

Land south of

# Christ Church

Harley Road, Cressage, Shropshire

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Field evaluation

NGR: SJ 59221 03961

Site code: HRC15

OASIS ID-110archa1-228176

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one ten archaeology

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## SUMMARY

In October 2015 trial trenching was carried out at land to the south of Christ Church, Harley Road, Cressage, Shrewsbury, Shropshire in connection with residential development of the site.

Documentary information indicated that a former road of probable medieval date crossed that southern edge of the site and that a number of buildings stood on and immediately adjacent to the site in the mid-18th century.

The results from trenches 1 & 2 where there was no evidence of these former structures suggests that they were in fact sited further to the north in the plot now occupied by the current church. Their demolition is likely to have been carried out in 1841 in order to make way for the construction of the newly dedicated Christ Church built to replace the earlier St. Samsons Church.

The 1747 map also showed an ancient monastic route-way (to Broadwas) crossing the southern boundary of the study site. Investigation of this road feature showed that at the east end of the site it appears to have comprised nothing more than a rudimentary track hollowed out through continued use rather than some form of deliberately deposited road material such as stones and/or metalling.

Pottery was retrieved from all of the trenches and was generally dated from the 17-18<sup>th</sup> centuries, those collected from trenches 1 & 2 where the largest quantity was found, were all residual and their deposition possibly related to the occupation of the earlier farmstead to the north. A lack of any earlier residual finds suggests little activity within the study site before this period.



Fig.1; site location (circled in red)



Fig. 2; application area (outlined in red)

## INTRODUCTION

### *Location and scope of work (Figs. 1 & 2)*

This document details the results of an archaeological evaluation during 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> of October 2015 at land to the south of Christ Church, Harley Road, Cressage, Shrewsbury, Shropshire at the request of We Build it Ltd. Planning permission (Ref: W/12/01206/FUL) has been granted by Shrewsbury District Council for the erection of three dwellings with single garages and formation of vehicular access, provision of community car park and a disabled access ramp at Christ Church. The work was carried out in accordance with a letter issued by the Historic Environment Team, Shropshire Council stipulating evaluation trenches within the area of the proposed development prior to the start of development.

### *Geology and topography*

Cressage is a village and civil parish in Shropshire. The village lies on the intersection of the A458 and the B4380, near to the River Severn and is 4 miles from the nearest town, and 8 miles south-east of Shrewsbury. The proposed development site lies within the historic centre of Cressage village straddling the east side of the main A458 (Harley Road) towards the southern end of the village.

Documentary information submitted with Dr Hill's representation during the planning application during 4<sup>th</sup> April 2012 indicated that a former road of probable medieval date crossed that southern edge of the site and that a number of buildings stood on and immediately adjacent to the site in the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century. It was therefore possible that archaeological remains relating to the medieval and later development of the village existed on the site and for these reasons it was deemed to have moderate to high archaeological potential.

### *Archaeological and historical background*

The village was originally called Christesache, or "Christ's Oak", and this over time has been corrupted to form the word "Cressage". In 584, Saint Augustine reputedly preached under the Cressage Oak. The oak tree was part of a forest (which no longer exists), and a cutting from it was planted near the village in 1616. This was later relocated due to railway construction. The small green in the centre of the village is the traditional site of Christs Oak and Market Cross site

(MSA2674). A stone cross is said to have stood here in the Middle Ages. By the 18<sup>th</sup> century it had been replaced by a circular wooden structure known as the Market Cross. This was demolished in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century.

The Shropshire Historic Environment Record (HER) was consulted with a search carried out over a 500m radius centred on the site and a total of 40 monument and 9 event records are listed.

The more significant monument records show that Cressage has its origins at least in the Late Saxon/early Norman period. In a field nearby lie the buried remains of St Samsons Chapel (MSA774) which is of probable late Saxon date. In the same field as the chapel lies a number of earthwork features interpreted as the deserted remains of Cressage medieval village (MSA2177). The main features are a group of linear ditches which define at least two quadrilateral enclosures, probably toft/ crofts, related to the present A458 road. The western enclosure contains very slight ridge and furrow running parallel to the road.

