

A SEPULCHRAL STONE SLAB IN CARISBROOKE CHURCH.

By H. T. WHITE, A.M.I.C.E.

IN the north aisle of Carisbrooke Church there lies a Purbeck marble slab which bears a very strange inscription. The slab is a tapered one, as is usual in slabs covering graves, and the inscription is round the wider end in incised letters of extremely unusual form. The slab is not well placed for obtaining a photograph of the letters; but they can be fairly well discerned on the above print.

In the *Victoria County History* it is stated that the words on the stone are "TŪBA AVELINE PASSELEWE," and that it commemorates a member of a family which held land at Brook in the 13th century. The stroke over the "V" denotes, as is frequent at that date, the omission of an "M."

The difficulty of accepting this reading is the fact that there is no "L" in the last word, as far as one can judge from the photograph.

An entirely different interpretation was given by Dr. D. G. Grundy, of Oxford, who has published a great deal on the Saxon Land Charters of Hampshire, to whom the photo. of the tomb was sent.

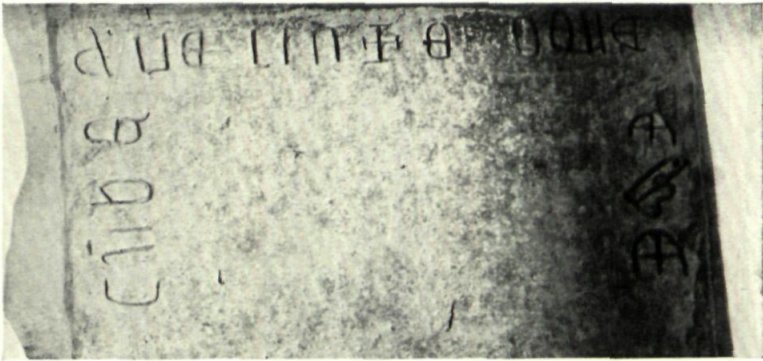
Dr. Grundy wrote: "The first word I read as 'CUBA.' The most important element is the stroke over the 'U,' for that enables me to fix the approximate date of between 1050 and 1100 A.D. This custom began in the reign of Edward the Confessor, and was dropped before 1200. The letter omitted is almost certainly an 'M,' therefore the word is 'CUMBA.' I cannot think that it is the Latin Cumba or Cymba (a boat), but am fairly certain that it is the Saxon 'Cumb,' with a Latin inflection. I suspect that the stone is a boundary stone of land belonging to 'AEBBA,' a very common female Saxon personal name. The very curious letter in the last word is double 'B.' The second word I take to be the Latin 'DUAE,' and the third word begins 'LIN,' and the engraver was giving his rendering of the Saxon word 'HLINC'—Lynch in I. of W. dialect. The fourth word seems to be 'DNAE'—dene, a valley in Saxon, with a Latin inflection added to it."

Thus the whole equals "The combe (hollow) of the two lynchies of the valley of AEBBA."

Finally, Dr. Grundy asks if there was an early monastery at Carisbrooke.

In view of the very great discrepancy between these two interpretations of the inscription the writer thought it right to get an

PLATE III



Stone slab at Carisbrooke

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opinion from "Headquarters" and wrote to the Royal Commission on Ancient Monuments in London, and received the following letter from Mr. C. S. Ralegh Radford of the Commission :

"I have examined the photograph of the tomb in Carisbrooke Church and find it difficult to be certain of the interpretation without examining the original, but I should judge that it dates from the 13th century. Some of the letters appear to be copied from a book hand, and this would account for the abbreviation stroke in the first word marking the omission of 'M,' a practice found in manuscripts and inscriptions throughout the Middle Ages. I would suggest that the tombstone was prepared for a longer and more ornamental inscription of which only the initial cross was cut, and that the present rough lettering was added subsequently to record the identity of the person buried. Such an explanation would account for the use of the word 'TUMBA,' instead of one of the more usual formulae.

"As regards the reading, I think that 'TU(M)BA AVELINE' is certain, and 'PASSELEWE' seems a possible reading of the last word. I cannot be certain about the shaft of the 'P'; the upright S's would be unusual but not impossible in inscriptions of this type. The stone appears to be damaged at the beginning of the right side, and I think I can distinguish traces of a long shaft, which might belong to the missing 'L.' The 'W' would be unusual. The alternative suggestion that what I have called the last word is really two, *viz.*, 'DAME EWE,' seems to be impossible, for I cannot make the third letter into an 'M'; for the use of the French should not occur with the Latin 'TUMBA,' and should in any case have the particle 'D' before the 'EWE.'

"I think that Dr. Grundy's suggestion may be eliminated for the following reasons. A Purbeck tombstone would not be suitable for a boundary stone. The 'E's,' which are of an advanced character, can hardly be older than the late 12th century, and Saxon would not be in use at that date, and I cannot reconcile his reading with the actual lettering. I am sorry not to be able to throw more light on this problem, but both lettering and formula are unusual. I do not know the local history of the Isle of Wight, and should be interested to learn whether any light is thrown on the identity of the person by local records. I have referred to it as being of the 13th century, and such is the date suggested by the letters, but in rough work of this kind it would not surprise me to find that the inscription was added as late as the 14th century."

With regard to local records, the *Victoria County History* mentions a John Passelewe, who held land at Brook in the 13th century, and a John de Passelewe held part of the Manor of Mottistone in 1305-06, which very definitely supports Mr. Ralegh Radford's view.