

Nicolas Rivier Biography

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Nicolas Yves Rivier (August 5, 1941-) was born in Lausanne, Switzerland, the son of André Rivier, Greek philologist who later became professor at Université de Lausanne, and Marjolaine (née Mercier).

Rivier first studied in Lausanne and then obtained a PhD in theoretical physics (1964-1968) at the University of Cambridge for a thesis entitled "Contribution to the Theory of Localized Moments in Dilute Alloys," under the supervision of Sir Nevil Mott, recipient of the 1972 Nobel Prize in Physics. He was then a postdoc with Ray Orbach at UCLA (1968-1969) and with Eugen Simanek at UC Riverside (1969-1970), before joining the physics faculty at Imperial College London. In 1993, he took up a professorship in the Unité de formation et de recherche en physique et ingénierie at Université de Strasbourg, and he became emeritus at the Institut de Physique et Chimie des Matériaux de Strasbourg in 2004. Over the years, he also held a number of visitor positions, including at Universidade Federal da Paraíba (1973-1977), Aix-Marseille Université (1979-1981), the Institute of Theoretical Physics at UCSB (1985-1987), and Argonne National Laboratory (1987-1989).

Rivier was recruited to Imperial by Bryan Coles, who showed early interest in spin glasses. Rivier was thus among the first theoretical physicists to show interest in modeling these materials. He notably attended the 1972 symposium in Detroit, Michigan, at which Mydosh's experimental results were discussed, and his first graduate student at Imperial, Keith John Adkins (PhD, 1974), wrote a thesis entitled "Theory of Spin Glasses". Although Rivier largely left the field of spin glasses by the mid-1970s, he remained interested in disordered materials, including foams, biological tissues and structural glasses, for the rest of his career.