The Old Hall (SA 13267) stands on the site of a manor house first mentioned in 1369. It overlooks a ford across the Severn and occupies the bailey of an earlier motte and bailey castle (MSA1333), the motte of which was partially destroyed when the railway was built. When a wall garden below the east front of the Old Hall was being made in 1923 the surface below the present lawn was found to be flagged, probably the remains of the paved bottom of the moat (VCH, 1908).

The parish church of Christ Church (MSA10117) which lies adjacent to the north side of the church was built in 1841 by Edward Haycock, the circular Romanesque-style font (1842) is said to be a copy of that formerly in St Samson's which was demolished in 1640 and Christ Church built as its replacement.

At the north end of Harley Road lies The Eagle Inn (MSA30245), a farmstead first identified and classified by the Historic Farmsteads Characterisation Project, 2008–2010 (ESA6427), largely from the digital version of the c.1900 OS large scale mapping.

Out of the nine event records only one relates to archaeological fieldwork, a watching brief (ESA7543) carried out in 2015 at Fingerpost Cottage, Cressage during ground work associated with the construction of an extension. The Cottage is a Grade II Listed building of mid-17th century date and formerly the gardener's cottage to the Old Hall at Cressage. Despite being a site of potential archaeological interest, no archaeological features were uncovered (Frost, 2015).

To the south of the site, along the southern boundary are the remains of an ancient medieval road that may have been constructed by the monks of

Buildwas Abbey to connect their farm at Harnage Grange (Hill, 2015), the trace of this can be seen today following the hedge-line on the south of the site. Before the current road to Sheinton was built the route connecting Cressage and Sheinton as shown on the Manor Map of 1747 was along a road that met the Harley Road at a crossroads. Hill's redrawn plan (based on the 1747 map) also shows that there were some structures (?cottages) to the south and north before the church was built in the 1840s. The Tithe map of 1842 indicates that the route of the old road to Sheinton had been abandoned and a new road constructed. When the present road to Sheinton was constructed it cut through the outer bailey of the medieval Castle. Eventually with the building of the Moors Council Estate and subsequent building of property in Sheinton Road the only section of ancient road surviving today is that which is contained within the southern edge of the study site.

## EXCAVATION METHODOLOGY

### *Aims of the work*

The objectives of the archaeological work were staged. Trial trenching was initially be carried out to determine the date, character, quality, survival and extent of the archaeological deposits within the area likely to be threatened by the proposed development. Should significant finds or features had been be identified then an appropriate excavation strategy would be implemented as a final stage of mitigation. This would be the subject of a separate brief. More specifically, trenches 1 & 2 were located at the west end of the site to investigate buildings mapped in 1747 whilst trench 3 was positioned to identify a medieval road also identified on the same map as formerly straddling the southern edge of the site.

### *Sample size and scope of fieldwork*

The archaeological field work and post-excavation was be carried out in accordance with standards and guidance for archaeological field evaluations produced by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA, 2014).

The trial trenching comprised three trenches each 1.20m wide. Two trenches (1 & 2) totalling 17 linear metres were excavated in the area of the proposed carpark where the 1747 Manor Map indicated the location of three structures (?buildings). A third 15m long trench was excavated to the east of the

site and was positioned perpendicular to an ancient route-way also indicated on the 1747 map.

#### *Fieldwork methods and recording*

The archaeological field work and post-excavation was carried out in accordance with standards and guidance for archaeological field evaluations produced by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA, 2014). All deposits were excavated removing the overburden under close archaeological supervision and investigated for archaeological features. Plans and sections of the trenches were made during excavation.

#### RESULTS: GENERAL

##### *Soil and ground conditions*

Conditions were generally dry during excavation, the deposits were also dry, showing little moisture retention. Excavation of the deposits was smooth and controlled leaving a clean visible surface.

##### *Reliability of field investigation*

There was little evidence of truncation within trenches 1 and 2, albeit with some significant root penetration affecting the topsoil layers. In trench 3 truncation associated with the insertion of a drain (ceramic) was observed at the south end.

