



The Lost story of Licoricia

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Final version

An introduction: Why stories matter in history

By author, Sarah Herrity.



Stories from the past are handed down through time. Favourite family memories are retold to children and grandchildren like precious treasure not to be forgotten. Since the time of the Ancient Greeks, historians have worked to investigate the past so they can write down stories they believe should be remembered. *Traces of the past left behind are used as evidence* to unlock hidden knowledge of the people who once lived. Today historians use evidence carefully to create more accurate historical accounts.

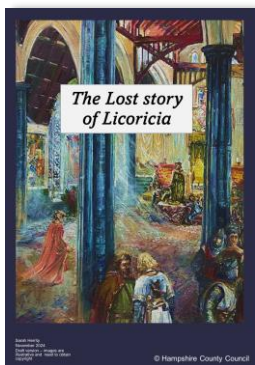
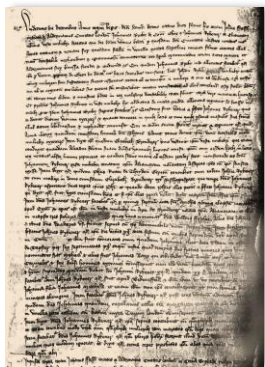
Stories of Kings and Queens, battles and invasions in Britain from the Romans to the Normans, were recorded in Chronicles. Scholars and monks from the Anglo-Saxon and Medieval period wrote these by hand at a time when few people could write. Their mixture of historical accounts, myths and gossip give historians a *glimpse into the mysterious past* that might otherwise have vanished. They reveal what people were thinking, what they chose to remember.

Stories can be lost when people leave behind little or no written evidence or are ignored by historians. Some have been lost forever without a trace. Others are waiting to be discovered. Lost stories create black holes in our picture of the past. We cannot hear what some people in the past thought or see how they lived because there is no evidence to show us. Lost stories leave a *silence*.

Rediscovering forgotten stories is like finding hidden treasure. *Stories are a window* we can peer through into a lost world. They help discover new things about the past. They can allow us to walk in another person's shoes, to follow their footsteps and see things through their eyes.

The Lost story of Licoricia was rediscovered by historian, Suzanne Bartlet and her husband when Jewish graves were dug up outside her back gate. She worked with historians at Southampton University to find evidence that would help her carefully piece Licoricia's life back together. Only Licoricia's death was written about at the time and this news spread as far away as Germany in a Jewish chronicle. Bartlet had to use sources which never meant to tell Licoricia's story. *Royal records* kept by the King provided crucial evidence to write the historical account of her life.

Licoricia's story gives you the chance to see into the *medieval world* and discover the experiences of a family living under the rule of powerful Kings. I have written Licoricia's story using the historical *facts we know are true based on evidence and my imagination* to fill in what we don't know to bring the story to life. This kind of story is called **historical fiction**. This story is told mainly from Licoricia's *perspective*. It is set in December 1246 when we know king Henry III visited Winchester city.



The festival of lights.

December 1246

Licoricia of
Winchester's house,
Winchester, England.

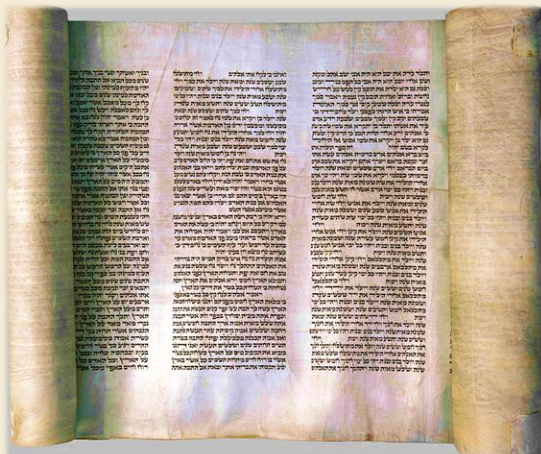


1 There is much excitement as Licoricia arrives home to her stone house in
2 the busy city centre of **Winchester**. The extra festive candles glowing through the windows make a
3 warm welcome on this cold winter's day. A wonderful smell greets Licoricia as she creaks open the
4 large wooden door. All day, visitors have been bringing food for the feast. Fried fritters, French and
5 English cheeses, sweet meats, fresh bread, cakes, pancakes and pots and pots of honey fill the
6 table. Heavy casks of wine and barrels of cider are being lugged up the steep stone steps from the
7 cellar. Licoricia laughs as she finds her youngest children Belia and Asher covered in flour. They are
8 making merry kneading dough in the kitchen with the servants. They are making delicious
9 **Hannukah** bugnets, their favourite! The dough is being deep-fried in olive oil from Italy
10 then drizzled with sweet honey. Licoricia had bought the honey from nearby St. Cross Hospital
11 and **Almshouse** for the poor while riding past along the beautiful river Itchen on business with
12 her bodyguard. She smiled as she saw her older son, Lumbard busily counting out raisins. She knew
13 he and his friends loved to play the Hannukah game spin the **dreidel** to win or lose sweet treats.
14 After the terrible events of the last years, she was glad to be back in Winchester with her family.



