



making sense of heritage

Land at East Taphouse Liskeard, Cornwall

Archaeological Evaluation Report



Cornwall Council Planning Ref: PA15/01393
Ref: 106842.01
August 2015



**Land at East Taphouse
Liskeard, Cornwall**

Archaeological Evaluation Report

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Archaeological Evaluation Report

Summary

Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by Halsall Construction Limited to undertake a trial trench evaluation on land at East Taphouse, Liskeard, Cornwall, centred on National Grid Reference (NGR) 218000 063280. The archaeological evaluation was carried out between the 4th and the 6th August 2015.

The evaluation formed part of an ongoing programme of archaeological works, including previously a desk-based assessment (WA 2014) and a geophysical survey (WA 2015a).

The evaluation was intended to provide additional information to enable an informed decision to be made on the determination of the planning application with regard to archaeology and cultural heritage. The evaluation trial trenches were targeted on the geophysical survey results.

The evaluation revealed five ditches within three of the four trenches, with the majority of the ditches located in the northern half of the Site. The ditches are most likely to represent former field boundaries. No discrete features were identified in the evaluation. All of the ditches were relatively shallow and showed signs of truncation from above, understood to be most likely from previous agricultural activity. There were no finds recovered from any of the features on the Site. A single find, a square-sectioned copper alloy nail of likely post-medieval/ modern date, was recovered from the topsoil in Trench 3.

All of the identified features in the evaluation correspond to anomalies of probable or possible archaeology in the previous geophysical survey (WA 2015a). The archaeological potential of the Site is however considered to be low, given the absence of any evidence to suggest previous sustained settlement activity on or near the Site, with the ditches identified likely to represent former field systems.



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Acknowledgements

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The archaeological evaluation was directed in the field by Piotr Orczewski, assisted by Peter Capps. The report was compiled by Simon Flaherty and Ruth Panes and the graphics were prepared by Karen Nichols. The project was managed on behalf of Wessex Archaeology by Andy Crockett.



Land at East Taphouse Liskeard, Cornwall

Archaeological Evaluation Report

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Project background

- 1.1.1 Wessex Archaeology (WA) was commissioned by Halsall Construction Limited ('the Client'), to carry out an archaeological trial trench evaluation on land at East Taphouse, Liskeard, Cornwall, centred on National Grid Reference (NGR) 218000 063280 (hereafter 'the Site', **Figure 1**).
- 1.1.2 The evaluation formed part of an ongoing programme of archaeological works, including previously a Desk-Based Assessment (DBA) (WA 2014) and a geophysical survey (WA 2015a), all in response to the proposed residential development of the Site. The DBA identified the potential for the presence of archaeological remains within the proposed development area. The subsequent geophysical survey expanded this further and informed the location of the trial trenches.
- 1.1.3 Following the preliminary results of the geophysical survey the Cornwall Council Historic Environment Planning Officer (HEPAO) advised the Local Planning Authority (LPA) that a targeted programme of trial trenching was required prior to the determination of the planning application. The evaluation was intended to provide additional information which would enable an informed decision to be made on the determination of the planning application with regard to archaeology and cultural heritage.
- 1.1.4 The evaluation was conducted in accordance with the guidelines and standards outlined in the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' *Standard and guidance for archaeological field evaluation* (CIfA 2014a).
- 1.1.5 This document sets out the results of the archaeological evaluation, which took place between the 4th and 6th August 2015.

1.2 Site location, topography and geology

- 1.2.1 The Site is located just over 6km to the east of Liskeard and c. 8km to the north-east of Lostwithiel. The Site lies on the south-western edge of the small village of East Taphouse (**Figure 1**).
- 1.2.2 The Site consists of a trapezoid area of approximately 0.8 hectares. The area is currently used for grazing. The site is bounded to the west by the B3359 and to the north by the A390. An unnamed road lies along the south boundary and to the east lies the residential properties of Lower Hillside. The external boundaries are marked by 'Cornish hedgerows', a drystone bank surmounted by a hedgerow, as well as a number of trees.
- 1.2.3 The Site lies at approximately 184m above Ordnance Datum (aOD) falling slightly to the east and north-east to around 178m aOD.



- 1.2.4 The solid geology comprises Slate and Siltstone of the Saltash Formation. There are no superficial deposits recorded on the Site but overlying superficial geological deposits of Clay, Silt, Sand and Gravel are recorded immediately to the northeast of the Site and so some overlap may occur (British Geological Survey online viewer).
- 1.2.5 The soils underlying the Site are recorded as typical brown earths of the 541k (Denbigh 2) association with some possible overlap to the north and south of the typical brown podzolic soils of the 611c (Manod) association (Soil Survey of England and Wales SE Sheet 5 1983).

