

## THE DISCOVERY OF A SHORT CIST AT RENDALL, ORKNEY.

BY WILLIAM KIRKNESS, F.S.A.Scot.

Early this year, a short cist was discovered on the farm of Castle, Rendall, by Mr John Sutherland, when levelling a small hillock which is situated 70 yards to the south of the farm buildings.

As part of this mound had been taken away when the Rendall public road was constructed, and as apparently soil has been removed from it many times, its original size and height are difficult to determine.

Mr Sutherland was digging earth from the top, when his pick went into a hole which proved to be a hollow filled with mud. After cutting a channel and draining off the water, Mr Sutherland cleaned out the cavity, but did not realise that he had found what seems to have been an ancient grave, until a tool-marked stone (see illustration) appeared at the bottom of the hollow. Immediately discontinuing the work, information was conveyed to Mr William T. Muir, Corr. Mem. S.A.Scot., who brought the discovery to my notice.

I visited the site on 27th April, when I found a basin 2 feet 8 inches in diameter and 2 feet deep. On examination, the lower part of the walls of this basin was seen to consist of hard clay and gravel. After carefully washing all loose earth from the sides, it was evident that the lower part of the cavity, for a height of 15 inches, had been grouted, making it perfectly watertight.

Mr Sutherland was able partially to reconstruct the short cist which had been placed in this hollow. Single stones had been used for the bottom and ends, a number of others laid flat, one upon another, formed the sides, and two or three were used for the cover. The size of the cist was about 20 inches long, 12 inches wide, and 15 inches deep. No burnt or unburnt bones were found in it. This may be due to such

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remains, if it were a grave, having completely decayed, or to their having been entirely removed when the cavity was first cleaned out.

The stone found in the grave is water-worn, of flattened discoidal



Indented Hammer-stone from a Grave at Castle,  
Rendall, Orkney. ( $\frac{1}{3}$ .)

shape, with pitted circular cavities on the top and bottom. It shows marks of abrasion round the greater part of the circumference, through use as a hammer-stone. The object measures  $4\frac{1}{4}$  inches in diameter and  $2\frac{1}{2}$  inches in greatest thickness. The cavities on the top and bottom sides measure about 2 inches in diameter and  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch in depth.