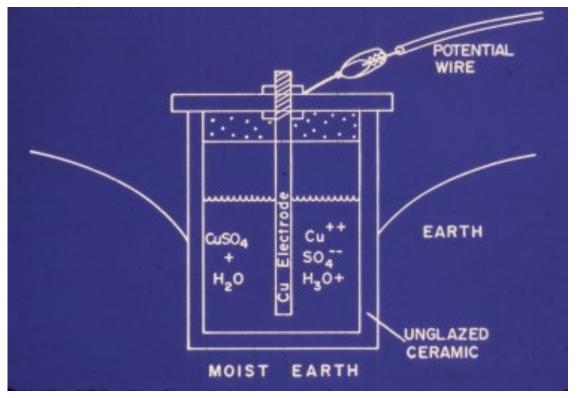
$$R = \frac{\rho}{2\pi L} \left[ \ln \left( \frac{2L}{a} \right) - 1 \right]$$

- A 1cm dia. rod buried 50 cm in 1,000  $\Omega$ m will have  $R = 1,150 \Omega$ m
- If buried in dry sand of 5,000  $\Omega$ m then R = 5,750  $\Omega$ m
- If poor contact then this will dramatically increase

See Ferguson (2012) for more detailed discussion



#### Non-polarizing Electrodes



Geophysical Prospecting, 1980, 28, 792-804.

A metal and its salt – no polarization charges can build up

- Cu-CuSO<sub>4</sub> cheapest, highest noise
- Pb-PbCl<sub>2</sub> medium priced, medium noise
- Ag-AgCl lowest noise, most expensive, used for marine applications

Comparison of a number of electrode designs and performance in Petiau and Dupis (1980)

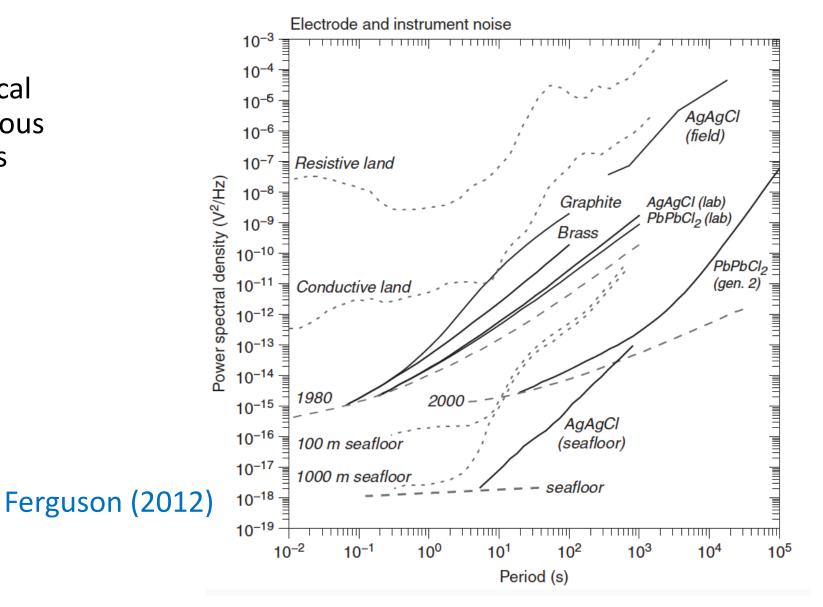
NOISE, TEMPERATURE COEFFICIENT, AND LONG TIME STABILITY OF ELECTRODES FOR TELLURIC OBSERVATIONS\*



#### Electrodes – noise levels

Solid lines are typical noise levels of various types of electrodes

Dashed lines are typical minimum signal levels



## Electrodes

Pot buried for stability

- Need to stabilize for temp
- Need low contact resistance
- Generally less than 1  $\ensuremath{\mathsf{K}}\Omega$
- Important for long recordings
- Can use NaCl water, saltwater or bentonite-type mud slurry to reduce contact resistance

#### JUST BE AWARE OF ALL OF THE ELECTROCHEMICAL BOUNDARIES YOU ARE SETTING UP! Each one can introduce noise



- Boundary between the metal (Pb) and its salt electrolyte (PbCl<sub>2</sub>)
- Boundary between the (PbCl<sub>2</sub>) salt electrolyte and the (NaCl) mud slurry
- Boundary between the (NaCl) mud and surrounding rock

