

STANFORD IN THE VALE ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESEARCH PROJECT

Church War Memorial Post-Survey Report

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This report details the results and interpretation from the archaeological field work (resistivity survey) which was carried out in an area of the cemetery of St Denys Church prior to the construction of a new War Memorial, Stanford in the Vale, Oxfordshire.

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Site: St Denys Church, Stanford in the Vale, Oxfordshire

Date: 2012

Project type: Research Project and Geophysical Survey

Museum accession No.: SF12.

NGR: SU 34222, 93500

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1. Introduction

1.1 This document discusses the results from the geophysical work carried out within the cemetery of St Denys Church, Stanford in the Vale, Oxfordshire, prior to the construction of the new War Memorial, during 2012. This work is part of an on-going research project examining in detail the archaeology, and in turn the heritage, of the village of Stanford in the Vale, under the project name: The Stanford in the Vale Archaeological Research Project.

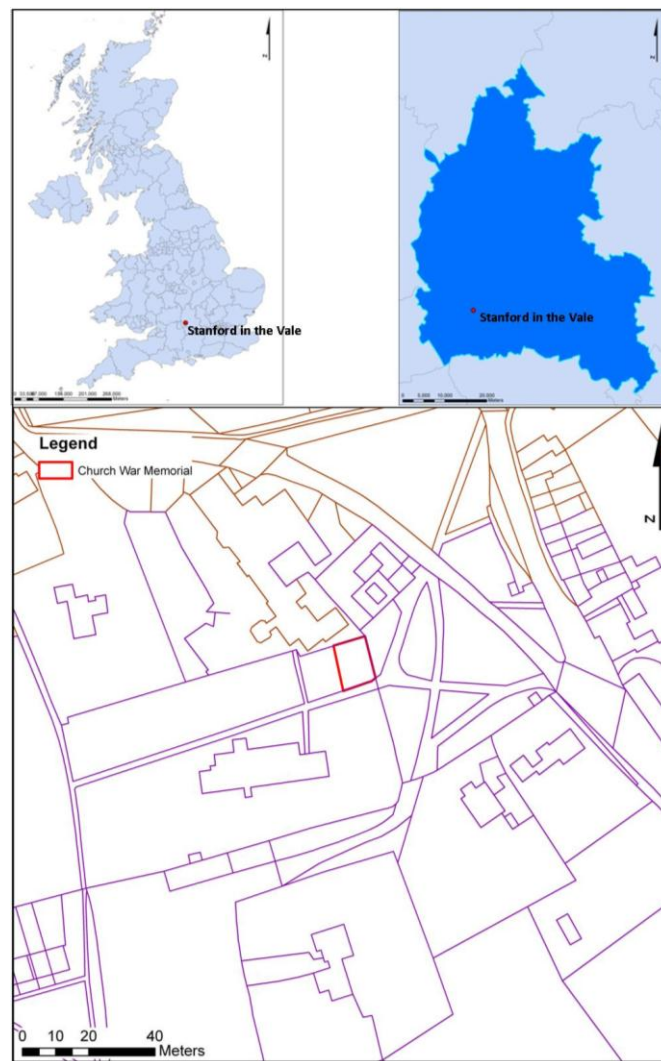
1.2 Within this document the following areas will be discussed: the aims and objectives of the project; the archaeological and historical background of the site, and of the area within the direct vicinity of the site; the methodology of the work carried out; the results; an interpretation of the results; lastly any further work which could be proposed to be carried out.

2. Site Location and Description

2.1 The site is located in the village of Stanford in the Vale, Oxfordshire in the NE corner of the Cemetery of St Denys Church. The location of the site is at NGR SU 34222, 93500 (Centre), which is the location for the construction of the War Memorial.

2.2 The area of the site is about 13 m long N-S (longest Point) by 10 m wide E-W (widest point), so giving an area of 138.7m². The location and area of the site can be seen in Figure 1.

Figure 1. This map shows the location of the site at a national, county and local level.



3. Project Aims and Objectives

3.1 The aims and objectives of the project, which this work is undertaken within, are split into three main areas:

- To gain a further and greater understanding of the archaeology of Stanford in the Vale.
- To either prove or disprove the following hypothesis: Stanford in the Vale was planned as a 10 acre medieval market town which had failed by the end of the medieval period. At this point Stanford in the Vale formed into a village.
- To get the local community involved in their local heritage and archaeology.

