

**AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION ON
WESTGATE ROAD, NEWCASTLE-UPON-TYNE,
TYNE AND WEAR**

**An Archaeological Investigation on Westgate Road, Newcastle-upon-Tyne,
Tyne and Wear**

Central National Grid Reference: NZ 2463 6399

Site Code: WGR 05

Commissioning Client:

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1. NON-TECHNICAL SUMMARY

- 1.1 An archaeological investigation was undertaken in October 2005 by Pre-Construct Archaeology Limited on Westgate Road, Newcastle-upon-Tyne. The investigation was commissioned by NEDL in association with the installation of an underground electricity supply to The Sports Café, a newly opened premises at the junction of Grainger Street and Westgate Road. The central National Grid Reference of the site is NZ 2463 6399.
- 1.2 The site is located in an area of considerable archaeological sensitivity, within the corridor of the Hadrian's Wall UNESCO World Heritage Site. The main aim of the investigation was to establish whether or not the proposed cable installation across Westgate Road would impact upon surviving remains of Hadrian's Wall or associated deposits. If structural fabric of the Wall was encountered, it was to be archaeologically recorded but retained *in situ*, with an alternative route for the cable run being sought.
- 1.3 The investigation comprised the excavation of a linear trench excavated in two phases along the line of the cable installation and to its maximum intrusive depth, 650mm.
- 1.4 In summary, no archaeological features or deposits predating the post-medieval period were recorded within the trench and the cable installation proceeded as planned.

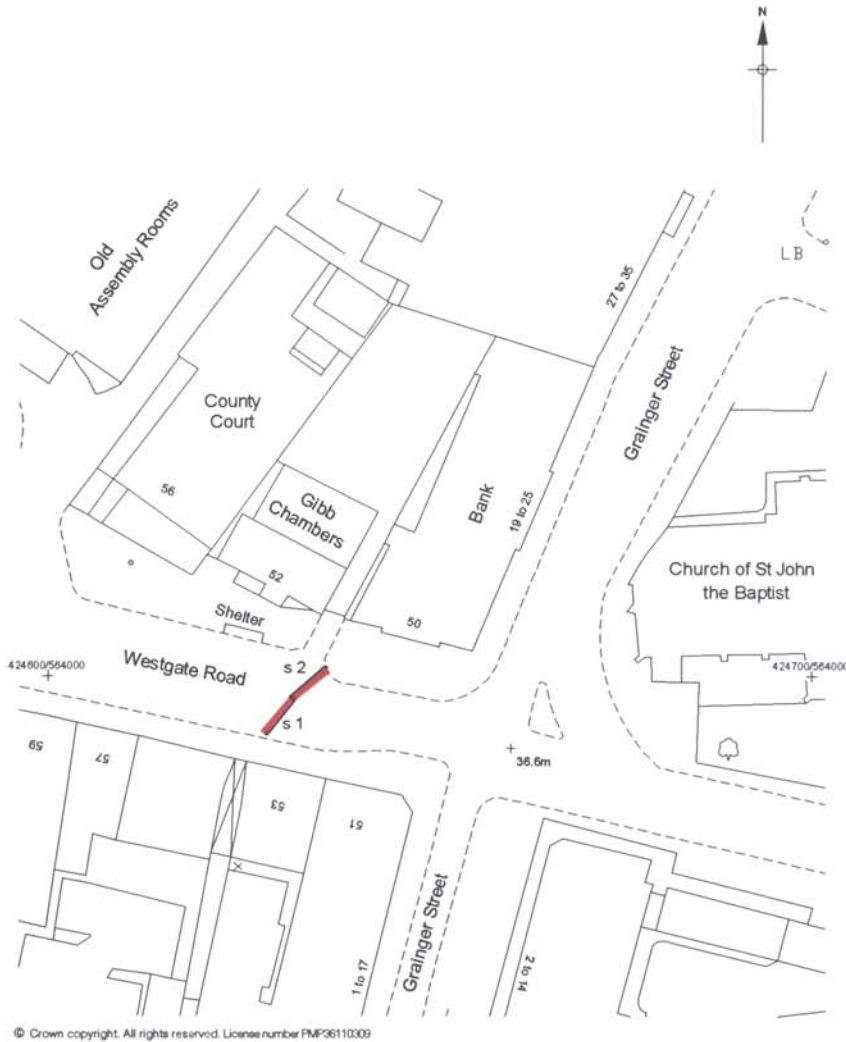
2. INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 This report describes the findings of an archaeological investigation undertaken by Pre-Construct Archaeology Limited (PCA) in October 2005 on Westgate Road, Newcastle-upon-Tyne. The central National Grid Reference of the site is NZ 2463 6399.
- 2.2 The investigation was commissioned by Northern Electric Distribution Limited (NEDL), who were to install a new electricity supply to The Sports Café, a newly opened premises at the junction of Grainger Street and Westgate Road. The cable run was to across Westgate Road, within the known line of Hadrian's Wall, which has the status of UNESCO World Heritage Site.
- 2.3 The archaeological investigation was undertaken according to a Specification,¹ compiled by the Tyne and Wear County Archaeologist. The purpose was to determine whether the installation of the electricity cable would affect surviving remains of Hadrian's Wall or any associated deposits. Because such remains are considered to be of national importance both Newcastle City Council and English Heritage favour their preservation *in-situ*.
- 2.4 A linear archaeological trench was investigated along the line of the cable run. Due to the necessity to keep one carriageway of Westgate Road open, the investigation was carried out in two phases, on successive Sundays, the 9th and the 16th October 2005.
- 2.5 At the time of writing, the project archive is housed at the Northern Office of PCA at Unit N19a, Tursdale Business Park, Durham, DH6 5PG. The completed project archive, comprising written, drawn, and photographic records and artefacts will be deposited at The Museum of Antiquities, Department of Archaeology, Newcastle University, under the site code WGR 05.
- 2.6 The Online Access to the Index of Archaeological Investigations (OASIS) reference number for the project is: preconst1-11976.

