



St Oswald's was built by Aethelflaed who's the daughter of Alfred the Great. It was built in partnership with her husband, Aethelred. Historic sources tell us that Aethelflaed and her husband were actually buried at St Oswald's. And archaeologists excavating here in the 1970s found what appears to be a crypt, which is underneath the back gardens of the houses behind us. Aethelflaed is a particularly important

person in the history of Gloucester and of England more generally, because she was for a long time the ruler of English Mercia. Mercia is what used to be a kingdom in the middle of England during the Anglo Saxon period. And Mercia was largely conquered by the Danes during the Danish invasion. This is a period people think of as the Vikings really.

Aethelflaed is credited with the refounding of the city and many of the city streets we see today were laid out during her rule. She also oversaw the foundation of St Oswald's Priory. The ruins that survive behind us are actually just the northern wall of that original church. And actually much of the structure that survives behind us is later, some of its 12th and 13th century. But a lot of the original Anglo Saxon stonework survives. And as you walk around, you'll be able to see parts of the original structure that are Saxon and parts that date from later on.

I would say that Aethelflaed is one of the great unknown heroes of English history. She's an absolute hero for Gloucester, she's a hero for England. It was very rare for a woman to be a ruler in Anglo-Saxon England, very rare in the whole of Western Europe at the time. Not only did she rule from Gloucester, not only did she found monasteries, she re-conquered a serious chunk of England from the Danes. She was a war leader as well.

So she's an absolute hero for our time and we should all know more about her. And this is one of the few monuments we have to her so, we should all be aware of it and we should all value it.

Andrew Armstrong, City Archaeologist

St Oswald's Priory



Historic England



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