

## Professor Martin John Rees, Lord Rees of Ludlow

The honorary degree of Doctor of Science was conferred upon Professor Martin John Rees, Lord Rees of Ludlow, by the Chancellor Her Excellency Professor Marie Bashir AC CVO at a special ceremony held in the Great Hall at 5.30pm on Saturday 10 November 2012.

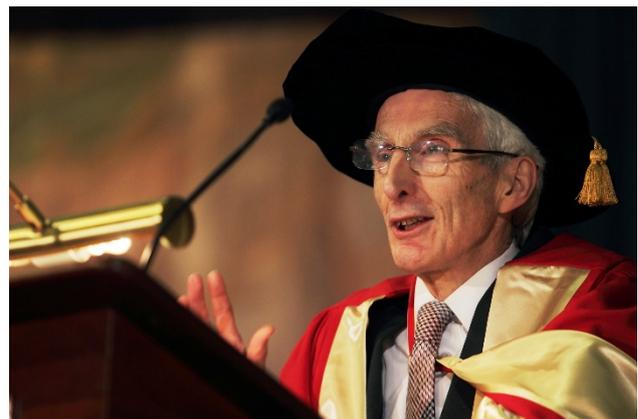
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*Lord Rees as his citation was being read out.*



*The Chancellor conferring the honorary degree upon Lord Rees.*



*Lord Rees' response.*



*The Chancellor, Robin Warren, Kate Grenville, Lord Rees, Geoffrey Yunupingu, Cate Blanchett and the Vice-Chancellor Dr Michael Spence.*



*Lord Rees in front of the jacarandah tree in the Quadrangle.*

## **Citation**

*Presented by the Dean, Faculty of Science, Professor Trevor Hambley:*

Chancellor, it gives me great pleasure to commend Martin Rees to you for admission to the degree of Doctor of Science (honoris causa). Lord Rees has distinguished himself around the world through his outstanding contributions to the promotion of cosmology and astrophysics, and for his work as a public intellectual at the interface between science, ethics and politics.

He has been an author or co-author on more than 500 research papers, and throughout his career has revealed new insights into the workings of the most powerful objects in the cosmos, in particular, active galactic nuclei, supermassive black holes and gamma ray bursts.

He has pioneered new thinking on the so-called Dark Ages, shortly after the Big Bang and before the first stars formed and lit up the universe. He has provided fundamental new insights into how the first galaxies formed and why many galaxies today may be invisible to our telescopes. He has also made important contributions to our understanding of the formation of large-scale structures throughout the cosmos. These predictions were confirmed in spectacular fashion by the Anglo-Australian Telescope at Siding Spring Observatory during the 1990s.

Martin Rees was educated at Trinity College, Cambridge, where he gained a first-class degree in mathematics. He held postdoctoral positions at Cambridge, California and Princeton before teaching at Sussex University and the University of Cambridge, where he was the Plumian Professor until 1991, and the director of the Institute of Astronomy.

He was president of the Royal Society – the highest leadership position in British science – from 2005 to 2010, master of Trinity College Cambridge from 2004 until earlier this year, and has been Astronomer Royal since 1995. (While this is nowadays a largely honorary position, he is required to be available to advise the Sovereign on astronomical and related scientific matters should the need arise.)

In these leadership roles he has been a strong champion of academia, particularly in the face of funding pressures and rising international competition. He has also authored seven books for a general readership, and lectured, broadcast and written widely on science and policy, including the 2010 Reith Lectures for the BBC where he called on scientists to come forward and play a greater role in helping us understand the science that affects us all, particularly in addressing the challenges facing the world in the 21st century.

Speaking to the British Academy in 2010, he articulated the need for such discussions to extend beyond the scientific paradigm, identifying an “ever widening gap between what science allows us to do and what it’s

prudent or ethical actually to do" in relation to issues such as genetics, brain science and artificial intelligence.

In 2005, Martin Rees was made a life peer, sitting in the House of Lords as Baron Rees of Ludlow. He belongs to several foreign academies and has been awarded many prizes, honorary fellowships and visiting professorships during his career, recognising his contributions to science, public education and beyond.

Last year he received the Templeton Prize, which is awarded to a living person who "has made an exceptional contribution to affirming life's spiritual dimension".

On receiving that prize, Lord Rees said: "Some people might surmise that intellectual immersion in vast expanses of space and time would render cosmologists serene and uncaring about what happens next year, next week, or tomorrow.

"But, for me, the opposite is the case. My concerns are deepened by the realisation that, even in a perspective extending billions of years into the future, as well as into the past, this century may be a defining moment."

Chancellor, I present Martin Rees for admission to the degree of Doctor of Science (honoris causa), and I invite you to confer the degree upon him.