¹ Newcastle City Council, 2005.



Figure 1. Site location
Scale 1:25,000



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Figure 2. Trench location
Scale 1:1250

3. PLANNING BACKGROUND AND RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

3.1 Planning Background

- 3.1.1 NEDL had notified Newcastle City Council of the intention to install electricity supply by underground cable to serve the newly opened Sports Café on the north-west side of the junction between Westgate Road and Grainger Street. The cable run was to cross the carriageway of Westgate Road to the south-west of the former bank building.
- 3.1.2 The need for early consultation in the planning process in order to determine the impact of development schemes upon the archaeological resource is identified in the document *'Planning Policy Guidance Note 16: 'Archaeology and Planning'* (PPG 16).²
- 3.1.3 The Tyne and Wear County Archaeologist (TWCA), part of the Historic Environment Section of Newcastle City Council, has responsibility for archaeological development control in Tyne and Wear. Because the route of the cable crosses Westgate Road on the known line of Hadrian's Wall and within the UNESCO World Heritage Site, the TWCA considered that there was potential for structural fabric of the Wall and associated archaeological deposits to be disturbed by the installation.
- 3.1.4 In considering any proposal for development, the City Council is mindful of the policy framework set by government guidance, in this instance PPG 16, as well as existing Development Plan policy. The Development Plan framework is provided by the *'Newcastle-upon-Tyne Unitary Development Plan'*, adopted in 1998. The Plan contains the following policies:

Policy C4

Development which would harm sites or areas of archaeological interest and their settings will not be allowed.

Policy C4.1

The following sites and areas of archaeological interest are identified for the purposes of Policy C4:

7. Hadrian's Wall, vallum and associated works

Policy C4.2

Where a proposal may affect a site or area of archaeological interest, the developer will be required to submit an appropriate assessment of its potential impact upon the archaeological remains and where necessary undertake an archaeological field evaluation.

Policy C4.3

Where assessment and evaluation have established that proposed development will adversely affect a site or area of archaeological interest, developers will be required to preserve archaeological remains *in situ* unless this is clearly inappropriate or the destruction of the remains is demonstrably unavoidable, in which case a programme of archaeological works shall be submitted to and agreed with the Council before the start of development.

² Department of the Environment, 1990.

