

**Zeitschrift:** Helvetica Physica Acta  
**Band:** 26 (1953)  
**Heft:** VII-VIII  
  
**Artikel:** Liquid Helium cooled coils for making intense transient magnetic fields  
**Autor:** Olsen, J.L.  
**DOI:** <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-112440>

### **Nutzungsbedingungen**

Die ETH-Bibliothek ist die Anbieterin der digitalisierten Zeitschriften auf E-Periodica. Sie besitzt keine Urheberrechte an den Zeitschriften und ist nicht verantwortlich für deren Inhalte. Die Rechte liegen in der Regel bei den Herausgebern beziehungsweise den externen Rechteinhabern. Das Veröffentlichen von Bildern in Print- und Online-Publikationen sowie auf Social Media-Kanälen oder Webseiten ist nur mit vorheriger Genehmigung der Rechteinhaber erlaubt. [Mehr erfahren](#)

### **Conditions d'utilisation**

L'ETH Library est le fournisseur des revues numérisées. Elle ne détient aucun droit d'auteur sur les revues et n'est pas responsable de leur contenu. En règle générale, les droits sont détenus par les éditeurs ou les détenteurs de droits externes. La reproduction d'images dans des publications imprimées ou en ligne ainsi que sur des canaux de médias sociaux ou des sites web n'est autorisée qu'avec l'accord préalable des détenteurs des droits. [En savoir plus](#)

### **Terms of use**

The ETH Library is the provider of the digitised journals. It does not own any copyrights to the journals and is not responsible for their content. The rights usually lie with the publishers or the external rights holders. Publishing images in print and online publications, as well as on social media channels or websites, is only permitted with the prior consent of the rights holders. [Find out more](#)

**Download PDF:** 29.06.2025

**ETH-Bibliothek Zürich, E-Periodica, <https://www.e-periodica.ch>**

## Liquid Helium cooled Coils for making intense transient Magnetic Fields

by J. L. Olsen.

Institut für Kalorische Apparate und Kältetechnik  
Eidg. Technische Hochschule Zürich.

(9. IX. 1953.)

*Abstract.* The very economical production of transient magnetic fields above  $10^5$  Oersted with coils immersed in liquid helium is discussed. Graphs are given to facilitate calculation of coil heating.

Work here on the magnetoresistance effect at low temperatures requires magnetic fields of about  $10^5$  Oersteds. It is well known that steady fields of this order can only be produced by the use of solenoids dissipating hundreds of kilowatts. *Transient* fields of this magnitude may, however, be produced comparatively easily with either batteries, a generator (KAPITZA<sup>1</sup>)<sup>2</sup>) or condensers (WALL<sup>3</sup>) as the power source. This technique has recently been employed by several workers<sup>4-10</sup>), and very complete and useful design data are available in papers by COCKROFT<sup>11</sup>) and CHAMPION<sup>8</sup>).

Cooling of the coils with liquid hydrogen or helium causes an enormous improvement in the electrical efficiency. This was first used by DE HAAS and WESTERDIJK<sup>12</sup>) who report producing fields of 250,000 Oersted for periods up to 0.1 second in helium and hydrogen immersed coils fed from a bank of batteries. This technique which provides a very convenient tool for low temperature research is at present in use here, and it is the purpose of this note to discuss some of the design considerations involved. In our case condensers now provide the current.

### Calculation of field.

The magnetic field which may be generated by discharging a condenser of capacity  $C$  microfarads charged to a potential  $V$  volts through a coil is given (CHAMPION<sup>8</sup>)) by

$$H = \left\{ \frac{20 C}{l} \right\}^{1/2} \frac{V}{a_1} \cdot S J \quad (1)$$

where  $a_1$  and  $a_2$  are the internal and external radii of the coil, and

$2l$  is its length.  $S$  and  $J$  are two factors less than unity.  $S$  depends on the fraction of the field energy actually within the coil, and is a function only of the shape of the coil, i.e. of  $a_2/a_1$  and of  $l/a_1$ .  $J$  depends on the amount of energy dissipated as heat in one cycle, and is a function of  $RP/L$  where  $R$  and  $L$  are the resistance and inductance of the coil, and  $P$  is the period of oscillation of the system. CHAMPION gives charts showing  $S$  and  $R/L$  for a wide range of shapes of coil, and a table for  $J$ .  $J$  is seen to decrease rapidly with increasing values of  $RP/L$ .

