



Avon Gorge Promontory Site

Data Structure Report

August 2024

Abstract

During the excavation of the Avon Gorge Promontory Site in August 2024, three trenches were dug and the contexts recorded. This report presents the results of the excavation and discusses their interpretation.

Ed Smith

Clutha Archaeology Group

cluthamail@gmail.com

Abstract

On the 2nd and 3rd of August 2024, at the Avon Gorge Promontory Site, three trenches were dug to investigate the archaeology beside an earlier trench which had been opened on a visit to the site in 2023 (Jepson, 2023).

This earlier trench (Trench 5) had uncovered an area of large flat stones which may have formed a paved floor. Two trenches (Trenches 6 and 7) were dug beside this floor and one of them (Trench 6) uncovered a possible edge to the floor. There were a number of finds in this trench, including possible sherds of pottery as well as rounded stones which suggest early human activity on the site. The finds have yet to be evaluated.

Trench 7 showed that the possible paved floor extended beyond the other side of Trench 5. However, the flat stones had been turned on edge nearer the vertical drop of the promontory site. Perhaps, a natural movement of the ground had caused this.

In a third trench (Trench 8) a fracture down its side and across the floor may have been due to an earlier excavation of the area. In this trench there was a piece of pottery (Find 20) which has been informally assessed as medieval. At the foot of the trench, the arrangement of stones suggest the footing of a post hole.

Future work will await the evaluation of the finds and a positive result will encourage further exploration near Trench 6, for signs of human activity. Another area of activity will be Trench 8 where we will explore the possibility of a post hole as well as the signs of an earlier excavation. Also there may be more medieval pottery in this area. In addition, there are other areas that will be explored including the possible cairn on top of the site and the ditch round the side of the promontory.



The Group uncover part of Trench 5, before starting to excavate the new trenches.

Introduction

Background

The location of the Promontory Site (National Grid Reference NS 73512 52955 and Canmore ID 360740) is shown in Figure 1.

The promontory site consists of a large flat, sub-rectangular area measuring 30m in length, north to south and 20m east to west which protrudes from the edge of the gorge as it slopes steeply towards the river. The promontory has very steep sloping sides to the east and south, more gentle to the north and can be fairly easily accessed from the west, where there appears to be a raised path or ramp leading up to the promontory.

In previous excavations, undertaken as part of Archaeology Scotland's Adopt-a-Monument project and Attainment through Archaeology scheme, the remains of a possible causeway were identified as well as a cairn on the top of the promontory and a possible stone wall nearby (Jepson, 2021 and Jepson, 2022).

In April 2023 a large trench (approximately 2m X 15m), referred to as Trench 5 in this report, was excavated and an area of flat stones uncovered which may have formed part of a paved floor (Jepson, 2023).

The main purpose of the 2024 dig, described in this report, was to discover more about this floor and, if possible, find its edge.



Work underway on Trench 7. There is a steep drop hidden by the vegetation in the background.

Location: 3-Maps

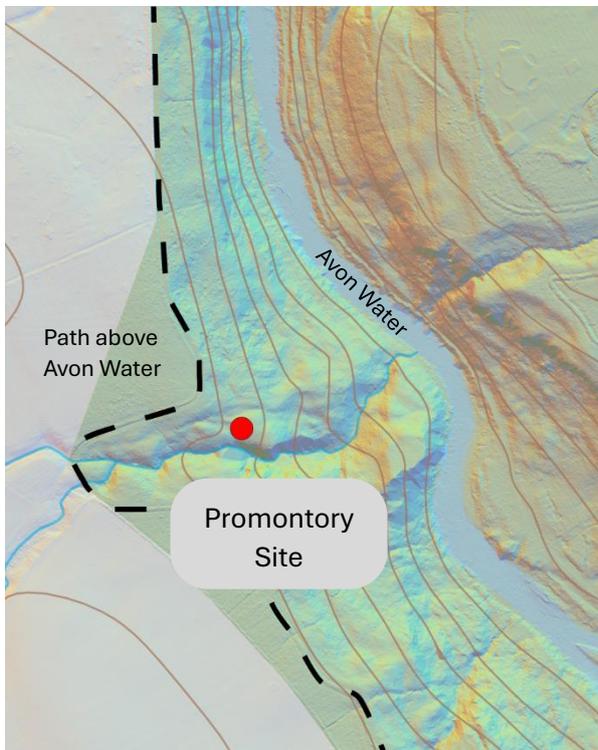
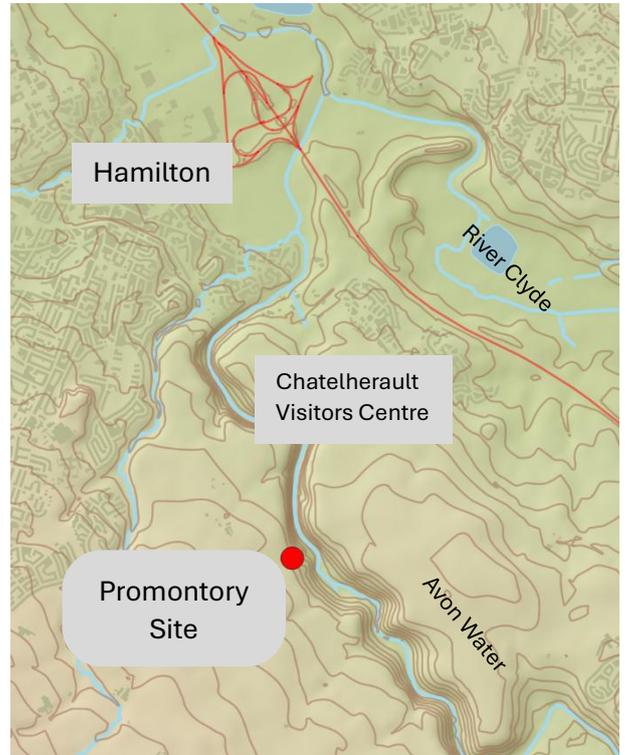


