

Exploring diversity through a personal story

*What does the life of
Licoricia of
Winchester reveal
about how medieval
society treated its
Jewish community?*

KS3 historical enquiry 1 on the experience of the Jewish medieval minority built around questions of historical significance

Exploring historical significance

*Have historians
always considered
Licoricia to be
historically
significant?*

Enquiry 1 Lesson 3





HRH King Charles came to see the new statue of Licoricia of Winchester as part of the Queen's Platinum Jubilee in 2022 when he was Prince Charles

He is speaking to children in Hampshire who were studying Licoricia.

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Our kings and queens are crowned in Westminster Abbey



Just meters away from where Elizabeth II was crowned is the chapel and shrine to Edward the Confessor. This was paid for by the money taken from Licoricia by King Henry III after her husband's death.

Henry III began the rebuilding of Westminster into the Abbey we see today. Jewish forced contributions helped to pay for this.

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Why might Licoricia's statue be seen as significant today?



In her speech Maggie Carver, founder of the Licoricia appeal, said,

“The statue of Licoricia stands as a reminder of the importance of Jewish and other minority communities within England’s history and right up to the present day.

Key terms

Resonate -If something **resonates with you** it reminds you of something. It might make you feel an emotion because can relate to it. Some things have a resonance throughout history.

Anti-Semitism – hatred or prejudice towards Jews for religious or racial reasons.

1. Jewish medieval history in Britain is seen as a forgotten history. Jews were an important part of medieval society who were treated badly.
2. Jews still face hatred and persecution from some people today. This is called **anti-Semitism**.
3. The difficulties Jews faced might sound familiar to other people in minorities today and **resonate** with them.
4. Many hope the statue will encourage acceptance of people from different religious and ethnic backgrounds

Have historians always thought Licoricia of Winchester was historically significant?

Historical significance is about whether historians or society choose to remember or write about something.

Silence is the opposite of significance.

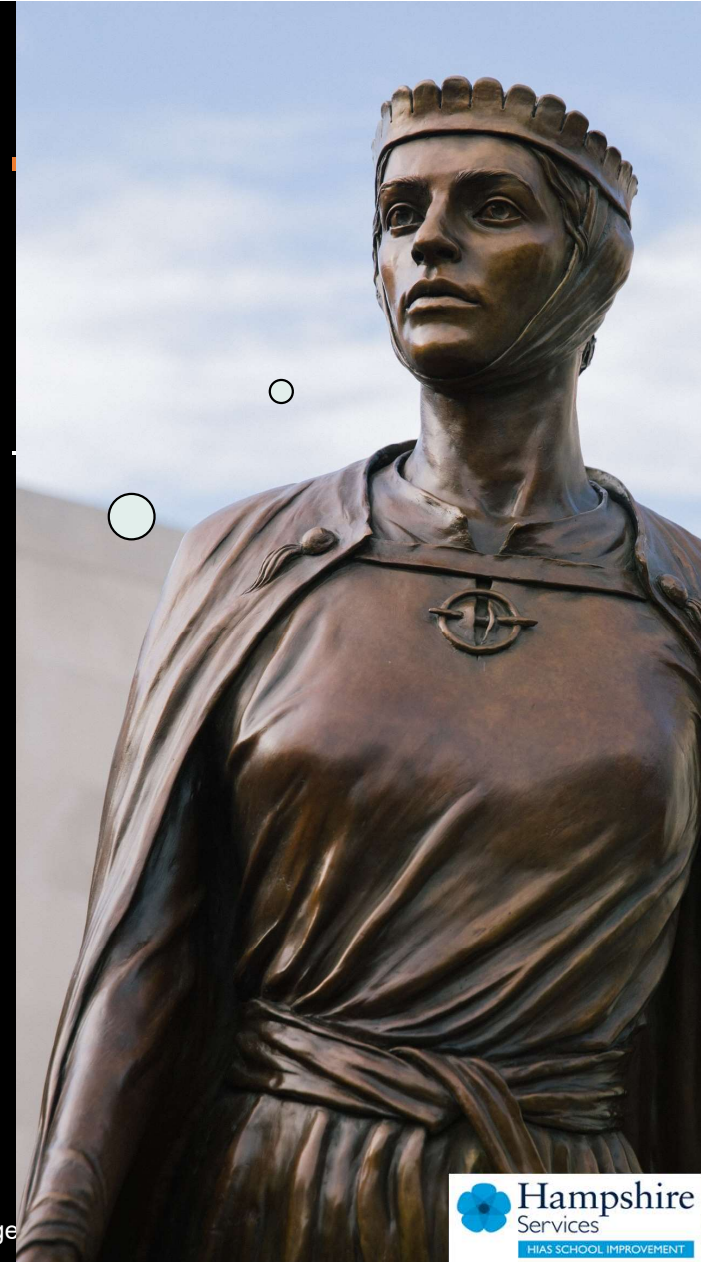
Licoricia was in medieval records but historians were silent about her until recently.

