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Land at OS Field 0006, Main Road  
 Weaverthorpe  
 North Yorkshire  
 SE 9694 7087

Archaeological Evaluation

Authorised by .....

Date:.....

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2005

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Weaverthorpe,  
North Yorkshire  
SE 9694 7087**

**Archaeological Evaluation**

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**Archaeological Evaluation**

***Non Technical Summary***

*Four trenches were excavated in August/September 2004 on land north of Main Road, Weaverthorpe in order to evaluate the archaeological potential of a proposed development site.*

*Pits and boundaries of probable Late Iron Age/Romano-British date, were identified, along with medieval chalk-built walls which were superseded by a later medieval phase that saw the digging of large pits, presumably for gravel extraction.*

*A small assemblage of residual flint objects was recovered, along with pottery of Late Iron Age/Romano-British and medieval date.*

**1. Introduction**

- 1.1 This report sets out the results of an archaeological evaluation carried out by MAP Archaeological Consultancy Ltd. at land north of Main Road, Weaverthorpe, North Yorkshire (Figs. 1 & 2 : SE 9694 7087). The evaluation took place over four weeks in late August to September 2004.
- 1.2 The evaluation was carried out on behalf of, and funded by, Mr and Mrs Mason following an outline planning application for the development of the site (Ref. 03/00507/OUT). The Heritage Unit of North Yorkshire County Council advised Ryedale District Council that a scheme of pre-determination archaeological evaluation be undertaken. The first stage of the evaluation consisted of a geophysical survey, using magnetometry, carried out by GeoQuest Associates in February 2004. The geophysical survey identified a large number of anomalies suggestive of silted up foundation trenches, ditches and gullies (Fig. 3). The trial trenches forming the subject of this report were designed to understand further the nature of the geophysical anomalies.
- 1.3 The objectives of the trial trenching are listed below in section 5. The information provided from the evaluation will enable an assessment of the impact of the development proposals on the archaeological deposits at the site. This strategy follows the archaeology policy issued by the Secretary of State for the Environment contained in *Planning Policy Guidance 16 'Archaeology and Planning'* (PPG 16).



- 1.4 Four areas, totalling c. 80m<sup>2</sup> were examined, at locations agreed by the Archaeology Section of the Heritage Unit, NYCC (Fig. 3).
- 1.5 The MAP site code for the project was 04-07-04.
- 1.6 All maps within this report have been reproduced from the Ordnance Survey with the permission of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office, Crown Copyright, licence No. AL 50453A.

## **2. Site Description**

- 2.1 The site lies within the north-eastern part of Weaverthorpe village, on the northern side of Main Road, which itself runs along the north bank of the Gypsy Race (Figs. 1 and 2). September Cottage, a recently constructed dwelling lies immediately to the east. Totalling c. 0.16ha, at the time of the evaluation the site was covered by stubble, following the recent harvesting of a crop of barley. The southern and western boundaries consist of hedges, with a post and rail fence along the eastern side. The northern boundary is not defined, but is at present represented by an area of ploughed land running northwards of a large ploughed-out bank. The topography consists of a slope that runs downwards to the south, from c. 80m to c. 71m A.O.D.

## **3. Geology and Soils**

- 3.1 The geology at the site is recorded as chalky drift and chalk (Mackney *et al.* 1983), with overlying well-drained calcareous fine silty soils of the Coombe 1 Association (*ibid.*). Similar deposits extend along the floor of the Gypsy Race, and are surrounded by relatively steep-sided hills of solid chalk bedrock.

## **4. Archaeological and Historical Background**

- 4.1 The Great Wold Valley, through which the Gypsy Race flows, forms a huge landscape of Prehistoric features, known largely from cropmarks on aerial photographs, but also represented by earthworks (Stoertz 1997).
- 4.2 Some of the most notable cropmark features in Weaverthorpe parish are the massive multiple dykes that are believed to represent an Iron Age stock-management system (Riley 1990).
- 4.3 Other cropmark features plotted by the RCHME show a series of linked rectangular enclosures forming an Iron Age/Romano-British 'ladder settlement' that runs eastwards into Weaverthorpe from the direction of Helperthorpe, parallel to, and on both sides of the Gypsy Race (Stoertz 1997, Map 1). The cropmarks on the north side of the Gypsy Race are obscured by the built-up area of the village, plus the earthworks and pasture to the south of the church. However, it is entirely possible that the ladder settlement continues eastwards to the vicinity of the evaluation area and beyond.



