

Coffin Stones

IN GREAT CARBROOKE CHURCH, NORFOLK.

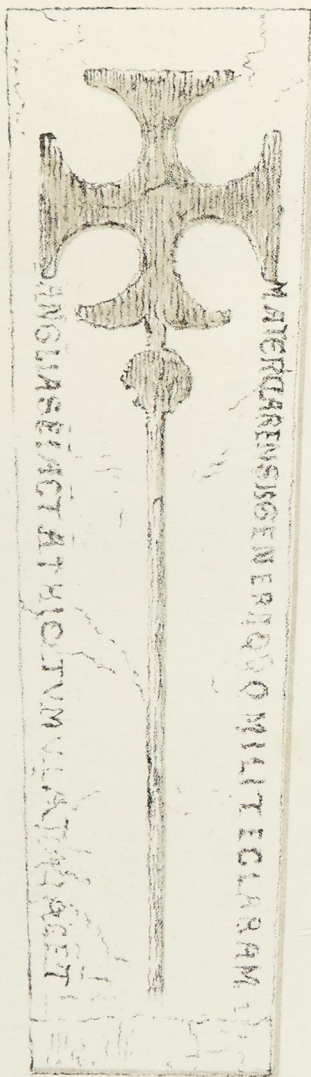
COMMUNICATED BY

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HON. SEC.

ON the floor in the centre of the chancel of Great Carbrooke Church are two coffin-shaped stones, of early character, on each of which is a cross of the form denoting those who belonged to the Order of Knights Templars, viz., a cross patée, rising from a stem surmounted by a knob. On each side of the stem are the letters of an inscription, extending from the arms of the cross to the bottom of the stones. This was the earlier usage for such inscriptions: the practice of the fourteenth century and afterwards being to place the letters as a border surrounding the whole composition. From this, and from the dates of the persons believed to be commemorated, it would seem that these slabs are among the very earliest inscribed ones we have in the county, the date being about the year 1200.

The stones are noticed by Blomefield (ii., 334) and in *The Gentleman's Magazine* for 1826 (i., 581.) They are attributed, the one to Maud, wife of Roger, Earl of Clare and Hertford, and the other to one of her younger sons, who may have been the first Commander of the Commandry or Preceptory of Knights Templars founded in the parish of Carbrooke by her. Earl Roger died in 1173 or 1174. She is supposed to have survived him, as a charter printed



No 1.—COFFIN STONE, CARBROOKE CHURCH, NORFOLK.

ONE INCH TO ONE FOOT.



No 2. ---COFFIN STONE, CARBROOKE CHURCH, NORFOLK.

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in Dugdale's *Monasticon* (ed. 1673, ii., 884) states that she gave a mark of silver, &c., to Godstow Abbey for the soul of her father, Sir James de St. Hillary, and her mother, and for the soul of her husband, Roger, Earl of Clare.

Burke's *Extinct Peerage* says she re-married William de Albini, Earl of Arundel; but that is probably an error, as he miscalls her maiden name, making her the daughter of James de St. Sidinio. But Mr. G. T. Clark has lately stated (*Archæological Journal*, xxxv., 330) that she died before Earl Roger, and that he married a second wife. Their only children, it is usually stated, were Richard, who succeeded his father as Earl of Clare; James, of whom a miraculous cure is related in childhood, at the shrine of Becket; and Isabel, who married William Mareschal, Earl of Pembroke. But a charter, printed in Dugdale's *Monasticon* (ed. 1673, ii., 507) of Richard, Earl of Clare, confirming the gifts of his father and mother, is witnessed as follows: "Hiis testibus *Ricardo* de Clare et *Jacobo* de Clare fratribus meis, &c." It would appear, therefore, that there were two Richards, brothers; and the second may be the person here commemorated.

Blomefield thinks that the fact of the stones being in an important place, the centre of the chancel, and no name being mentioned, shows that the persons interred were of great distinction. The inscriptions are in Roman characters, two inches high, with one or two "Lombardic" forms. Blomefield's idea that they were added to the stones in the time of Henry VI., when the church, he says, was rebuilt, is quite inadmissible. They have all the character of inscriptions of the end of the twelfth century; and had they been of the fifteenth their more recent date would have been easily recognized. Gough (*Sepulchral Monuments*, i., xxxvi.) notices this mistake of Blomefield. After giving Blomefield's account of the stones, he says, "I must beg leave to differ from Mr. Blomefield, both as to the *date*

of the inscriptions, their import, and the lady. I suppose the inscriptions are cut in the Saxon capitals, and show that *she* was a *Clare* rather by *birth* than *marriage*, and that *he* might be a younger son of Earl Roger."

As far as can be made out, they read as follows:—

No. 1. MATER CLARENSIS GENER[I QVO] MILITE CLARAM
ANGLIA SE IACTAT HIC TVM[VLATA IACE]T

i.e., apparently, "Here lies buried a mother of the family of Clare, by a soldier of which [family] England boasts herself renowned."

The lady's name is not mentioned; and who was the illustrious soldier? Probably Roger, husband of Maud, of whom Burke says, that from his munificence to the Church, and his numerous acts of piety, he was called "the Good."

No. 2. A DEXTRIS NATVS REQVIESCIT MATRIS HVMATVS
[HVNC] PETIIT PORTVM PROPRIVM REVOLVTVS IN
ORTVM

"A son rests interred at the right hand of his mother. Returning to his own birth, he has sought this harbour." "His own birth" appears to mean the source of his own life, *i.e.*, his mother.

Both epitaphs are specimens of the laboured efforts, common at the time, to force double meanings out of words. It would be interesting to have clearer proof who this son was; and also who the mother was for certain. The crosses denote Templars; but I suppose females would not be admitted to the order, and therefore the first stone could hardly be the memorial of any but the foundress of the house at Carbrooke, the Countess Maud. She appears to have given the Preceptory here to the Order of St. John of Jerusalem in 1192. (Dugdale's *Monasticon*, ed. 1673, ii., 546.)