Different people have different ideas at different times on what is significant in history,

What are historians writing about Licoricia and why now?

Key terms

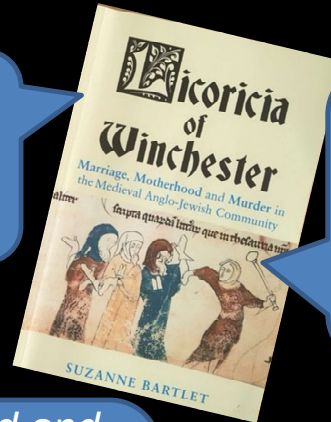
Historical significance - is the importance of people and events suggested or attributed by historians and society



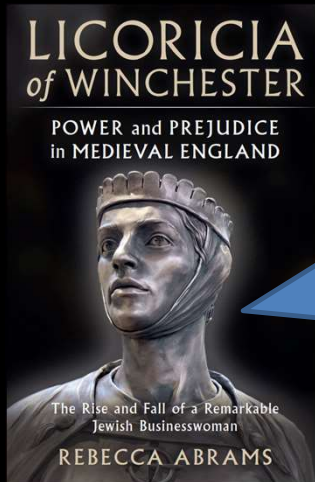
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What are these historians writing about Licoricia today?

The most important Jewish woman in medieval England .
Robert Stacey 2015



Licoricia gives an impression of what it was like to be a woman in a small embattled minority group, living at a time of worsening relations.
Suzanne Bartlet 2015



Courageous, strong minded and strong willed, she was an astute and able businesswoman, a powerful matriarch and a leading member of Winchester Jewry
Rebecca Abrams 2022

Tough as nails, twice widowed ... who survived three spells in the Tower of London only to be murdered.

Simon Schama 2013



What would you write about Licoricia for your guide to the statue?

Licoricia was

What criteria might historians use to decide if someone is historically significant?

Is she remembered today – do people still talk about, know about, celebrate or criticise her today?

Was she remarkable – did she do anything unusual or noticeable at the time? Has she been written about or had her image represented since?

Did her life result in change – did she have any influence or power? Did her life change anything for others at the time or later in history?

Is her story resonant – does her story seem to reflect people's experiences or current issues today or has it rippled through time?

Is her story revealing – does her story teach us more about a time in history?

Why do modern historians think I am historically significant?

Step 4: Read the two historians' interpretations of Licoricia written in 2020. Can you spot any reasons why they believe Licoricia is historically significant?

1. Highlight any reasons the historians give for why Licoricia was historically significant.
2. Use different colours or label which reasons are about: Licoricia being **remembered** today; Licoricia being **remarkable** for her time; her actions **resulting** in change; her story being **resonant** with people's experiences today; her story **revealing** something about medieval history

Can you spot any reasons why these historians believe Licoricia is historically significant?