- 4.4 An 'umbonate' bronze brooch with enamelled decoration of 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD date was recently found in the field (metal-detecting find by Mr Ken Umpleby).
- 4.5 The Anglo-Saxon and Anglo-Scandinavian periods are poorly documented at Weaverthorpe, but the fact that the village was mentioned in the Domesday Survey (1086), along with the origins of the place-name, point to the fact that there was an Anglo-Scandinavian settlement there. Weaverthorpe was recorded as *Wifretorp* in 1086, the name meaning *Vidfari's* village (*Vidfari* being an Old Scandinavian personal name meaning 'far-traveller' (Smith 1937)).
- 4.6 Physical evidence of pre-conquest activity is provided by a stycca from the second reign of Aethelred II (AD 844-49 - another metal-detecting find from the site by Mr Umpleby, identification by Craig Barclay, formerly Yorkshire Museum).
- 4.7 The Domesday Survey shows Weaverthorpe to have been the pre-conquest centre of a broad estate of the Archbishops of York, worth £14 in the time of King Edward (1066). However, the village was waste in 1086, perhaps as a result of William of Normandy's harrying of the north in 1069.
- 4.8 Herbert of Winchester obtained Weaverthorpe manor during the incumbency of Archbishop Thomas II (1108-1114). An inscription on the sundial over the south door of St Andrew's church records the construction of the church by Herbert. It is believed that the earthworks immediately south of the church relate to his manorial centre.
- 4.9 Weaverthorpe appears to have the form of a street village with fairly regular north-south rows of properties separated by a central street and the Gypsy Race (Fig. 2). The development area is situated at the eastern end of the northern block of rows, but it is not clear whether it formed part of the medieval village. The large bank (now ploughed out) at the northern boundary may have separated the properties of the village from the arable fields, if so this places the development area within the medieval village.
- 4.10 The main archaeological intervention to have taken place at Weaverthorpe was the excavation by Brewster in 1960 of an area enclosed by an earthwork bank and ditch, prior to the eastward extension of the churchyard (Brewster 1960). A Romano-British pit was located along with 3<sup>rd</sup>/4<sup>th</sup> century pottery. Two rectangular dwellings with chalk walls were interpreted as a hall and ancillary buildings, abandoned in the 14<sup>th</sup> century. The enclosing earthworks were examined by Raymond Hayes and others in 1951, when Gritty Ware sherds were recovered from beneath the bank, indicating a post-conquest date for its construction.
- 4.11 No archaeological deposits were revealed during a watching brief on roadworks to the south-west of the church (MAP 2003).

## 5. Objectives

5.1 The objectives of the trial trenching were to determine:

(a) the nature, depth, extent and state of preservation of any archaeological deposits to be affected by the development proposals.

(b) to prepare a report summarising the results of the work and assessing the archaeological implications of the proposed development.

(c) to prepare and submit a suitable archive to the appropriate museum.

5.2 Two particular topics were to be addressed:

(a) the presence of any pre-medieval land-use at the site, whether Prehistoric or Romano-British

(b) the character of any medieval and Post-medieval activity.

## 6. Methodology

### 6.1 *Evaluation*

6.1.1 Four areas were subjected to evaluation: Trench 1 a 10m x 2m area in the northern part of the site; Trench 2 an L-shaped area 2m wide and with a total length of 14m, in the centre; Trench 3 a 12m x 2m area, also in the centre; and Trench 4, another L-shape, 2m wide and totalling 13m in length in the southern part of the site. The trenches were sited in consultation with the Archaeology Section of NYCC (Fig. 3).

6.1.2 The evaluation areas were stripped of topsoil by a rear-acting excavator using a toothless blade, under close archaeological supervision. Machining ceased at the top of archaeological deposits, or the natural, whichever appeared soonest.