4. Archaeological and Historical Background

4.1 The site is located in the center of the historical village, adjacent to the church, as well as Church Green. The geology underlying the site is Stanford Formation Limestone and is approximately 74 m above sea level.

4.2 On the site itself no known archaeological and very little historical information is known. However, a large amount of archaeological remains have been found within close vicinity to the site giving an idea of the possible buried remains beneath the survey area. The earliest known activity surrounding the site dates to the Mesolithic period, shown by large quantities of flint scatters found in the surrounding area (Stebbing, 1977, p. 8). Also, further prehistoric evidence has been found, that of both Neolithic and Bronze Age flint scatters (Stebbing, 1977, p. 8) (Ashby, 2010, p. 9) (HER 26340 - MOX23767). This evidence shows prehistoric activity in the direct area surrounding the site.

4.3 From the Roman period, a larger quantity of finds material has been found. This includes artifacts, including 3 pottery sherds found in the gardens of the Manor House (English Heritage, 2007a) (HER 7560 - MOX957) and also a spindle whorl found 355 m to the SW of the site (English Heritage, 2007b) (HER 7986 - MOX960). Also excavation within the village have revealed roman remains including: ditches, pits and gullies at 27 High Street (HER 15888 - MOX993) and Firtree Nurseries (NMR, English Heritage, 2007c) (HER 15952 - MOX995), about 300 m to the SE; and two cremations burials, about 440 m to the S, found during work on the rising main (Cotswold Archaeology, 2009) (HER 26470 - MOX23909). From this evidence it may be seen that there is a Roman settlement in the area, as well as a possible Roman cemetery.

4.4 At present, from the Anglo Saxon periods there is only an extremely small amount of evidence, that of only 4 features dating from this period from across the whole village.

4.5 From the Medieval and early Post Medieval periods there is a vast increase in activity in the area surrounding the site. From the medieval period there is a large amount of evidence from finds spots, excavations and standing buildings, suggesting there is an abundance of activity occurring at this time surrounding the site. This includes artifacts found at the Manor House, that of: a unique Bronze Skillet dating to the 13th – 14th C AD (Dunning, 1962); a bone spindle whorl; pottery; and bronze sheet (NMR, English Heritage, 2007c) (HER 7560 - MOX957). Furthermore, during excavations, medieval features have been found such as pits at The Grange Nursing Home (HER 16801 - MOX12566) and 27 High Street (HER 15888 - MOX993) (NMR, English Heritage, 2007c), and a large quantity of medieval buildings and structures, including a possible water mill, during other excavation in the village (Ashby, 2010).