Figure 1

The Promontory Site is located at the edge of a gorge formed by the Avon Water inside Chatelherault Country Park. The Site is beside a path above the Avon Water which leads from the Visitors Centre. The area is similar to other promontory sites in the Clyde Valley and it may be that these sites will be surveyed as part of the Clyde Valley Archaeological Research Framework (2024).

OS Open Data © was used in the construction of these maps.

Approximate Location of Trenches

The three trenches (Trenches 6, 7 and 8) were dug beside the existing trench (Trench 5).

This diagram shows the approximate position of the trenches.

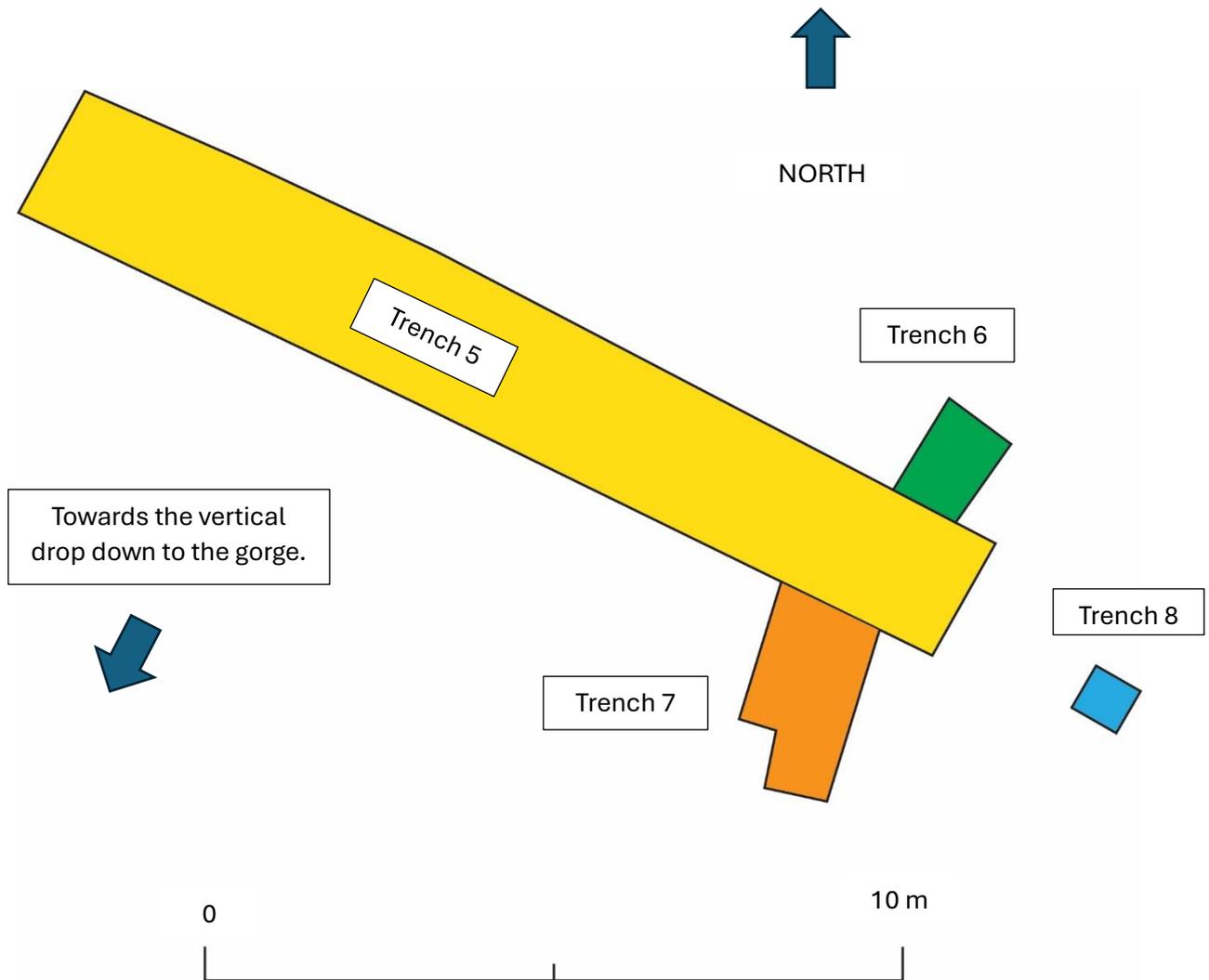


Figure 2. The approximate layout of the existing trench (Trench 5) together with the trenches dug in this excavation (Trenches 6, 7 and 8).