6.1.3 Pits were sectioned, and segments of ditches were excavated, to determine function and record their form.

6.1.4 All work was carried out in line with the Institute of Field Archaeologists Code of Conduct (IFA 1998).

6.1.5 All artefacts were retained for specialist analysis.

6.1.6 Samples were taken from sealed deposits for environmental analysis.

### 6.2 *On-site Recording*

6.2.1 All archaeological deposits were recorded according to correct principles of stratigraphic excavation on MAP's *pro forma* context sheets which are compatible with the MoLAS recording system.



### 6.3 *Plans and Sections*

- 6.3.1 The full extent of archaeological deposits were recorded in plan at a scale of 1:20 on drawing film. Sections of features and individual layers were drawn at 1:10, also on drawing film, and included an OD height.

### 6.4 *Photographic Record*

- 6.4.1 The photographic record comprised monochrome and colour prints, and colour transparencies, in 35mm format, recording all archaeological features encountered. A number of digital images were also taken.

### 6.5 *Finds*

- 6.5.1 Finds were processed in accordance with English Heritage Guidelines (EH 1995). All finds were cleaned, identified, assessed, dated (where possible), marked (where appropriate), and properly packed and stored according to national guidelines.

## 7. **Results**

An attempt has been made to link associated features from different trenches, and in this way six separate phases of activity can be identified. A group of features in Trench 3 remain undated and unphased.

### 7.1 *Phase 1*

- 7.1.1 Phase 1 concerned four pits, Pits 2008, 2018, 2031 and 3010.

- 7.1.2 Pit 2008 was situated in the north-west corner of Trench 2 (Figs 6 and 7 – Pl. 1). As the pit extended out of the excavated area to the north and west, and was truncated by a later ditch (2006) to the south, its original dimensions were unclear, but it was at least 0.45m deep. The greyish brown silty fill (2007) contained no finds.

- 7.1.3 Pits 2018 and 2031 were oval pits situated in the southern area of Trench 2, each having a depth of c. 1m (Figs. 6 and 7). The full dimensions of only Pit 2018 were obtained (2031 being truncated by a later ditch – PL. 2), showing it to be 1.5m long and 0.7m wide. Pit 2018's single fill (2017) was an homogenous brown sandy silt that contained two Greyware sherds and a single calcite-gritted sherd. The two fills of Pit 2031 – a gravelly silty sand at the base (2030) and an upper deposit of brown clay silt (2029) - contained no finds.

- 7.1.4 Pit 3010 was located at the north-west corner of Trench 3 and was badly truncated by later ditches – 3012 to the north and 3014 to the south (Figs. 8 and 9). Only 0.10m deep, its sole fill (3009) contained no finds.

### 7.2 *Phase 2*

- 7.2.1 This phase saw the excavation of a number of east-west aligned boundary ditches, Ditches 1020, 2006=3014 and 2028.



- 7.2.2 Ditch 1020 crossed the northern part of Trench 1, and was a broad feature with a width of 2.10m and a depth of 0.95m, cut into the natural chalk gravel (Fig. 4 – Pl. 3). The profile was asymmetrical with a shoulder on the northern side (Fig. 5). Neither of the two fills – a gravelly greyish brown silt in the base (1021) nor an upper deposit of brown silt (1003), contained any finds.
- 7.2.3 Ditch 2006 was identified in the northern part of Trench 2 (Fig. 6), and its alignment was continued as Ditch 3014 in the northern part of Trench 3 (Fig. 8). Both ditches had asymmetrical profiles with shoulders on their southern edges (Figs. 7 and 9). Ditch 2006 was 1.50m wide and 0.95m deep. The basal fill was a brown clay silt (2005), the other three fills (2002, 2003 and 2004) being sandy silts with varying amounts of gravel; 2003 contained two Staxton ware sherds. Ditch 3014 was 1.30m wide and 0.37m deep, having apparently been truncated to a greater extent than Ditch 2006. The brown sandy silt fill (3013) contained a Staxton Ware sherd along with residual calcite-gritted fragments.
- 7.2.4 Ditch 2028 ran across the southern part of Trench 2, before terminating c. 2.5m from the western baulk (Fig. 6). This ditch was 1.70m wide and 1.25m deep, again with an asymmetrical profile showing a shoulder on the northern edge (Fig. 8). A sandy, gravelly basal fill (2027) was superseded by an intermediate fill of brown clay silt (2025), which was overlain by a deposit of more sandy silt at the top (2025=2021). Fills 2025 and 2026 both contained Staxton Ware sherds.
- 7.3 *Phase 3*
- 7.3.1 Phase 3 concerned a group of chalk-built structures: Wall 1007 in Trench 1 and Walls 2019 and 2020, along with Structure 2024 in Trench 2.
- 7.3.2 Wall 1007 survived up to seven courses in height, and ran across the central part of Trench 1 on an east to west alignment (Figs. 4 and 5 – Pl. 4). The masonry consisted of roughly squared chalk blocks bonded with soft silt, the surviving face pointing to the south. The construction cut (1006) created a slight terrace, c. 0.20m deep, with the northern face of the wall butting up to the cut.
- 7.3.3 Wall 2020 ran across the infilled Ditch 2028 on a rough east to west alignment (Figs. 6 and 7 – Pl. 5). Only two courses of unbonded, roughly squared chalk courses survived for a length of 1m, the remainder having presumably suffered a combination of demolition and plough damage. This wall was only two blocks in width (0.28m), and was faced to the north, and possibly also on the south side. Wall 2020 was butted by Wall 2019, which ran at right-angles northwards before disappearing out of the excavated area (Figs. 6 and 7 – Pl. 5). The wall survived intact to two courses high, and was also constructed of unbonded roughly squared chalk blocks; at 0.35m it was slightly wider than Wall 2020. These two walls, although not bonded together, were presumably contemporary, or at least part of the same structure. Neither wall showed