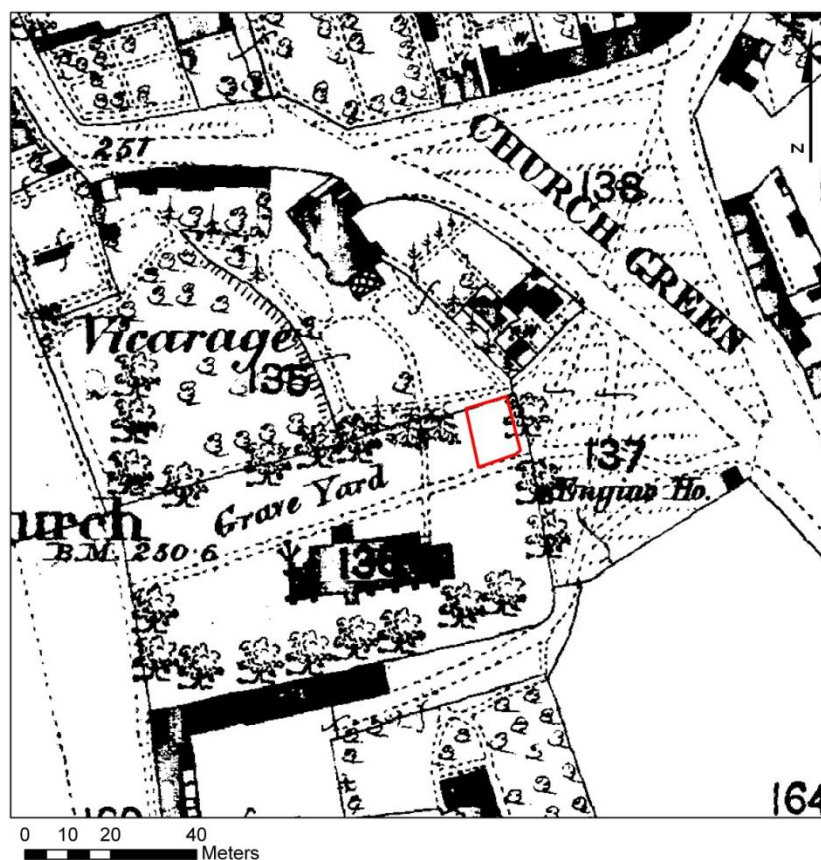
4.6 Lastly, there is one standing building also dating from this period adjacent to the site, and which the survey area is the part of the cemetery of, that of the parish church of St. Denys (Berkshire Federation of Women's Institutes, 1979, p. 134). From the historical documents it can be seen that there was a church constructed on the present site, from the 12th C AD, of which only the two nave doorways remain (Page & Ditchfield, 1924), though there may have also been earlier structure pre dating this also on the site. Though, the 12th C onwards changes and additions were made to the church in the 13th, 14th, 15th and 16th C AD (Page & Ditchfield, 1924). Also, within the cemetery there are a further three listed structure: two Chest Tomb Stone, one dating to 1784 and the second dating to the 18th C (British Listed

Buildings, 2012b) (British Listed Buildings, 2012a); two head stones dating to the Late 17th C (British Listed Buildings, 2012c). These structures are both located about 60 to 70 m to the SW of the survey area.

4.7 From the information detailed above it is presently thought that by the end of the 12th – 14th C AD Stanford in the Vale was a large medieval settlement, with the current theory of it being a medieval market town, which by the end of the 14th C had collapsed in to a much smaller village. This is further supported by document evidence that Stanford was granted a market in 1230, which possible took place on Church Green (Maine, 1866, p. 19).

4.8 During the Post-Medieval period, historic maps of the site start to be produced. Such as seen in Figure 2, a 1874 map, all other historic maps both per and postdating this one, dating back to 1760, show the area where the present site is, as being part of the land/cemetery of the adjacent church. From the Tithe Award of 1846, the land was owned by the Revd. Thomas Sauders and the occupied was the Rev. Edward Gear, and the land type was Church and Yard (Howse, 1994, p. 19). From this map data, it may indicate that the archaeology within this area of the village will be well preserved, and dates to many periods, as from at least the medieval period the adjacent church green and church have been the center of the village community.

Figure 2. This map, from 1874, shows that the area of the site, as well as the adjacent St Denys Church (EDINA, 2011).



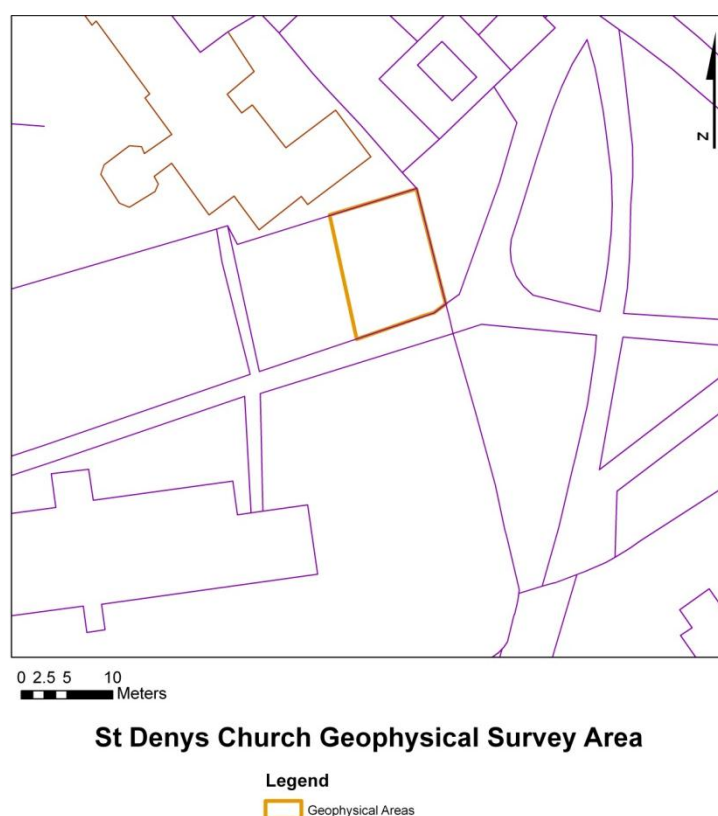
1874 Map of St Denys Church and Cemetery

