

ACHP11



# THE ABBEY CHURCH, PERSHORE

*Archaeological Evaluation*

*for Robert Kilgour Architects Ltd*

*July 2011*

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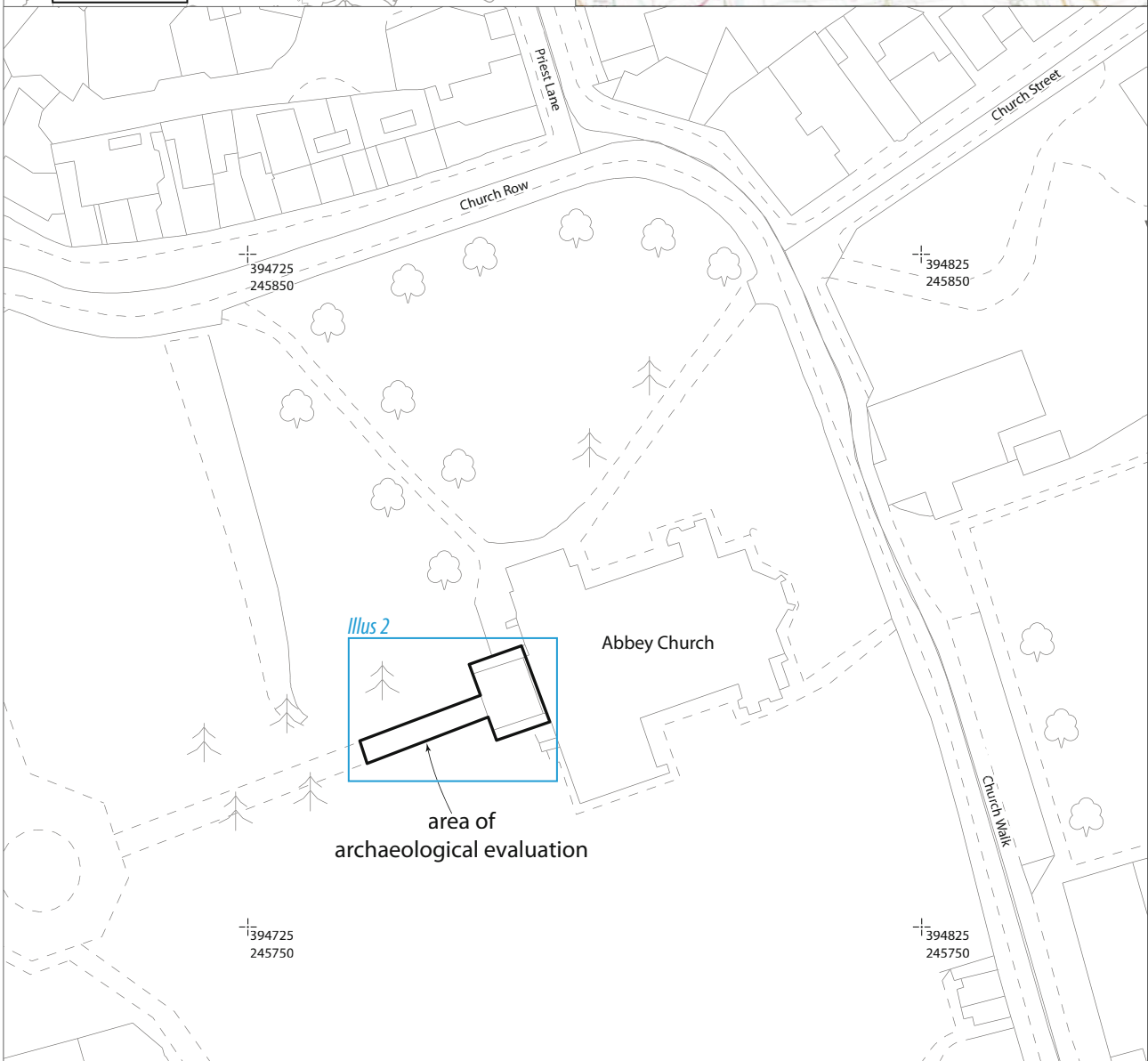
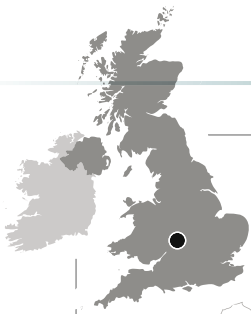
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Scale 1:1000 @ A4



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**Illus 1**  
Location plan

# THE ABBEY CHURCH, PERSHORE

## Archaeological Evaluation

*Headland Archaeology excavated five trenches at the west end of Pershore Abbey to evaluate the archaeological impact of a proposal to replace the existing steps with an access ramp. No archaeological deposits were revealed. Cartographic, photographic and archaeological evidence indicate that the evaluation area was extensively remodelled during the 20th century. Re-deposited material including fragments of medieval floor tiles and post-medieval pottery was found within the evaluation trenches.*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Headland Archaeology (UK) Ltd. was commissioned by the client to undertake an archaeological evaluation within the grounds of Pershore Abbey (SAM 260).

An application has been submitted to the Diocesan Advisory Committee and English Heritage to alter the existing path and steps at the west end of the abbey church. The proposal involves the replacement of the existing steps with a permanent ramp to enable disabled access to the building.