15 **People are generous at Hannukah.** They want to make sure everyone, even their
16 poorest neighbours, will be able to eat well at the feast. Life was getting harder and there was less
17 to share. Licoricia's house is large, welcoming guests with a warm fire. Its light flickers in the silver
18 candlesticks that had been given an extra polish for the special occasion. 'This holiday is a chance
19 to *Love your neighbour*', Licoricia tells her children, 'This is what God wants. It is written in the
20 first books of the Bible that both Jewish and Christian people use. There are many poor Jewish
21 families to look after now, since the King's greedy **tallage** took so much from them', she explains.
22 This enormous **tax** demand had taken a third of everything Jewish families owned. King Henry
23 could spend this as he wished. This was making life very hard for families. No-one
24 had been spared. Those who can, pay more of tallages to help the poor. Licoricia is keen to help
25 her **community**.

26 **Soon it will be time to tell the Hannukah story to the guests.** Over
27 2000 years ago, Jewish people had been **persecuted** by a cruel Greek king Antiochus IV. He had
28 banned Jewish people from practicing their beliefs. They were heartbroken when he put Greek
29 gods in their holy **temple** making it **unholy** and the Greeks tried to force them to convert. But their
30 faith was the most precious thing they had. The story told of how God had helped them to
31 survive and fight to take back the temple. The oil lighting the temple lamp amazingly lasted an
32 extra 7 days, while new oil was made. At Hannukah, the 8 candles in the special menorah candle
33 holder are a reminder of the 8-day miracle. Lumbard remembers the story, he has heard it many
34 times. Our King's almost as bad, he thinks. Lumbard has not forgotten what happened to his
35 mother when she was taken. He knew his king wanted to convert Jews to become Christians. But
36 2000 years was so long ago and that story was so far away. Surely our king wouldn't stop us
37 visiting the **synagogue** here...would he?



Trade and travel

December 1246
Winchester



1 **Winchester came alive at Christmas.** Outside Licoricia's house, Shoemaker Street
2 is bustling with shoppers and **market traders**. Licoricia's oldest sons Isaac and Benedict are drinking
3 with Christian friends. They notice people staring and muttering that Jews should not be out mixing
4 with Christians against the teaching of the Church. Others were talking about the crowds that had
5 lined the streets to welcome the royal visitors to Winchester Castle for Christmas. Benedict has just
6 made a good spice sale to supply the castle kitchens. Winter spices like ginger, pepper, cinnamon,
7 cloves and nutmeg were needed to flavour the feasts of King Henry III and thousands of guests. He
8 explained to his friends that this spice had travelled over land and sea along secret **spice routes**.
9 **Camel caravans** carried them from as far away as China and India, through great Eastern cities like
10 **Baghdad** and **Constantinople**, places he longed to visit. The Jewish traders he knew had connections
11 with other Jewish traders across the world. They brought luxury goods like fine silk, almonds, French
12 wine, beautifully decorated jewellery boxes, brightly coloured gems and exotic citrus fruits to English
13 markets. They told exciting stories about the people they had met with different religions and new
14 ideas. They had warned that at times even wars and disease travelled with people who used them.

15 **Travel is dangerous.** King Henry III has travelled 3 days from London to Winchester castle,
16 his favourite place to spend Christmas. He is proud to have been born there. It had been a centre of
17 **royal power** for hundreds of years. But this meant passing through Alton woods, known for
18 **highway robbers** who often attacked travellers. The king was taking no chances. **Men-at-arms** and
19 skillful knights are travelling with him and his **court** of close advisors to protect them. Henry knew
20 that these **bishops**, **barons** and their families are expecting a luxurious Christmas at the castle and
21 Bishop's Palace nearby. He knows he needs to be generous to keep their loyalty. Henry looks at the
22 barons and their knights riding ahead and wonders if his forces will be enough to rule what is left
23 of his **Angevin Empire**. Despite losing lands in France, he still has French lands in Gascony and lands
24 in Wales and Scotland. Some of these lands are gifts to loyal barons who will need to defend them.