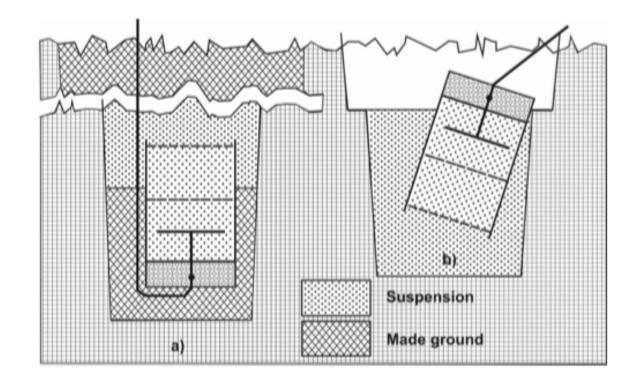


#### Electrodes

If very dry ground (eg dry sand), then use the "Russian bucket" method

Place electrode upside-down in a bucket, then fill the bucket with a mud slurry.

The electrode "face" then becomes the top of the bucket, so this requires a deep hole to avoid thermal variations or drying out





#### How can a Non-polarizing Electrode go bad?

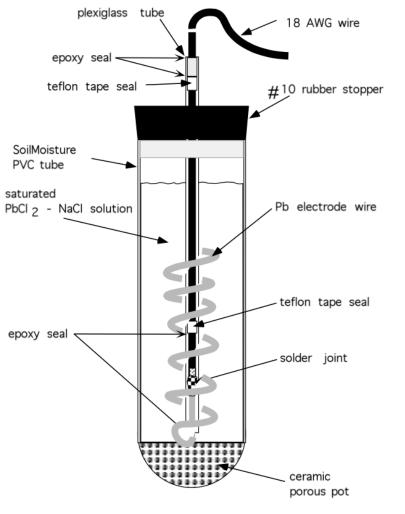


Figure B1. Diagram of Pb-PbCl 2 electrode

If the electrolyte is allowed to become too dry, or if "old", then salt can precipitate onto the metal electrode

When this happens, the electrode becomes noisy due to polarization charges, and can act as a capacitor and build up charge.

The sign of this happening is if the electrode has a large DC value (>20 mV is considered a "bad" electrode)



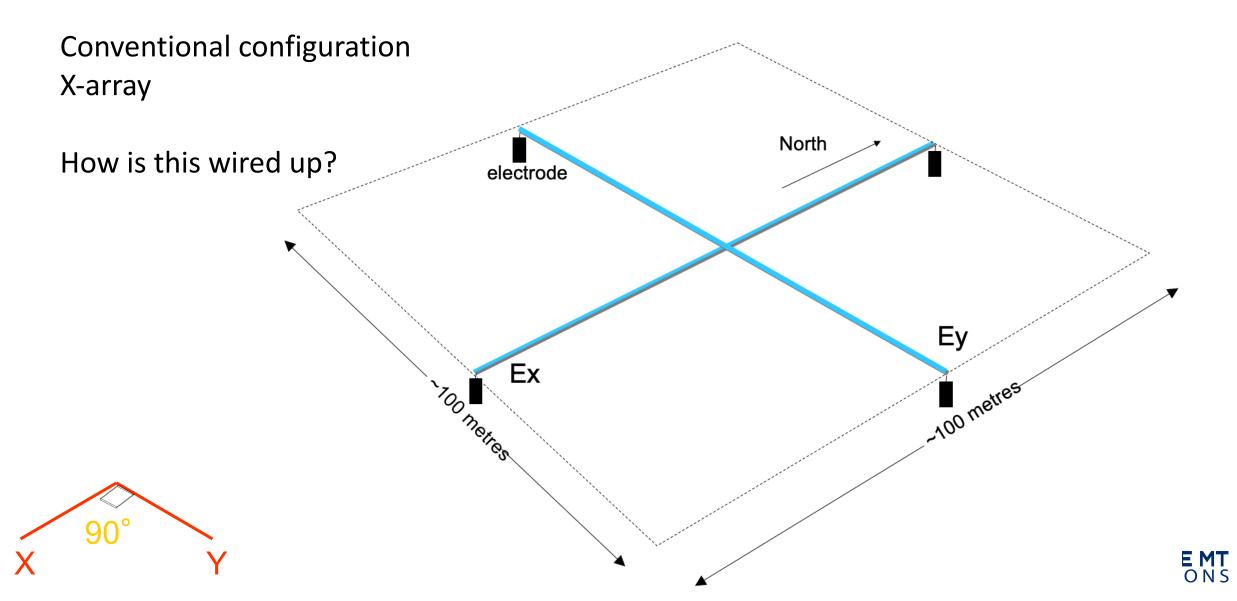
#### **E-Lines**

- Need to be known length
- Need to be straight line (between endpoints) – this avoids inductive effects due to Hz
- Azimuth within 1°
- Use compass or other means to "shoot in"
- Best wire to use is co-axial cable, with the shield open at the electrode and attached to the receiver ground at the receiver – forms a Faraday cage reducing induction pickup noise on the wire