evidence of a construction cut, being laid directly on to Ditch Fill 2021. There were no directly associated finds.

7.3.4 Structure 2023 continued the line of Wall 2019 southwards, after an interval of c. 0.5m with Wall 2020 (Figs. 6 and 7). Structure 2023 survived to four courses in height within a construction cut (2024), and consisted of unbonded, squared chalk blocks, arranged into courses of irregular height. Again, there were no associated finds, either from the chalk blocks themselves, or the fill of the construction cut (2022).

#### 7.4 *Phase 4*

7.4.1 This phase was characterised by the excavation of pits in the southern areas of Trenches 1 and 2, and over much of Trench 4.

7.4.2 Four features intercut at the southern end of Trench 1, the earliest of which was a pit (1013) in the south-west corner of the trench (Figs. 4 and 5 - Pl. 4). Pit 1013 was at least 2m in length and 0.65m deep; the sole fill (1011) contained no finds. Pit 1017 cut into the eastern side of 1013 and exceeded 1m in width and 0.75m in depth; again, there were no finds in the gravelly fill (1014). Cut 1019 was a possible circular posthole, 0.5m in diameter and 0.30m, within the south-western corner of Pit 1017. Finally, Pit 1016 was located to the south-east, being at least 0.75m wide and 0.30m deep; the silty fill (1015) contained no finds.

7.4.3 Two pits (2014 and 2016) were identified in the southern part of Trench 2 (Figs. 6 and 7 - Pl. 6). Pit 2016 was the earliest, being a sub-circular feature situated at the northern baulk, 1m in diameter and 0.30m in depth. The brown sandy silt fill (2015) contained no finds. Pit 2014 clipped the southern edge of 2016, and with a length exceeding 2.70m and depth of around 0.50m, this was a much larger feature. The brown gravelly sandy silt fill (2013) also contained no finds.

7.4.4 An intercutting complex of eleven cut features belonging to Phase 3 were identified in Trench 4 (Figs. 10 and 11 - Pls. 7 and 8), consisting of ten pits (4003, 4009, 401, 4016, 4022, 4027, 4029, 4032, 4034 and 4037), and a possible gully (4013). Associated pottery shows these features to be broadly contemporary.

7.4.5 The earliest pits (4009 and 4027) were respectively situated in the north-eastern and south-western parts of the trench (Figs. 10 and 11). As they extended outside the excavated area the exact dimensions of these pits remain unclear, but Pit 4009 was at least 1.20m wide and 0.9m deep, and Pit 4027 1.10m wide and 0.45m in depth. Pit 4008 was filled by an homogenous sandy gravel (4008). The two fills in Pit 4027 consisted of a sandy gravel basal deposit (4026), overlain by greyish silt (4019) containing two Beverley-type 1 sherds.



