

# Interpolation between Darcy–Weisbach and Darcy for laminar and turbulent flows

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## Abstract

An equation describing flow in an open channel with obstacles is derived, following the conservation of momentum approach used by Bélanger and St. Venant. When the obstacles are all submerged the result yields the Darcy–Weisbach equation for turbulent flow in pipes and open channels. When the obstacles are only partially submerged the result leads to the governing equation in a porous medium. If the flow is turbulent the square of the velocity is proportional to the hydraulic gradient and if the flow is laminar, which is the usual case, the velocity is proportional to the hydraulic gradient. This last result is in agreement with Darcy's law in porous media. Thus our equation interpolates between and reduces to, the two fundamental results of Darcy. In general our equation should prove useful in practice for open flow in a channel with both submerged and emerging obstacles.

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## 1. Introduction

Grassed waterways are a standard means to carry surface runoff while avoiding erosion [1]. A similar situation arises with mulch and other debris in fields or channels. Modern modeling of such flows relies on the use of the appropriate Darcy–Weisbach equation, e.g. see [2–4], which states that the flow velocity,  $V$ , is proportional to the square root of the flow depth,  $D$ , and the slope,  $S_o$ , which we consider to be always small in the following.

This famous formula was obtained by Darcy [5] from his careful measurement of turbulent flows in pipes and then extended to open channels, primarily by Darcy and Bazin [6]. Weisbach [7] obtained the same result, hence the joint name given to the result. Interestingly, Chézy [8] and Du Buat [9] obtained basically the same equation much earlier. Chézy's work was written a few years prior to Du Buat's, but as an internal report only. Based on Du Buat's and others' experiments, Prony [10] suggested a more general formula for pipes and open channels,

$$DS_o = aV + bV^2, \quad (1)$$

with  $a$  and  $b$  constant, suggesting already that the use of a fractional power would be slightly more accurate in some cases [11]. However if we write

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$$\frac{D^3 S_o g}{v^2} = f \left( \frac{DV}{v} \right), \quad (2)$$

where  $g$  is the acceleration of gravity and  $v$  the kinematic viscosity, which is essentially the expression in [11], with  $g$  added to be dimensionally correct, then we can consider a number of possibilities (see also [12] for a more complete discussion). If  $f$  is linear we obtain the well known Poiseuille law [13] for laminar flow, whereas if  $f$  is quadratic the Darcy–Weisbach result follows. No function,  $f$ , will yield  $DS_o$  as a function of a fractional power of  $V$  as possibly suggested by Eq. (1).

For pipes of relatively small sections taking a function,  $f$ , proportional to  $(DV/v)^\alpha$ , was shown by Reynolds [14] to be best with  $\alpha \approx 1.75$ , i.e. less than  $\alpha = 2$  obtained by Darcy–Weisbach, the latter being preferable for the open channels which concerns us here. There is no value of the  $\alpha$  that would lead to Manning’s well known equation [15], but it is interesting that if we take  $\alpha = 1.8$ , i.e. close to Reynold’s value of 1.753, and replace  $S_o$  in Eq. (2) by  $S_o^{0.9}$ , then Manning’s result follows. That 0.9 power being unjustified, theoretically at least, it is preferable to use either Darcy–Weisbach in open channel or Reynolds in small tubes, for turbulent flow, and of course Poiseuille for laminar flow.

Bélanger [16] considered the steady flow in an open channel with slope  $S_o$ , which we take as small, and obtained the fundamental result, see [11] for a thorough discussion of Bélanger’s contribution, which can be written as,

$$\frac{dD}{dx} = \frac{S_o - S_e}{1 - F^2}, \quad (3)$$

where  $F$  is the Froude number,

$$F^2 = \frac{q^2}{gD^3} = \frac{V^2}{gD}, \quad (4)$$

where  $q = VD$  is the flux.  $S_e$  is now called the friction slope, such that when  $S_o = S_e$ ,  $dD/dx = 0$  which, for instance for turbulent flow must reduce to Darcy–Weisbach. Thus with  $\alpha = 2$  i.e.  $f = (DV/v)^2$  in Eq. (2) then we obtain

$$D^3 S_o g = \frac{C_s}{2} D^2 V^2, \quad (5)$$

$C_s/2$  being the constant of proportionality in Eq. (2). When  $dD/dx = 0$ ,  $S_e = S_o$  and hence

$$S_e = \frac{C_s V^2}{2gD}. \quad (6)$$

Of course, at the time Bélanger used it Eq. (6) which we call the Darcy–Weisbach equation, was based on Du Buat’s results.

In the following, like Bélanger, we shall consider steady flows only, as the laws of resistance to flow, e.g. Darcy–Weisbach, play the same role whether the flow

is steady or not. Since we are interested in the laws of resistance to flow we can consider steady state flows only without loss of generality. Of course generalizing Bélanger’s results to unsteady flows was a fundamental contribution of St. Venant [17] and Eq. (3) can then be seen as the steady state limit of the St. Venant equations, and as a result is often referred to him, rather than Bélanger.

In the following we shall generalize Eq. (3) when both submerged and/or partially submerged obstacles are present in the channel. As the density of obstacles increases we shall obtain, in the limit, Boussinesq’s equation [18] for groundwater flow when the Dupuit–Forchheimer approximation holds [19], [20]. In this case the Boussinesq equation is based on Darcy’s other fundamental work on flow in porous media [21].

Much of the above historical background can be found, with additional details, in [11,22] as well as other historical reviews.

## 2. Interpolation formula and discussion

We essentially follow Bélanger’s approach [11,16] taking into account the additional resistance caused by submerged and partially submerged obstacles. With the presence of obstacles the volume they occupy in the flow can be significant [3] and we call  $\theta$  the porosity, i.e. the volume of water/[volume of water + volume of partially submerged obstacles]. If we call  $\tau$  the shear stress experienced by the flow, it must be balanced by the weight of water, the momentum and the pressure, or

$$\tau = \rho g S_o D \theta + \rho V^2 \theta \frac{dD}{dx} - \rho g D \theta \frac{dD}{dx}, \quad (7)$$

where  $\rho$  is the density of the liquid and we replace the stress by the friction slope, with the identity

$$\tau \equiv \rho g S_e D, \quad (8)$$

$S_e$  must take into account the soil surface and obstacles.

If there was no partially submerged obstacle, Eq. (6) would hold with a modified  $C_s$  to take into account submerged obstacles. Indeed this is the standard approach [2–4] used even when emerging obstacles were clearly present. Here we write separately the effect of emerging obstacles, or,

$$S_e = \frac{V^2}{2gD} [C_s \theta + C_d A (1 - \theta)], \quad (9)$$

where  $A$  represents the ratio of the frontal area of the emerging obstacle, and the cross section of the obstacle

$$A = \frac{4Dd}{\pi d^2}, \quad (10)$$

with  $d$  the characteristic diameter of the obstacle. The coefficients  $\theta$  and  $(1 - \theta)$  represent the proportion of surfaces on which each stress is acting. For given

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