#### Electrode array configurations



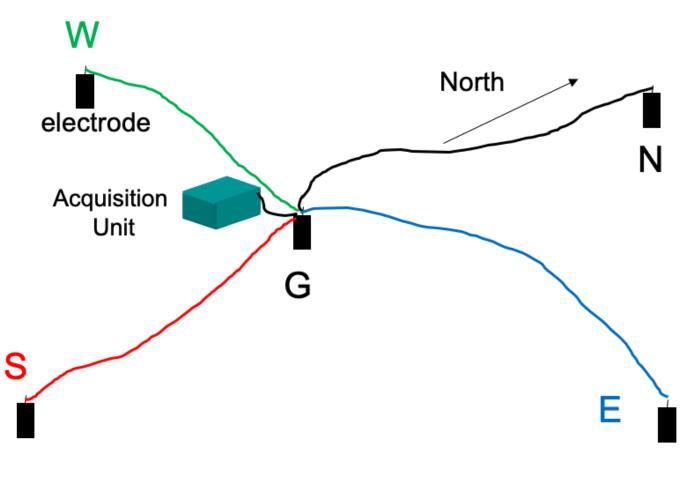
## Electrode array configurations

Conventional configuration X-array

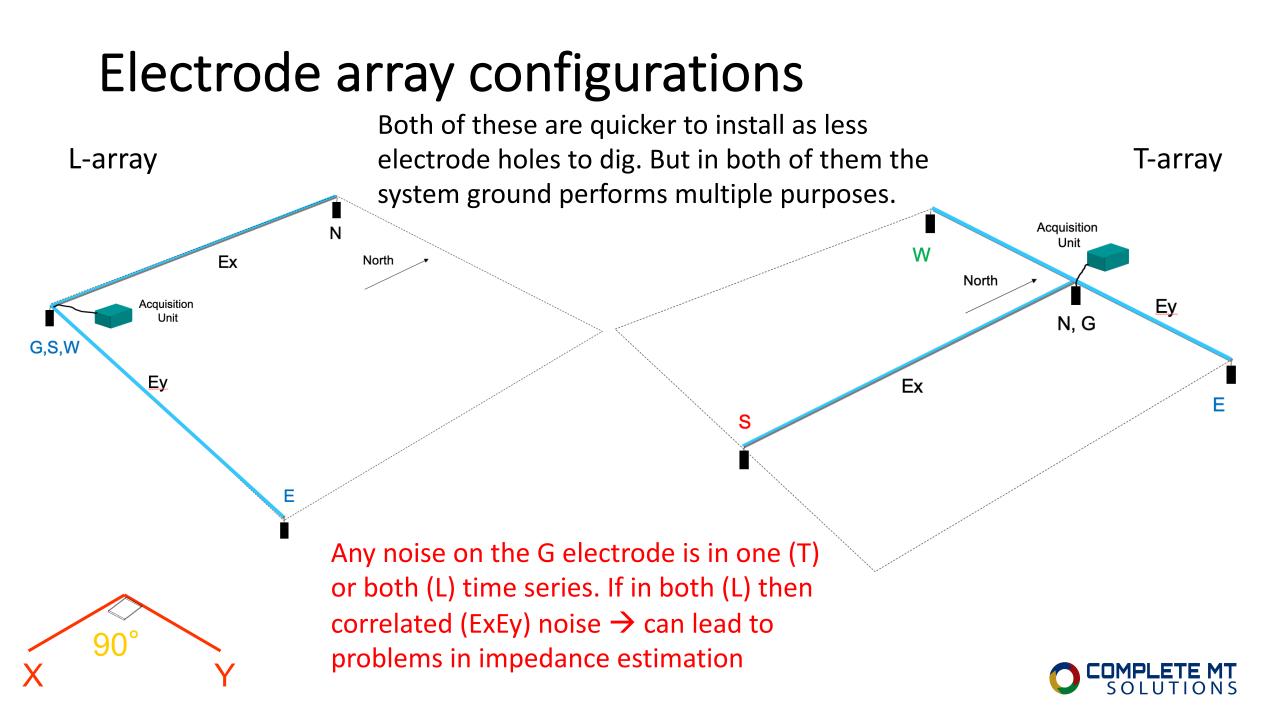
All electrodes referenced to the system ground G

System ground MUST BE A LOW NOISE ELECTRODE AND BE VERY WELL INSTALLED!!! Otherwise the receiver may "float" and you get noise when it discharges. But noise on G doesn't matter.

