

Gillian Turner

**North Pole South Pole:
The epic quest to solve the great
mystery of Earth's magnetism**

Reviewed by Allen Petrey, Wellington

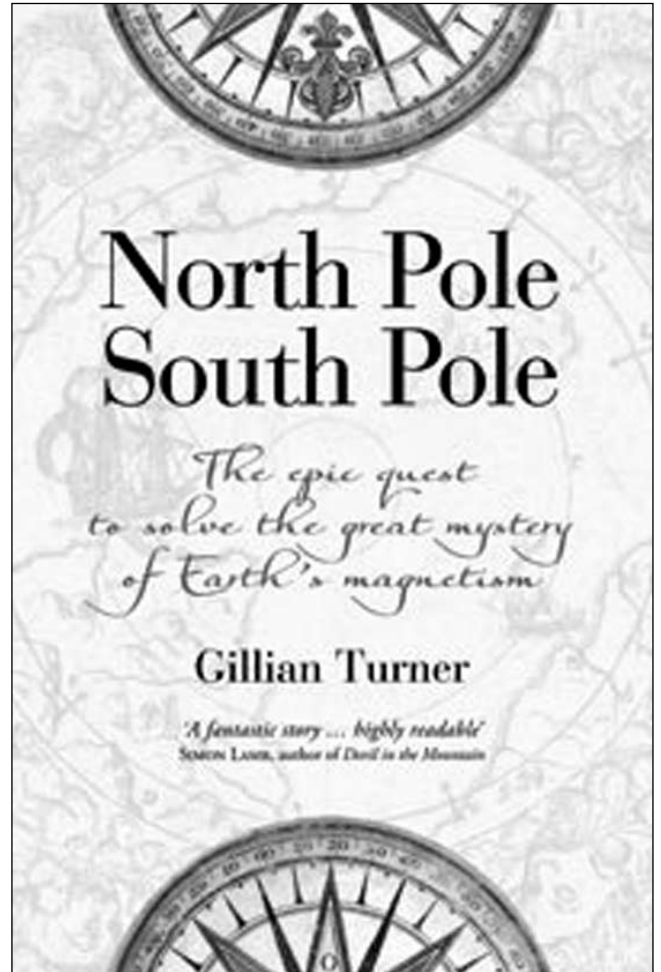
North Pole South Pole is the biography of geomagnetism: the story of a quest that has occupied scientific geniuses throughout the past millennium. This absorbing book explores the inner workings of our planet and its magnetic shield and is clearly written and beautifully illustrated.

Scientists have struggled for centuries to understand the Earth's magnetism – and, even more problematically, the evidence in rocks that the Earth's magnetic field has flipped at times, every million years or so, so that north becomes south and south becomes north.

It was not until the advent of supercomputers in the mid-1990s that everything known about the Earth's magnetism from 400 years of observations and geological records stretching back to the beginning of time could be brought together to stimulate the forces at work.

This is the climax of the University of Wellington author Gillian Turner's *North Pole South Pole* and provides a window into science and the brilliance of the human mind.

For Turner, it's the culmination of a lifelong passion. 'It's hard to imagine a more exciting science story', she says. 'Ever since I first became interested in the Earth's magnetic field, I've thought it would make a terrific story – and not just for people interested in science. It's really a story about human curiosity and people obsessed with cracking a mystery.'



Turner, Gillian 2010. *North Pole South Pole: The epic quest to solve the great mystery of Earth's magnetism*. Awa Press, Wellington. 288 p.
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