Project Aims and Objectives

The aim of the Promontory Site excavation is to investigate the possible paved area in Trench 5 which was uncovered in 2023. The exploration is twofold:

- How far does the paved area extend beyond Trench 5?
- Does the paved area have an edge?

Methodology

The field work was carried out by Clutha Archaeology Group on the 2nd and 3rd of August 2024. All excavation was undertaken by hand and a total of three trenches were dug. The work was carried out in conjunction with South Lanarkshire Council and in particular Chris McGinley, Countryside Ranger Team Leader of the Countryside & Greenspace Service, who provided invaluable help.

The participants were

[Peter Dunn](#), [Eric Gardner](#), [Shona MacLean](#), [Chris McGinley](#), [Ailsa Smith](#), [Ed Smith](#), [Jean Tumilty](#), [Tom Tumilty](#), [Ross Wood](#)

Photogrammetry was used to record the trenches but the weather was a problem. Rapidly moving clouds cast changing shadows across the site which made photogrammetry more difficult. The method prefers a diffuse, steady light.

Results

Introduction

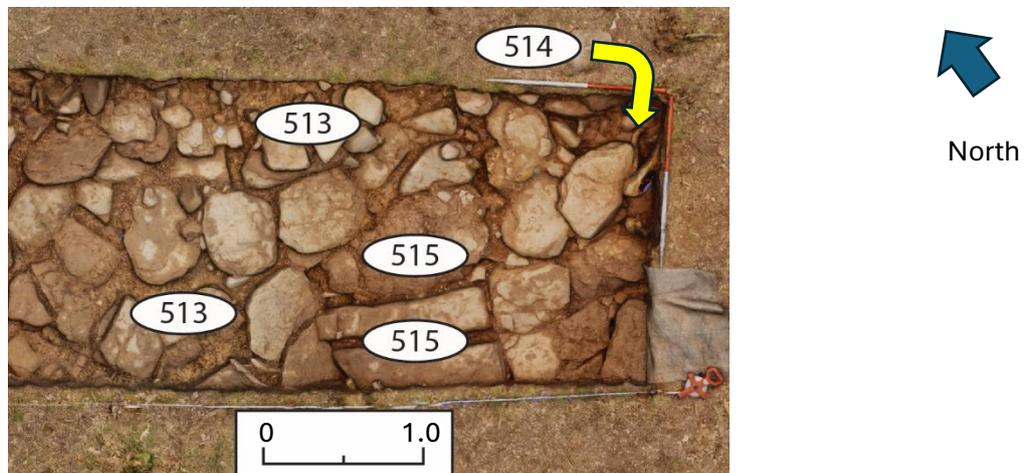
The weather was good for excavation and the work continued without interruption.

The results in this section should be read together with the data in the Appendix which lists the finds together with their photographs.

Trench 5

The Contexts at the East End

Trench 5 was dug on a visit to the site in April 2023. This end of the trench was uncovered, to help locate Trenches 6 and 7.



This photograph is a plan view of the east end of Trench 5, as it was when dug in April 2023. It shows the contexts in this trench that overlap with Trenches 6 and 7.

The possible floor surface formed by 513 and 515 may also be seen in Trenches 6 and 7.

