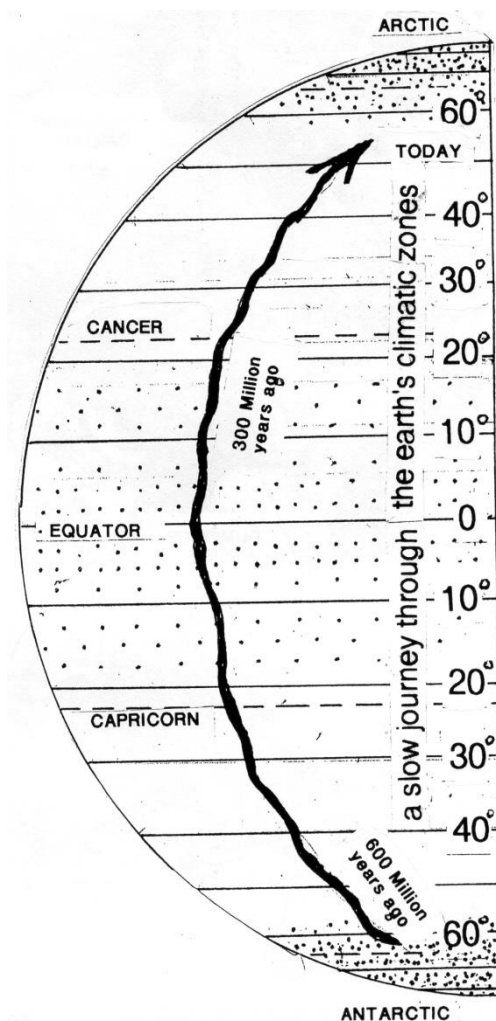


Once again, August has been the popular holiday month. In 'olden times' such a break from normal work or school allowed extra hands to help with the harvest, but now it is more likely to provide an opportunity for travel. Many travellers might also send a picture postcard to friends and family as a means of keeping in touch between the regular exchanges of Christmas cards.

While out and about one may also notice how our local rocks reveal that they have also travelled! Over the last 600 million years our local piece of the Earth's crust, i.e. our 'tectonic plate', has been drifting north from the Antarctic, picking up sediments or suffering erosion associated with each climatic zone. At the same time, life upon it was evolving. If it could have sent some postcards, what would they have shown? Read on for suggestions.

For homework, why not measure the distance on the atlas map and work out the speed of this plate's movement?



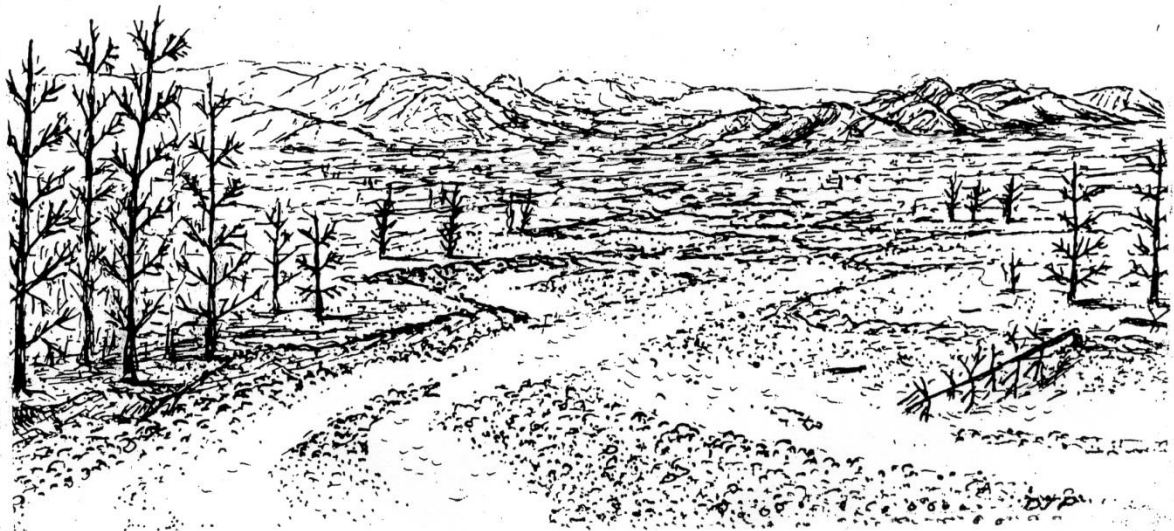
550 million years ago

Sediment eroded from old volcanoes fills a deep trough in a bare cold landscape yet to be colonised by life. After later earth movements it is exposed at Bayston Hill where it is quarried for excellent road stone.