In accordance with the advice of Worcestershire Historic Environment and Archaeology Service (Glyde 2010) a written scheme of investigation (Kimber 2011) was submitted by the applicant and approved by the Planning Authority.

#### 1.1 Location

The site comprises the access path, steps and a paved area approaching the western entrance of the Abbey Church (NGR SO 94767 45784). The upper part of the site is situated at 21.6mOD and the lower paved area (at the base of the steps) at 21mOD. The underlying geology is Lower Lias formation of the Jurassic period overlain by alluvium.

#### 1.2 Archaeological background

Pershore has Roman and Anglo-Saxon antecedents, with a minster church founded in AD c.698, but the present

town is likely to have grown in the main following the foundation of the Benedictine Abbey in AD c.970 as a small rural settlement adjacent to its north gate (Dalwood 1996). Following its establishment as a burgh after 1065 Pershore became moderately prosperous via the wool trade, but declined towards the end of the medieval period.

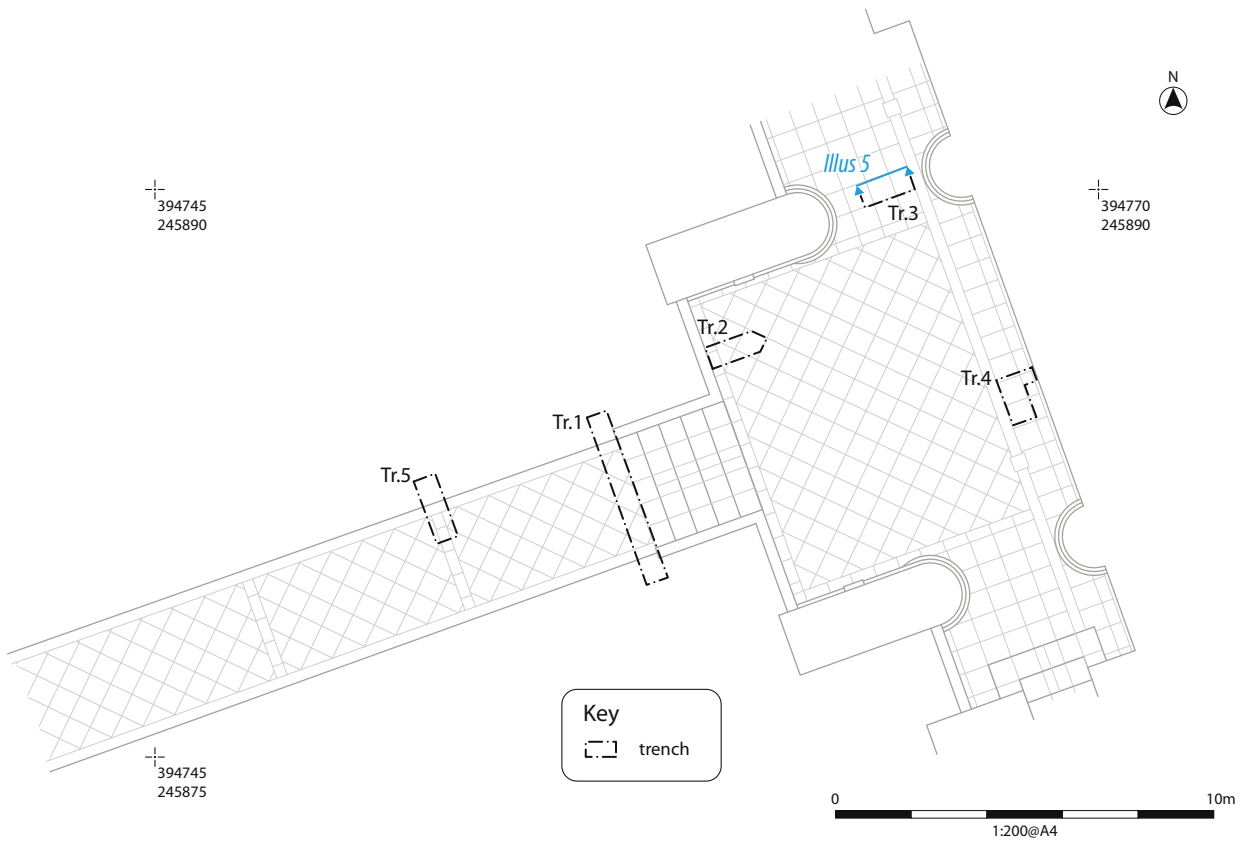
The abbey has had a long history, from Saxon religious house, via a Norman and later medieval structure to the rather truncated remnants now forming the present abbey church. A Saxon foundation is preserved within the present-day nave (Blockley 1996), while Norman architecture is visible within the south transept.

Andrews (in Dalwood & Ratkai 1996) states that after the dissolution of the monasteries the Lady Chapel and nave were demolished and sold for building materials. The standing part of the abbey (the crossing, transepts and chancel) was purchased from the crown by the parishioners of Holy Cross after the surrender of the monastery in 1534.

The area of the current works lies within the former nave of the abbey.

