

## Preface and acknowledgements

'Oh there are strange rivers  
Rivers that we cannot see...'

*John Stewart*

The interest in the subject of this thesis dates back to the mid-seventies of the last century when, as an undergraduate, I had to write a paper on the Pliocene and Pleistocene vegetation development in the Netherlands. The results left me with three main impressions: the huge pile of literature that had to be read, the impressive thick and outstanding recently published paper by Burchardt Menke (a perfect opportunity to practise my reading in German), and the understanding that the Plio-Pleistocene vegetation record was compiled by gathering bits and pieces from sites all over the country.

After graduating I first surveyed the mud of the Holocene coastal plain, and so for some years the subject faded into the background. Subsequently I became a field geologist in the southern part of the Netherlands a post that provided me easy access to the well-known Pliocene and Early Pleistocene type sites. New boreholes for groundwater exploration in the Roer Valley Graben (RVG), carried out in the late 1980s, marked a major turning point in my interest in the Plio-Pleistocene stratigraphy. Through interpreting the deposits of this period I became aware of the many pitfalls and uncertainties that arise from a comprehensive explanation of the preserved Pliocene to Pleistocene sedimentary sequences in the RVG and their rather straightforward correlation to the type-sites on the Peel Block. Since then, I gradually started to collect relevant information with the idea that I would at some point publish a paper on Pliocene and Early Pleistocene stratigraphy and sediments. Finally, after several more years it has resulted in the booklet presented here.

Although it was not initially my intention, several people had mentioned already that this subject was suitable as a PhD topic. However, because of the hectic times of multiple changes at the *Geological Survey of The Netherlands* and children that had to be raised, it took some time before I accepted the challenge. With respect to this, I owe sincere thanks to Mart van Bracht, who was at that time the head of the Geo-Mapping department and is now director of TNO *Geological Survey of the Netherlands*. Based on his own experiences in producing a similar booklet, Mart encouraged me to do the same and finally he persuaded me to take the final steps. Subsequently, it was self-evident that prof.dr. J. Vandenberghe should be the supervisor because he and his collaborators have a long and outstanding experience on Early-Pleistocene matters. Jef, I very much appreciate the way you fulfilled this task: being open-minded to controversial ideas, critical in reviewing texts, and always encouraging to go on. The patience and confidence of both Jef and Mart in my ability to achieve a good result have been seriously tested during the final stages of the project. Their continuing support I greatly acknowledge.

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## Contents

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*Wim Westerhoff*

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