- 7.4.6 Pit 4003 was situated in the central part of the trench, and cut through the northern side of Pit 4009 (Figs. 10 and 11). There were six fills, in ascending order from the base: 4008, 4003, 4006, 4005, 4004, 4002, 4039 and 4007, which were basically sandy silts with varying concentrations of gravel, with the exception of a deposit containing larger chalk pieces (4039). The southern part of the pit was recorded separately as Cut 4025, its two fills (4017 and 4014) corresponding to Fills 4005 and 4004 respectively. Fills 4002 and 4014 both contained Staxton and York Glazed Ware sherds.
- 7.4.7 Pit 4016 cut into the central part of Pit 4003, and was over 1.20m in length and 0.35m deep (Figs. 10 and 11). The silty gravel fill (4015) contained no finds. A shallow gully (4013), 0.55m wide and 0.16m deep, cut across the top of 4015 on a north-south alignment. The sandy silt fill (4012) contained a Staxton Ware sherd.
- 7.4.8 A group of five pits formed an intercutting complex in the central part of the trench: 4011 (fill 4010), 4023=4030=4034 (fills 4018=4020=4033), 4029 (fill 4028), 4032 (fill 4031), and 4037 (fills 4036 and 4035) (Figs. 10 and 11). Truncation and the fact that parts of these pits extended outside the excavated area make it difficult to provide exact dimensions; depths ranged between 0.10m (4011) and 0.52m (1037). Pit 4023=4030=4034 was an elongated oval in plan and may in fact represent a group of pits rather than a single feature. Fill 4010 contained a Beverley-type 1 sherd, 4028 seventeen Staxton sherds, 4031 fifty-six Staxton and three Beverley-type 1 sherds, 4033 a single Staxton sherd, 4035 four Staxton sherds, and 4036 single sherds of Greyware, Splashed Ware and Staxton Ware.
- 7.4.9 Finally, Pit 4022 in the south-west corner of Trench 2 cut into Pits 4027 and 4030 (Figs. 10 and 11). This pit was at least 1.30 wide and 1.60m long, and was 1.20m deep. The two fills – a gravelly sand (4024) at the base, and a brown silt (4021) at the top – contained no finds.
- 7.5 *Phase V*
- 7.5.1 Phase V is taken up by the demolition or collapse of Wall 1007 in Trench 1 and Walls 2019 and 2020 in Trench 2, represented by Deposits 1008 and 2012 respectively.
- 7.5.2 Deposit 1008 built up on the southern side of Wall 1007 (Fig. 5), and consisted of jumbled chalk stones to a depth of 0.50m, from which no finds were obtained. Deposit 2012 was situated on both the west and east sides of Wall 2019, and immediately north of Wall 2020, gradually tailing off in density away from the walls (Fig. 7). This deposit consisted of c. 50% angular chalk rubble in a sandy silt matrix, and contained calcite-gritted, Staxton and York Glazed sherds.
- 7.6 *Phase 6*
- 7.6.1 Phase 6 represents all later activity at the site, which can be summarised as the formation of subsoil deposits (1001 and 1009; 2009; 3002; 4001), and modern



topsoil (1000, 2001, 3001 and 4000) across the site (Figs. 5, 7, 9 and 11). These deposits can be seen as the result of arable cultivation.

## 7.7 *Unphased*

- 7.7.1 Four features (3004, 3006, 3008, 3012 and 3016), in Trench 3, and Gully 2011 in Trench 2, were unphased because of a general paucity of associated finds and stratigraphic relationships. The only clue as to dating lies in the fact that Gully 3012 cut through Phase 1 Pit 3010, indicating a possible date from the Roman period to the medieval or even later period.
- 7.7.2 In the south of Trench 3, a shallow, north-west to south-east aligned, narrow gully (cut 3004, fill 3003) had a stakehole in the base (cut 3006, fill 3005) (Figs. 8 and 9). This was presumably a minor boundary. Two parallel gullies (3012 and 3016) ran on a west to east alignment c. 4.5m from each other; both were c.0.55m wide and 0.15-0.22m deep, and filled by deposits of sandy silt (3011 and 3015 respectively) (Figs. 8 and 9).
- 7.7.3 Gully 2011 ran roughly parallel and between Ditches 2006 and 2028 in Trench 2 (Figs. 6 and 7). This 0.25m wide and 0.10m deep gully terminated half way across the excavated area, and was filled by gravelly sandy silt (2010).

