Oersted’s discovery of the deflection of a compass needle near a current-carrying wire, and Ampère’s assertion, soon afterwards, that magnetism could be explained entirely in terms of electric currents rather than magnetic poles, would appear to tick all the boxes required for classification as a “scientific revolution” as described by Thomas Kuhn in *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. The only snag is that this “revolution” took rather a long time – anything between one and two centuries, in fact, since magnetism was taught as chiefly a property of magnets until only a few decades ago; or even longer, since some aspects and legacies of the pole model linger on in scientific discourse even today.

In this talk I will examine the varying fortunes of Ampère’s model between 1820 and 2020 and try to answer the following questions:

1. Was this really a revolution?
2. If so, why did it take so long?
3. Is Kuhn’s description of scientific progress a useful one?