Legend
 Church War Memorial

5. Geophysical Survey (Resistivity)

5.1 Given the likely hood of the nature of the buried remains, a resistivity survey was carried out to locate any buried archaeological features on the site. Due to the size of the site, and in turn, the close proximity of the edge of the grids to metal features such as fences, resistivity was used to survey the site, as magnetometry results are likely to become distorted by these modern structures. The location of the area within the site, in which the resistivity survey was carried out on, can be seen in Figure 3.

Figure 3. This figure shows the location and area of the resistivity survey was carried out in the Cemetery of St Denys Church.



5.2 The resistivity grids were laid out using tapes, in the usual method, in the size of 20 m by 20 m. Once this was done the NGRs for the four corners of the grid were recorded using a Builder 509 total station. These grids were surveyed, using the resistivity meter as fully as possible, with dummy readings being inserted where it was not possible to survey a full grid square due to geographical, topographical or other unknown circumstances.

5.3 The resistivity survey was carried out using a Geoscan RM 15 with a twin electrode configuration (Geoscan Research, 2005, p. 2). Each grid was surveyed using a series of zigzag traverses spaced at 1m intervals. Mobile probes spaced at 0.5 m gave an effective sub-surface penetration of between 0.5 m and 1.0 m, with larger features showing at a greater depth. The readings were automatically logged at 1m intervals giving a resolution of 400 readings per 20 m x 20 m square.

5.4 Upon the completion of the survey, the geophysical data was transferred from the portable computer to a desktop PC for processing and interpretation using a combination of Geoplot 3.0 (Geoscan Research, 2010) and Arc GIS 9.3.1 (ESRI, 2009). Within Geoplot the data was passed through despiking, low pass filter and a high pass filter. The survey was then geo-referenced onto an Ordnance Survey 1:10,000 base map, providing an orientation and scale.

6. Results

6.1 The results from the resistivity survey carried out during this season's work are seen in Figure 4. Also seen in Figure 5, are the separate features, outlined in red. Interpretations of the features which are shown on the plot are described below in Section 7 of this document.

Figure 4. This map shows the results from the resistivity survey carried out within the construction area of the War Memorial, St Denys Church, Stanford in the Vale, Oxfordshire.



