

*Et oversettelsesvalg henger alltid tett sammen med vurderinger knyttet til det konkrete oversettelsesoppdraget (translation brief). Derfor følger her beskrivelsen av et tenkt oppdrag for oversettelsen av nedenstående tekst hentet fra boka LEWIS. A HISTORY OF THE ISLAND (Donald MacDonald, Gordon Wright Publishing).*

**Translation brief:** Den norske teksten tenkes brukt i en bok rettet mot nordmenn som er interessert i utradisjonelle reisemål, blant annet utkantområder i Europa.

## PRE-HISTORIC LEWIS

Lewis, with Harris, forms the most northerly portion of the hundred-mile long string of islands called the Outer Hebrides, or the Long Island. Lewis is most mountainous where it adjoins Harris. The mountains of Mealasbhal in the parish of Uig, and Beinn Mhor, in the parish of Lochs, rise to over 1,800 feet, while the rest of the Island consists chiefly of a low, undulating, mossy plain, where peat may lie to a depth of twenty feet in places on top of boulder clay.

The Island has been fairly accurately described as being "an immense peat, with notches of the moss cut away here and there, to afford a sure foundation for the inhabitants, and produce for their bodily wants". However, on the east and west coasts, where the soil is fairly fertile, there are sandy tracts which have been cultivated for thousands of years.

It is evident from the numerous tree stumps found embedded in the peat, that the surface of the island was once totally different from its present brown, heathy, unprepossessing condition. It is difficult to picture Lewis forested, with alder, birch, ash, rowan and hazel, where now lies only bogland.

Lewis tradition blames the marauding Norse for destroying these forests, by setting them on fire, as part of their scorched earth policy to harass the native population. Magnus Bareleg's punitive campaign of 1098, when "fire played fiercely over Lewis", may account for this belief, there being little else to burn except trees and very primitive houses. The real enemy of the forests, however, was the peat, which gradually formed as the warm climate changed to the cool conditions we know today.

There was probably very little peat in Lewis when the Callanish Stones were set up, between 3,000 and 4,000 years ago, and yet, when Sir James Matheson had the site excavated in 1856, the peat was five feet deep. In an Iron Age kitchen midden excavated in Galson (estimated to be about 1,500 years old), were found the bones of wild-cat and blackbird, both creatures of woodland and tropical grasslands. In the Tolsta crannog, in Loch Osabhat (found when the loch was drained in 1870), it was discovered that the outer rim of this artificial island, which had contained three houses, was formed of an outer and inner row of wooden stakes five or six inches in diameter.

The Norse devastation therefore, only hastened the process of woodland deterioration which had been in operation for centuries. Finally, only small patches of hazel scrub were left in sheltered places such as Swordale, on Keose Glebe by Luerbost Loch, and in Garry, and rowans on odd islets in moorland lochs.

There is ample evidence that people lived in Lewis thousands of years ago. *Tursachan*, or *Fir-Bhreige Chalanais*, the Callanish Stones, with their neighbouring stone circles, and the Neolithic relics found in old habitation sites and quarries are sufficient proof. Who these early settlers were, it is now impossible to say, but they were not Celts, for the Celts did not arrive

in Scotland until about 500 B.C., and the previous inhabitants were Stone and Bronze Age people. The Island, as it stands, on the north-western periphery of Europe, must also have been the final place of refuge for displaced persons, as well as many sea-rovers, using the western sea-routes.

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