

= Old Man of Hoy =

The Old Man of Hoy is a 449 @-@ foot ( 137m ) sea stack on the island of Hoy , part of the Orkney archipelago off the north coast of Scotland . Formed from Old Red Sandstone , it is one of the tallest stacks in Britain . The Old Man is popular with climbers , and was first climbed in 1966 . Created by the erosion of a cliff through hydraulic action some time after 1750 , the stack is no more than a few hundred years old , and may soon collapse into the sea .

= = Geography = =

The Old Man stands close to Rackwick Bay on the west coast of the island of Hoy , in the Orkney Islands , Scotland , and can be seen from the Scrabster to Stromness ferry . From certain angles it is said to resemble a human figure .

Winds are faster than 8 metres per second ( 18 mph ) for nearly a third of the time , and gales occur on average for 29 days a year . Combined with the depth of the sea , which quickly falls to 60 metres ( 200 ft ) , high @-@ energy waves on the western side of Hoy lead to rapid erosion of the coast .

= = Geology = =

The Old Man of Hoy is a red sandstone stack , perched on a plinth of basalt rock , and currently the tallest sea stack in Britain . It is separated from the mainland by a 60 @-@ metre ( 200 ft ) chasm strewn with debris , and has nearly vertical sides with a top just a few metres wide . The rock is composed of layers of soft , sandy and pebbly sandstone and harder flagstones of Old Red Sandstone , giving the sides a notched and slab @-@ like profile .

= = History = =

The Old Man is probably less than 250 years old , and may soon collapse . The stack is not mentioned in the Orkneyinga saga , written c.1230 , and on the Blaeu map of 1600 , a headland exists at the point where the Old Man is now . The McKenzie map of Hoy of 1750 similarly shows a headland but no stack , but by 1819 the Old Man had been separated from the mainland . William Daniell sketched the sea stack at this time as a wider column with a smaller top section and an arch at the base , from which it derived its name .

Sometime in the early nineteenth century , a storm washed away one of the legs leaving it much as it is today , although erosion continues . By 1992 a 40 @-@ metre ( 130 ft ) crack had appeared in the top of the south face , leaving a large overhanging section that will eventually collapse .

= = Climbing = =

The stack was first climbed by mountaineers Chris Bonington , Rusty Baillie and Tom Patey in 1966 . From 8 ? 9 July 1967 , an ascent featured in The Great Climb , a live BBC three @-@ night outside broadcast , which had around 15 million viewers . This featured three pairs of climbers : Bonington and Patey repeated their original route , whilst two new lines were climbed by Joe Brown and Ian McNaught @-@ Davis and by Pete Crew and Dougal Haston .

Red Szell became the first blind person to climb the Old Man , despite suffering from retinitis pigmentosa that left him with 5 per cent vision . With assistance from Martin Moran and Nick Carter , he scaled the stack in 2013 .

There are seven routes up the stack , the most commonly used of which is the original landward facing E1 ( Extremely Severe ) . A log book in a Tupperware container is buried in a cairn on the summit , as an ascensionists ' record . As many as fifty ascents of the stack are made each year .

= = = BASE jump = = =

Roger Holmes , Gus Hutchinson @-@ Brown and Tim Emmett made the first BASE jump from the stack on 14 May 2008 . Hutchinson @-@ Brown died 11 days later during a jump in Switzerland .