



## **Brief Biography of Martin John Spencer Rudwick**

Date of birth 1932, INHIGEO Honorary Senior Member since 2012

### **Present positions:**

- Emeritus Professor of History at the University of California, San Diego
- Affiliated research scholar, Department of History and Philosophy of Science, Cambridge University.

### **Previous Awards**

1987 History of Geology Award, Geological Society of America  
1994-1997 Turner Lecturer, Trinity College, Cambridge University

- 2005 Sue Tyler Friedman Medal for the history of geology, Geological Society of London  
2007 George Sarton Medal, History of Science Society.  
2008 Election as Fellow of the British Academy for the Humanities and Social Sciences  
2014 Davis Prize for books in the history of science directed towards the wider public, History of Science Society

### **Overview**

Martin Rudwick started his career as a palaeontologist, with a special interest in brachiopods and palaeoecology. While on the staff of the Geology Department at Cambridge University he began to interest himself in the work of Cuvier and found that much of what Cuvier was doing was relevant to his own scientific interests.

Thereafter, and partly as a result, he gradually shifted his interests from geology to history of geology. He was appointed Professor at the Free University in The Netherlands (as successor to Hooyma), and worked for a period in the Science Studies unit at Edinburgh University, where he acquired considerable interest in the sociology of knowledge.

Rudwick subsequently relocated to Princeton University in the United States, following upon which he took up a chair at San Diego.

Finally he returned to Cambridge as an affiliate research fellow in the History and Philosophy of Science Unit there.

Martin Rudwick has exerted a huge influence on the development of History of geology in the following ways:

- Very detailed (and exemplary) studies of English and French history of geology, especially in the period 1770-1850.
- Analysis of early uniformitarianism and catastrophism.
- Attention directed to ‘visual imagery’ and its importance in the development of geological thought.
- Emphasis on the relationship between history and geology and the role of historical thinking in the emergence of *geology* as an independent science with its own special characteristics (as opposed to mineralogy or geognosy).
- Detailed case studies of important episodes in the history of geology (such as the ‘Great Devonian controversy’ and Darwin’s work at Glen Roy).
- Deployment of ideas from the sociology of knowledge (e.g. the notion of ‘core set’) to describe and analyse geological developments, especially during controversies.
- Rescuing the reputations of personalities such as de Luc, who were for long (since the time of Gillispie) regarded as 2nd-class figures.

Martin Rudwick’s major history of geology contributions are as follows:

*The Meaning of Fossils: Essays in the History of Paleontology* (American Elsevier, 1972)

*The Great Devonian Controversy: The Shaping of Scientific Knowledge among Gentlemanly Specialists* (Chicago, 1985)

*Scenes from Deep Time: Early Pictorial Representations of the Prehistoric World* (Chicago, 1992)

*Georges Cuvier, Fossil Bones, and Geological Catastrophes* (Chicago, 1997)

*The New Science of Geology: Studies in the Earth Sciences in the Age of Revolution* (Ashgate, 2004) (an anthology of his more important HOG publications)

*Lyell and Darwin, Geologists: Studies in the Earth Sciences in the Age of Reform* (Ashgate, 2005) (a second anthology!)

*Bursting the Limits of Time: The Reconstruction of Geohistory in the Age of Revolution* (Chicago, 2005)

*Worlds before Adam: the reconstruction of geohistory in the age of reform* (Chicago, 2008)

*Earth's Deep History: How It was discovered and why it matters* (Chicago, 2014).

These works have been described as the "definitive histories of the pre-Darwinian earth sciences"

Martin has also produced an excellent Open University film showing how Lyell used evidence from his studies at Mount Etna to argue for the great age of the Earth.