

Strath 6: Creag Strollamus



The rounded summit of Creag Strollamus, south of Caolas Scalpay, is an easily access hill (266m OD) with a wide variety of sedimentary and igneous units. With relatively little effort, it also provides a spectacular 360° panorama.

Aspects covered: the Paleocene Broadford Gabbro; Cambro-Ordovician Durness Group dolostones; Torridonian sedimentary rocks; hydrothermally-altered Paleocene plateau lavas and conglomerates; granite and micro-granite of the Paleocene Eastern Red Hills Intrusive Centre; Upper Cretaceous flint-bearing limestones.

Route: [Allt Feàrna](#) - [Creag Strollamus](#) - [Loch Cùil na Creig](#) - [Allt Apoldoire](#) - [Allt Eoghainn](#) - [Strollamus](#) (- return [Allt Fearna](#)).

Distance: 8 kilometres.

Time: 6-7 hours.

General comments: A relatively (physically) easy excursion on low ground ([Creag Strollamus](#) summit at 266m OD) that examines a wide variety of rock-types, including gabbro and granite not otherwise easily accessed. The starting and finishing points of this excursion are 1.5km (1 mile) apart. It may be possible to leave vehicles at both ends of the excursion, which would alleviate the return journey from the end point to the start point along the busy Broadford-Portree (A 87) road. The finishing point is at [Strollamus](#), where the old (disused) Broadford to Portree road joins with the present-day (A87) road.

[Creag Strollamus](#) is a 266m OD hill close to the Broadford-Portree (A87) road, 4km (2.5 miles) NW of [Broadford](#). Parking is available near the old bridge over the [Allt Feàrna](#), south of the main road and at Strollamus, at the junction with the [\(gated\) old road at \[NG 6008 2664\]](#). Ensure that the gated road (now track) is not blocked.

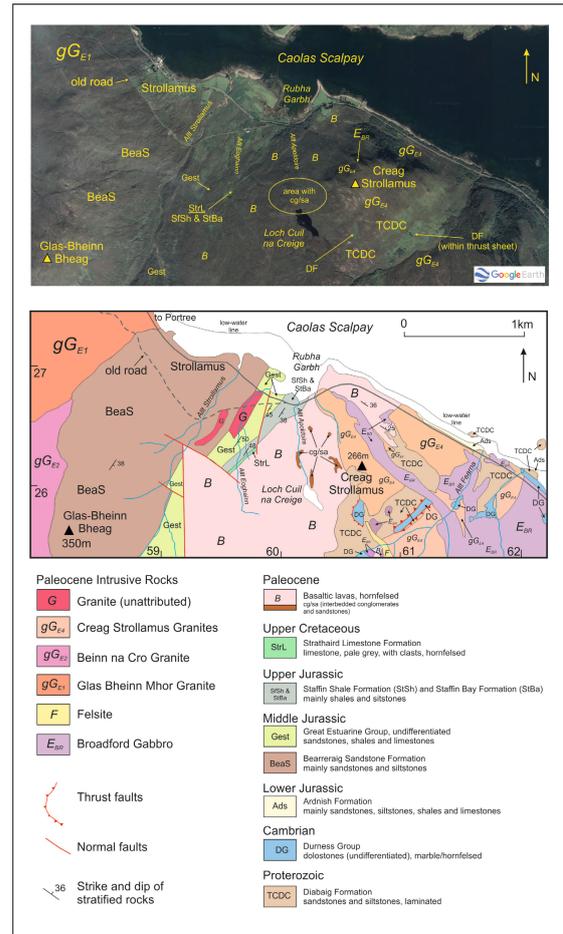
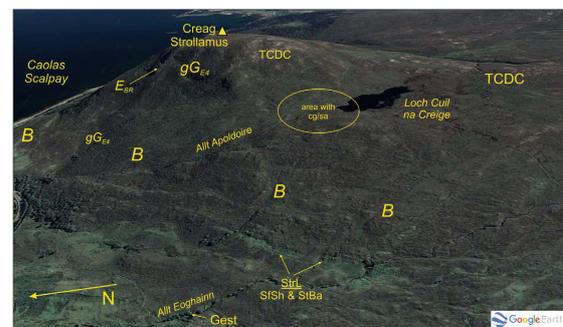
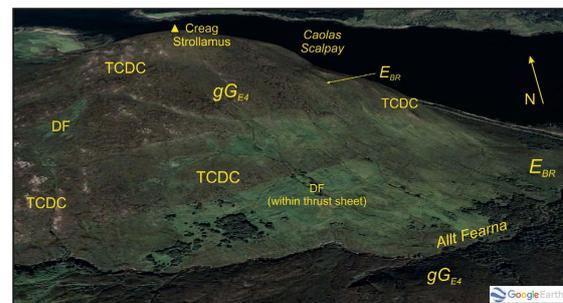