Trade and travel

December 1246
Winchester



25 **Up at the castle** Henry III is worried. He knows he must raise more money to try to win back
26 lands in France and it would be shameful to lose control of Gascony! But the barons in parliament
27 are demanding more power from the king before they raise taxes. 'Lucky I can charge Jewish people
28 any taxes I want', thinks Henry, 'locking them up as hostages to force them to pay works well. I must
29 make sure the castle's new privies and chambers are more luxurious than at the Bishop's palace.'

30 **Meanwhile, the festivities continue at Licoricia's home.** The children
31 spin the dreidel with glee. Licoricia enjoys catching up with her Jewish guests. She is glad the
32 doctor and his wife, a talented midwife, have found a new life in Winchester. They were forced out of
33 Southampton after the Archbishop of Canterbury had brought back terrible news from the
34 Fourth Lateran Council in Italy. He and 800 bishops from countries across Europe had travelled great
35 distances to take part in the largest ever meeting with the Pope in Rome. **The bishops were** told to
36 separate Jewish and Christian people in their kingdoms so Christians couldn't be influenced by
37 Jewish beliefs. Towns like Southampton had decided to remove all Jewish people. The lawyer who is
38 with them says he will pay the fine as long as he can rather than wear the badge the pope ordered all
39 Jews to wear. They are sad to see people wearing the badge being treated badly. Over by the fire a
40 group of wine traders, scribes, ladder makers and metal workers bring Licoricia news from the city.
41 They are upset that they are being shut out of more trades by the Christian clubs or guilds that run
42 them. Laws already stop Jews working in many jobs like farming. They didn't want to resort to trading
43 in loans, even if it is one of the few jobs open to Jews. People might be happy to borrow from a Jew
44 because the Churches teach it is a sin for Christians to lend money to other Christians for profit. But
45 lending to people could be dangerous, people didn't like owing you money or paying it back.
46 Licoricia thought of her husband David. Very few Jewish people could lend money to rich noblemen
47 but like David, those that did had become well known. Together David and Licoricia had helped many
48 people to get the money they needed. She missed David so much.

49 **Suddenly, there is a loud banging on the door!** All the guests fall silent in fear.
50 An official from the castle is at the door with an armed guard. Licoricia is being summoned to the
51 castle the next morning! Licoricia's children run to her and hold her tightly.
52 What new dangers will she face tomorrow?

The Prisoner

Remembering
London in 1244



1 **Licoricia can see Winchester castle looming over the city** in the
2 morning light as she peers nervously from her carriage. The wheels clatter loudly on the
3 street cobbles on the way to see the king. The sight of the heavily guarded towers are a painful
4 reminder of her frightening ordeal 2 years ago. Little Asher was only 2 years old that unforgettable
5 February. Licoricia was devastated by the sudden death of her husband David. When this news
6 reached the king he ordered that Licoricia be taken to the Tower of London as his prisoner. Locked
7 away from her young son and family, she felt close to **despair**. She knew what would happen next.
8 The king would take as much of their property and money as he wanted. Would the king take her
9 home? Licoricia knows how, like the spin of the dreidel, her people could win or lose everything to
10 the king, if he chose to take it. Henry III knew that English people who were Jewish and everything
11 they owned were his. If a Jewish person died, it was another opportunity to take what he wanted.
12 Licoricia was afraid. Would she be safe? Licoricia closed her eyes and prayed.

13 **Licoricia was locked in the Tower for months** while the king ordered the
14 study of all the royal records on David's business. They were kept locked in large **archa** chests in
15 the King's castles around the country. All records of Jewish property and business loans were kept
16 there. She thought back to when she had lost her first husband and had been left with young
17 children to support. She had been educated and could build a business of her own. She was
18 grateful for the Jewish tradition of teaching both boys and girls. It had been hard but she had
19 been successful, even before meeting David. She felt determined. If she had to she would
20 begin again. Her children and her community were depending on her.

21 **At long last, Licoricia was set free and heard the king's decision.** He would take their main
22 home in Oxford and she had to pay the enormous sum of 5000 marks. This was about the same
23 amount that a rich Earl could expect to make in a year! She also had to pay a massive sum
24 towards the building of a new extravagant shrine to Henry's favourite saint,
25 Edward the Confessor for Westminster Abbey in London and had to make extra payments every
26 year. But he allowed Licoricia to keep the rest of the business. The king knew that she was a
27 successful businesswoman and she would make money he could take in the future.

