

Jacques Le Goff [1924-2014]

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Born on January 1st 1924 in Toulon, historian Jacques Le Goff has died on 1 April in Paris aged 90. He took up a teaching position and eventually headed up the Paris based School for Advanced Studies in the Social Sciences (EHESS). He was one of the main proponents of 'New History', inspiring a shift in historical research from an emphasis on political figureheads and mata-events to social memory and historical anthropology.



Throughout a long career in higher education and public broadcasting, Le Goff transformed views of the Middle Ages from a dark and backward time to a period that set the building blocks for modern Western civilisation.

Outside the lofty towers of academia, Le Goff hosted a weekly history programme on the public radio station France Culture. He also constituted as an historical advisor on many films, including the 1986 adaption of Umberto Eco's *The Name of the Rose* featuring Sir Sean Connery.

Le Goff was editor-in-chief of the highly respected *Annales*, the mantra journal for historians concerned with long-term social research. His many books included works on Middle Age intellectuals, bankers and merchants, a biography of King Louis IX and a seminal work on the introduction of the concept of Purgatory.

As a junior researcher in Prague, Le Goff witnessed the Communist takeover of Czechoslovakia in 1948. Throughout his life he was a frequent commentator on current events, as a committed pro-European and devout agnostic humanitarian.

Awarded the prestigious Dr. A.H. Heineken prize for history a decade ago in 2004, Le Goff was

praised with the words "By transforming our view of the Middle Ages, you have changed the way we deal with history". At the time the jury described him as "without doubt the most influential French historian alive today". Sadly the comment is no longer quite accurate but the influence of his work will certainly endure.

See Medievalists.net for a more complete obituary.