DHEM: The Que-Hellyer Volcanics Experience

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Abstract

The intermediate volcanic sequence hosting the Que River and Hellyer mines provides an excellent environment for electromagnetics in that the only two strong conductors ever found in them have been developed into mines. Now that the ground has been thoroughly explored by surface EM and the search is by necessity becoming deeper, downhole EM has become an extremely important aspect of the exploration programme. However, even in this ideal environment for EM, there are factors that cause interpretation headaches, although all can be overcome with care and experience. These problems include the overlying moderately conductive black shales, instrumentation responses from the Sirotem unit, responses from culture, and the effect of strong conductors such as the known ore bodies close to the target.

Key words: downhole electromagnetics, Que River, Hellyer, volcanics

Introduction

Electromagnetic techniques have played an important role in the discoveries of the Que River and Hellyer deposits (Webster and Skey, 1979; Silic *et al*, 1985; Eadie *et al*, 1985). Since the Hellyer discovery, downhole EM techniques (DHEM) have become an important part of the exploration strategy in the volcanic sequence hosting the above ore bodies (referred to in this paper as the Que-Hellyer volcanics) because of the failure of blanket surface EM surveys to locate further targets worthy of follow up and because no other method can accurately target drillholes at depths beyond the surface EM detection limits. Some forty exploration drillholes have been logged with EM since the Hellyer discovery. Recently drillhole patterns have been designed and are being drilled to be used as geophysical platforms for potential targets at depths beyond the detection capabilities of the surface systems.

This paper discusses our experience with DHEM techniques in the Que-Hellyer volcanics by illustrating the power of the method and also some of the problems encountered.

The EM environment of the Que Hellyer volcanics

The Que-Hellyer volcanics are known to be relatively resistive with a bulk value of about 500 ohm-m (Webster and Skey, 1979). The overlying Que River Shales are slightly more conductive, although variable, with resistivities as low as 100 ohm-m. Conductive weathering is not a problem in this environment, and there are not many other spurious conductors. In fact the only two first-priority surface EM conductors followed up in the Que-Hellyer volcanics are the two ore bodies, Que River and Hellyer. However, given the relatively short time constants associated with parts of these deposits (Silic *et al*, 1985; Eadie *et al*, 1985; Staltari, 1986) there have been two candidates identified as having the potential to overshadow an EM response from an ore body: the shales that overlie the Que-Hellyer volcanics and the Sirotem instrumentation response.

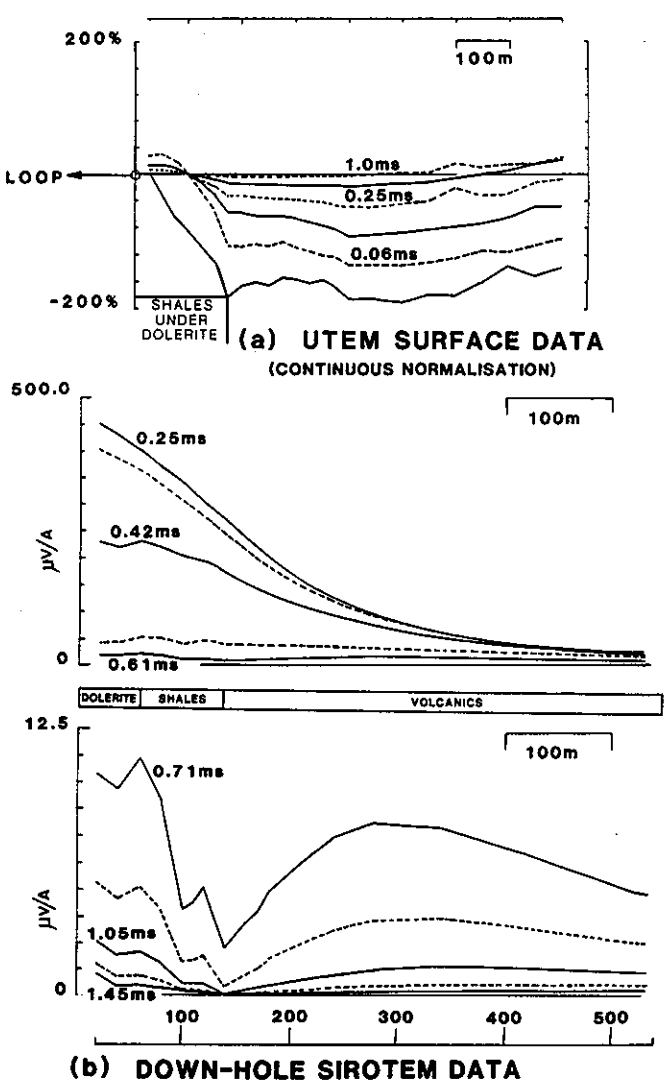

FIGURE 1
Surface and downhole response to the overlying shale unit. (a) The surface UTEM anomaly lasts to comparable times to that of the Que River and Hellyer ore bodies. (b) The DHEM response is interpreted to be from a large body with a moderately low resistivity.