The major source of information on the layout of the demolished part of the church is the extensive excavation carried out by FB. Andrews in 1929–30 (HWCM 5407). Andrews' efforts to trace the plan of the nave met with frustration: 'the lines of the nave walls and the arcades north and south have been followed for some 175ft from the crossing westwards, but with little result other than





Based upon digital 1:100 data supplied by Robert Kilgour Architects.

**Illus 2**

Location of evaluation trenches

2

the exposure of fragments of foundation stone-work of the walls and further debris-filled trenches' (in Dalwood & Ratkai 1996). The excavations extended well beyond the limit of the recorded wall-lines, but a large area 'proved entirely barren'. It is clear from Andrews' account that only very short lengths of in situ foundations of the demolished abbey buildings survive under Abbey Park (Dalwood & Ratkai 1996).

## 2. METHOD

The objectives of the archaeological programme were to determine the presence or absence of archaeological remains that would be impacted upon by the proposed works, and more specifically, to establish the depths at which human remains occur and to establish whether or not any structural remains relating to the demolished nave survive in the area of the proposed access ramp.

Four evaluation trenches were excavated by hand within the footprint of the proposed access ramp development. An additional trench (requested by English Heritage) was excavated to the north of the proposed development. The trenches were excavated to a pre-determined depth (Appendix 1).

All recording followed *IfA* Standards and Guidance. Recording was undertaken on Headland Archaeology pro forma trench record sheets. 35mm colour transparencies and black&white print photographs were taken, and a drawn section of each trench was recorded at a scale of 1:10.

All human bone was reburied during the backfilling of trenches.



**Illus 3**

Trench 1 – West facing section



**Illus 4**  
Trench 2 – South facing section

### 3. RESULTS

No archaeological features or deposits were found within any of the trenches.

Beneath the make-up for the concrete slab path surface, Trench 1 contained a silty clay deposit [103], containing occasional small pieces of disarticulated human bone. Beneath this a loose deposit of rubble was present containing fragments of medieval floor tile alongside pottery dated to the 18th century (Appendix 2).

Within Trench 2 a mid brown sandy loam [203] was present, containing occasional mortar fragments and a single piece of floor tile. This deposit continued below the required excavation depth.

The eastern part of Trench 3 was disturbed by the presence of two extant ceramic drain pipes. To the west of these was a grey clay deposit [309] occupying a steep sided cut feature. The deposit contained no finds and seems likely to relate to the foundation for the adjacent flying buttress constructed in the early 20th century. The buttress pad cut a loam deposit [307] similar in nature to context [203].

Trench 4 contained a heavily compacted rubble deposit [402] immediately below a deposit of cinder which formed the make-up for the modern concrete slabs. The location of the trench, immediately adjacent to the west end of the abbey suggests that this deposit relates to the foundations of the west end wall.

In Trench 5 a small amount of disarticulated human bone was found within deposit [506].

### 4. CONCLUSION

The floor tile recovered from Trench 1 seems likely to have originated from the nave demolished in the 16th century. Its association with later pottery, however, suggests that it was re-deposited at a later date.

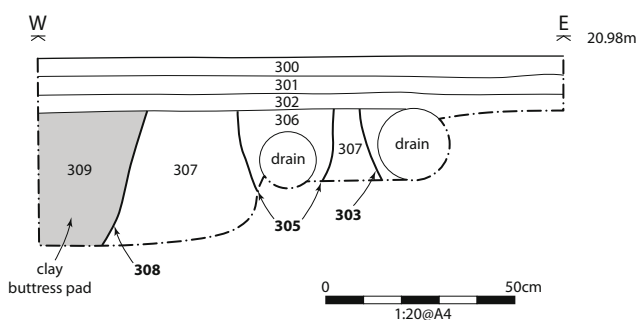
No articulated human remains were revealed in the course of the evaluation. The small amount of disarticulated material is unsurprising considering the proximity of the grave yard and this material is by definition re-deposited.

The lack of archaeological deposits within the trenches can be explained by the interventions that have taken place in the area of the former nave since its destruction in the 16th century.

Two flying buttresses were erected in 1911 to support the west wall of the abbey. The construction of these is likely to have caused a degree of disturbance and remodelling to the surrounding deposits.

Illustrations in later reports (Dalwood 1996, Dalwood & Ratkai 1996) indicate that the current evaluation fell within an area excavated by Andrews in 1929–30, during his search for the extent and layout of the pre-dissolution nave and associated buildings.

The 1938 Ordnance Survey map (Appendix 4) reveals an entirely different path layout to the one existing in 2011. A graveyard boundary wall occupied the line of the current east-west path. The wall turned to the south-east to abut the west wall of the abbey. This substantial wall is visible on a photograph taken by Benjamin Brecknell Turner in c.1852 which is stored in the Victoria and Albert Museum photographic collection (VAM 2011). The photograph shows the wall as it appears on the 1938 Ordnance Survey map, occupying a large footprint



**Illus 5**  
Trench 3 – South facing section





**Illus 6**  
Trench 4 – Camera facing East



**Illus 7**  
Trench 5 – West facing section

within the evaluation area. The removal of this wall (after 1938) would have necessitated the landscaping of the area and may have contributed to the re-deposited, made-up ground revealed in the evaluation trenches.