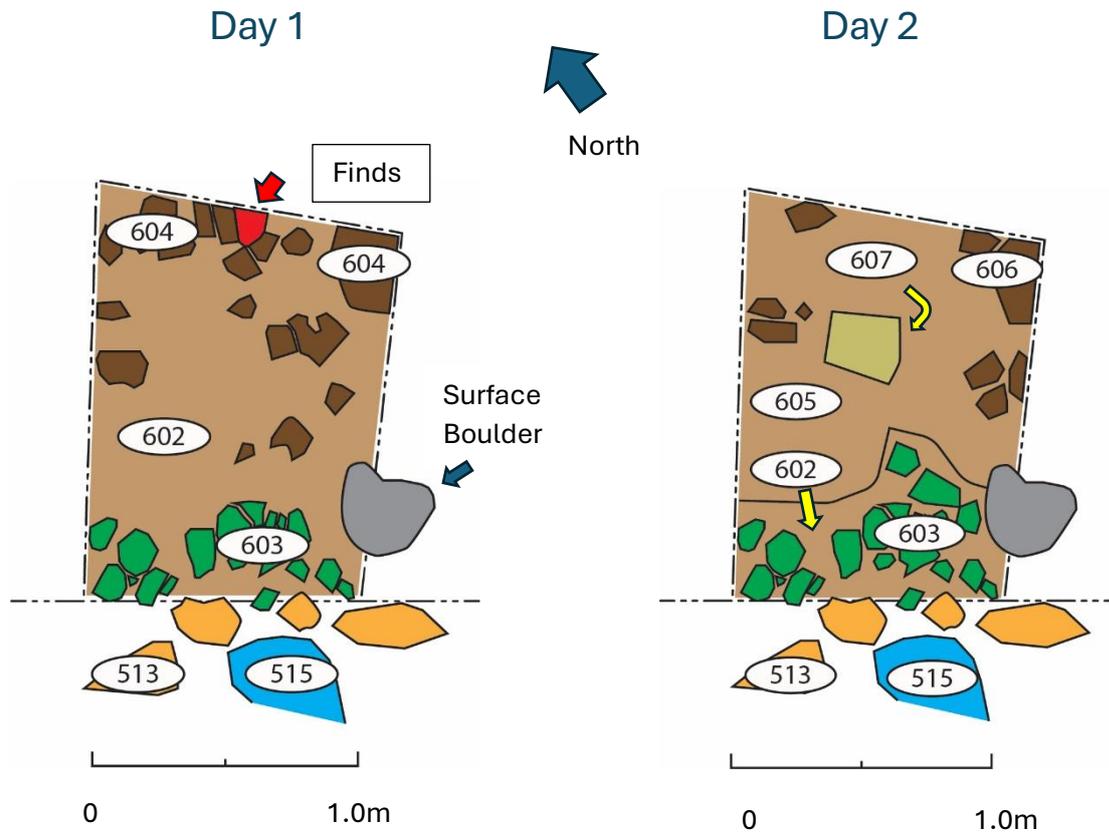
Contexts

513	Medium to large mid-grey flattish stones abutting each other.
514	Compact dark reddish-brown sticky clay.
515	Medium to large sub-rectangular and sub-oval mid-grey flat stones which abut each other in a linear pattern.

Interpretation

513	Possible floor surface and edging
514	The stones are set in this clay here and in the other trenches.
515	Possible floor surface

Trench 6



Photos of Trench 6



The dots ● ● mark the edge of context 603.

These photos show the edge of Context 603, particularly in the photo on the right. These stones might form the edge of the 'paved floor' in Trench 5.

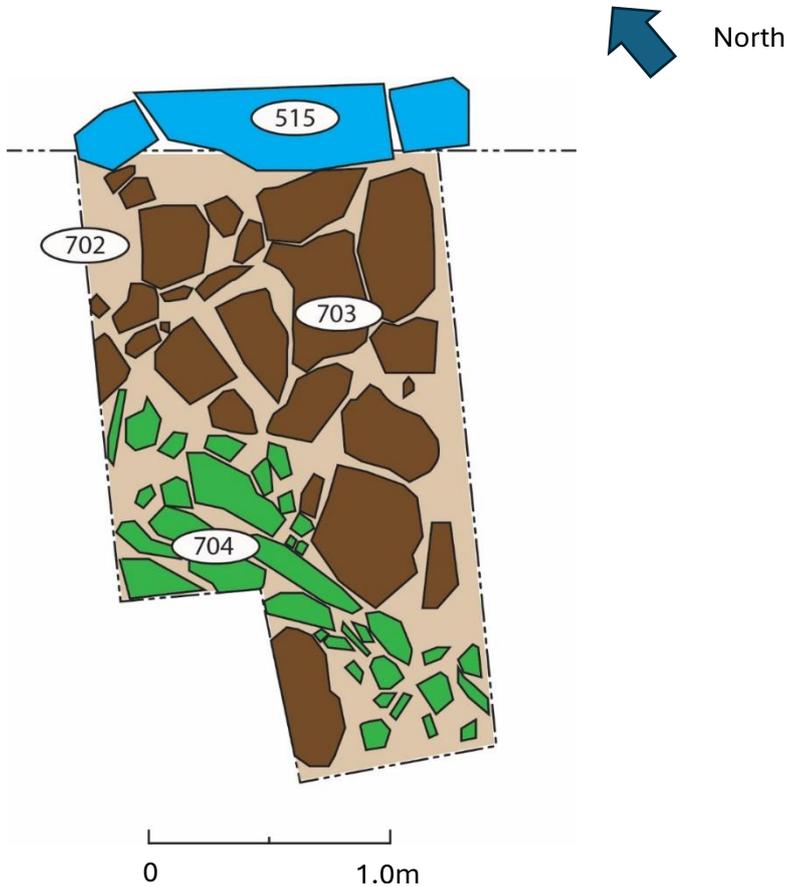
Contexts

601	Dark brown silt, heavy root laden. Probably the same as 501.
602	Compact dark reddish-brown sticky clay. Probably the same as 514. There were 'finds' in this context.
603	Similar to 513. The stones are smaller than 515. Small to medium sub-rectangular mid-grey flat stones. The stones are next to each other in a roughly linear pattern.
604	Mixture of sub-rectangular and sub-rounded sandy brown stones. Some are similar to 'hammer stones'. Random pattern of stones. There were 'finds' among these stones.
605	Compact dark reddish-brown sticky clay similar to 602 but with patches of white clay. There are fewer stones in this context than in layer above (602).
606	Stones similar to 604 but fewer of them.
607	Similar to 605 but with more white clay. There were no stones found in this context.

Interpretation

601	Turf and topsoil
602	Below 601
603	Stones embedded in 602. This may be an edge to the 'floor' in Trench 5 formed by 513 and 515. Is this the edge we were looking for?
604	Stones embedded in 602. These sub-rounded stones may have been formed by the river which went on to create the incised valley. Some of the rounded stones may be 'hammer stones'. The finds and 'hammer stones' may indicate human activity at the edge of the site.
605	This context lies below 602. It may be a natural process that the clay changes with depth.
606	Stones 606 embedded in 605.
607	This context lies below 605. The clay continues to change with depth. Probably natural.