- 3.1.5 Accordingly, it is present policy of both Newcastle City Council and English Heritage to ensure the preservation of all structural remains associated with the Hadrian's Wall World Heritage Site. Therefore, as a rule, advice from the TWCA is that re-development must ensure that there is no possibility of construction work affecting any surviving Roman structural remains, preservation *in situ* of such remains being the strongly preferred option.
- 3.1.6 The aforementioned Specification for the archaeological investigation was prepared by the TWCA. In broad terms, the investigation aimed to inform the TWCA and English Heritage of the character of archaeological remains along the line of the cable installation. In the event that any fabric of the Wall were exposed by the works, the remains were to be preserved *in situ*, in line with the policies outlined above, and an alternative route for the cable was to be sought at a location where the Wall was not present.

3.2 Research Objectives

- 3.2.1 In broad terms, the archaeological investigation aimed to establish the date, nature, extent and significance of archaeological remains at the site as evidenced by any buried deposits and features and any artefactual and ecofactual evidence that they may contain.
- 3.2.2 The specific objectives of the archaeological investigation were:
- to identify any structural fabric of Hadrian's' Wall and any associated features and deposits;
 - to establish the extent of 19th century and later truncation at the site;
 - to determine or confirm the approximate extent and date of any archaeological remains;
 - to determine the condition and state of preservation of any archaeological remains;
 - to determine the degree of complexity of the horizontal and/or vertical stratigraphy present;
 - to determine or confirm the likely range, quality and quantity of any artefactual evidence present;
 - to determine the potential of the site to provide palaeoenvironmental and/or economic evidence and the forms in which such evidence may be present.
- 3.2.3 Additional aims and objectives of the project were:
- to compile a site archive consisting of all site and project documentary and photographic records, as well as artefactual and palaeoenvironmental material recovered;
 - to compile a report that contains an assessment of the nature and significance of the stratigraphic, artefactual, archaeological and palaeoenvironmental data, as appropriate

4. ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

4.1 Roman

- 4.1.1 The site lies in close proximity to the presumed line of Hadrian's Wall, although the course through this part of central Newcastle has not been convincingly proven. The Wall was c. 3m in width and to the north was a level area (the berm), c. 6m in width, beyond which was the Wall ditch, on average 8m wide x 3m deep.
- 4.1.2 A number of reported observations of the Wall were made in the Westgate Road and Collingwood Street area in the 19th century. In the late 1920's and early 1930's, a number of archaeological interventions were made during highway works on the Westgate Road by the North of England Excavation Committee (NEEC). The NEEC concluded from these works that the Wall ran to the south of Westgate Road and that the Wall ditch ran under the modern highway. However, the interpretation of some of these findings has been questioned.
- 4.1.3 Structural evidence for the Wall was found to the west of the site in 1985 at the Westgate Arts Centre, 67-75 Westgate Road, where parts of a milecastle were discovered. Excavations at the junction of Bath Lane and Westgate Road, to the west of the site, revealed a feature interpreted as the outer edge of the Wall ditch. This had been revetted in stone in the medieval period. The location of the ditch in this area, north of the modern road edge, strengthens the suggestion by the NEEC that Westgate Road developed within the ditch itself as a 'hollow-way'. The evidence for the milecastle on the south side of the road also indicates that the wall itself was located on the south side of Westgate Road at this point.
- 4.1.4 The archaeological significance of the berm between the Wall and its northern ditch has become increasingly apparent in recent years due to the discovery of defensive features known as 'clippi pits' at several locations in Tyne and Wear, such as at Shields Road, Byker and Buddle Street, Wallsend. The pits are normally positioned at regular intervals, often in a 'chequerboard' pattern, and are thought to represent a complex of defensive entanglements comprising an element of the Wall system as a whole. Previously recorded examples of the pits have varied relatively widely in form, from substantial, deeply cut square pits to shallow, sub-oval scoops. Although examples of such pits have now been recorded on a number of Wall sites, it has not been possible to establish whether they represent part of the original scheme for the mural frontier, or a later addition to the defensive system.

4.2 Medieval

- 4.2.1 The site lies within the core of the medieval town, inside the walled area, and within the parish of the medieval church of St. John the Baptist, which lies on the north-eastern side of the junction between Westgate Road and Grainger Street, only 50m distant. The church dates from the 13th century and includes a pinnacled tower added some two hundred years later.