4 The construction of the buttresses, excavations during the 1920s and the removal of a substantial wall and subsequent remodelling of pathways have all contributed to the potential for archaeological deposits to have been removed from the evaluation area. The trenches were however relatively shallow and there is potential for the presence of archaeological deposits at a greater depth than evaluated.

## 5. ARCHIVE

The archive will be deposited at Worcestershire County Museum within one year of the completion of fieldwork.

## 6. BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Blockley, K, 1996, *Pershore Abbey Excavations 1996*, Interim Report, Cambrian Archaeological Associates.
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- Planning Policy Statement 5: Planning for the Historic Environment 2010
- VAM, 2011, *Abbey Church, Pershore*, [online], [<http://www.vam.ac.uk/images/image/40051-popup.html>], accessed July 2011.

## 7. APPENDICES

### 7.1 Appendix 1 – Site registers

#### *Trench register*

<b>Trench no.</b>	<b>Length (m)</b>	<b>Width (m)</b>	<b>Depth (m)</b>	<b>Level (mOD)</b>
1	4.75	0.6	0.75	21.59
2	1.6	0.6	0.45	21.07
3	1.4	0.6	0.5	20.98
4	1.2	0.9	0.27 max, 0.2 av.	21.02
5	1.7	0.6	0.5	21.55

#### *Context register*

<b>Trench no.</b>	<b>Context no.</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Depth (below surface m)</b>
1	100	Concrete paving slabs	0–0.06
1	101	Sand and cinder levelling deposit	0.06–0.1
1	102	Dark brown topsoil, occasional DSK human bone	0.1–0.23
1	103	Mid brown silty clay	0.23–0.76+
1	104	Loose stoney rubble dump	0.56–0.76+
1	105	Reddish sand deposit	0.6–0.76+
2	200	Concrete paving slabs	0–0.05
2	201	Sand	0.05–0.11
2	202	Cinder levelling deposit	0.11–0.2
2	203	Mid brown sandy loam containing mortar fragments	0.2–0.45+
3	300	Concrete paving slabs	0–0.05
3	301	Sand	0.05–0.1
3	302	Cinder levelling deposit	0.1–0.15
3	303	Cut for ceramic drain	0.15–0.32
3	304	Fill of [303]	0.15–0.32
3	305	Cut for ceramic drain	0.15–0.35
3	306	Fill of [305]	0.15–0.35
3	307	Mid brown sandy loam	0.15–0.5+
3	308	70° cut (in section) for buttress pad	0.15–0.5+
3	309	Heavy grey clay filling [308]. Buttress foundation pad?	0.15–0.5+
4	400	Concrete paving slabs	0–0.05
4	401	Cinder levelling deposit	0.05–0.15
4	402	Heavily compacted rubble with mortar and stone inclusions	0.15–0.27+
5	500	Concrete paving slabs	0–0.05
5	501	Light brown sandy silt	0–0.15



<b>Trench no.</b>	<b>Context no.</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Depth (below surface m)</b>
5	502	Cinder levelling deposit	0.15–0.27
5	503	Orangey brown clayey silt; Compact; Frequent sub-angular sandstone inclusions	0.20–0.35
5	504	Light-mid grey compact clay	0.35–0.50+
5	505	Cut for current path or differential drying	0.00–0.50+
5	506	Mid brown silty clay topsoil	0.00–0.16
5	507	Mid brown sandy silt; Compact; Moderate inclusions of sub angular sandstone	0.09–0.50+

### *Photographic register*

<b>Photo no.</b>	<b>Colour slide</b>	<b>B&amp;W</b>	<b>Digital</b>	<b>Direction</b>	<b>Description</b>
1	571/1	550/1	1	NE	Tr. 1 – West facing section
2	571/2	550/2	2	NE	Tr. 1 – West facing section
3	571/3	550/3	3	N	Tr. 1 – Plan
4	571/4	550/4	4	E	Tr. 2 – Plan
5	571/5	550/5	5	N	Tr. 2 – Section
6	571/6	550/6	6	W	Tr. 3 – Plan
7	571/7	550/7	7	N	Tr. 3 – Section
8	571/8	550/8	8	E	Tr. 4 – Plan
9	571/9	550/9	9	N	Tr. 4 – Section
10	571/10	550/10	10	W	Tr. 5 – Plan
11	571/11	550/11	11	W	Tr. 5 – Section
12	571/12	550/12	12	N	Tr. 1 – Section
13	571/13	550/13	13	E	Tr. 1 – Plan
14	–	–	14	–	Working shot
15	–	–	15	–	Working shot
16	–	–	16	–	Working shot

## 7.2 Appendix 2 – A note on the finds from Pershore Abbey

*Kath Crooks*

### *Deposit [103]*

One piece of yellow medieval window glass. No decoration.

### *Deposit [104]*

Finds from this deposit included eight fragments of floor tile, of which six had been decorated with inlaid decoration. With the exception of one small fragment all floor tiles were very worn, with only traces of decoration surviving, meaning that it was not possible to distinguish the designs. One, however, may have been heraldic and another possibly foliar. Two fabrics were present, one of which probably was Malvernian; the other may be from Bredon. Bredon type tiles have been previously found in Worcestershire at Little Malvern Priory. Apart from thickness (between 25mm and 30mm) full dimensions did not survive. A date in the 14th century is likely.