Trench 7



Context 703 is a continuation of the possible paved area (515) in Trench 5. However when it becomes 704, the stones have been turned on their edge.

Contexts

701	Same at 501: Dark brown silt, heavy root laden.
702	Same as 514: Compact dark reddish-brown sticky clay.
703	Similar to 513: medium to large sub-rectangular mid-grey flat stones. The stones are level and lie next to each other in a way similar to a floor surface.
704	Similar to 703 but the stones are edge-on rather than flat.

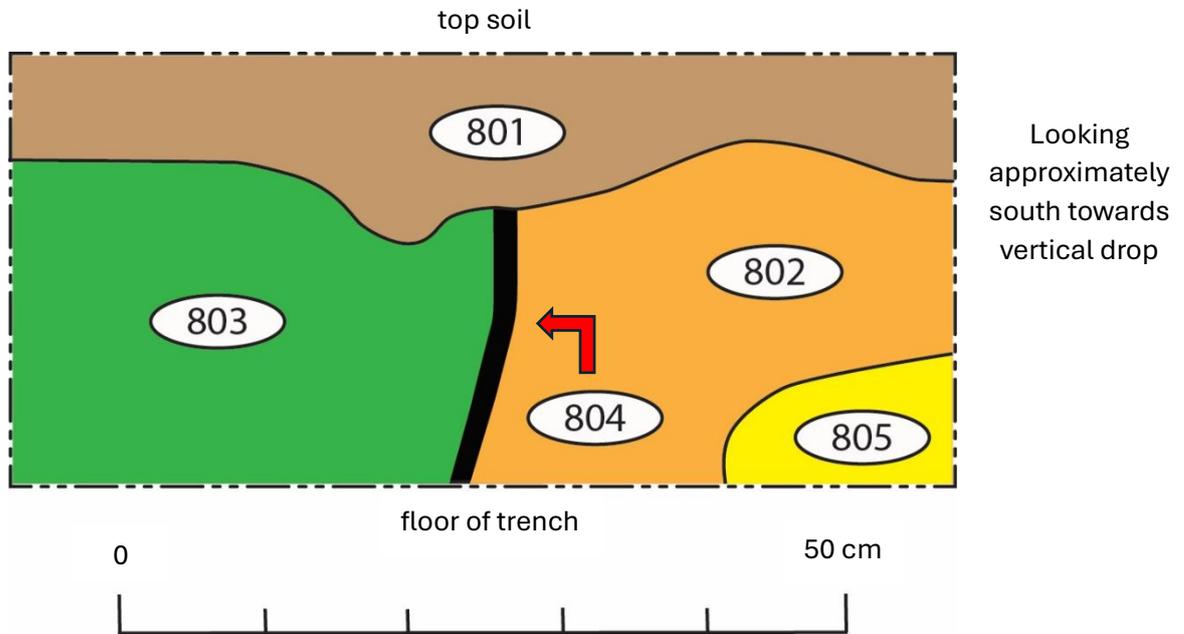
Interpretation

701	Turf and top soil.
702	Same as elsewhere on the site.
703	Possible extension of the 'floor surface' in Trench 5
704	Context 703 may have been turned by possible land slip near the vertical drop.

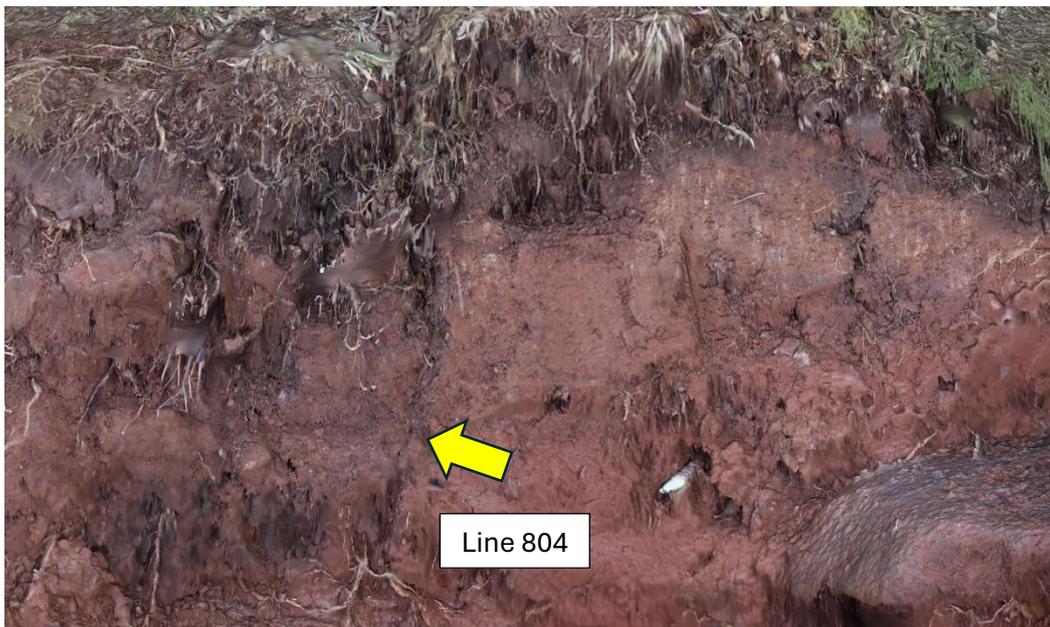
Trench 8

Side Elevation looking South

Sketch showing the contexts of the side elevation of Trench 8 looking towards the vertical drop.