##### *Distribution of archaeological deposits*

The results have shown that no significant archaeological deposits are likely to exist within the areas evaluated by the trial trenching. The stratigraphic sequence consisted of three layers comprising a natural substrate overlain by a relict cultivation soil which was in turn sealed by the modern topsoil.

##### *Presentation of results*

The results of the excavation (below) are described from the earliest to the latest deposits. The trench was attributed context numbers with a numerical value equivalent to the number of the trench.

## RESULTS: DESCRIPTIONS (Figs. 3 & 4)

### *TRENCHES 1, 2 & 3*

#### *Contexts 102, 202 & 302 (natural geology)*

The surface of the geological horizon or natural substrate was exposed throughout the majority of all three trenches where it comprised a friable mid yellowish-brown (and in some places reddish-brown) clayey-sand with a large component of small to large rounded pebbles.

No archaeological deposits were observed cut into or overlying the surface of this layer which in trench 1 (context 102) where it was recorded at a height of 47.65m AOD at the south-west end of the trench sloping down to 47.35m AOD at the north-east end. The same clayey-sand natural was repeated in trench 2 (context 202) which was staggered and located approx. 3m further to the south-east. In this trench the surface of the natural substrate was recorded at the south-west end of the trench at a height of 47.80m AOD sloping down to 47.75 at the north-east end.

In trench three, located at the west end of the study site the natural geology (context 302) was recorded at a level height of 48.80m AOD.

#### *Contexts 101, 201 & 301*

Overlying the natural clayey-sand (contexts 102, 202 & 302) throughout all of the trenches and interpreted as a relict subsoil layer, was a deposit of light greyish-brown sandy-silt with a 20-25% component of small to medium sized rounded pebbles. A 2-3% inclusion of charcoal flecking was also recorded. In trench 1 it was about 0.10m thick at the south-west end increasing to 0.40m thick at the north-east end. In trench 2 the equivalent deposit (context 201) varied from between 0.15-20m thick whilst in trench 3 the equivalent deposit (context 301) varied between 0.10-15m thick. Finds were retrieved mainly from context 101 comprising mainly late 18<sup>th</sup> century pottery and a fragment of red brick.

#### *Contexts 100, 200 & 300*

Overlying the relict subsoil layer in all three trenches (contexts 101, 201 & 301) was the existing topsoil layer, comprising a dark greyish-brown loam with a small component of small to medium sized rounded pebbles. There was also charcoal flecking and this was present in a greater concentration than that found in the underlying deposit. In trench 1 the topsoil deposit was about 0.30m thick at the