Figure Strath 6.1: Summary map of the Creag Strollamus area and annotated Google Earth® image.



Strath 6.2: Annotated oblique Google Earth® images of the Creag Strollamus area. Key as in Figure Strath 6.1.

Locality 1 [\[NG 6172 2612\]](#):

From the [old bridge](#) over the [Allt Feàrna](#), proceed due west towards the crags at 100m OD on the east side of [Creag Strollamus](#). 30m beyond the corner post of the fence, and up to the base of the crags, the Broadford Gabbro crops out. A particularly good exposure is located c. 200m west of the corner post, in the vicinity of a small burn. Here, a N-S elongate mass, c. 25m x 15m, forms a 2m-high knoll. The gabbro is medium- to coarse-grained and is devoid of mineral layering. The dominant minerals are clinopyroxene (locally altered to green aggregates of amphibole + chlorite + epidote) and plagioclase, in an ophitic textural arrangement. Olivine is not present. In places, the Broadford Gabbro contains anastomosing veins, 1–3mm wide, containing chlorite, epidote and calcite.



Strath 6.3: Small crag of Broadford Gabbro, west of the Allt Feàrna. Pole c. 1m long.



Strath 6.4: Relatively fresh surface of the Broadford Gabbro, with dark pyroxene and white plagioclase. Coin c. 24mm across.

Continue uphill towards the rusty brown crags.

Locality 2 [\[NG 6127 2601\]](#):

This 10m-high crag is composed of highly-altered Late Proterozoic ('Torrisonian') sandstones, siltstones and grits of the Mullach nan Càrn Member (Diabaig Formation), which commonly have a bleached appearance. Internal structures are not obvious and detailed examination is required to deduce a general dip of the strata of 40–50° towards the east. The exposed

Excursion Strath 6: Creag Strollamus

faces are commonly parallel to bedding. These strata are, in places, strongly jointed and cut by Paleocene (basalt and dolerite) and silicic (felsite) dykes.



Strath 6.5: Crag of Torrisonian strata (Mullach nan Càrn Member of the Diabaig Formation), west of the Allt Feàrna. View towards the SW.

Proceed south, to the area NW of the [Allt Feàrna](#), which has a brighter-than-typical green vegetation, where Cambro-Ordovician Durness Group dolostones (in part, marble) crop out.

Locality 3 [\[NG 6108 2557\]](#):

In this area, Cambro-Ordovician Durness Group dolostones and Torrisonian Mullach nan Càrn Member strata have an inferred (not seen) thrust-fault contact relationship, with the Torrisonian strata forming part of the structurally overlying Kishorn Thrust Sheet, i.e. the dolostones constitute a structural inlier (window or fenster). Solution hollows locally define the margin of the dolostone outcrop. The dolostones, typically grey and fine-grained, with chert-rich layers and abundant secondary carbonate-dominated veins, form discontinuous topographically lower exposures throughout the grass-dominated area, surrounded by the poorly exposed Torrisonian strata.



Strath 6.6: Tectonic window (fenster), with Cambro-Ordovician Durness Group dolostones in thrust-fault contact (surrounded by) Torrisonian Mullach nan Càrn Member sandstones, west side of the Allt Feàrna.