St Denys Church Resistivity Survey Results

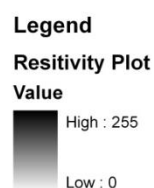
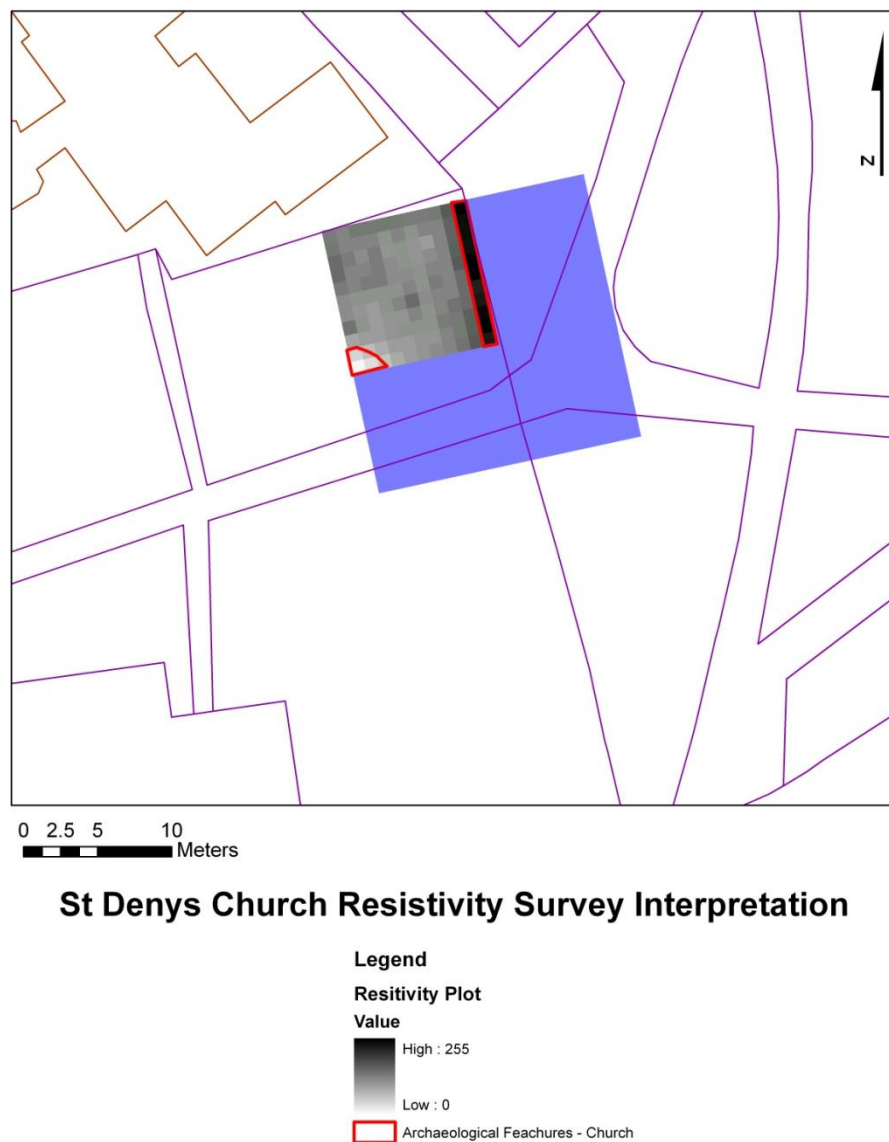


Figure 5. This map shows the location of features shown on the resistivity data (in red).

