

Stoer Lighthouse with Red Boat.
by Katie, P1



Stoer Lighthouse.
by Millie, P4



Stoer Lighthouse at Sunset.
by Callum, P6

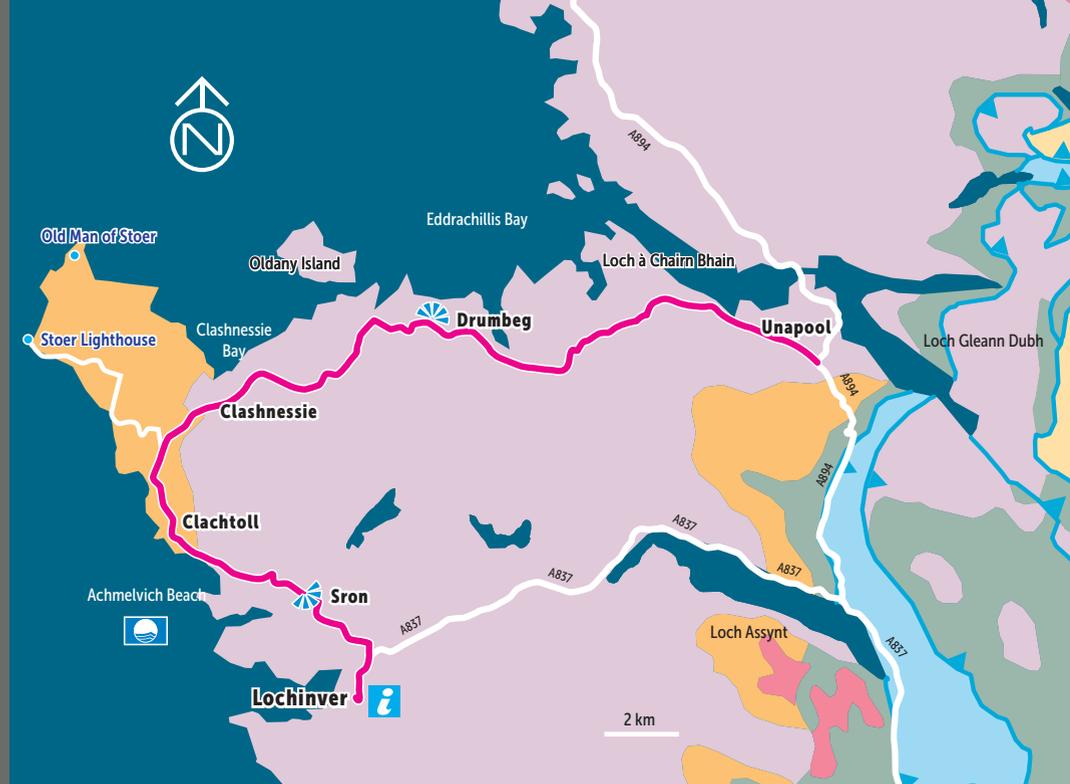


Split Rock.
by Annabelle, P3



Old Man of Stoer.
by Caty, P6

Paintings by the children of Stoer Primary School



Rocks from the dawn of time

-  **Granite, syenite, porphyry:** Coarse igneous rocks, rich in feldspar and quartz; various ages.
-  **Durness Limestone:** Pale and dark grey limestone, commonly with caves, clints and grykes; c. 480 million years old.
-  **Basal Quartzite and Pipe Rock:** White to pink quartzite with worm burrows ('pipes') in the Pipe Rock; c. 500 million years old.
-  **Torridonian Sandstone:** Red-brown, coarse sandstone; c. 1000 million years old.
-  **Moine Rocks:** Metamorphosed sandstones and mudstones; c. 980 million years old.
-  **Lewisian Gneiss:** A stripy, pink to grey-green rock, with distinct Scourie Dykes. At c. 3000 million years old the oldest rocks of Britain.
-  **Thrust faults**



Pebble Route 3



The loop road around North Assynt (Asainte) is a wonderful driving or cycling route and there's plenty of 'hidden gems' on the way to stop for a tea and cake! Passing by white sandy beaches and archaeological culture spanning the past four thousand years of Norse and Gaelic history, there is so much to see here.

The area is also famous for its community ownership. In the early 1990s the crofters managed to buy the land for £300,000 following a big fundraising campaign and contributing their own savings. Although modern crofting has its origins in the 18th century, small scale agriculture like this has been practiced on the North Atlantic Fringe for six thousand years. Today many crofters depend on their animals for much of their livelihood so please be really careful with your dogs around livestock.

Pebble Route 3 takes you on a winding journey through a series of peaceful crofting townships on the edge of the Atlantic. If you want to really take your time on this route, almost every township has some form of accommodation from camping to hotels and many crofting families also run a B&B.

Cnoc an lochan glaciation

The light and dark banded Lewisian gneiss can be seen at most places along the route. Remember most of the crystals you are looking at formed at extremely high pressures and temperatures, over 25 km deep, approaching 3 billion years ago. Watch out for places where the banding has been bent and buckled under pressure. Some of the best examples can be found at Achmelvich beach, especially if you follow the footpath north to a second, smaller beach.