Fig. 3; site plan with trench locations

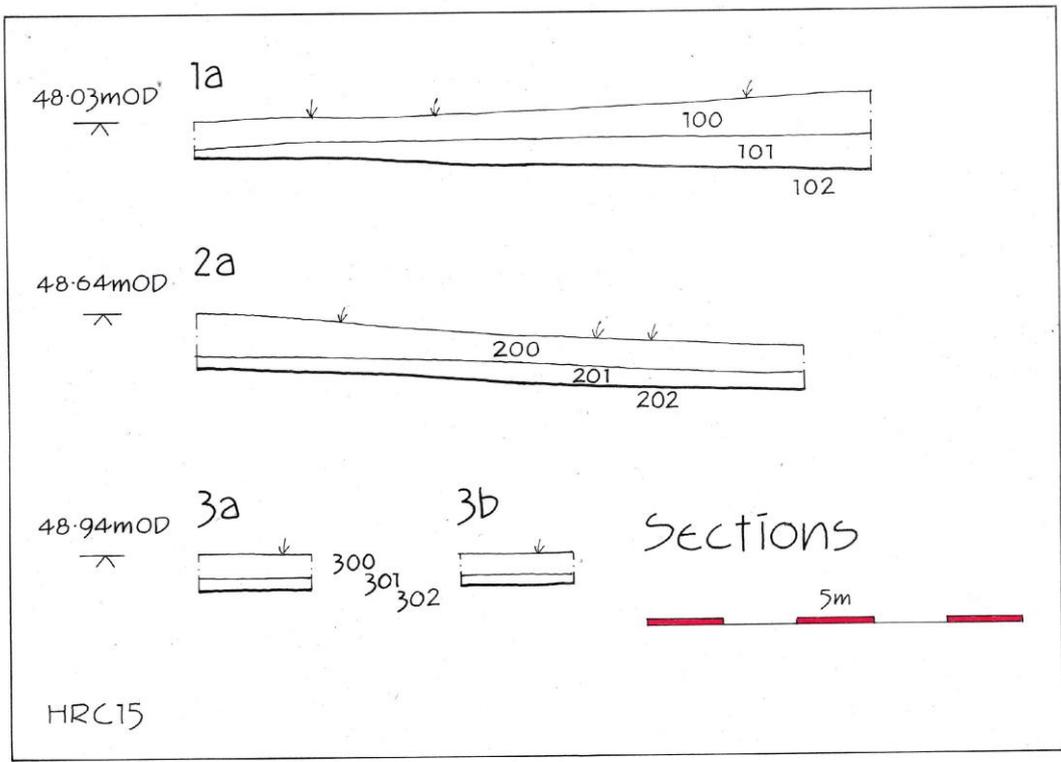


Fig. 4; trench sections

*Continued from page 11*

south-west end increasing to about 0.45m thick at the north east end. In trench 2 the thickness of the topsoil at the north-east end tapered off to about 0.15m indicating a slightly elevated area of topsoil (mound) within the central area investigated by trenches 1 & 2. Finds comprised a mixture of pottery and building material ranging in date from post-medieval to modern and two fragments of bottle glass.

## FINDS

### Pottery by *Paul Blinkhorn*

The pottery assemblage comprised 25 sherds with a total weight of 368g. It was all post-medieval or modern. The following fabric types were noted:

CRM: Creamware, mid 18<sup>th</sup> – 19<sup>th</sup> century (Towner 1978). 2 sherds, 19g.

IGW: Post-medieval Black-glazed Buff Ware, late 17<sup>th</sup> - 18<sup>th</sup> century (Crossley 1994). 11 sherds, 129g.

MOD: Miscellaneous 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century wares. 4 sherds, 107g.

SS: Staffordshire Slipware, mid-17<sup>th</sup> – 18<sup>th</sup> century (*ibid.*). 8 sherds, 113g.

The pottery occurrence by number and weight of sherds per context by fabric type is shown in Table 1. Each date should be regarded as a *terminus post quem*. The range of fabric types is typical of sites in the region. The assemblage comprised a mixture of tablewares such as press-moulded plates and dishes in Staffordshire Slipware, and fragments of pancheons (large bowls) in IGW. This is typical of the traditions.

Table 1: Pottery occurrence by number and weight (in g) of sherds per context by fabric type

Cntxt	SS		IGW		CRM		MOD		Date
	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	
100	4	43	2	66			3	71	MOD
101	1	20	1	5					L17thC
200	2	34					1	36	MOD
300	1	16	8	58	2	19			M18thC
Total	8	113	11	129	2	19	4	107	

*Environmental data*

No animal bone was recovered and none of the deposits exposed during the excavation proved suitable for palaeo-environmental sampling.



Plate 1; trench 1, from the west



Plate 2; trench section, from the south-west



Plate 3; trench 1, section, from the south-east



Plate 4; trench 1, section, west end, detail



Plate 5; trench 1, section, east end, detail



Plate 6; trench 2, section, from the south-east



Plate 7; trench 2, section, south-west end, detail



Plate 8; trench 2, section, north-east end, detail



Plate 9; trench 3, from the north



Plate 10; section 3a



Plate 11; section 3b

## DISCUSSION (Fig. 5)

Although a search of the Historic Environment Record (HER) has shown a number of significant Saxon and medieval monuments situated within 500m of the study site, a single watching brief undertaken in 2015 represents the only archaeological fieldwork carried out to date.

Documentary information comprising principally the 1747 Manor Map supplemented by the OS 1882-3 indicated that a former road of probable medieval date crossed the southern edge of the site and that a group of three buildings stood on and immediately adjacent to the site in the mid-18th century. Of the two more southerly buildings the one straddling the roadside would in the traditional farm layout, probably equate to the barn, whilst the building to the east would be a good candidate for a cow shed. The more northerly building appears to be L-shaped suggesting the farmhouse with a cross wing.

