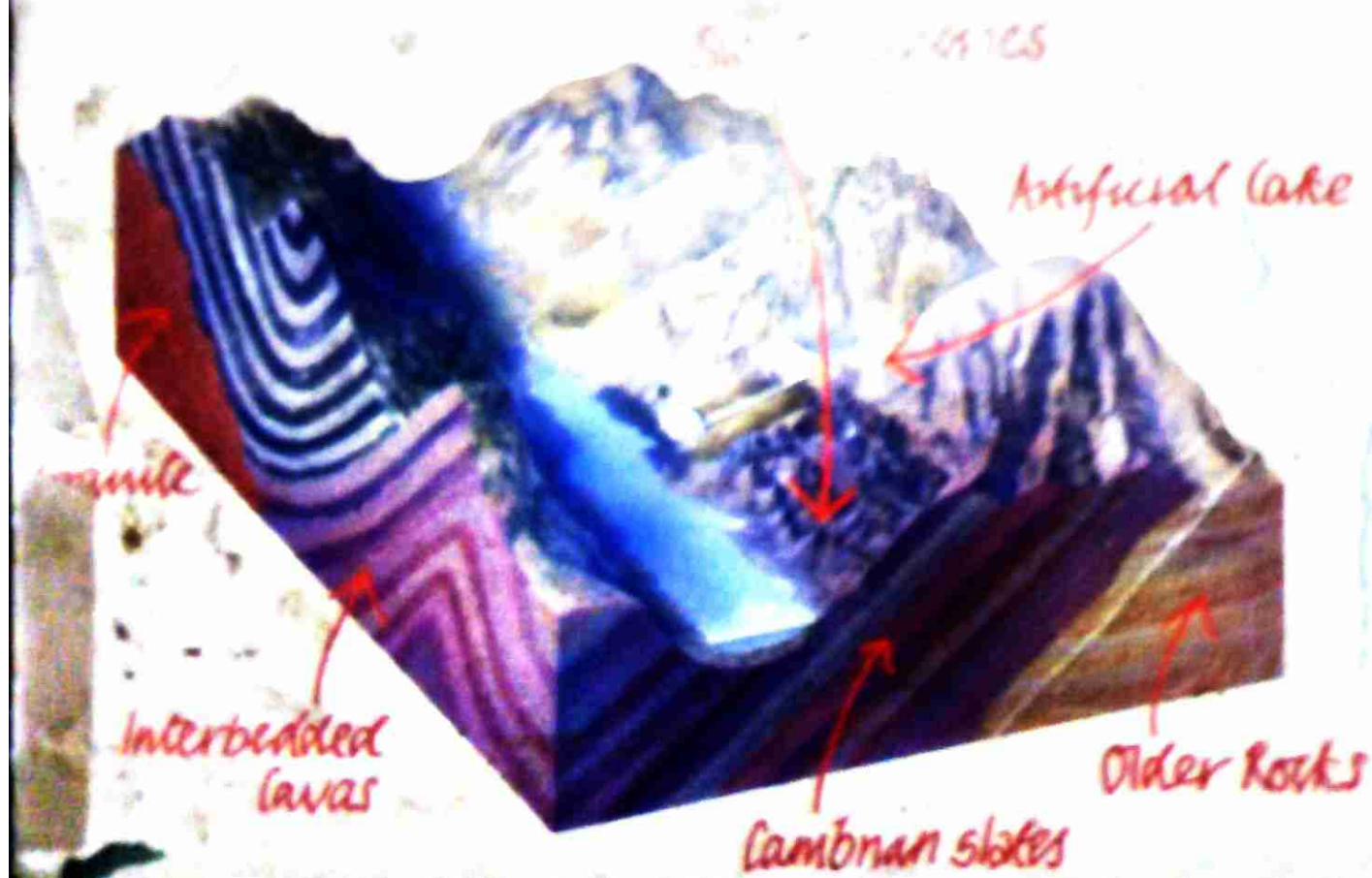


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A

aa lava A type of $\diamond$ lava characterized by its jagged, angular and sharply pointed blocks. Its black, clinker-like appearance results from the explosively escaping bursts of gas through the rapidly congealing surface as the molten lava beneath tugs at the hardening crust, causing it to break into irregular masses. The word *aa* is Hawaiian. $\diamond$ lava, *pahoehoe*.

abime A vertical shaft in $\diamond$ karst terrain. The deep shaft through the limestone is of such magnitude that it is often referred to as 'bottomless', but in reality it opens into a network of subterranean passages at depth. $\diamond$ pot-hole, *swallow-hole*.

abiotic The non-living factors which influence an ecosystem, e.g. the geology, are termed the abiotic factors.

ablation (1) The wastage or removal of surface snow or ice by melting and evaporation, achieved by: (a) transfer of $\diamond$ sensible heat and $\diamond$ latent heat (aided by $\diamond$ vapour pressure and $\diamond$ wind velocity) and by $\diamond$ insolation; (b) $\diamond$ conduction from morainic debris or surrounding rock walls; (c) meltwater streams; (d) rainfall; (e) $\diamond$ sublimation; (f) wind removal. The *ablation factor* is the rate at which the ice or snow surface wastes. $\diamond$ ablation till. (2) The removal of rock debris by wind action ($\diamond$ deflation).

ablation till $\diamond$ till.

Abney-level A simple, lightweight surveying instrument for measuring slope-angle (angle of inclination), where no great accuracy is required. It comprises a hand-held sighting-tube linked to a spirit-level, the bubble of which is reflected in the eyepiece. When the observer sights an object, adjustment is made to the tilting spirit-level and once the bubble image coincides with the object sight the slope-

angle can be read from an attached scale.

abrasion The mechanical wearing effect on rocks caused by $\diamond$ corrosion. The abrading agent can take a variety of forms, e.g. sand, pebbles, boulders, but all must be moving across the rock surface in order to scratch, grind or polish. These frictional agents may be transported in various ways: by wind, running water, ocean waves and currents or by glacier ice. The act of abrasion will, therefore, vary in both its speed and its magnitude according to the type of agents involved. Sand-blasting by wind creates $\diamond$ ventifacts. $\diamond$ abrasion platform, *attrition*.

abrasion platform A virtually smooth marine platform cut by ocean waves at a coastline. If it is currently being fashioned it will be exposed only at low tide, but there is a possibility that the *wave-cut platform* will be hidden sporadically by a mantle of beach shingle, which is the abrading agent. If the platform is permanently exposed above high-water mark it is probably a $\diamond$ raised-beach platform.

abscissa The horizontal axis (x axis) in a graph. $\diamond$ ordinate.

absolute age Denotes the dating of rocks in the strictest sense, in actual rather than relative terms, usually by the number of years. $\diamond$ geochronology.

absolute drought A period of at least fifteen consecutive days on each of which less than 0.25 mm (0.01 in) of rainfall is recorded - British definition. In the USA a $\diamond$ dry spell refers to fourteen consecutive days without measurable rainfall.

absolute humidity (vapour concentration) The amount of water vapour per unit volume of air, expressed in g cm^{-3} . Some-