- 4.2.2 The route now occupied by Westgate Road was one of the principal thoroughfares of the medieval town. The Hospital of St. Mary the Virgin, founded in the 12th century, was located on the south side of the thoroughfare, to the east of the site. The chapel of the hospital lay under Neville Street and the traffic island upon which Stephenson's Monument stands. At this point the natural boulder clay is known to lie c. 0.90m below pavement level. Inhumation burials have been found in this area in the past.
- 4.2.3 An indication of the medieval built form of this part of the town can be gained from Thomas Oliver's map of 1830 which shows a series of long, north-south orientated burgage plots running back from frontages onto Westgate Street. The burgages were probably built with stone side walls at ground floor level carrying timber framing above.
- 4.2.4 Archaeological and documentary evidence clearly indicate that the site lay within an active area of settlement by the 12th century, possibly even earlier.

4.3 Post-Medieval and Modern

- 4.3.1 John Speed's map of 1611 shows clearly the area defined by Westgate Street with buildings fronting both sides. Westgate Road appears on James Corbridge's map of 1723 and shows that by this time buildings fronting Westgate Road were more intensive. The aforementioned map from 1830 by Thomas Oliver is the earliest town plan to show a great level of detail and demonstrates that the layout of plots held on burgage tenure remained fossilised in the early 19th century street plan.

5. GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY

5.1 Geology

- 5.1.1 The solid geology of the area comprises Middle Coal Measures rock of the Upper Carboniferous period.
- 5.1.2 The drift geology comprises glacial till (boulder clay), varying in thickness between 10m-30m.

5.2 Topography

- 5.2.1 The archaeological trench ran across the carriageway of Westgate Road, from pavement to pavement, on a south-west to north-east alignment, c. 25m to the west of the junction with Grainger Street. In this part of Westgate Road, the ground falls away gently to the east, for example, road level at the mid-point of the archaeological trench was 37.10m OD, compared to 36.60m OD in the middle of the carriageway at the Westgate Road and Grainger Street crossroads.

6. ARCHAEOLOGICAL METHODOLOGY

6.1 Fieldwork

- 6.1.1 The archaeological fieldwork was undertaken in accordance with the relevant standard and guidance document of the Institute of Field Archaeologists.³ PCA is an IFA-Registered Organisation (RAO 23).
- 6.1.2 The fieldwork comprised the excavation of a linear SW-NE aligned trench across the carriageway of Westgate Road, along the line of the cable run. Although undertaken effectively as an archaeological evaluation, as required by the project Specification, groundworks and traffic management were undertaken by Integrated Utility Services, with staff from Pre-Construct Archaeology in attendance to supervise excavation of the trench and record exposures. The work was undertaken in two phases on successive Sundays, due to the requirement to keep one carriageway open to allow the passage of vehicular traffic. A utility duct to house the cable run was laid along the base of the trench prior to backfilling and reinstatement of the tarmac road surface.
- 6.1.3 The first phase of the fieldwork was undertaken on the 9th October 2005 in the southern carriageway of Westgate Road. A trench measuring 5.90m in length by 0.60m wide and 0.67m deep was excavated from the southern pavement edge running on a SW-NE alignment to the mid-point of the road. The second phase was undertaken on the 16th October 2005 in the northern carriageway. A trench measuring 5.65m in length by 0.60m wide and 0.67m deep was excavated continuing the line of the trench across the road on the same alignment to the northern pavement edge. In total, therefore, the NE-SW trench measured c. 11.55m in length by 0.60m wide and was excavated to a maximum depth of 0.67m. The width and depth dimensions were the maximum required for the installation of the cable run.
- 6.1.4 The road surface was cut, using a pavement saw, along the edges of the trench. A 5-ton 360° mechanical excavator, using a 0.60m wide-blade ditching (non-toothed) bucket was used to remove the road surface, its make-up deposits and underlying material in spits of approximately 100mm thickness, down to the maximum depth required for the cable run. Spoil was mounded away from the trench edge by machine. All such work was monitored by an archaeologist.
- 6.1.5 Subsequent recording of the trench sections was undertaken in accordance with recognised archaeological practice and following methodology set out in PCA's field recording manual.⁴ Following machine clearance, the sections of the trench were quickly cleaned using appropriate hand tools. One section of the trench was drawn to a scale of 1:10 and the trench was located relative to the Ordnance Survey grid.
- 6.1.6 Archaeological deposits were recorded using a 'single context recording' system. Features, deposits and structures were recorded on *pro forma* context record sheets. A 'Harris Matrix' stratification diagram to record stratigraphic relationships was compiled and checked during the course of the fieldwork.

