

Dedication

In memory of Jean Margaret Firth
(born 8 August 1938, died 19 August 2002)

Jean would have wanted her bit of the book to be useful. The page opposite introduces the *annual maximum series* and summarises how the *peaks-over-threshold series* is defined from a continuous long-term record of a variable such as river flow.

In catchments with large storage or in flat terrain, *flood growth rates* can be innately mild. The sketch below is a reminder that a moderately well estimated *flood frequency curve* can yet leave judgements of flood risk poorly supported.

The solid line (labelled Q_T) is our estimate of the flood frequency curve. The broken lines mark estimates 20% bigger and 17% smaller than our central estimate. The actual risk of a particular flood flow being exceeded may readily be four times greater (or smaller) than we project.

In such circumstances, it is essential to explore historical information to establish whether the river is as flood-free (or flood-prone) as our central estimate of flood frequency suggests.