Dr Emma Cavell
Senior Lecturer, History
Swansea University

Undoubtedly Licoricia is significant not just because of her success in business, but because she represents a rare example of a Jewish woman of medieval England who is known about even today. In general, the sources say less about women than about men. When it comes to the Jewish communities, and more particularly to Jewish women, there is even less to be found. The Jews represented a minority population in England between the reign of William the Conqueror (1066-87) and their Expulsion from England in 1290 by Edward. Their lives and occupations were concentrated in the main towns and cities of medieval England – like Winchester, a city with a rich medieval Jewish history. In addition, their activities were recorded in a limited range of documents, and many of these have been lost or destroyed. Yet Licoricia stands out in the records that survive and was pretty famous in her own day. She was extraordinarily wealthy, thanks in particular to her own skill as a money-lender, but also to her successive marriages to two wealthy Jewish businessmen. (Her second husband, David of Oxford, who died in 1244, was the wealthiest Jew in England in his day!). Between 1244, when David died, and her own death in 1277, Licoricia lent money to people from all over southern England, including the king (Henry III) and queen (Eleanor of Provence), and Simon de Montfort. Henry III sometimes even protected her from the worst of the royal taxation that he was frequently levying on his Jewish subjects, though he also extracted vast sums of money from her over her working life! Because she had such a good relationship with the king, she was also able to talk to the king on behalf of other Jews, if they were in trouble. It is chiefly for her business activities, her good relationship with the king, and also her horrible, unsolved murder, that we remember Licoricia. There were one or two other Jewish businesswomen of the thirteenth-century who stand out in the records, but none as exciting as Licoricia. It is important to remember, too, that the towns and cities of medieval England were home to a diverse range of different people doing different kinds of work, and until 1290 this included Jewish men and women. They are just as important as their Christian neighbours. Some, like Licoricia, were also quite famous!

Licoricia was ...

Step 4 student resource sheet 8

Step 4: To do:

1. Highlight any reasons the historians give for why Licoricia was historically significant.
2. Use different colours or label which reasons are about: Licoricia being **remembered** today; Licoricia being **remarkable** for her time; her actions **resulting** in change; her story being **resonant** with people's experiences today; her story **revealing** something about medieval history

Swansea University

Much of the information we have about the Jews in medieval England comes from records about money and taxes, and this is how we know about Licoricia. She was not a queen or a member of the government, but what makes her important is that her name was recorded and those documents survived. Licoricia was a rich, powerful, successful businesswoman. She was married and widowed twice and had several children. As a famous moneylender she conducted business with people from all areas of society across England, and because of her position she was sometimes protected by the King. On a number of occasions, Licoricia attended the court of King Henry III and also received royal support for her business deals, which suggests that she had a special relationship with the King. However, she was still a member of the Jewish minority living under the control of royal authority. Licoricia's earnings were heavily taxed and she was imprisoned in the Tower of London more than once. After the death of her second husband, David of Oxford, she was sent to Tower and remained there until she paid over an enormous portion of her inheritance, known as the Death Duty. Like other Jews in medieval England, we do not know much about Licoricia's everyday life, such as where she was born, when she got married, how many children she had, or how old she was. Yet, Licoricia was exceptional within the medieval Jewish community and so, is an important figure in medieval Jewish history. She is also significant to the Jewish community of Winchester today and they have chosen her story to tell the public more about local Jewish history. Licoricia features in the Medieval Jewish Trail, a historic walking tour around Winchester and, although there are no images of her in the historical records, a statue of how she is imagined having looked like will be erected in Jewry Street in 2021.

Can you spot any reasons why these historians believe Licoricia is historically significant?

Dr Emma Cavell
Senior Lecturer, History
Swansea University

What do these interpretations emphasise?

Undoubtedly Licoricia is significant not just because of her success in business, but because she represents a rare example of a Jewish woman of medieval England who is known about even today. In general, the sources say less about women than about men. When it comes to the Jewish communities, and more particularly to Jewish women, there is even less to be found. The Jews represented a minority population in England between the reign of William the Conqueror (1066-87) and their Expulsion from England in 1290 by Edward. Their lives and occupations were concentrated in the main towns and cities of medieval England – like Winchester, a city with a rich medieval Jewish history. In addition, their activities were recorded in a limited range of documents, and many of these have been lost or destroyed. Yet Licoricia stands out in the records that survive and was pretty famous in her own day. She was extraordinarily wealthy, thanks in particular to her own skill as a money-lender, but also to her successive marriages to two wealthy Jewish businessmen. (Her second husband, David of Oxford, who died in 1244, was the wealthiest Jew in England in his day!). Between 1244, when David died, and her own death in 1277, Licoricia lent money to people from all over southern England, including the king (Henry III) and queen (Eleanor of Provence), and Simon de Montfort. Henry III sometimes even protected her from the worst of the royal taxation that he was frequently levying on his Jewish subjects, though he also extracted vast sums of money from her over her working life! Because she had such a good relationship with the king, she was also able to talk to the king on behalf of other Jews, if they were in trouble. It is chiefly for her business activities, her good relationship with the king, and also her horrible, unsolved murder, that we remember Licoricia. There were one or two other Jewish businesswomen of the thirteenth-century who stand out in the records, but none as exciting as Licoricia. It is important to remember, too, that the towns and cities of medieval England were home to a diverse range of different people doing different kinds of work, and until 1290 this included Jewish men and women. They are just as important as their Christian neighbours. Some, like Licoricia, were also quite famous!