³ IFA, 1999a and b.

⁴ PCA, 1999.

- 6.1.7 A photographic record of the investigations was compiled using SLR cameras. This comprised black and white prints and colour transparencies (on 35mm film), illustrating in both detail and general context the principal features and finds discovered. All photographs included a legible graduated metric scale.
- 6.1.8 A Temporary Bench Mark (TBM) was established at the site from an Ordnance Survey Bench Mark (value 34.56m OD) located on Rosemary Lane at the south-eastern corner of the churchyard of St. John's church. The TBM had a value of 37.16m OD. The height of all principal strata and features were calculated relative to Ordnance Datum and indicated on the appropriate plans and sections.

6.2 Post-Excavation

- 6.2.1 The site's stratigraphic data is represented by the written, drawn and photographic records. A total of 9 archaeological contexts were defined during the investigation. Post-excavation work involved checking and collating site records, grouping contexts and phasing the stratigraphic data. A written summary of the archaeological sequence was then compiled, as described below in Section 7.
- 6.2.2 No artefactual material was recovered during the investigation.
- 6.2.3 No category of inorganic material was recovered during the investigation.
- 6.2.4 The project's palaeoenvironmental sampling strategy was to recover bulk samples where appropriate, from well-dated (where possible), stratified deposits covering the main periods or phases of occupation and the range of feature types represented, with specific reference to the objectives of the evaluation. To this end, no features of significance were encountered to warrant the recovery of bulk samples.
- 6.2.5 Survival of all materials from archaeological fieldwork depends upon suitable storage. The complete project archive, comprising written, drawn and photographic records (including all material generated electronically during post-excavation) will be packaged for long term curation according to relevant guidelines.⁵ No material was recovered that required specialist stabilisation or an assessment of its potential for conservation research. The depositional requirements of the receiving body, in this case The Museum of Antiquities, Department of Archaeology, Newcastle University, will be met in full.

⁵ UKIC, 1990.

7. THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL SEQUENCE

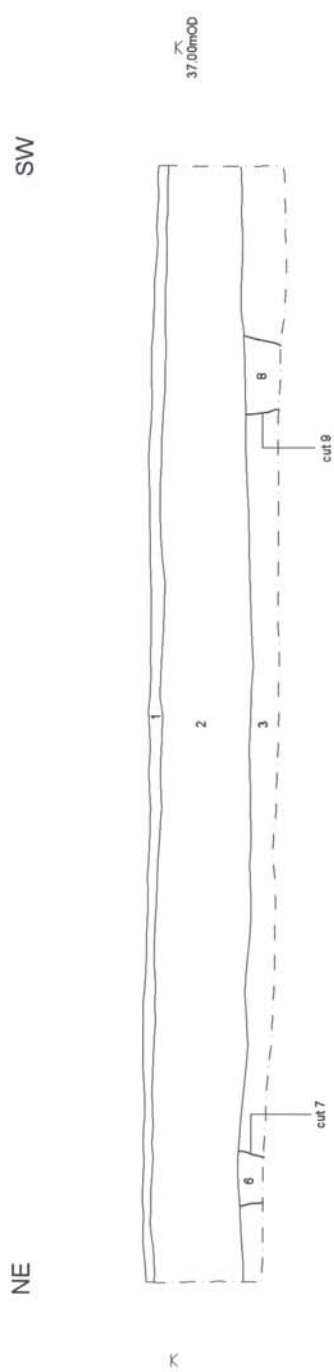
Note: Discrete stratigraphic entities (e.g., a cut, a fill, a deposit) were assigned unique and individual archaeological 'context' numbers, and these are indicated in the following text as [x]. The archaeological sequence at the site has been described by stratigraphic phases, detailing the progression of deposition. Standard archaeological phase numbers have been allocated to each of the deposits encountered even where these may have formed as part of the natural geological sub-strata.