2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 Introduction

- 2.1.1 The DBA (WA 2014) identified that there have been relatively few intrusive archaeological investigations within the local area and none within the Site itself. This suggested that the archaeological potential of the area, particularly in relation to earlier periods, is currently poorly understood.

2.2 Designated sites

- 2.2.1 There are no Scheduled Monuments or Listed Buildings within the proposed development area, although the western edge of the Site overlaps with the eastern limit of the Bradock Down Registered Battlefield (List entry **1000005**). The area is thought to be the site of an English Civil War battle fought in 1643, when the Royalist army under Sir Ralph Hopton defeated the parliamentary forces.
- 2.2.2 Although a metal detector survey of the battlefield site was undertaken as part of archaeological investigations along the Liskeard to Maudlin pipeline, no evidence for the battle was identified. An alternative location for the battle is suggested to lie over 1.7km to the south-west, within the Grade II* Registered parkland of Boconnoc (List entry **1000350**).

2.3 Archaeological Baseline

Early Prehistoric

- 2.3.1 The most significant prehistoric features recorded within the vicinity of the proposed development area comprise a number of scheduled and non-designated barrows of probable Late Neolithic or Bronze Age date, located to the west and south-west of the Site. The DBA noted that small quantities of prehistoric worked flint have reportedly been discovered in close proximity to the barrows.
- 2.3.2 No earlier prehistoric sites are known within the immediate vicinity of the Site, though such remains are often ephemeral, representing seasonal and temporary activity and can be difficult to identify in the archaeological record.

Iron Age & Romano-British

- 2.3.3 The DBA identified no recorded archaeological evidence of Iron Age or Romano-British finds or features within the immediate vicinity of the Site. However, the Iron Age hillfort and earthworks at Largin Castle over 1km north of the Site, and a Roman fort uncovered by geophysical survey near Lostwithiel (British Archaeology 2007; 8) indicate activity within the wider area.

- 2.3.4 The DBA also noted that a cropmark feature to the north-west of the Middle Taphouse crossroads is marked and labelled on early Ordnance Survey (OS) maps as 'entrenchment'. Similar features lie further to the north-west and are believed to be associated with Iron Age activity at Largin Castle.

Medieval, post-medieval and modern

- 2.3.5 The DBA identified very little evidence for medieval activity in the immediate vicinity of the Site, and suggested that there is an overall low potential for archaeological remains of this date to be present. Similarly, there is little evidence that significant archaeological remains of post-medieval date are likely to be present.
- 2.3.6 However, a draft Ordnance Survey map of 1803 depicts a trackway or road from Boconnock to Liskeard, which may have traversed the Site. The origin and precise location of the road are uncertain, although it is possible that the thoroughfare may have been of some antiquity.
- 2.3.7 The DBA noted that subsequent cartographic sources dating from the mid-late 19th century do not depict the aforementioned thoroughfare. These maps indicate that the Site was occupied by a plantation during this period, prior to its conversion to agriculture in the 20th century.

2.4 Geophysical Survey

- 2.4.1 A detailed gradiometer survey (WA 2015a) was undertaken across the Site on 16th April 2015. The survey was successful in detecting anomalies of probable and possible archaeological interest across the Site. In addition to these, anomalies interpreted as areas of increased magnetic response were also identified.
- 2.4.2 The anomalies of probable and possible archaeological interest were interpreted as primarily linear ditch features and irregular pit anomalies. Due to the small size of the Site it was not possible to ascertain the nature of these features, although it was considered likely that most relate to former field boundaries of unknown date.
- 2.4.3 The most complex area of potential archaeology was determined to lie within the southern parts of the Site. Within these areas, numerous linear and discrete anomalies were suggested to signal the possible presence of pit and ditch features of unknown purpose and date. These may relate to enclosures and former field systems but due to the small area of the Site, the period and usage can only be speculated.
- 2.4.4 Two parallel linear features which produced a very strong response, separating these features from the surrounding anomalies, were also revealed. Though of unknown provenance, it was suggested that these may represent a former boundary, road or trackway, possibly the trackway indicated on the 1803 Ordnance Survey map. A similar feature has also been identified to the south.
- 2.4.5 An interpretation of the gradiometer survey results, overlain with the locations of the evaluation trenches which were targeted on the survey results, is shown in **Figure 1**.

3 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Aims and objectives

- 3.1.1 The overall aim of this programme of archaeological evaluation was to provide further information regarding the potential location and nature of archaeological remains within

the Site. If remains were present, the evaluation was to seek to establish sufficient details such that informed decisions could be made regarding the need and scope of any further mitigation that may be required before or during the development of the Site.