28 **Licoricia had narrowly escaped total disaster.** The king's grandfather had taken everything
29 when Aaron of Lincon had died. She was relieved to be going back home. The king now expected
30 Licoricia to take her husband's place to be his financier. She would have to be brave because any
31 wrong move would mean he could take all she owned, even her life. This new role put her in great
32 danger. At least she would be in a better position to speak up for her Jewish community.

33 **The carriage jolts as it stops at the castle gates** bringing Licoricia's thoughts
34 back to the present. The king was waiting!



An audience with the king

December 1246, The Great Hall
Winchester Castle



1 **Sunlight streams through the large windows of the Great Hall.**

2 It sheds light on the majestic stone arches that reach high up to the wooden beams overhead.
3 The King's crown and throne shine radiantly, as if reminding visitors of the belief that God had
4 given the king his power to rule. Licoricia also looks impressive in her finest red tunic and
5 matching velvet cloak but inside she is full of fear. What did the king want? She knew that her
6 Jewish community was counting on her to speak up for their families. Many would be forced into
7 poverty and starvation if there was another tallage.

8 **King Henry is impatient to speak with Licoricia.** He needs to pay to defend

9 lands in France. He demands that Licoricia finds the money from the Jewish community.
10 Licoricia gasps. She knows she has no choice. The Jewish community would be imprisoned or
11 worse if this money was not found. How would she tell her community about this dreadful news
12 when many were already facing starvation? She put up a strong defence, arguing that the Jewish
13 community could not afford this without great suffering . She reminded him that if he took too
14 much from them there would be no more to give in the future. But it was no use. Henry's mind
15 was made up. He tells Licoricia he needs the job done quickly as he is rushing back to London in
16 icy January to celebrate Edward the Confessor's feast on the 12th day of Christmas.

17 **'I will not miss the Confessor's Feast, you must make haste!'**

18 exclaims Henry. Licoricia knows he is building a shrine to Saint Edward at Westminster Abbey.
19 She has been taught the history of Edward the Confessor. The death of this Anglo-Saxon king
20 sparked the battle for the English throne when the **Normans** had invaded. She wondered if Henry
21 had forgotten that both Licoricia and King Henry's **ancestors** had settled in Norman England from
22 Northern France 200 years ago. It is why everyone speaks French at the king's court.



23 **As she is leaving, Licoricia notices the light glinting off the armour**
24 of a group of barons and knights behind a pillar. She recognises one of them as the
25 king's brother-in-law, Simon de Montfort. As she walks closer, she overhears his complaints about
26 the king having favourites. She overhears him say that some of the barons are getting more than
27 their fair share of land and power. Licoricia suspects he is thinking he would make a better king
28 than Henry. **Civil war** was never far away. Seeing Licoricia, Simon de Montfort's eyes narrow as
29 he whispers to those in his group. She suspects he is criticising the king for having a Jewish
30 woman working with him when she had not **converted** to Christianity.

31 **Licoricia knows barons who turn against the king are dangerous.**

32 When King Henry III was just a boy in 1215, rebellious barons had captured Winchester and
33 London and offered the English throne to the French Prince. Many Jewish homes were attacked as
34 Jews were seen as the king's servants. Henry gave in to the barons' demands and ended the war.

35 **Licoricia is met by the Bishop of Winchester as she walks towards**
36 the large wooden doors. He reminds her that the next payment to avoid wearing the **Jewish badge**
37 is due. Wearing the badge puts Licoricia and other Jewish people at risk of ill-treatment. Licoricia
38 wonders why the Christian king and Church bishop seem to ignore Jewish and Christian
39 teaching to '*Love your neighbour as yourself*' when it comes to Jewish people.

40 **The king is boasting that he is planning to go on Crusade** at the request
41 of the Pope. He is persuading others to fight with him against Turkish Muslims to gain control of
42 the holy city of Jerusalem. The teaching of the Church meant that any person with different
43 beliefs was seen as a threat but Licoricia is worried these wars mean they now see Jews as
44 enemies. Jewish people in many cities had been murdered because of the Crusades. Would she
45 be able to keep her family safe?