Further finds included five fragments of flat roof tile, three of which were probably medieval and products of the Worcester industry. One had a clear tan glaze.

All pottery was of later post-medieval date. A sherd of Staffordshire mottled slipware dated to the mid 18th century. The clay pipe probably dates to the 1720s.

### *Deposit [203]*

One piece of undecorated floor tile.

## 7.3 Appendix 3 – Worcestershire HER Summary Report





## Activities

Her Reference	Name	Monument Type	Dates	OS Reference
WSM21957	Watching Brief in 1994, Abbey Park, Pershore	BURIED SOIL	1066 to 1539	SO9468745564
WSM22955	Watching Brief in 1995, Service Trench, Church Road, Pershore Abbey	INHUMATION	1066 to 1539	SO9474845853
WSM23957	Evaluation in 1996, West End of Nave, Pershore Abbey	TRACKWAY	1066 to 1539	SO9470045774
		POST HOLE	-100 to 42	
		BUILDING	1500 to 1599	
		LINEAR FEATURE	1540 to 1899	
		EVENT	1550 to 1650	
WSM24418	Evaluation in 1997, Nave, Pershore Abbey, Pershore	DITCH	411 to 1065	SO9471045772
		ABBEY	1066 to 1539	
		CHURCHYARD	1540 to 1899	
		EVENT	1075 to 1125	
		EVENT	1300 to 1599	
WSM26818	Watching Brief in 1996, "The Octagon", Abbey Park, Pershore	BUILDING	1850 to 1946	SO9469345766
		BUILDING	1850 to 1946	
		YARD	1850 to 1946	
WSM29813	Building Recording in 1994, St Andrew's Church, Pershore	CHURCH	1400 to 2050	SO9483045820

WSM30138	Excavations in 1996, Choir, Crossing and Transepts of Pershore Abbey	ABBEY	411 to 1065	SO9477545784
		ABBEY	1100 to 2050	
		ABBEY	1220 to 2050	
		ABBEY	1224 to 2050	
		ABBEY	1288 to 2050	
		ABBEY	1540 to 2050	
		ABBEY	1686 to 2050	
		BURIAL VAULT	1650 to 1854	
		GRAVE	1540 to 1854	
		ABBEY	1862 to 2050	
WSM30139	Geophysical Survey in 1993, Pershore Abbey & Abbey Park, Pershore	FIELD BOUNDARY	1066 to 1900	SO9470345670
		COUNTRY HOUSE	1850 to 1947	
		WALLED GARDEN	1850 to 1947	
		HOLLOW WAY	1066 to 1800	
		DITCH	1066 to 1800	
WSM30140	Ground Probing Radar Survey in 1994, Within Pershore Abbey, Pershore	VAULT	1066 to 1539	SO9478245792
		FLOOR	-100 to 42	
WSM30141	Geophysical Survey in 1996, The Octagon, Pershore Abbey	ABBEY	1066 to 1539	SO9471045765
WSM30782	Skeleton Excavated in 2001, St Andrew's Church, Pershore	INHUMATION	1540 to 1899	SO9483045818
WSM31657	Watching Brief in 2003 at Path running North from the Abbey, Pershore	EVENT	1540 to 1899	SO9478845816

WSM32259	Evaluation in 1974, Abandoned Flandrian River Channel, Pershore	EVENT	-4000 to -2351	SO9471945847
		EVENT	43 to 410	
		EVENT	-800 to 42	
		EVENT	1066 to 1900	
WSM32264	Small Scale Excavations in 1985 adjacent to Church, Pershore	STRUCTURE	1850 to 1961	SO9478445781
		POST HOLE	1066 to 1539	
		POST HOLE	43 to 1539	
		CHARNEL PIT	900 to 1800	
		INHUMATION	900 to 1800	
WSM32292	Watching Brief in 1992, Abbey Church, Pershore	LINEAR FEATURE	1837 to 1914	SO9477045787
		FEATURE	-100 to 42	
WSM32295	Study in 1897, Pershore Abbey, Pershore	CHURCH	1100 to 2050	SO9478245790
		CHAPEL	1100 to 1399	
		CHAPEL	-100 to 42	
WSM32296	Excavations in 1929, Abbatial Buildings and Nave, Pershore Abbey	WARMING HOUSE	1066 to 1539	SO9476345759
		CLOISTER GARTH	1066 to 1539	
		CLOISTER	1066 to 1539	
		REFECTORY	1066 to 1539	
		CHAPTER HOUSE	1066 to 1539	
		INHUMATION	Undated	
WSM32330	Archaeological Assessment of the Entrance Doorways, Pershore Abbey	BUILDING	1200 to 1862	SO9478645792
WSM34416	Watching Brief on North-East Corner of Rectory, Pershore Abbey, Pershore		Undated	SO9477345808

WSM35079	Watching Brief in 2006 at North-East Chapel, Pershore Abbey	Foundation	1200 to 1299	SO9479845812
		Skeleton	1066 to 1199	
		Skeleton	1301 to 1539	
WSM35773	Ongoing Work - Watching Brief at Pershore Abbey, Pershore		Undated	SO9477645810