The Manor map of Cressage village in 1747, redrawn from the original by John Roque in 2001, suggests that these buildings were probably located further north outside the area of investigation and clustered at the west end of the plot now occupied by Christ Church.

The results of trenches 1 & 2 where there was a lack of any foundation remains, floor surfaces or roofing material from the archaeological record, fragments of which could be expected to survive after their demolition as residually deposited material, strengthens the hypothesis that these buildings were in fact sited further to the north. Their demolition is likely to have been carried out prior to 1841 when the newly dedicated Christ Church was built to replace the earlier St. Samsons Church on the north-west side of the village.

The 1747 map also showed an ancient route-way (to Broadwas) crossing the southern boundary of the study site, this former road feature is currently marked by an existing hedge-line and the shallow visible remains of a 'hollowed-out-way' along its northern edge, this was particularly prominent at the junction of Harley Road at the west of the site. Trench 3 showed that at the east end of the site, this former monastic road appears to have comprised nothing more than a rudimentary track hollowed out through continued use rather than some form of deliberately deposited road material such as metalling. It was also noted during the survey that the road alignment lay on flat east-west ridge between sloping contours and was perhaps chosen as a convenient route utilising the existing topography on an elevated position.

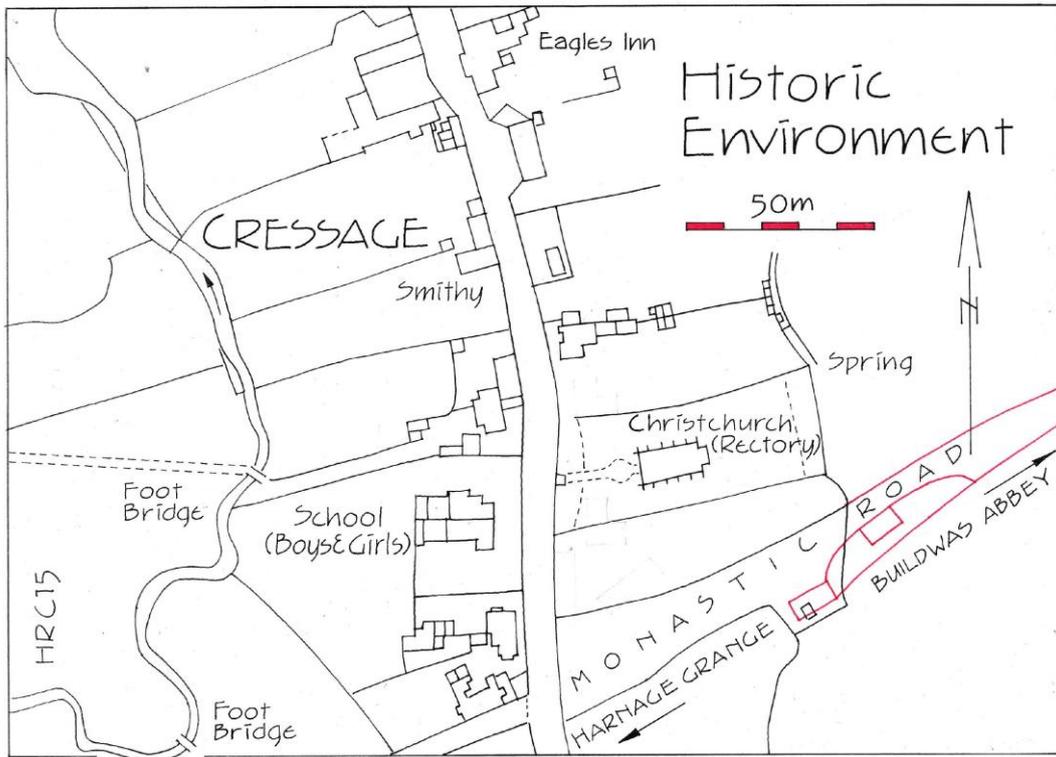


Fig. 5; black (OS 1882-3), red (1747)

Pottery was retrieved from all of the trenches and was generally dated from the 17-18<sup>th</sup> centuries, those collected from trenches 1 & 2 where the largest quantity was found, were all residual and their deposition possibly related to the occupation of the earlier farmstead to the north. A lack of any earlier residual finds suggests little activity within the study site before this period.