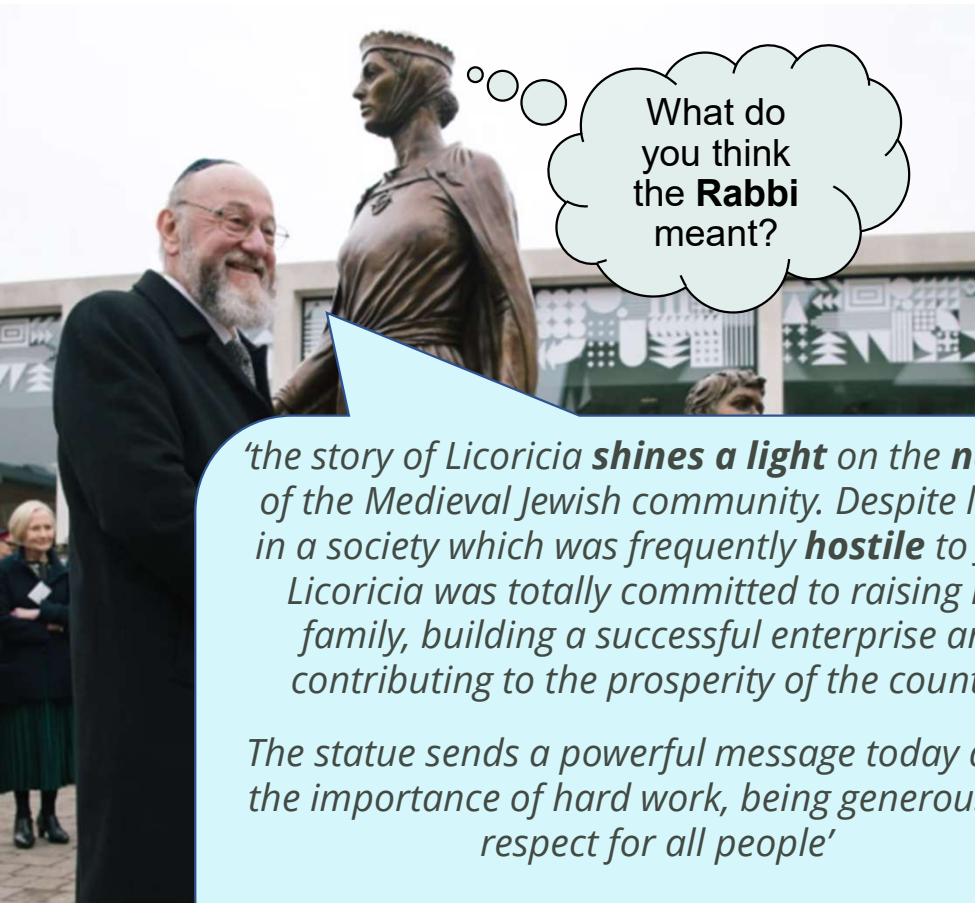
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Dr Toni Griffiths
Honorary Research Fellow
Swansea University

What criteria is missing?

