

2. Achmelvich to Altanabradhan (3.2km there and back)

The route

The path starts at the Highland Council beach car park below the Youth Hostel. Stop briefly at the Ranger hut to get some more information on some of the wildlife you may see on the way. Go through the croft gate and follow the track north. After 400m a signpost will indicate a well defined path leading off to the left. The path will take you past the Cathair Dubh chalets, but if you continue the path will eventually dip downwards towards a small burn that was the site for the old meal mill. If you follow the burn you will discover the beautiful little sandy beach at Port Altan na Bradhan.

Very Gneiss

Achmelvich rests on a very ancient landscape. The Lewisian Gneiss (pronounced "nice") is one of the oldest rocks in Europe and is thought to be three billion years old. It is a metamorphic rock which means it has been squashed, buckled and transformed by massive pressure and huge temperatures deep under the earth's surface. It is an exceptionally hard rock, which doesn't disintegrate very easily and therefore doesn't easily produce soil.

The Meal Mill at Altanabradhan

Seemingly in the middle of no-where lies this ruin of a meal mill (muileann) with several of the old mill wheels and the millrace still to be seen. In fact it was built around 1760 on the boundary of Clachtoll and Achmelvich townships and shared by the tenants who paid thirlage to the Estate for the privilege. It was operated by John Macleod, up to the end of the nineteenth century. In fact the footings of the miller's house are still visible at the tip of the hill. Also known, as a "clack mill" from the noise made by the clacking of the stones as they turned, horizontal water mills are common in Scandinavia, the Northern and Western isles. The water supply for the mill was Loch na Creige Leithe, the Loch of the Grey Crag, where a dam and sluice were built to control the flow. Water would have been forced down a chute to turn wooden paddles. The grinding stones were set horizontally above the paddles.



Altanabradhan mill