



This marble slab (known as a *mensa sepulchralis* or 'funerary table') originally stood over the container which held the ashes of a Roman woman. In the middle is carved the top view of a two-handled drinking cup, with holes in the centre. When members of her family came to pay their respects, they would pour wine into the cup as an offering, and the liquid would drip onto her ashes, so that she could enjoy it (!)

It was made by the woman's husband, and he intended to share the tombstone when he died. It was very common in Roman times for more than one person to share a grave.

The inscription reads:

'To the spirits of the dead. Lucius Valerius Aprilis set this up for his wife Livia Casta and for himself.'

Compare:

AshLI Slides 2 - Roman soldier on horseback. In this inscription, the people setting up the tombstone *forbid* anyone else to share it.

Another *mensa sepulchralis* where a hollow was carved into the stone for a *real* cup to be inserted, now in the Harvard Art Museums, inv. 1977.216.1895:
<http://www.harvardartmuseums.org/art/287171>

Details:

c.AD 50-150. Marble. H. 32cm, W. 30cm, D. 7cm. Ashmolean Museum ANChandler.3.45.