Asher's farewell

English channel 1290



1 **Asher looks back across the sea to England.** His mother's fears were justified.
2 Licoricia is dead and he is being forced to leave the kingdom of his birth. He thought of the life he
3 had lived there. England had become more and more dangerous since he was a little boy. He
4 shuddered when he thought of his mother lying murdered on the floor of their house next to her
5 Christian servant back in 1277. Alice had stayed with the family despite the new law forbidding
6 Christians to work for Jewish families. He misses the encouragement they would have brought
7 him today. He is dismayed that the man accused of her murder was never caught. Licoricia
8 would be heartbroken to learn that prejudice against non-Christians grew worse after Henry's
9 death, Asher thought. Henry's son Edward was a ruthless king and Asher had lived through
10 frightening new laws against Jewish beliefs. Meeting in a **synagogue** was banned, then even the
11 freedom to follow Jewish beliefs at home was banned by 1282 at the request of Church leaders.
12 **Pressure to convert to Christianity grew more intense as all Jewish people were forced to listen**
13 **to talks by the Church.**

14 **As the cold sea air brings tears to his eyes,** Asher feels a wave of anger wash
15 over him. Did Edward not know that Jewish people would not betray their God and give up who
16 they were? He is angry that in this year of 1290 King Edward had given all Jewish people a
17 dreadful choice, to **convert** to be a Christian or leave the country! It was no surprise to Asher that
18 almost all Jewish people had refused to convert and were now banished from England forever!
19 They preferred to lose everything rather than become Christian. Asher is glad that his mother did
20 not live to see her community treated like this. His feet were sore. Thousands of people, like Asher
21 had been forced to walk to the south coast taking only what they could carry. They were travelling
22 by ship to northern Europe, hoping to find a new home. Asher's house and possessions had been
23 taken by the new king. But Asher knows King Edward cannot take away the knowledge he
24 has learned. He would build a new life. He dreams of finding a home where his family can be safe.



25 **Asher watches the English shore disappear.** He would not return but he had
26 left his mark at Winchester Castle 3 years earlier. He remembers being arrested with the whole
27 Jewish community in 1287. King Edward had demanded another large tallage. He wanted to force
28 payment from these people, who by now were very poor. As a prisoner, Asher felt powerless.
29 He could not stop the king treating people this way, but he wanted to do something to make his
30 voice heard. He knew what to do. He could see what others had already done. He would write on
31 the castle walls, there in the South Tower. This would be his **protest**. It would leave written
32 evidence that he existed, that he mattered, that Jewish people had been **oppressed**. He began to
33 scratch, letter by letter. He used a date in the Jewish calendar, writing in **Hebrew** so only Jewish
34 people could read it. The last line said,

35 *'All the Jews of the land of the isle were imprisoned. I, Asher inscribed this.'*

36 **'You must always choose life'**, these words are **etched** into Asher's memory.

37 Licoricia had taught her family this important bible verse from the Old Testament. They had faced
38 many challenges in their lives and learned to survive and rebuild. The family had survived another
39 **civil war**. Simon de Montfort had taken over Winchester and deposed the King. Jewish homes
40 were attacked but Henry III's son Edward had defeated the rebels. Licoricia's family had rebuilt
41 their business before his mother had been brutally murdered in her home. No-one really knows
42 why she had been killed but Asher had heard that news of her death had reached Germany,
43 reported in a Jewish Chronicle. Asher will follow the example of courage shown by his mother.

44 **Asher looks across the grey sea to the shores of France.** This is where
45 he must start his new life. He trusts that God has plans for his life and his family. He will not
46 give up. He will choose life!

Licoricia and Asher are remembered.

Winchester 2023

Today a statue of Licoricia and Asher stands in Shoemaker street which was renamed Jewry Street.

1. Can you find a tallage demand from the king held by Licoricia?
2. Can you find the dreidel held by Asher?
3. How do you think we should remember Licoricia?
3. Why do you think Jewish people today chose Licoricia of Winchester to be the statue that helps to remember the medieval Jewish people?
4. Why do you think *Love your neighbour* is written on the plinth?



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Page 6 Reconstruction of Winchester Castle and Westgate c.1283 after Henry III's renovations with kind permission of Hampshire Architects Department.

Page 7 Tower of London in the late 15th-century image. It is the earliest surviving non-schematic picture of the Tower by Author of poems is Charles, Duke of Orléans, illustrated is unknown - A manuscript (British Library, MS Royal, 16 folio 73) of poems by Charles, Duke of Orléans (1391–1465) [1]. The original manuscript is held by the British Library. A copy of the image is available on plate 1 of Parnell, Geoffrey (1993), *The Tower of London*, Batsford, ISBN 978-0713468649., <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=218655> [Public Domain](#)

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Page 12 Photo of graffiti that can still be seen at **Winchester West Gate** taken by S Herrity

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HIAS inspector for History.*