## Buildings

Her Reference	Name	Monument Type	Dates	OS Reference
WSM05407	Holy Cross Church / Pershore Abbey, Pershore	ABBEY	1066 to 1539	SO9478245790
		CHURCH	1539 to 1900	
		MINSTER	689 to 970	
		CHURCH	1847 to 2050	
WSM05409	St Andrew's Church, Pershore	CHURCH	1147 to 1961	SO9483045823
		INHUMATION	1700 to 1899	
		PARISH HALL	1961 to 2050	
WSM16003	Wall and gate piers to Abbey Park, Pershore	WALL	1700 to 1700	SO9483945734
		GATE PIER	1700 to 1700	
WSM16008	3 Church Row, Pershore	DWELLING	1800 to 2050	SO9475945874
WSM16011	Wall at Vicarage, Church Street, Pershore	WALL	1700 to 2050	SO9481445836
WSM35140	9 Church Row, Pershore	CRUCK HOUSE	1525 to 2050	SO9472845861

## Historic Town Survey

Her Reference	Name	Monument Type	Dates	OS Reference
WSM29055	CMHTS survey extent of Pershore		Undated	SO9477145653

## Landscapes

Her Reference	Name	Monument Type	Dates	OS Reference
WSM15293	Pershore Medieval Town		Undated	

## Monuments

Her Reference	Name	Monument Type	Dates	OS Reference
WSM05408	Cross (Possibly High Cross), Abbey churchyard. Pershore	CROSS	1066 to 1539	SO9480045710
WSM07802	Precinct of Saxon Monastery, Pershore	MONASTERY	690 to 1065	SO9478945864
WSM11870	Precinct of Abbey, Pershore	MONASTIC PRECI	1066 to 1539	SO9472345641

WSM16035	Site of "The Abbey", Abbey Park, Pershore	DWELLING	1850 to 1947	SO9469245751
		PARK	1850 to 1947	
		GARDEN	1850 to 1947	
WSM16037	Flandrian River Channel, Pershore.	EVENT	-4000 to -2351	SO9471945847
		EVENT	200 to 399	
		EVENT	1066 to 1900	
WSM16043	Site of Great Gatehouse, Pershore Abbey, Pershore	GATEHOUSE	1066 to 1825	SO9471645838
WSM16044	Pershore: Medieval/Post-Medieval Component; Churchyard	CHURCHYARD	1066 to 1900	
WSM16049	Pershore; Med/Post-Med Component, Tenement Plots; West of High Street	OCCUPATION AREA	1066 to 1900	
WSM16050	Pershore: A-S/Med Component, Market Place/Open Space	MARKET PLACE	411 to 1065	
WSM16053	Pershore; Med/Post-Med Component Tenements, W of High St, N of Church St	TENEMENT PLOTS	1066 to 1900	
WSM16055	Pershore: Medieval/Post Medieval Component; Street System		Undated	
WSM16065	Pershore: Post-Medieval Component; Churchyard of Holy Croaa	CHURCHYARD	1540 to 1900	
WSM16066	Pershore: Post-Medieval Component, Open Space		Undated	
WSM16069	Pershore: Anglo-Saxon Component; Occupation Area N of Abbey Precinct	OCCUPATION AREA	411 to 1065	SO9465245885
WSM32253	Site of Abbatial / Claustral Buildings, Pershore Abbey	BENEDICTINE MONASTERY	1090 to 1538	SO9475345772

## Parks and Gardens

Her Reference	Name	Monument Type	Dates	OS Reference
WSM29024	Garden, "The Abbey", Abbey Park, Pershore	GARDEN	1700 to 1999	SO9468645656

