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# Professor David Thouless FRS

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Subject  
Physics

Fellow type  
Honorary

Year started  
1961

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Biography

David Thouless is Professor Emeritus of Physics at the University of Washington, and a Nobel Laureate in Physics. He was educated at Winchester College, and read Natural Sciences at Trinity Hall. He obtained his BA in 1955, and then did graduate work in physics at Cornell University under the supervision of Hans Bethe, getting his PhD in 1958. After a year at the Lawrence Berkeley Laboratory in California, he did a further two years of post-doctoral work with Rudolf Peierls at Birmingham University. He moved to Cambridge in 1961, where he was an Assistant Lecturer in the Department of Applied Mathematics and Theoretical Physics, and a fellow of Churchill College. In 1965, he moved back to Birmingham as a Professor of Mathematical Physics. It was there that he did the work with Mike Kosterlitz on topological phase transitions that was cited in the award of the Nobel Prize in 2016. Between 1978-1980, he had brief appointments at Queen's University in Canada and at Yale University in the USA, before moving to the University of Washington in 1980. There he did further work on topological phases of low-dimensional systems, which was the second piece of work cited in the award of his Nobel Prize. He remained at the University of Washington until he retired in 2003.

Other honours and awards include the Maxwell Medal in 1973, the Holweck Prize in 1980, the Lars Onsager Prize in 2000, and the Wolf Prize for Physics in 1990. He is a Fellow of the Royal Society, a member of the National Academy of Sciences, and an Honorary Fellow of Churchill College, Trinity Hall and Clare Hall.

His wife, Margaret Thouless, is a virologist. They now both live in Cambridge, and have two sons and a daughter, and four grandchildren.

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## College positions

2017–Present

Honorary Fellow

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## Links

[David Thouless wins a Nobel Prize \(https://www.chu.cam.ac.uk/news/2016/oct/4/former-fellow-](https://www.chu.cam.ac.uk/news/2016/oct/4/former-fellow-)

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