Strath 6.7: Cambro-Ordovician Durness Group dolostones below the Kishorn Thrust Plane, surrounded by Torridonian strata, west of the Allt Feàrna.



Strath 6.8: Durness Group dolostone (marble) cut by anastomosing carbonate-dominated veins. West of the Allt Feàrna. Coin c. 24mm across.

Continue uphill towards the summit of [Creag Strollamus](#).

Locality 4 [NG 6096 2580]:

On the lower slope on the SE side of [Creag Strollamus](#), numerous isolated exposures of the Mullach nan Càrn Member strata crop out. These fractured rusty brown-weathering sandstones and siltstones have relatively easily identified stratification, grading and cross-stratification. They are locally rich in pebbles.



Strath 6.9: Stratified and cross-stratified Mullach nan Càrn Member strata, lower slopes SE of Creag Strollamus. Pole c. 1m long.

Continue uphill towards the summit of [Creag Strollamus](#).

Locality 5 [NG 6091 2590]:

Much of the ground SE of the summit of [Creag Strollamus](#) is composed of a pale brown (weathered), granophyric-textured, variably coarse- to medium-grained, macro-porphyrific granite with alkali feldspar and quartz phenocrysts (2-3mm). The main mafic minerals are amphibole and biotite. Fractures are common and, locally, the granite is sheared.



Strath 6.10: Weathered granite, SE of the summit of Creag Strollamus. Pole c. 1m long.

Continue to the summit of [Creag Strollamus](#).

Locality 6 [NG 6069 2607]:

From the summit of [Creag Strollamus](#) the following excellent geological panorama can be observed:

South, the Beinn na Caillich Granite of the Eastern Red Hills Intrusive Centre forms the summits of [Beinn na Caillich](#) and [Beinn Dearg Mhòr](#);

SW, the Beinn na Caillich Granite crops out in [Coire Garbh](#) and has a contact with the volcanic sequence that forms [Creagan Dubh](#);

WSW, the scree-covered, rounded granite mass of [Beinn na Crò](#) constitutes the SW margin of the Eastern Red Hills Intrusive Centre. The prominent, heather-covered ridge of [Glas-Bheinn Bheag](#) is composed of Jurassic sedimentary rocks. Beyond is the scree-covered, elongate ridge of [Glas-Bheinn Mhòr](#), forming the granite of that name. In the distance, to the west, are the summits of [Beinn Dearg Mhòr](#) and [Glamaig](#), which are composed of various granites of the Paleocene Western Red Hills Intrusive Centre;

NW, Paleocene lavas form coastal and inland cliffs as far north as [The Storr](#) on Trotternish;

North, the island of [Scalpay](#) is dominated by Torridonian sedimentary rocks of the Diabaig and Applecross formations, together with Upper Jurassic and Upper Cretaceous sedimentary rocks that crop out in the grass-

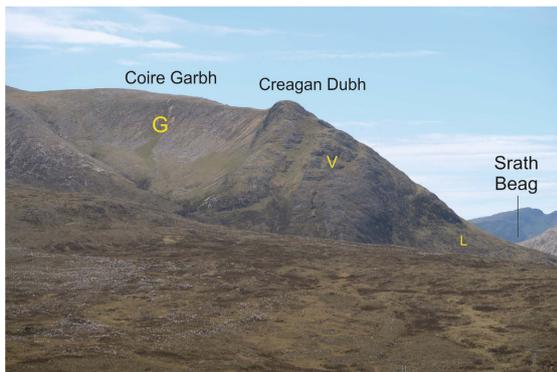
covered valley of the [Allt Stapaig](#), above which (to the east) are Paleocene plateau lavas;

SE, the low-lying ground of [Strath Suardal](#), south of [Broadford](#), is composed of Cambro-Ordovician dolostones.

East of [Broadford Bay](#) are the summits of [Sgùrr na Coinnich](#) and [Ben Aslak](#), which are composed of Torridonian sedimentary rocks of the Sleat Group.