## Scheduled Ancient Monuments

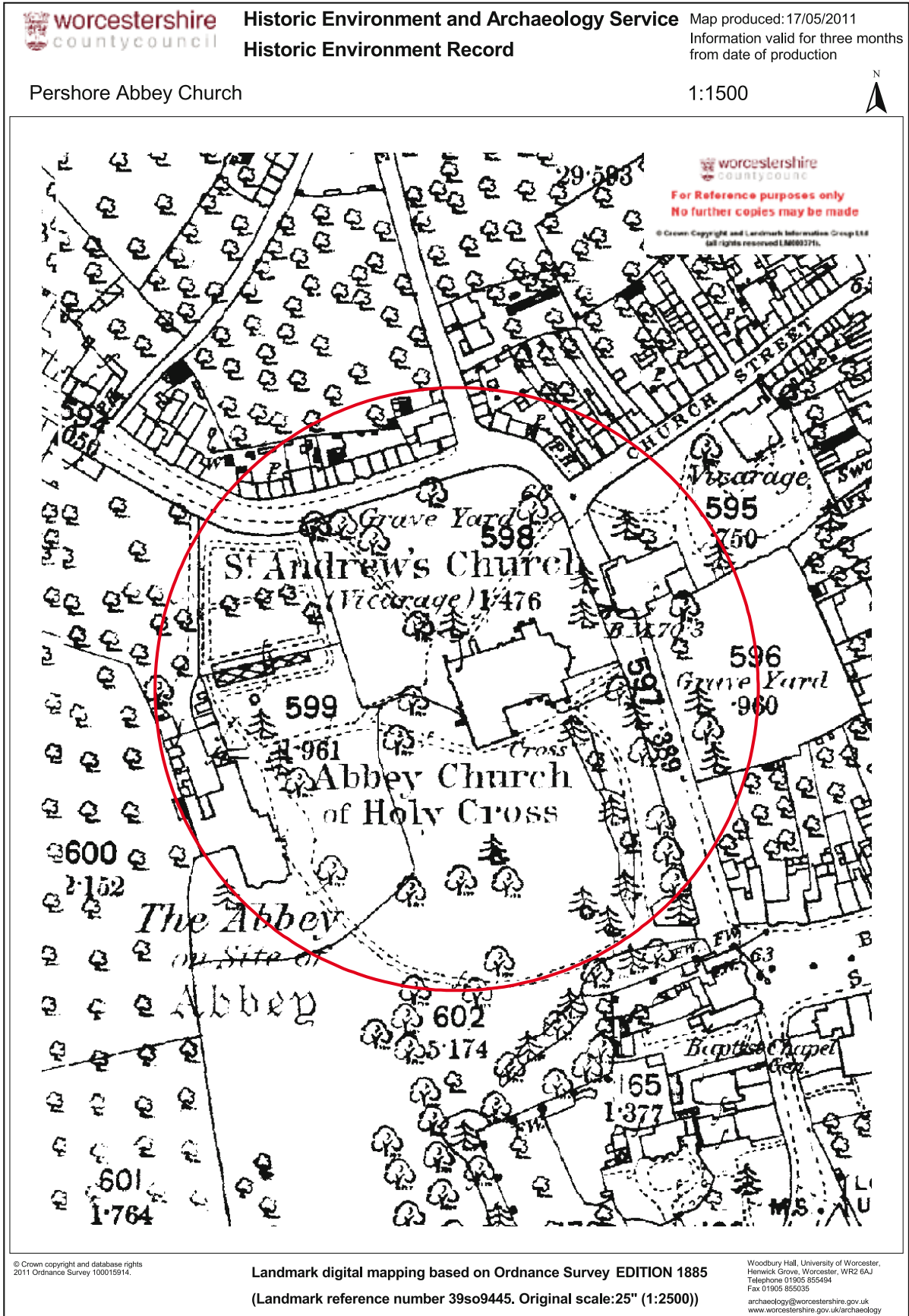
Her Reference	Name	Monument Type	Dates	OS Reference
SAM260	Pershore Abbey (site of)		Undated	SO9476745803

Report prepared by the Historic Environment Record, Worcestershire Historic Environment and Archaeology Service, Woodbury Hall, University of Worcester, Henwick Grove Worcester WR2 6AJ  
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7.4 Appendix 4 – Historic maps