7.1 Phase 1: Late Post-medieval

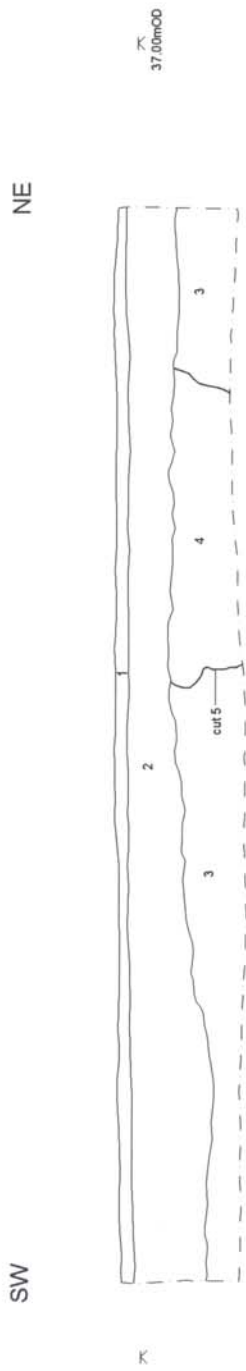
- 7.1.1 The earliest deposit to be recorded was a layer, [3], comprising friable dark greyish brown sandy clay. This deposit was recorded at a maximum height of 36.82m OD and was encountered along the full length of the trench, being at least 0.40m thick and continuing below the basal limit of excavation. This deposit has been interpreted as a 19th century levelling deposit.
- 7.1.2 Three features, [5], [7] and [9], were recorded cutting into layer [3]. The most extensive of these was feature [5], recorded towards the north-eastern end of the trench. This appeared to be linear in form, orientated roughly NNE-SSW, thereby meeting the section of the trench at an oblique angle. It had steep but irregular sides with a true width of c. 1.0m and was at least 0.40m deep, continuing below the basal limit of excavation. The feature was filled by sandstone rubble, [4], and was recorded at a maximum height of 36.84m OD, 0.30m below the existing ground surface. This feature has been interpreted as a robbed-out wall foundation of probable 19th century origin.

7.2 Phase 2: Modern

- 7.2.1 Feature [7] was recorded towards the south-western end of the trench, cutting into Phase 2 deposit [3]. Linear in plan and orientated roughly NW-SE, the feature was 0.29m wide and at least 0.12m deep, continuing below the basal limit of excavation. It was recorded at a maximum height of 36.65m OD, 0.50m below the existing ground surface. Its fill, [6], comprised firm, mid grey clayey silt. A modern service cable was housed within the lowermost part of the feature to be exposed.
- 7.2.2 Feature [9] was recorded in the central portion of the trench. This was also linear in plan and orientated roughly NW-SE, measuring 0.41m wide and at least 0.20m deep, continuing below the basal limit of excavation. It was recorded at a maximum height of 36.65m OD, 0.49m below the existing ground surface. Its fill, [8], comprised firm mid grey silty clay. A modern service cable was housed within the lowermost part of the feature to be exposed.
- 7.2.3 Sealing the cut features described above was an extensive deposit, [2], comprising indurate mid greyish brown concrete. This was exposed along the full length of the trench and was of variable thickness, up to a maximum of 0.50m. The maximum height recorded for this deposit was 37.07m OD, this being only 60mm below the existing ground surface. This deposit was the bedding layer for the existing road surface, an indurate black tarmac, [1], through which the trench was cut. It had a maximum thickness of 0.16m and was recorded at a maximum height of 37.13m OD.



North-west facing section.



South-east facing section.



Figure 3. Sections
Scale 1:40

8. CONCLUSIONS

- 8.1 The archaeological investigation undertaken on Westgate Road did not reveal any archaeological remains of significance.
- 8.2 Features and deposits associated with the current road surface, modern services and late post-medieval structures were recorded within the trench. No structural remains of Hadrian's Wall or associated features were encountered, down to the maximum depth of impact for the installation of the electricity cable. Furthermore, no artefactual material pre-dating the 19th century was recovered, even residually in context, during the fieldwork.

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10. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS AND CREDITS

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