Photograph of part of the side elevation showing the difference between 802 and 803. The line 804, may be a fracture which these two contexts.



Contexts

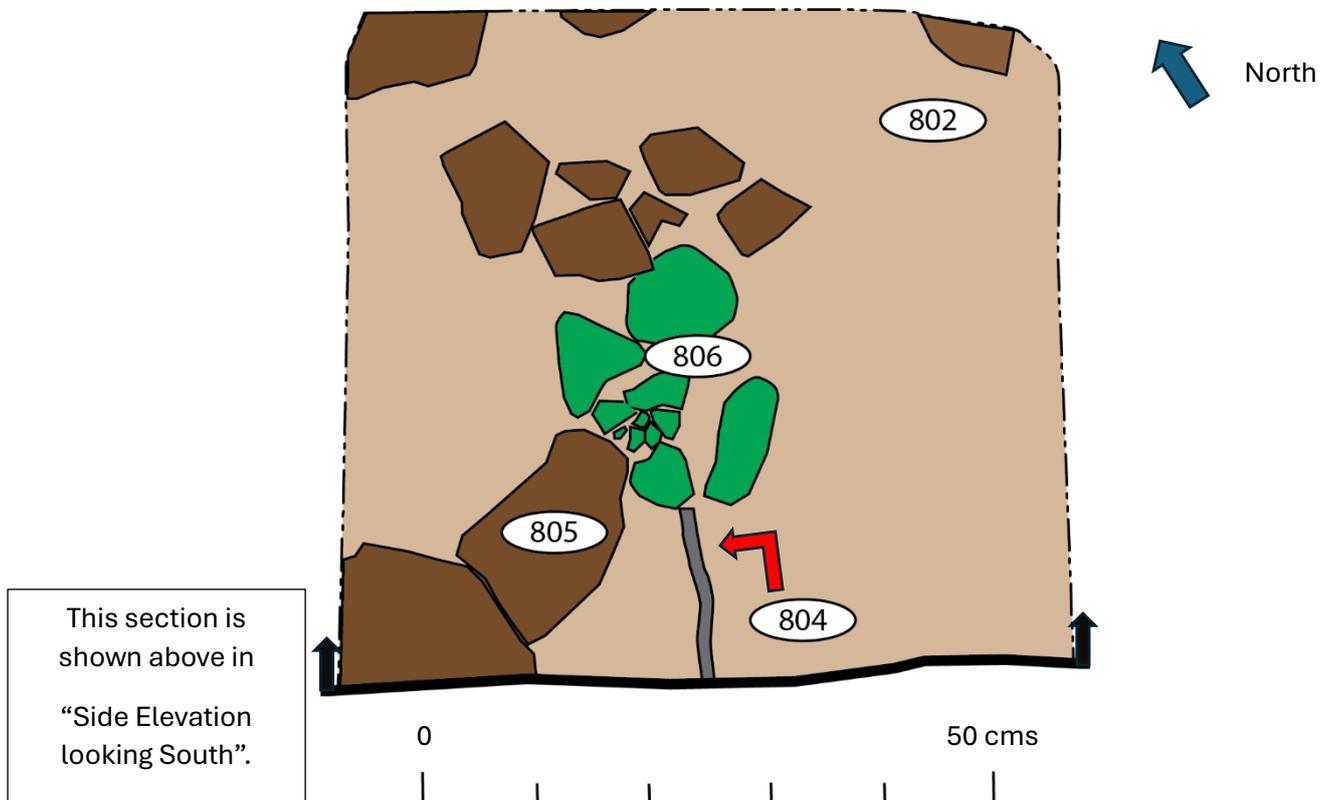
801	Turf and top soil. Dark brown silt, heavily laden with roots.
802	Compact dark reddish-brown sticky clay. There were 'finds' in this context.
803	Similar to 802 but with more organic material. This organic material reaches a greater depth than in other trenches on the site. There were 'finds' in this context.
804	A dark line between 802 and 803 which extends across the floor of the trench.
805	Medium sized flat stones embedded in 802.

Interpretation

801	Top soil
802	Similar to 514 and elsewhere on the site
803	Possible human activity, such as digging a post hole, put the organic material at this depth.
804	Is this a fracture in the clay 802 caused by human activity such as digging a post hole.
805	Natural?

Trench 8 Floor Plan

Sketch showing the contexts in the plan view of Trench 8.