### *Summary of results*

Documentary information indicated that a former road of probable medieval date crossed that southern edge of the site and that a number of buildings stood on and immediately adjacent to the site in the mid-18th century.

The investigation revealed no significant archaeological deposits, instead a stratigraphic sequence comprising a natural substrate overlain by a relict subsoil which was in turn sealed by the modern topsoil suggests little activity within the study site itself. Buildings mapped in 1747 were shown not to extend into the proposed car-parking area and that any remains if present, are likely to exist further to the north at the west end of the plot now occupied by Christ Church and which led to their demolition in 1841.

A medieval monastic route-way, also mapped in 1747 straddling the southern boundary of the study site was investigated at the east end and was shown to comprise a rudimentary track which was in places hollowed-out.

Pottery collected from all of the trenches was generally dated from the 17-18<sup>th</sup> centuries, an absence of any earlier dating evidence currently suggests little activity before this period.

### *Significance*

The results of the trial trenching have shown that there are unlikely to be any significant archaeological deposits surviving within the area of the proposed car parking area. An absence of any evidence of the remains associated with the buildings mapped in 1747 suggests that these lay further to the north in the plot now occupied by the existing church. The proposed building plot at the western end of the study site shows that the ancient route-way, also mapped in 1747 is likely to comprise no more than a hollowed out track rather track.

### *Impact of development*

The trial trenching has indicated that in the area of development to the north-west of the study site comprising car parking will not impact on any surviving remain associated with the buildings shown on the 1747 Manor map. Trench three further confirmed that the housing plot to the east of the site will not impact remains associated with the medieval road straddling the southern edge of the study site.

### *Archive Location*

The archaeological documentary archive arising from the work will be appropriately conserved and deposited with the Shropshire County Museum. The digital archive arising from the work will be deposited with the Archaeology Data Service (ADS)

#### *Physical archive:*

pottery

#### *Documentary archive:*

X1 hard (unbound) report

#### *Digital archive:*

Pdf report

X12 digital images

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1747 Manor Map of Cressage

OS 1882-3

Shropshire Historic Environment Record 2015.

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## APPENDIX 1 OASIS FORM

Project name	evaluation at land south of Christ Church, Harley Road, Cressage, Shropshire
Short description of the project	In October 2015 trial trenching was carried out in connection with residential development of the site.
Project dates	Start: 19-10-2015 End: 20-10-2015
Previous/future work	No / Not known
Any associated project reference codes	HRC15 - Sitecode
Type of project	Field evaluation
Site status	None
Monument type	NONE None
Significant Finds	SN Post Medieval
Methods & techniques	"Targeted Trenches"
Development type	Rural residential
Prompt	Planning condition
Position in the planning process	After full determination (eg. As a condition)
Country	England
Site location	SHROPSHIRE SHREWSBURY AND ATCHAM CRESSAGE land south of Christ Church, Cressge
Postcode	SY56DF
Study area	0 Square metres
Site coordinates	SJ 59221 03961 52.631517420167 -2.602584602139 52 37 53 N 002 36 09 W Point
Height OD / Depth	Min: 47.35m Max: 48.8m
Name of Organisation	one ten archaeology
Project brief originator	Local Authority Archaeologist and/or Planning Authority/advisory body
Project design originator	one ten archaeology
Project director/manager	sean cook
Project supervisor	sean cook
Type of sponsor/funding body	Landowner
Physical Archive recipient	county museum
Physical Contents	"Ceramics"
Digital Archive recipient	OASIS
Digital Contents	"none"
Digital Media available	"Images raster / digital photography","Text"

Paper Archive recipient	county museum
Paper Contents	"none"
Paper Media available	"Report"
Publication type	Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)
Title	evaluation at land south of Christ Church, Cressage, Shropshire
Author(s)/Editor(s)	Cook, S
Date	2015
Issuer or publisher	one ten archaeology
Place of issue or publication	warks.
URL	<a href="http://www.oasis.ac.uk">http://www.oasis.ac.uk</a>
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