Much of the information we have about the Jews in medieval England comes from records about money and taxes, and this is how we know about Licoricia. She was not a queen or a member of the government, but what makes her important is that her name was recorded and those documents survived. Licoricia was a rich, powerful, successful businesswoman. She was married and widowed twice and had several children. As a famous moneylender she conducted business with people from all areas of society across England, and because of her position she was sometimes protected by the King. On a number of occasions, Licoricia attended the court of King Henry III and also received royal support for her business deals, which suggests that she had a special relationship with the King. However, she was still a member of the Jewish minority living under the control of royal authority. Licoricia's earnings were heavily taxed and she was imprisoned in the Tower of London more than once. After the death of her second husband, David of Oxford, she was sent to Tower and remained there until she paid over an enormous portion of her inheritance, known as the Death Duty. Like other Jews in medieval England, we do not know much about Licoricia's everyday life, such as where she was born, when she got married, how many children she had, or how old she was. Yet, Licoricia was exceptional within the medieval Jewish community and so, is an important figure in medieval Jewish history. She is also significant to the Jewish community of Winchester today and they have chosen her story to tell the public more about local Jewish history. Licoricia features in the Medieval Jewish Trail, a historic walking tour around Winchester and, although there are no images of her in the historical records, a statue of how she is imagined having looked like will be erected in Jewry Street in 2021.



What do you think the **Rabbi** meant?

*'the story of Licoricia **shines a light** on the **nature** of the Medieval Jewish community. Despite living in a society which was frequently **hostile** to Jews, Licoricia was totally committed to raising her family, building a successful enterprise and contributing to the prosperity of the country.*

The statue sends a powerful message today about the importance of hard work, being generous and respect for all people'

The Chief Rabbi of the UK and the Commonwealth, Ephraim Mirvis

Key terms

- Rabbi** – religious leader of the Jewish faith.
- hostile** - unfriendly, showing dislike, going against
- nature** – character, what they were like

It was not just the King Charles who visited the statue. Faith leaders from different religions in the UK came together to celebrate the unveiling.

This included leaders the of Jewish, Anglican, Catholic, Orthodox, Quaker, Muslim, Jain, Buddhist, Sikh and Bahai communities.

Step 6



For your guide:

1. Explain what you think Licoricia's story *shines a light on* or reveals about medieval Jewish history.
2. Give some reasons why historians think Licoricia is significant.

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Going deeper: A forgotten history?

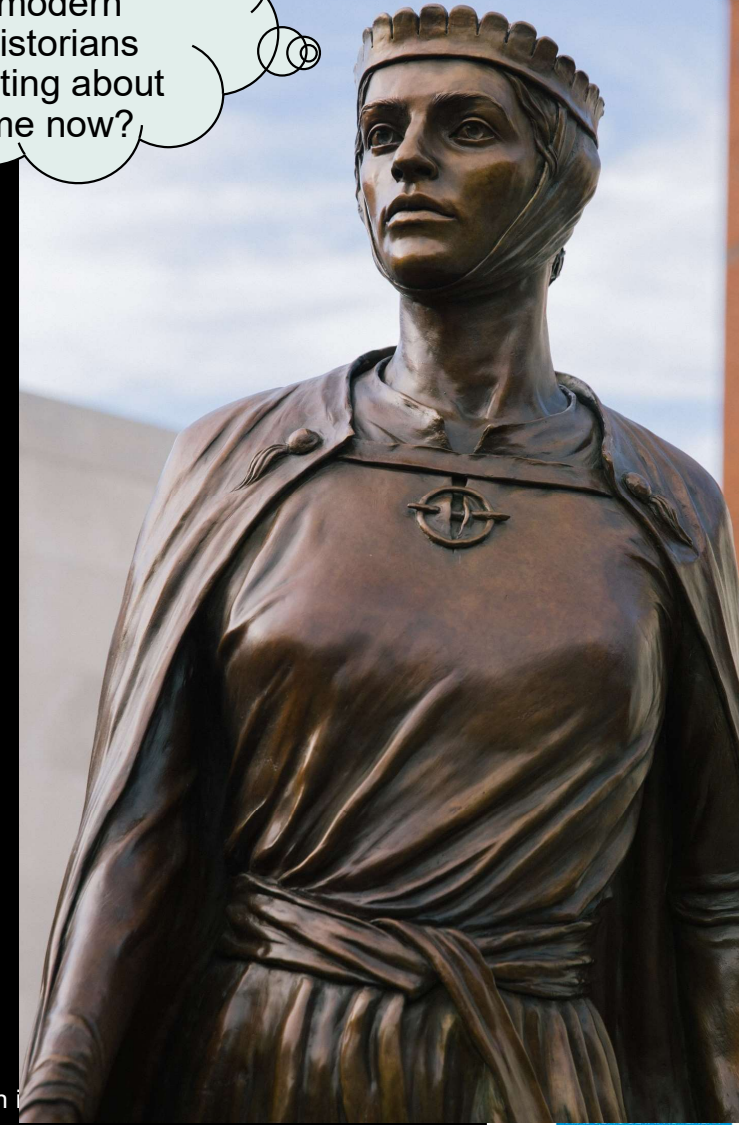
Jewish medieval history has been missing in the history curriculum in many schools as it was ignored by historians for many years.