1885 map



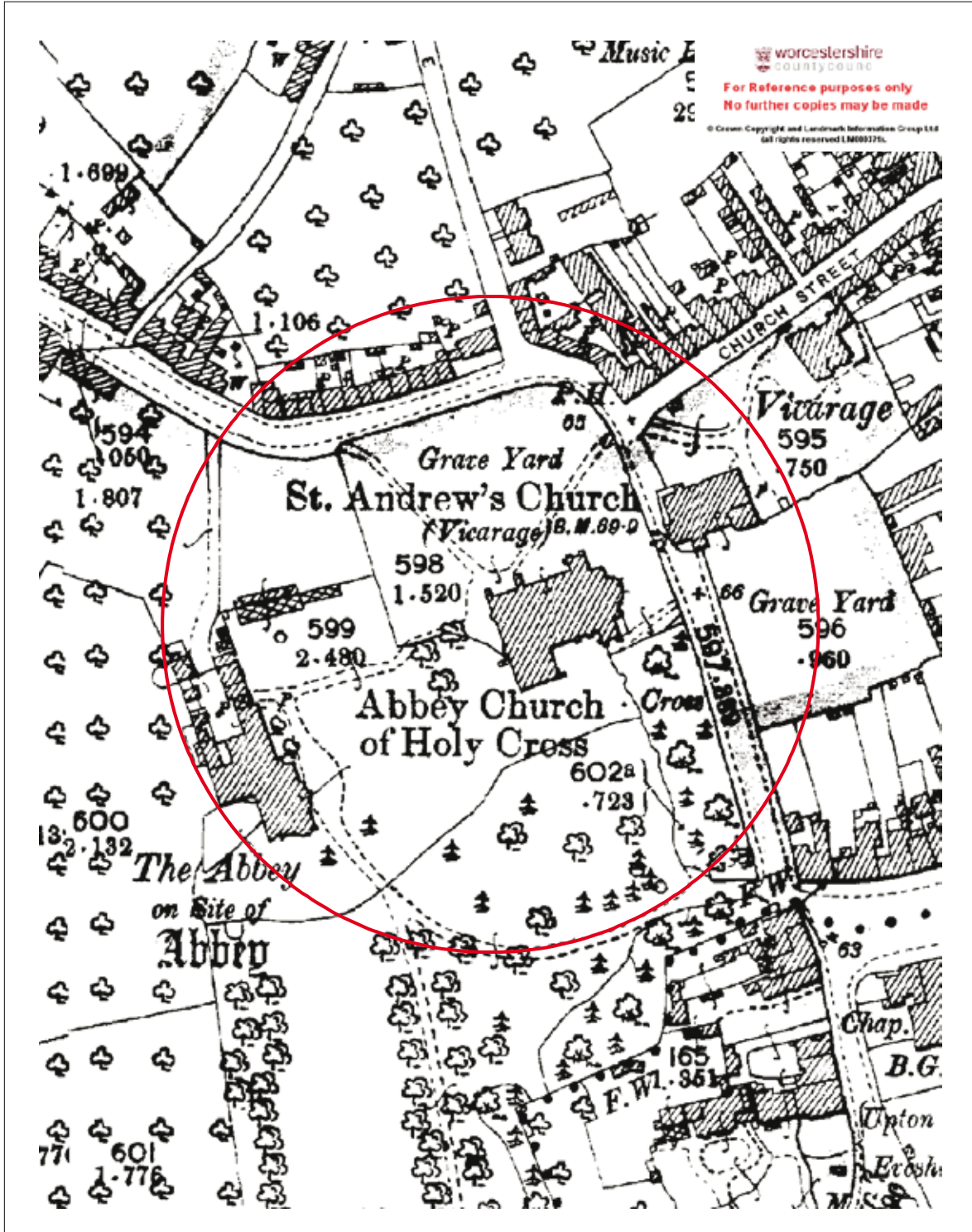


Historic Environment and Archaeology Service  
Historic Environment Record

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Pershore Abbey Church

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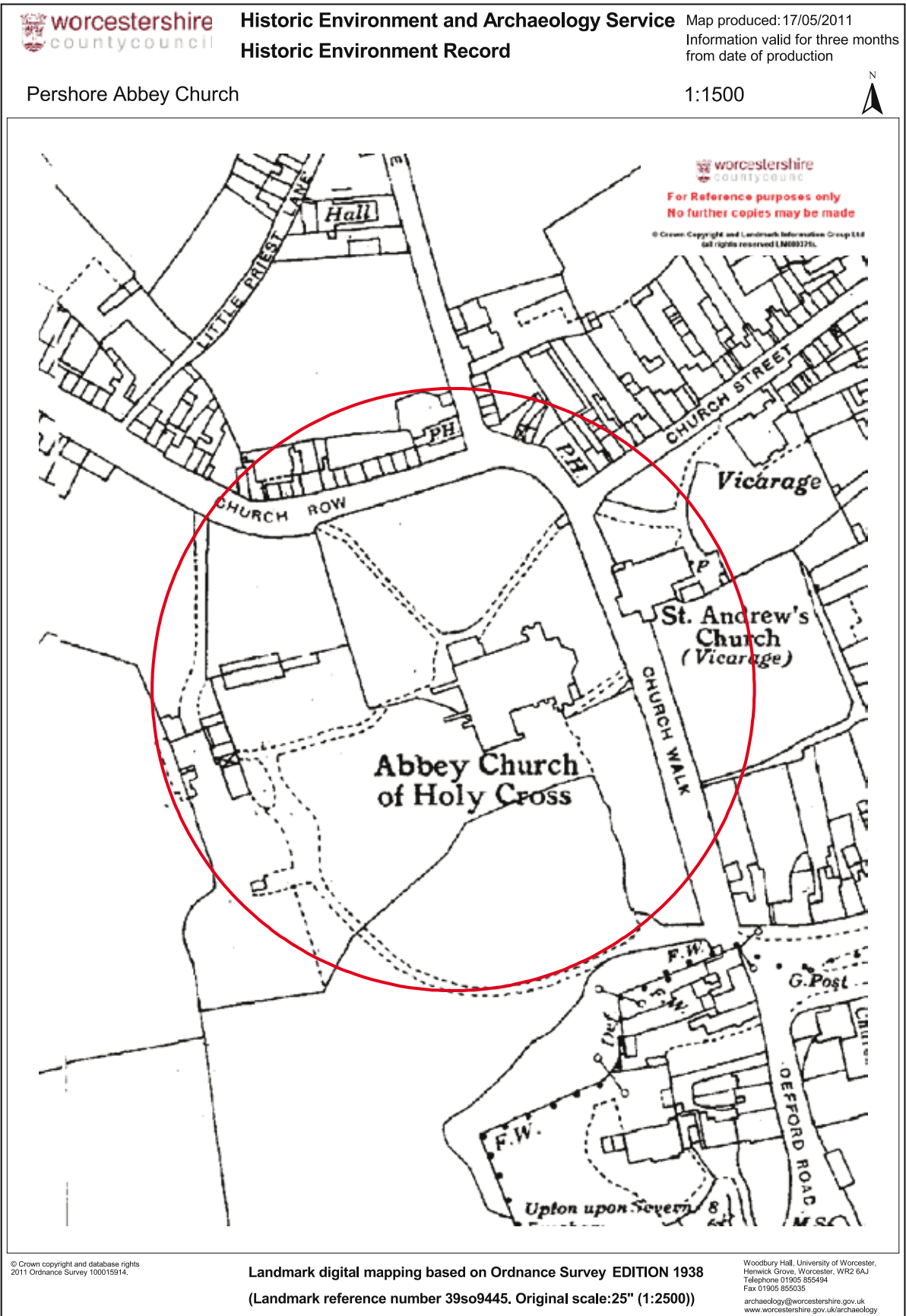


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1938 map





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