90







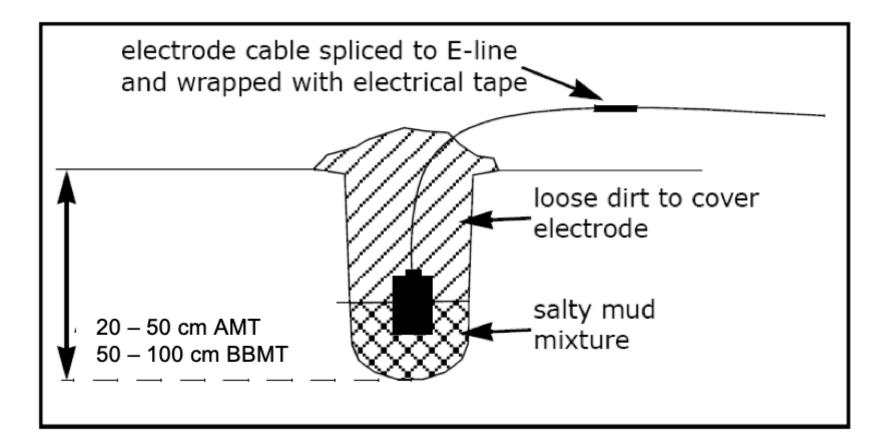
#### Splice electrode to E-line

Splice the end of the electrode wire to the E-line

MAKE SURE BOTH ARE CLEAN!!! Cut wire back if necessary

Do NOT use connector plugs!

Wrap splice with electrical tape and ensure no possibility of water getting in





#### **E-lines** What is wrong with this picture???





#### **E-lines** What is wrong with this picture???

E-lines not help down every 0.5m to reduce wind-noise pickup





# Checking electrodes – beginning and end of acquisition at each site

- DC measurement for electrode state
  - Measure the DC voltage between pairs of electrodes N to S, E to W. Look for high DC levels >20-30 mV. Usually a sign of a bad electrode. Isolate which electrode by performing N to G, S to G, etc., and replace
- ◆ AC measurement for AC noise source
  - Measure AC voltage between pairs of electrodes. Gives level of AC noise. Should be <50 mV or might saturate (although modern 24-bit systems less likely to)
- Resistance measurement for grounding
  - Measure QUICKLY the resistance between pairs of electrodes This is an active measurement and can polarize the electrodes so be quick and perform forward and reverse. Should be < 1 k $\Omega$  for AMT, < 10 k $\Omega$  for BBMT.
  - Best to use an analogue multimeter far lower current used





#### **Power Supply**

- Normally 12V batteries (as for a vehicle)
- Replaced and recharged every day
- Can be recharged with solar cells



#### Receiver/Recorder

- Receives all sensors via cable
- Main job is to digitize the time series
  - Digitizing rate depends on band
  - ~64 Hz for lower frequencies
  - ~512 to 2048 for higher frequencies
- Contains gain, filters, amplifiers, etc.
- All data (time series) is stored in memory



#### Receiver/recorder



#### Metronix ADU





#### Recording unit with batteries

- Batteries are normally swapped out each day
- Recharged over night
- Possible to use solar cells to recharge





#### Remote Reference

- Stations are coordinated by GPS timing signals
- Very accurate and very important
- Allows for stations to be great distances apart
- Almost always H field is usually used for reference
  - More stable; less noise usually than E-field
  - Exception is the AMT dead-band better to use an e-field for remote referencing





• May be difficult in certain localities to receive good gps signal





#### Conclusions

- MT data acquisition is not easy to do
- It requires at least the same diligence, care and attention as subsequent processing, analyses and inversions
- Consider EVERYTHING electrodes, electrode lines, coils, coil cables, receiver, GPS, remotes
- Do NOT rush the fieldwork. Far better to spend more time in the field than 10x that time in the lab trying to resuscitate poor data



#### Acknowledgements

A number of people have mentored me on my journey through magnetotellurics since 1974...

Some of them in particular showed me how to perform high quality

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- Rosemary Hutton (U Edinburgh)
- Ron Kurtz (GSC)
- John Booker (UW)
- George Elliot and Gerry Graham (Phoenix)



Rosemary Hutton - A pioneering geophysicist

A tribute - exploring the impressive life and work of pioneering geophysicist and former member of staff - Rosemary Hutton - has been published in the Lyell Collection -Geological Society of London



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