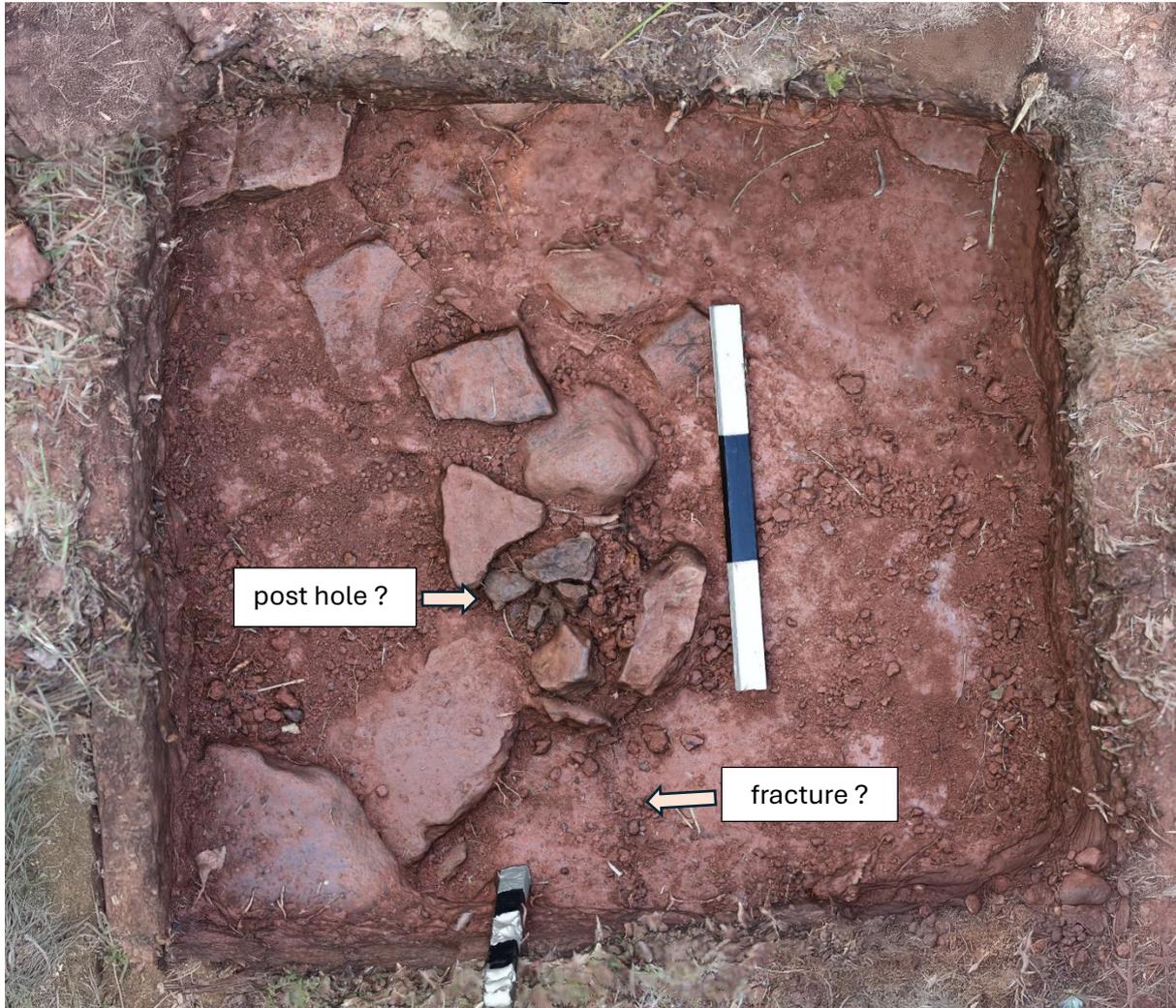
Contexts

802	Compact dark reddish-brown sticky clay.
804	A dark line, between 802 and 803 in the side elevation view, which, in the plan view, extends halfway across the floor of the trench.
805	Medium sized flat stones embedded in 802.
806	Stones embedded in 802 forming a circle with the line 804 touching the middle.

Interpretation

802	Similar to 514 and elsewhere on the site.
804	Is this a fracture in the clay 802 caused by human activity such as digging a post hole?
805	Natural?
806	Possibly the base of a post hole with packing stones.

Photo showing a Plan view of Trench 8



The stones, in the middle of this plan view, may have been used to pack the base of a post hole. The fracture in the soil is a continuation of the fracture visible in the Side Elevation. It may have formed when the post hole was dug.

References

Jepson, A. (2021) 'Avon Gorge, Excavation' in Thoms, J. (ed) *Discovery and Excavation Scotland*, Cathedral Communications Limited, Vol. 22, 2021, pp. 164-165

Jepson, A. (2022) 'Avon Gorge, Excavation' in Thoms, J. (ed) *Discovery and Excavation Scotland*, Cathedral Communications Limited, Vol. 23, 2022, pp. 166

Jepson, A. (2023) 'Avon Gorge, Excavation' in Thoms, J. (ed) *Discovery and Excavation Scotland*, Cathedral Communications Limited, Vol. 24, 2023, pp. 176