Along most of the route the Torridonian sandstone has been removed by the passage of ice. Particularly in the last 2.5 million years, exposing the underlying Lewisian gneiss. There are remnants of pebbly sandstones and fine grained mudstones to be seen at Clachtoll and Stoer beaches and in the mountain sentinels standing inland to the west.

Gneiss is very resistant to erosion, so when ice broke through the softer sandstone it met much tougher material. It smoothed over low lying hills (cnocs) and ground out shallow hollows. The hollows now fill with water to form the lochans.

Evoke a Sense of Place



Explore Deep Time

Island Mountains

Pull into the carpark just before the top of the hill at the **Sron** (nose), here you can see why the landscape in Assynt (Asainte) is iconic. The hills here rise up like blips on a heart rate monitor, the last roots of long gone mountains. Glaciers have carved out these striking 'inselbergs' (island mountains) and each has its own distinctive personality. At its heart Assynt has some of the most complex geology anywhere

in the world and there is always a steady stream of future Earth scientists studying the rocks at the side of the road. Call into the Rock Stop at Unapool to find out more.

From left to right in the photo we have Canisp, Suilven, Cul Mor and Cul Beag.

Buried landscapes

At **Clachtoll** you can visit the remains of an Iron Age broch tower. There's a Ranger hut here with information about the wildlife and history. You can't miss the curious 'split rock' but if you look carefully you might find the contact between the gneiss and sandstone at the far end of the beach. This is the moment that vast rivers carrying sand and pebbles began to bury hills and valleys made of gneiss. The outcrop in the centre of the beach

is mudstone, look carefully for cracks formed as wet mud dried and shrunk, known locally as 'Frankenstein stitches'. North west of **Stoer** beach you can see a thin spit of land sticking out into the sea called **Stac Fada**. This has been attracting attention recently and is shown to be material ejected from a massive asteroid strike 1.2billion years ago.

On old man watching whales?

Look out to sea and you may be lucky enough to spot some dolphins, or head out to **Stoer Lighthouse** for whale watching. There are some more remnants of sandstones along the roadside to Stoer Lighthouse and if you choose to walk around the peninsular at Stoer you will see a sandstone sea-stack called 'The old man of Stoer'. He's popular with rock climbers!

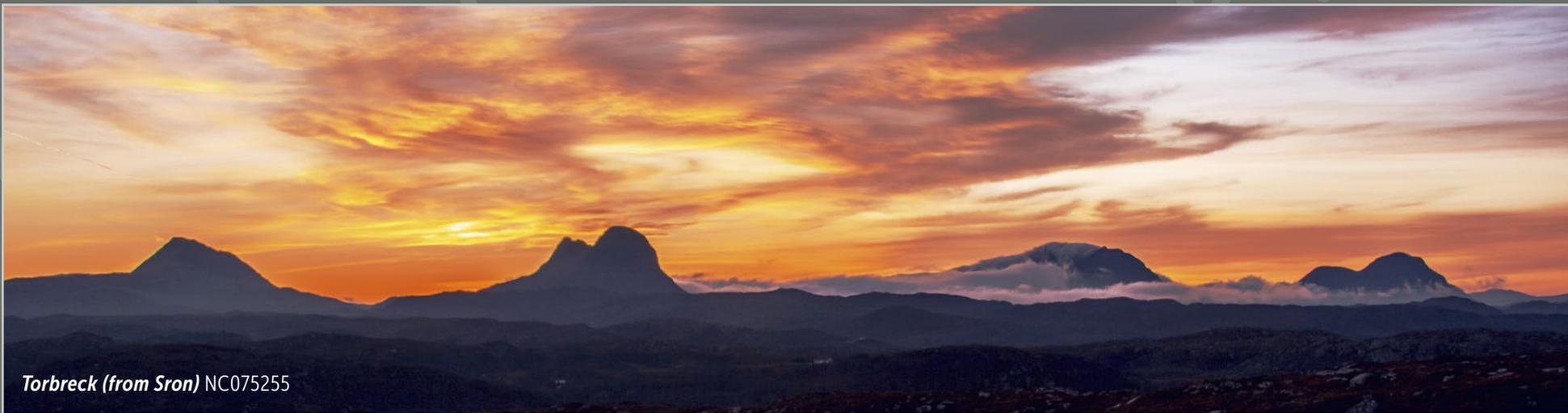
Continue your journey past **Clashnessie** beach and **Oldany Island**. Oldney is Old Norse for 'fruit island', a delicious concept! The island has been uninhabited since the 1700s, but there's a large burial ground called **Baile na Cille** (the town by the church) which suggests this hasn't always been the case.

Endless exploring

The view out from **Drumbeg** is over **Eddrachilles bay** and the islands you can see are **Eilean an Achaidh** (the field island) and **Cul Eilean** (the back island). You might be able to see the salmon farm, nestled between the islands. Continue your route along past **Nedd**, why not explore the many

footpaths and discover ancient Duns, Iron Age fridges (Souterrains) and old sheilings? The hill that now dominates the landscape to the east is the **Quinag** (coon-yak) which is named after its narrow tip that resembles a cuinneag (milk-pail).

Encourage Stewardship



Torbreck (from Sron) NC075255

Photography: Lochinver Landscapes



Drumbeg NC119329