Equation (1) may also be written in the slightly different form

$$CV^2 = H^2 \cdot \frac{a_1^2 l}{20 SJ}. \quad (2)$$

From this it may be seen that when  $S$  and  $J$  are constant  $CV^2$  (and hence approximately the cost of the condensers) is proportional to the volume in which it is intended to produce the magnetic field. It is therefore clear that for simple experiments, where the specimen or arrangement being exposed to the field is small, a considerable saving can be made by having the magnet coil placed directly round the specimen rather than placing it outside the cryostat containing the experimental equipment. For the arrangement used by us the saving is at least of the order of  $10^2$ .

The gain achieved by reducing the size of the coil is, however, accompanied by an increase of  $R/L$ , which varies as  $a_1^{-2}$ , and therefore by a decrease in the value of  $J$ . To avoid this decrease in  $J$ , either  $P$ , the period of the oscillation, or the specific resistivity of the material from which the coil is wound must be reduced. Fortunately an adequate reduction in resistance is achieved by immersing the coil in liquid helium. For good commercial copper wire this reduction is of the order of one hundred times.

### Heat generation.

The total heat generated in discharging the condensers,  $\frac{1}{2} CV^2$ , will mainly go to heating the coil, and thus increase its resistance. The total amount of this increase may of course be calculated by equating  $\frac{1}{2} CV^2$  to the change of heat content of the copper. The heat rise at intermediate points of the cycle may be calculated by equating the amount of Joule heat  $I^2 \rho dt$  produced in the time  $dt$  to the resultant change in heat content  $CdT$ . Here  $I$  is the current

density,  $\rho$  the resistivity, and  $C$  the specific heat of the copper. On integrating we obtain

$$\int I^2 dt = \int \frac{C}{\rho} dT. \quad (3)$$

The value of the integral on the right hand side of (3) is only a function of the temperature and the residual resistance, and may be calculated from published specific heat and resistance data. When this has been done a knowledge of  $\int I^2 dt$  allows the temperature increase and hence the change in resistance to be determined.

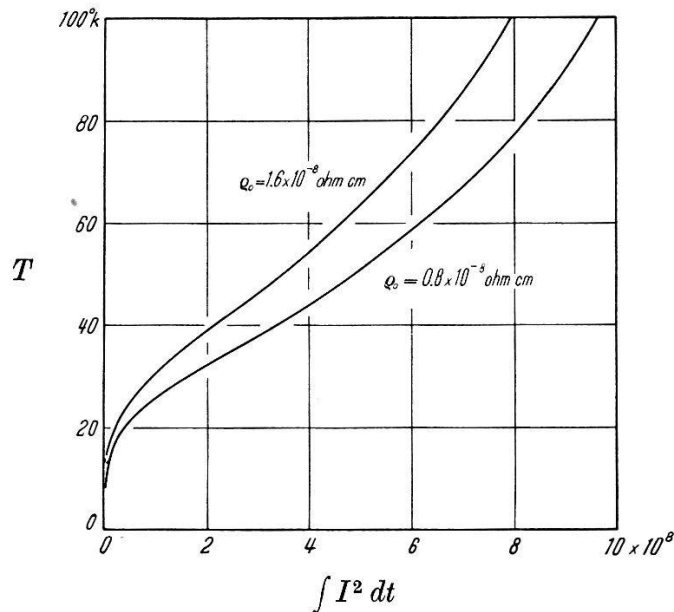


Fig. 1.

Temperature  $T$  as function of  $\int I^2 dt$  for copper with two values of the residual resistivity  $\rho_0$ .  $I$  is the current density in Amperes per  $\text{cm}^2$  in the metal, and  $t$  the time in seconds.

In figure 1 and 2 we show the temperature and resistance plotted as a function of  $\int I^2 dt$  for copper for two values of residual resistance. These values correspond to 1% and 0.5% of the room temperature resistance. The curves have been calculated from resistance and specific heat data taken from literature.

#### Example of actual use of coils.

Our supply of current comes from a 3,000  $\mu\text{F}$ d bank of electrolytic condensers which can be charged to 360 volts. This is fed into a coil 15 mm long, 4 mm internal and 9 mm external diameter. The windings are made of 750 turns 0.2 mm enamelled commercial copper wire embedded in glue. At present no external strengthening

is given to the coil since fields of up to only 150,000 Oersted are used. No tendency for the coil to burst has been found, nor does the residual resistance show any noticeable increase as would be expected in the case of serious straining.

The resistance of the external circuit requires close attention if it is not to be large compared with the resistance of the coil (in our case  $0.07 \Omega$ ) at helium temperature. Switches with solid contacts are undesirable since arcing occurs which interferes seriously with delicate measurements. A mercury switch with a large contact area has been found quite satisfactory here, although an electronic device may provide a more elegant solution.