Strath 6.11: Beinn na Caillich, viewed towards the south from the summit of Creag strollamus.



Strath 6.12: Coire Garbh, Creagan Dubh and Srath Beag, viewed towards the SW from the summit of Creag Strollamus. G: granite; B: basaltic lavas and volcanoclastic strata; L: Lewisian Gneiss Complex.



Strath 6.13: Beinn na Crò, with Blà-bheinn ('Blaven') in the distance, viewed towards the WSW from the summit

of Creag Strollamus. G: granite; C: gabbros of the Cuillin Intrusive Centre.



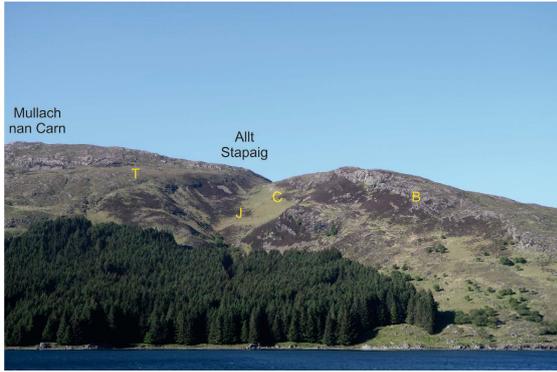
Strath 6.14: Beinn Dearg Mhòr and Glamaig (Sgurr Mhairi and An Coileach), viewed towards the WNW from the summit of Creag strollamus.



Strath 6.15: Plateau lavas forming coastal and inland cliffs as far north as The Storr on Trotternish. View towards the NW from the summit of Creag Strollamus across Scalpay and Raasay to north Skye.



Strath 6.16: Torridonian strata on Scalpay, with the plateau lava summit of Dùn Caan on Raasay in the distance. View towards the NNW across Loch na Cairidh.



Strath 6.17: The valley of the Allt Stapaig on the south side of Scalpay, with Torridonian strata (T) (Mullach nan Carn Member) west (left) of the valley, Jurassic (J) strata and Cretaceous (C) strata within the valley, and Paleocene basaltic lavas (B) forming the crags on the east (right) side of the valley. View towards the north from the summit of Creag Strollamus.

From the summit of [Creag Strollamus](#) proceed SW, downhill, towards [Loch Cùil na Creig](#).

Locality 7 [NG 6059 2598]:

Approximately 100m SW of the summit, the crags are composed of highly-altered Torridonian strata. Nevertheless, these rocks show clear evidence of stratification and cross-stratification. Slump structures and micro-faults are also evident. The dominant rock-types are sandstones and siltstones, with obvious magnetite-rich layers up to 5mm thick.

Further to the SW, the Torridonian strata give way to highly-altered plateau lavas, the junction being marked by a distinct break in slope.

Locality 8 [NG 6045 2588]:

These lavas form the low-lying ground around [Loch Cùil na Creig](#), extending SW to the [Allt na Teangaidh](#). They are dark green and are cross-cut by several generations of anastomosing veins of epidote and chlorite (1–3mm wide). Layers rich in amygdaloids of chlorite and calcite are common throughout, with thicknesses in excess of 50cm.



Strath 6.18: Inclined sheets of basaltic lava (B) on the SW side of Creag Strollamus, viewed towards the summit

from the NE side of Loch Cùil na Creige. Immediately below the summit, Mullach nan Carn Member ('Torridonian') strata (T) crop out.



Strath 6.19: Amygdale-rich facies of a basaltic lava, NE of Loch Cùil na Creige. Hammer c. 30cm long.



Strath 6.20: Detail of amygdale-rich facies of a basaltic lava, NE of Loch Cùil na Creige. Coin c. 24mm across.

Proceed to the NW end of [Loch Cùil na Creig](#) to where the [Allt Apoldoire](#) flows north out of the loch. Continue north along the [Allt Apoldoire](#) for c. 100m and thence 20m to the east.