## 8. Discussion

- 8.1 The geophysical survey suggested that considerable archaeological deposits were present at the proposed development area, and the evaluation successfully identified the character of these remains.
- 8.2 The earliest phase of activity (Phase 1) saw the digging of a number of pits, and the small amount of dating evidence suggests that these were Romano-British in date. The lack of debris (particularly animal bone) within the pits rules out their having been for rubbish disposal. The bell-shaped profile of Pit 2018 suggests that at least this example may have been for grain storage.
- 8.3 Phase 2 was concerned with the creation of a series of east to west aligned boundaries. Ditch 1020 was a major V-profiled feature. Ditch 2006 aligned with Ditch 3014, both sharing an asymmetrical profile. Although Ditch 3014 appeared to be shallower this may be due to truncation. It is likely that Ditch 2028 was the companion of Ditch 2028/3014, the two features forming a double-ditched boundary or trackway. Medieval sherds were found in the upper fills of Ditches 2006 and 2020/3014, but it is possible that these features were earlier, the sherds being deposited in the upper parts of the ditches some time after they were originally dug.
- 8.4 Phase 3 represented the most solid structural evidence recovered by the evaluation. Wall 1007 survived in places to seven courses in height, showing that it could not have been a sill-beam wall for a building. The lack of associated floor levels or rubbish suggest that it was not a domestic structure, although any putative floors may have been truncated by the major pits dug



immediately to the south. Perhaps it was a boundary wall. The walls in Trench 2 were only visible for a short stretch, and Wall 2020 was badly damaged by either demolition or the plough. However, it is likely that the Trench 2 walls represent the remains of buildings; Structure 2023 appears to have been a stone-packed pit forming a post-setting similar to late 14<sup>th</sup> century examples excavated at Eastgate, Beverley (Evans and Tomlinson 1992). Again, there was a lack of associated floor levels or deposits for the Trench 2 structures, but this could be possibly explained by their truncation by Phase 4 pits. Pottery found within the demolition or collapse layer (2012) suggests a 13<sup>th</sup> century or later date for the abandonment of the structures.

- 8.5 The Phase 4 pits marked a distinct change in the utilisation of the site, with a change from settlement or occupation to what appears to be piecemeal pit-digging. With the exception of 4031, the pits of this phase generally contained only tiny amounts of occupation material, if any at all, and so they cannot have been for rubbish disposal. A reasonable explanation for these pits is that they were for gravel extraction, the dating evidence suggesting that this process took part in the 14<sup>th</sup> century.
- 8.6 After the close of Phase 4 activity the archaeological evidence suggests that the area entered a relatively uneventful era, with the formation of a covering of subsoil apparently representing arable use. The RAF vertical aerial photograph published by Brewster (Brewster 1972, Pl. 1) showed the site as pasture, but it has again become arable land in recent times.

## **9. Implications of the Proposed Development**

- 9.1 Archaeological activity was shown to be present in all of the evaluation trenches.
- 9.2 At their most shallow the structural remains in Trench 2 lie at c. 72.60m AOD, within 0.25m of present ground level. These deposits are therefore vulnerable to all but the shallowest processes, including topsoil stripping. In addition, the structural deposits were seen to extend beyond the northern and southern limits of the trench, albeit for an unknown distance. The archaeological deposits in Trench 3 lie at a similar depth from the surface, from c. 73.10m AOD to 72.60m AOD. In Trench 1, the top of Wall 1007 lay c. 0.50m from the surface at c. 72.60m AOD. The archaeological deposits in Trench 4 lay closest to the surface at the northern end, c. 0.35m from the top at c. 71.00m AOD.
- 9.3 The geophysical survey confirms that concentrated archaeological activity extends across the entire proposed development area in the southern part of OS field 0006.
- 9.4 The evaluation has illustrated that any development of the site should be accompanied by appropriate mitigation measures regarding the archaeological deposits, either through sympathetic foundation design, preservation by record, or a combination of the two.

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