3.1.2 With due regard to the ClfA *Standard and guidance for archaeological field evaluation* (ClfA 2014a), the generic aims of the project were to:

- *To locate, identify and to investigate and record the presence/absence of archaeological features or deposits;*
- *The evaluation, where possible, would confirm the extent, date, character, relationship, condition and significance of archaeological features, artefacts and deposits within the proposed development area;*
- *To inform the scope and nature of any requirements for any potential further fieldwork, whether additional watching brief, excavation or post-excavation work;*
- *To enable the preservation by record of any archaeological features or deposits uncovered;*
- *To place any identified archaeological remains within their historical context, methodology.*

3.2 Fieldwork methodology

3.2.1 All works were undertaken in accordance with the methodology set out within the WSI (WA 2015b). In format and content it conforms with current best practice and to the guidance outlined in *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment* (MoRPHE, English Heritage 2006). All fieldwork was conducted in accordance with the guidance and standards outlined in the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' *Standard and guidance for archaeological field evaluation* (ClfA 2014a).

3.2.2 All the trenches were laid out using a Leica Viva series GNSS unit using the OS National GPS Network through an RTK network with a 3D accuracy of 30mm or below and in general accordance with the pattern given in the Method Statement (**Figure 1**). The investigation areas were scanned using a cable avoidance tool (CAT) by trained WA staff experienced in the use of such equipment prior to machining.

3.2.3 Trench excavation was carried out using a mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless ditching bucket measuring approximately 1.80m wide, and was supervised by a suitably qualified archaeologist at all times. The topsoil was removed by machine in a series of level spits to the top of the archaeology or natural geological deposits, whichever was encountered first. The machine excavated arisings were stored at the side of the trench and were scanned for artefacts at regular intervals.

3.2.4 Areas of investigation completed to the satisfaction of the Cornwall Council Historic Environment Planning Officer were backfilled using the excavated material in the approximate order in which they were excavated and left level on completion.

3.3 Recording

3.3.1 All exposed archaeological deposits were recorded using WA's *pro forma* recording system.

3.3.2 A complete drawn record of archaeological features and deposits was compiled. This included both plans and sections, drawn to appropriate scales (generally 1:20 for plans,

1:10 for sections), and with reference to a site grid tied to the Ordnance Survey National Grid. The Ordnance Datum (OD) height of all principal features and levels was calculated and plans/sections annotated with OD heights.

- 3.3.3 A photographic record was maintained during the evaluation using digital cameras equipped with an image sensor of not less than 10 megapixels. Digital images were subject to managed quality control and curation processes which embed appropriate metadata within the image and ensure long term accessibility of the image set.

4 ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESULTS

4.1 Introduction

- 4.1.1 Works comprised the machine excavation of four trenches within a single pastoral field. Trench 1 measured 30m in length by 1.8m in width (**Plate 1**). Trenches 2 and 3 measured 20m in length by 1.8m in width (**Plates 2 and 3**) and Trench 4 measured 10 m in length and 1.8m in width.

4.2 Natural deposits and soil sequences

- 4.2.1 The sequence of overburden deposits was fairly consistent across most of the Site. It comprised of a mid greyish brown clay loam topsoil that varied in thickness from 0.25m to 0.33m. The topsoil sat directly on top of the natural geology, a mid-reddish brown silty clay with abundant slate inclusions.

4.3 Archaeological remains

Introduction

- 4.3.1 Archaeological remains were identified within Trenches 1, 2 and 3, comprising of five ditches (103, 105, 107, 203 and 303). Trench 4 did not contain any archaeological remains.

Trench 1

- 4.3.2 Trench 1 contained three east to west aligned ditches (103, 105, 107) located within the northern half of the trench. They were flat based with concave sides and the width of the ditches varied between 2.16m and 3.2m. The ditches were shallow, varying between just 0.14m and 0.4m in depth, and appeared to have been heavily truncated by agricultural activity on the Site. There was a distance of 3.9m between ditch 103 and ditch 105 and 4.15m between ditches 105 and 107. Ditch 107 was the only one of the three ditches to contain two fills (**Plate 5**).

- 4.3.3 Although stratigraphic relationships between the three ditches were not observed, and no dating evidence recovered, the geophysical survey results suggest ditches 103 and 107 are broadly contemporaneous and form either side of an east to west aligned trackway of approximate 10m width. Ditch 105 bifurcates to the west-north-west and south-west approximately 10m to the west of Trench 1 (the south-west aligned branch passing through Trench 2 as ditch 203) and is clearly unlikely to be contemporaneous with ditches 103 and 107.

Trench 2

- 4.3.4 Trench 2 contained one ditch 203 located in the south-eastern part of the trench (**Plate 6**). The ditch is orientated north-east to south-west and contained two fills with no finds. The ditch had a width of 3m with concave sides and a flat base. The feature had been heavily truncated from above with a depth of 0.22m. The function and date of the ditch are

unclear but it is most likely to represent a former field boundary, and on the basis of the geophysical survey results, equivalent to ditch 105 in Trench 1.