Strath 6.21: Loch Cùil na Creige from the SW side of Creag Strollamus. The area surrounding the loch is composed of Paleocene lavas with interbedded conglomerates.

Locality 9 [\[NG 6023 2599\]](#):

Here, crudely bedded conglomerates interbedded with the basaltic lavas crop out and dip to the east at 15–20°. They are composed of sub-angular to rounded boulders, cobbles and pebbles of dominant red Torridonian sandstone and grit, together with lesser amounts of Jurassic sandstone, limestone and shale, and Paleocene basalt and dolerite. The boulders/blocks are up to 50cm across. The dark, grey-green matrix ranges between grit and silt grade and the pebbles and cobbles are typically matrix-supported.



Strath 6.22: Poorly stratified sandstone and conglomerate within the lava sequence, NE of Loch Cùil na Creige. View is NE towards the summit of Creag Strollamus. Pole c. 1m long.



Strath 6.23: Weakly stratified, matrix-supported, polyolithic conglomerate/breccia, NE of Loch Cùil na Creige. Hammer c. 30cm long.



Strath 6.24: Large sub-rounded boulder of Torridonian sandstone in a matrix-supported, polyolithic conglomerate/breccia interbedded with basaltic lavas, NE of Loch Cùil na Creige. Coin c. 24mm across.

Proceed NW over poorly exposed plateau lavas for c. 600m to the [Allt Eoghainn](#) (and its minor tributary), where overhead powerlines cut across the stream.

Locality 10 [\[NG 5964 2613\]](#):

In and adjacent to the main stream and its tributary, west below the minor crag formed by the overlying lavas, the Upper Cretaceous Strathaird Limestone Formation crops out.

These strata give rise to a verdant vegetation and the sequence is cut by minor intrusions. The formation is mainly exposed adjacent to and below these intrusions, giving rise to minor caves due to solution weathering and erosion. Stratigraphically below the Strathaird Limestone Formation are dark grey shales of the Upper Jurassic Staffin Shale Formation. An inclined sheet of dolerite occurs at the shale-limestone boundary.

Two sections can be identified. In the main stream, the sequence comprises c. 1.5m of bioturbated micritic limestone overlain by c. 3.5m of dark grey, highly crystalline micritic limestone. These beds have well developed joints and a significant development of stylolite surfaces, where material has been removed by pressure dissolution. Above are basaltic lavas.

In the tributary section, the base of the sequence is covered by boulders. The lowest exposed c. 1.2m consists of dark grey, bioturbated, micritic limestone, above which is c. 1.6m of dark grey micritic limestone with stylolites. The overlying c. 0.5m consists of a conglomerate facies, with pebbles of limestone, together with flints. The flints define bands within the limestone, are typically rounded, and may constitute some form of trace fossil burrow. The top of the sequence consists of c. 1.6m of grey micritic limestone with stylolites.



Strath 6.25: General view of the area around the Allt Eoghainn, south of Strollamus, where Upper Jurassic and Upper Cretaceous strata crop out. View is towards the east, with Creag Strollamus in the distance (left).



Strath 6.28: Detail of the micritic limestone facies of the Strathaird Limestone Formation, with minor cherts and stylolites, Allt Eoghainn. Hammer c. 30cm long.



Strath 6.26: Dolerite sheet intruded along the contact between Upper Jurassic strata (Staffin Shale Formation, below intrusion, adjacent to minor path) and Upper Cretaceous strata (above, with distinctive pale appearance).



Strath 6.29: Detail of the chert-rich facies of the Strathaird Limestone Formation, Allt Eoghainn. Coin c. 2.5cm across.

Follow the [Allt Eoghainn](#) downhill to the old Broadford - Portree road and thence to the present-day road. If returning to the start point, it is located c. 1.5km (1 mile) east along the Broadford-Portree road (A87) road. Care should be exercised on this busy road.

End of excursion.



Strath 6.27: General view of the Strathaird Limestone Formation, Allt Eoghainn. Pole c. 1m long.