Appendix

Small Finds Register

Project: Avon Gorge **Site:** Avon Gorge **Date:** 2-3/8/24

SF No	Context	Description	Material	Photo	Date/ Initials
1	TR6/602	Charcoal	Charcoal		2/8/24
2	TR6/602	Charcoal	Charcoal		2/8/24
3	TR6/602	3 pieces of thin black stone	Stone		2/8/24
4	TR6/602	Possible hammer stone fragment (1)	Stone		3/8/24
5	TR6/602	Possible hammer stone fragment (2)	Stone		3/8/24
6	TR6/602	Possible hammer stone fragment (3)	Stone		3/8/24
7	TR6/602	Possible hammer stone fragment (4)	Stone		3/8/24
8	TR6/602	Possible hammer stone fragment (5)	Stone		3/8/24
9	TR6/602	Possible hammer stone fragment (6)	Stone		3/8/24
10	TR6/602	Possible hammer stone fragment (7)	Stone		3/8/24
11	TR6/602	Possible hammer stone fragment (8)	Stone		3/8/24
12	TR6/602	Possible hammer stone fragment (9)	Stone		3/8/24
13	TR6/602	Small stone with red centre	Stone		3/8/24
14	TR7/703	Rounded piece of quartz	Stone		3/8/24
15	TR7/703	Broken rounded piece of stone	Stone		3/8/24
16	TR7/703	Possible hammer stone fragment (10) (same material as in trench 6)	Stone		3/8/24
17	TR8/802	Broken rounded piece of stone	Stone		3/8/24
18	TR8/803	Piece of sandstone with score marks	Stone		3/8/24
19	TR8/803	Possible piece of pottery	Ceramic		3/8/24
20	TR8/803	Small piece of possible pottery	Ceramic		3/8/24

Photographs of the Finds

Find 1



Find 2



Find 3



Side A



Side B

Finds 4 – 12



Find 13



Side A

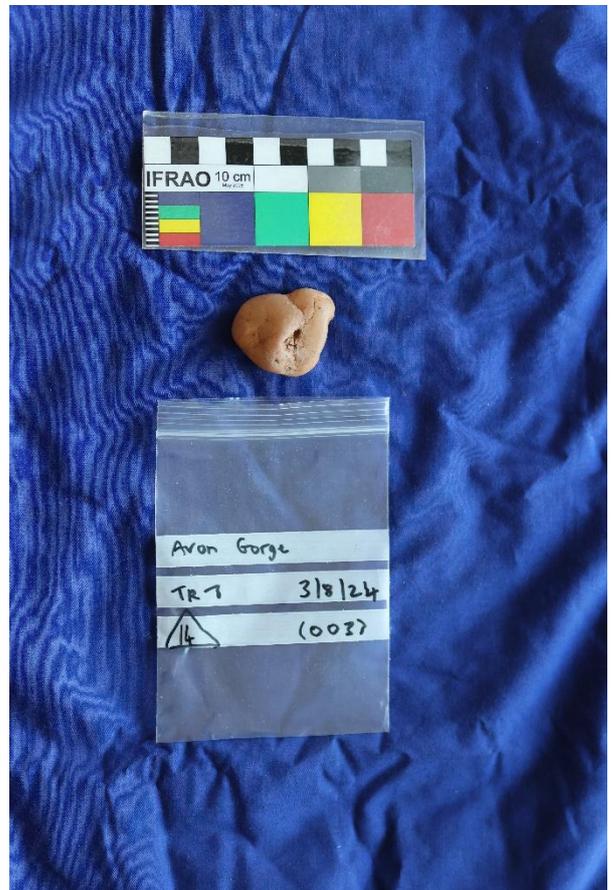


Side B

Find 14

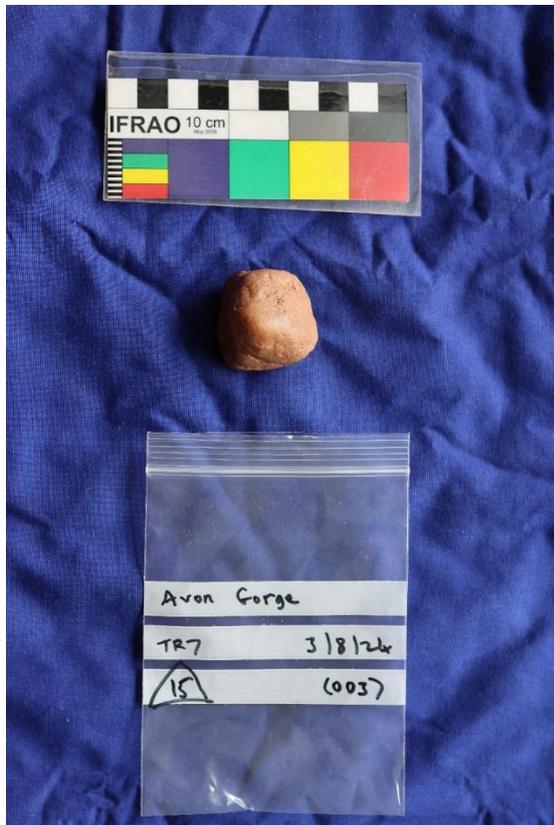


Side A



Side B

Find 15



Side A



Side B

Find 16



Side A



Side B

Find 17



Side A



Side B

Find 18



Side A



Side B

Find 19



Side A



Side B

Find 20



Side A



Side B

Find 20 edge