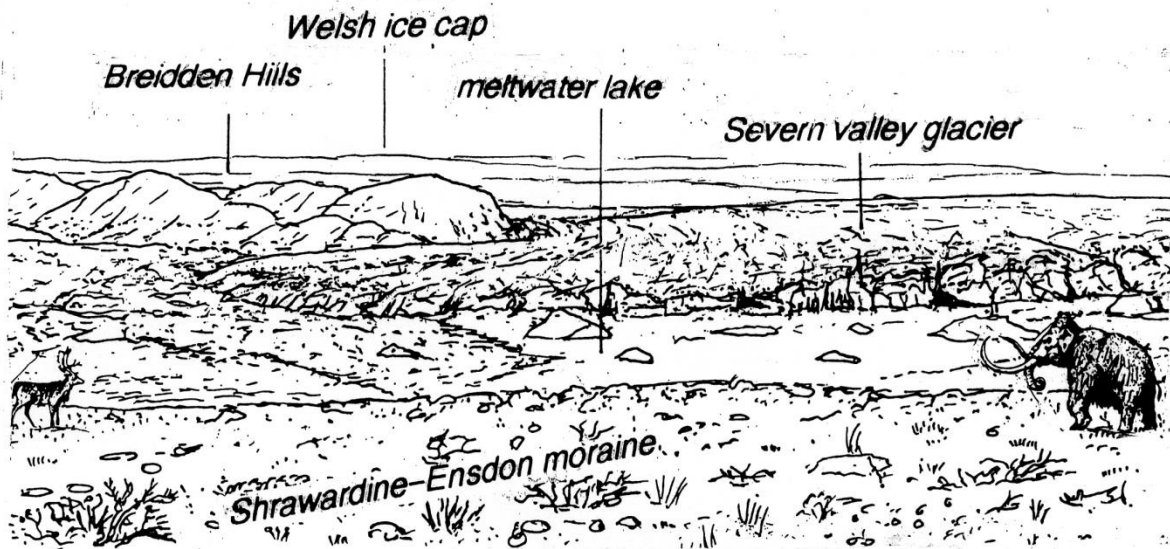
300 million years ago

Sand and gravel washed from the Shropshire Hills fills the plain on the site of Shrewsbury. A 'tropical savanna' climate with long dry seasons presents a challenge to primitive conifers and early reptiles. The resulting 'rust' coloured sandstones, dug from The Quarry (creating the Dingle) can be seen in the town's medieval buildings.



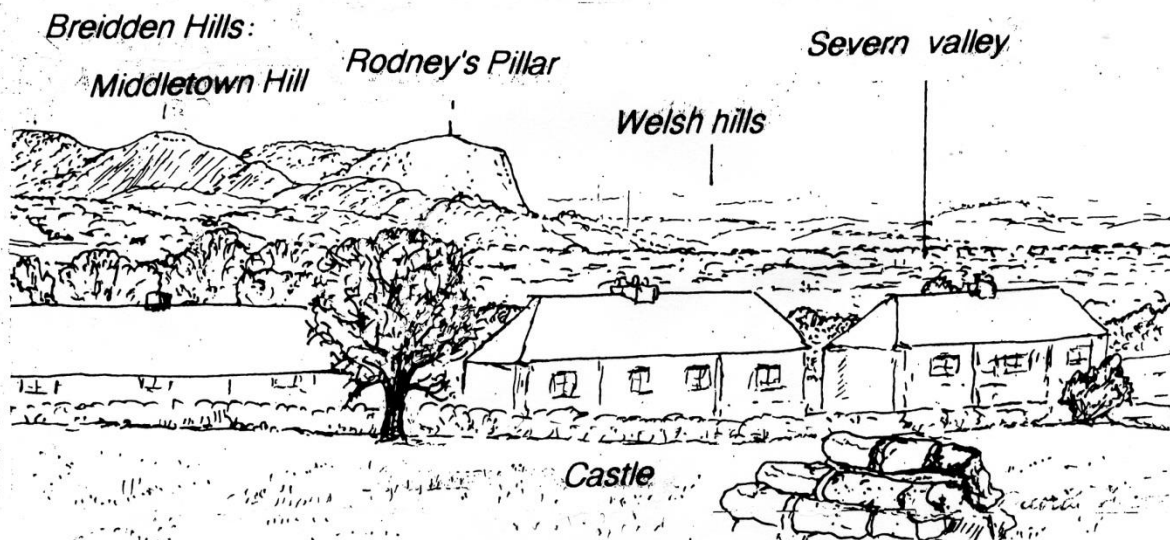
The View from SHRAWARDINE CASTLE then and now

18,000 years ago



Towards the end of the last Ice Age the glaciers are melting back to reveal our present landscape

Today



Since then the 'natural' landscape has been modified by human activity in various ways.

At this latitude we are still vulnerable to periodic 'Ice Ages'!