The coil arrangement above gives fields of ca. 130,000 Oersted\*) when the condensers are discharged from 300 volts. This is rather

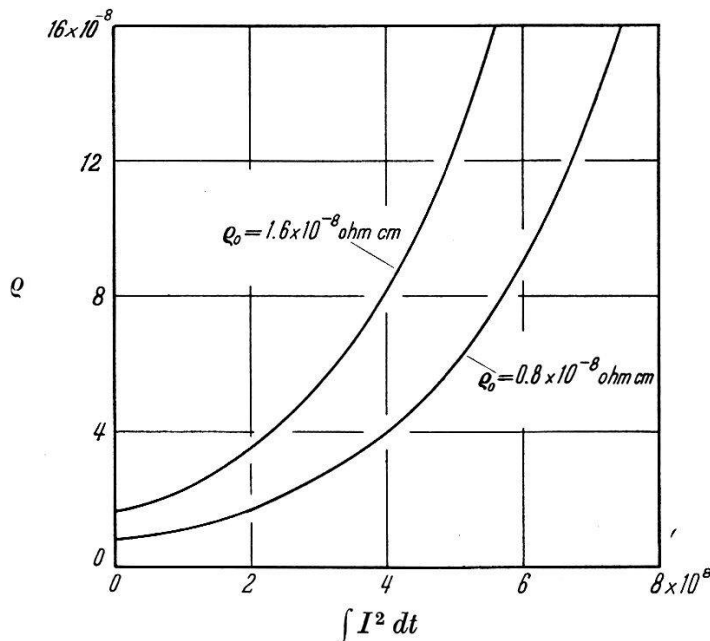


Fig. 2.

Resistivity  $\rho$  in ohm cm as function of  $\int I^2 dt$  for two values of the residual resistivity  $\rho_0$ .  $I$  is the current density in Amperes per  $\text{cm}^2$  in the metal and  $t$  the time in seconds.

less than predicted by equation (1) which gives 180,000 Oersted when the resistance  $0.12 \Omega$  of the external circuit is taken into account. The magneto-resistance in the inner windings increases the resistance of these windings by approximately a factor 6, but this is somewhat difficult to allow for.

If all the energy of the condensers is dissipated in the cryostat then ca.  $75 \text{ cm}^3$  of liquid helium should be evaporated. The evaporation observed lies about  $50 \text{ cm}^3$  per discharge.

\*) After 2.5 millisecond.

In early experiments using a 24 volt battery as power source feeding into a coil of 4 mm internal and 18 mm external diameter and 15 mm length wound with 930 turns of 0.3 mm diameter copper wire a maximum of 75,000 Oersted was reached after 30 milliseconds. Some difficulty was, however, found in limiting the evaporation of helium owing to inadequate arrangements for breaking the circuit early enough. The information contained in figures 1 and 2 may be used for predicting the performance of coils for this case too.

### Conclusion.

A glance at figures 1 and 2 shows that the electrical efficiency is not greatly different whether helium or hydrogen is used as refrigerant. The main advantage to be gained by the method lies in the reduction in volume to be filled with magnetic field energy, and in the economy achieved, which may be decisive in the preliminary stages of a research project.

### Acknowledgement.

I wish to express my thanks to Prof. Dr. P. GRASSMANN in whose institute this work was carried out for his constant interest and encouragement.

### Literatur.

- <sup>1)</sup> P. L. KAPITZA, Proc. Roy. Soc. A **105**, 691 (1924).
  - <sup>2)</sup> P. L. KAPITZA, Proc. Roy. Soc. A **115**, 658 (1927).
  - <sup>3)</sup> T. F. WALL, J. Inst. Elect. Engrs. **64**, 745 (1926).
  - <sup>4)</sup> E. R. GAERTNER and M. L. YEATE, Rev. Sci. Instrum. **20**, 588 (1949).
  - <sup>5)</sup> Y. TANAKE, Sci. Rep. Res. Inst. Tohoku Univ. A **1**, 267 (1949).
  - <sup>6)</sup> G. RAOULT, Ann. Phys. Paris **4**, 369 (1949).
  - <sup>7)</sup> M. J. WALKER and R. C. RAYMOND, J. Opt. Soc. Amer. **40**, 766 (1950).
  - <sup>8)</sup> K. S. W. CHAMPION, Proc. Phys. Soc. B **63**, 795 (1950).
  - <sup>9)</sup> D. SHOENBERG, Nature **170**, 569 (1952).
  - <sup>10)</sup> W. R. MYERS, J. Sci. Inst. **30**, 237 (1953).
  - <sup>11)</sup> J. D. COCKROFT, Phil. Trans. Roy. Soc. A **227**, 317 (1928).
  - <sup>12)</sup> W. J. DE HAAS and J. WESTERDIJK, Nature **158**, 271 (1946).
-