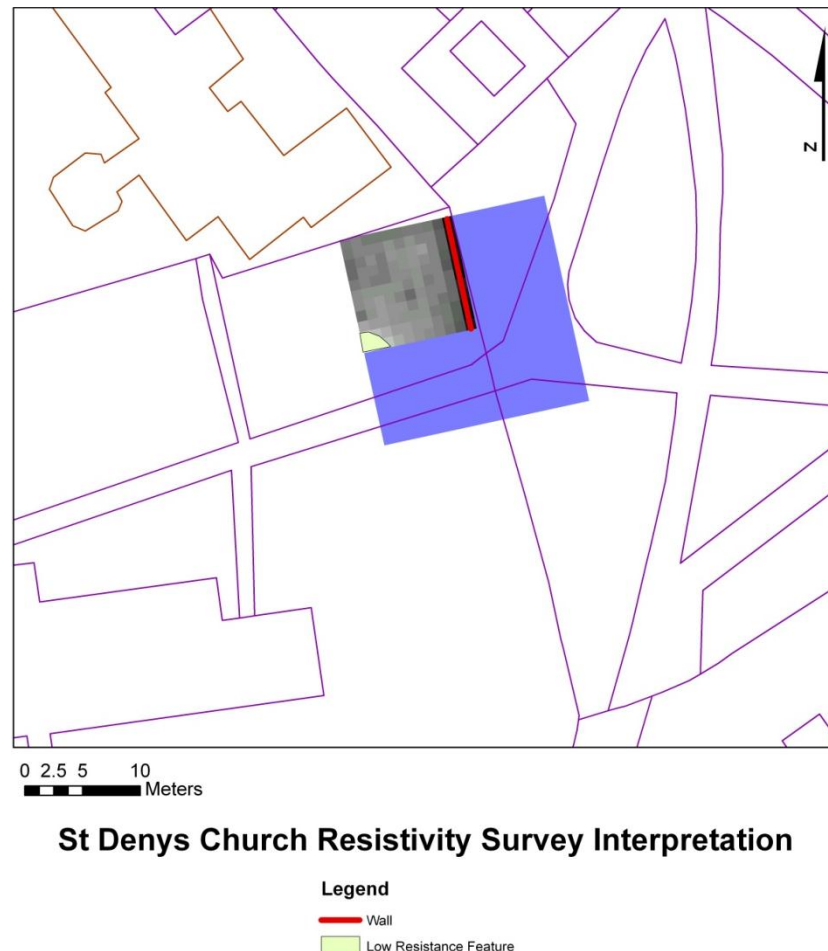


6.2 The results shown in Figure 5 show two main features, of both high and low resistance, and which both extend off the edge of the survey area. The first anomaly is that of a linear feature, located along the eastern edge of the survey area and which extends off the edge of the survey plot. This is a high resistance (18 to 26 ohm's) feature measuring 20 m long by 1 m wide. The second anomaly is that of a sub-oval feature, which extends off the edge of the survey area and is located in the south west corner of the plot. This is a low resistance (-22 to -12 ohm's) feature, measuring 1.80 m (at its longest point) by 2.35 m (at its widest point).

7. Interpretation

7.1 From the results, explained above, and the two features which have been identified on the results an interpretation can be made about each of the features in turn. The interpretation of the features can be split into two main areas: 1. Structures; 2. Unknown. The current interpretation of all these features can be seen in Figure 6.

Figure 6. This map shows the location and interpretation of the features shown on the geophysical data.



7.2 Structures

7.2.1 The first type of feature which can be seen on the resistivity plot is that of a structure. This is the high resistance feature located on the eastern edge of the geophysical plot. This feature has been interpreted as the part of the foundation of the boundary wall of the existing church cemetery. This is as the anomaly runs adjacent to this wall as well as on the same alignment. Due to the wall, which this feature is thought to be the foundation of, still standing as the boundary wall of the cemetery at present, the feature is thought to date to the Post-Medieval period. Furthermore the foundation of the wall may be 1 m wider than the existing wall due to the increased level of cemetery soil behind the wall, so it needs a wider foundation to be able to support this extra height, weight and volume of material.

7.3 Unknown Features

7.3.1 The second type of feature which can be seen on the geophysical plot is that of a low resistance feature, which currently has an unknown function. This feature is located in the NW corner of the survey area. Due to this feature being of a low resistance, and located right on the edge of the survey plot the only interpretation, which may be possible, is that of it being the edge of a possible ditch. Though, at present, due to the feature being located on the edge of the plot this cannot be proven, but may be related to an early church on the site. Furthermore the date of this feature is also unknown at this time, but due to it being of such a low resistance could possibly pre date the Post-Medieval period. Further work will need to be undertaken prior to the date and function of this feature being confirmed.

8. Conclusion

8.1 In conclusion, the survey has shown that there is very little visible archaeology in the area where the War Memorial is to be constructed. Though the survey does show two features right on the edge of the survey area, that of a possible wall footing and that of a possible ditch, but this is not certain due to its location on the edge of the data. The ditch feature may, however, pre date the existing church on the site and may surround an earlier structure. This may only be proved through further archaeological work being carried out on the site. Furthermore, even though no other archaeological features are shown on the data, this does not confirm that there are no archaeological features in this area, as the depth of cemetery soil in this area may be masking the archaeological features. Furthermore it being likely that there are graves containing human remains in this area of the crematory which are unlikely to show on resistivity data due to their form and fill type, which would not show up using this type of survey technique.

9. Further Proposed Work

9.1 From the features identified and interpreted above, further archaeological work can be proposed to be carried out in the area surrounding the surveyed grid. This work would help us better understand the low resistance feature located in the SW area of the current survey plot as well as further understanding the area directly surrounding the current church. An expansion of the survey work would also identify any possible early structures on the site, which are not buried under the current church structure as well as also help to understand and manage the buried archaeology on the site. Because of this it is proposed that the resistivity survey would also be carried out in the area of the cemetery directly surrounding the church. This would include the two main areas of the historic cemetery on the Northern and Southern sides of the existing structure. Due to this being a non-invasive technique, the survey would not disturb any of the buried human remains. If the proposed work was to be undertaken a full pre survey report would be produced and permission from both the Prequel Church Council (PCC) and Diocese of Oxford would be gained.

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