To understand why Licoricia and her Jewish community were forgotten and are being remembered now, we need to look at the **historiography** of Jewish history.

Key terms

historiography – studying written history to understand how and why historians' views or interpretations have changed over time.

Why are modern historians writing about me now?



Why has Jewish medieval history been forgotten for so long?

What evidence is available to historians?

The **evidence** available on medieval Jewish history is limited. This means that there is much we don't know about Jewish life in medieval England. Apart from some Jewish religious **scholarship** and poetry, the evidence mainly comes from **hostile** sources against the Jews including:

- medieval **Chronicles** which were histories written by Christian monks. Monks were suspicious of Jews as they were outcasts who had a different religion. The chroniclers did little to separate facts from legends.
- financial records of Jewish property, debts, loans and legal cases kept by the king's **Jewish Exchequer**

Step 5: Answer the questions below.

1. Why is it difficult for historians to find out about medieval Jews in England?
2. Why are more historians writing about Jewish history and Licoricia today?

1. *Jewish history for our own needs*, Cecil Roth (1928) quoted in *Jews in Medieval Britain* by Patricia Skinner (2003)

What is the historiography of medieval Jewish history in England?

1900s British Jewish history was largely forgotten by British historians. It was written about by Jewish historians, specialising in Jewish history like Lionel Abrahams (writing Jewish history in the 1890s) and Cecil Roth (writing from 1920s-60s). **Scholars** of medieval Jewish history faced **anti-Semitism**. Roth complained that, “**he cannot dare to let it be known that he is seriously interested in...Jewish scholarship**” which was “**an outcast in the universities.**”¹

1960s After the **Holocaust** during World War II when the Nazi government tried to remove and destroy all Jews, universities became interested in whether the treatment of the Jews in the medieval period was linked to these events. A few Historians, like E Rokeah, studied the royal records to learn more about how Jewish people were treated in medieval England.

1980s historians became more interested in ordinary people's lives in history. This is called **social** and **cultural** history. This meant there was more interest in women's history and Jewish history. Historian Robert Stacey used the financial records on the Jews to answer new questions about their social life.

1990s Historians became more interested in **minority** groups. New evidence became available as more documents from the Jewish Exchequer were published. The **commemorations** of the 1190 **massacre** killing many Jews, and the 1290 **expulsion** forcing Jews to leave, created more interest in medieval Jewish history. In 1999 some school textbooks began to include Jewish history. A Year 9 history text book, *Modern Minds* edited by Christine Counsell and Michael Riley has a paragraph on the beginnings of anti-Semitism in the medieval period to help explain the hatred of Jews in Nazi Germany in the 1930s.

2000s Historian Patricia Skinner at Southampton University published her book, *Jews in Medieval Britain* and supported Suzanne Bartlet in her research on Licoricia. Bartlet published her history book, *Licoricia of Winchester* in 2009 and this was used by famous historian Simon Schama to tell the story of Licoricia in his 2014 book, *The story of the Jews*. The Licoricia Appeal charity published their new book, *Licoricia of Winchester, Power and Prejudice* when the new statue of Licoricia in Winchester created more interest in 2022. Today people are more interested in who has moved to Britain over time. This is called the history of **migration**. A new History GCSE textbook, *Migrants in Britain* in 2022 mentions Licoricia for a new History GCSE topic on migration.

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Page 7 photo of Simon Schama
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Page 9 and 10 Images of historians' interpretations of Licoricia taken by S Herrity from the original texts. Dr Emma Carvell and Dr Toni Griffiths kindly wrote in response to the question, "Do you think that Licoricia of Winchester is historically significant?", for the purposes of this lesson.

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