Trench 3

- 4.3.5 Trench 3 contained one ditch (303) located in the northern half of the trench (**Plate 7**). The ditch was orientated east-west, with a width of 0.5m and had moderately sloped convex sides with a concave base. The ditch has been heavily truncated by agricultural activity and had a depth of just 0.1m.

- 4.3.6 This ditch correlated with a linear east to west aligned geophysical anomaly of probable archaeological origin, and is most likely to represent a former field boundary. However, additional anomalies of probable and possible archaeological origin to the south were also targeted by this evaluation trench, none of which could be observed as physical remains.

Trench 4

- 4.3.7 Trench 4 contained no features or deposits of archaeological interest. A discrete geophysical anomaly of probable archaeological origin targeted by this trench could not be identified during the evaluation.

4.4 Artefacts

- 4.4.1 A single find, a square-sectioned copper alloy nail of likely post-medieval/ modern date, was recovered from the topsoil (301) within Trench 3. No other finds were recovered from the evaluation.

5 DISCUSSION

5.1 Overview

- 5.1.1 Five undated linear features, interpreted as field boundary and/or trackway ditches, were recorded in three of the four evaluation trenches. All of the ditches correspond to anomalies of probable or possible archaeological origin identified in the previous geophysical survey (WA 2015a) (**Figure 1**). No finds were recovered from any of the features, the only find from the Site, a copper alloy nail, derived from the up cast topsoil (301) from Trench 3.

5.2 Geophysical survey correlation

- 5.2.1 All of the features identified in the evaluation correspond to anomalies of probable or possible archaeological origin in the geophysical survey (WA 2015a) (**Figure 1**). However not all areas where anomalies of probable or possible archaeology were identified in the survey revealed archaeological features (most notably the southern portion of Trench 3 and Trench 4).
- 5.2.2 There were no discrete features identified in the evaluation. It may be that due to the level of truncation on the Site that some anomalies, particularly the discrete anomalies, represented concentrations of differing soil matrix within the topsoil or very ephemeral features which simply did not survive the machine-excavation of some evaluation trenches.

5.3 Archaeological Potential

- 5.3.1 The archaeological potential of the Site is considered to be low. The five undated linear features identified in the evaluation are most likely to represent former field boundaries

and/or trackway ditches, and the almost complete absence of any finds from the Site suggests only very limited former activity on or near the Site.

6 ARCHIVE

6.1 Storage

- 6.1.1 The designated receiving museum is the Royal Cornwall Museum, which at present is not issuing accession numbers or accepting archives. However, with virtually no finds recovered, liaison with the Cornwall Records Office may allow the deposition of a paper-only archive.
- 6.1.2 No charge will be made for the temporary storage of finds or archives during the period when WA is undertaking fieldwork or report preparation. However, if, after completion and submission of the report, finds and archives cannot be deposited with the relevant museum due to circumstances beyond WA's control, the archive will either be returned to the landowner for safe storage, or a charge will be made for continued temporary storage at WA offices.
- 6.1.3 A charge for storage may also be made where a delay is caused by a lack of confirmation of post-fieldwork analyses and reporting, if the delay exceeds three months.

6.2 Preparation of archive

- 6.2.1 The complete site archive, which includes paper records, photographic records, graphics, artefacts and digital data, has been prepared following the standard conditions for the acceptance of excavated archaeological material by the local museum, and in general following nationally recommended guidelines (SMA 1995; ClfA 2014b; Brown 2011; ADS 2013).
- 6.2.2 All archive elements have been marked with the Site code, and a full index have been prepared.
- 6.2.3 The archive of all records and finds has been consistent with the principles of Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MoRPHE) (English Heritage 2006).

6.3 Discard policy

- 6.3.1 WA follows the guidelines set out in Selection, Retention and Dispersal (Society of Museum Archaeologists 1993), which allows for the discard of selected artefact and ecofact categories which are not considered to warrant any future analysis. Any discard of artefacts will be fully documented in the project archive.
- 6.3.2 The discard of environmental remains and samples follows nationally recommended guidelines (SMA 1993; 1995; English Heritage 2002).

6.4 Security copy

- 6.4.1 In line with current best practice (e.g. Brown 2011), on completion of the project a security copy of the written records has been prepared, in the form of a digital PDF/A file. PDF/A is an ISO-standardised version of the Portable Document Format (PDF) designed for the digital preservation of electronic documents through omission of features ill-suited to long-term archiving.

7 REFERENCES

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8 APPENDICES

8.1 Appendix 1: Trench tables

| Trench 1 | Dimensions: 30m x 1.5m | | |
|-------------|--|---|-----------------------------------|
| | Max depth: 0.34m | | Ground Level: 174.74m-178.73m aOD |
| | Coordinates: E 218008.2570 N 63317.2350 and E 218009.0245 N 63286.0350 | | |
| Context | Category | Description | Depth\ Thickness |
| 101 | Topsoil | Mid grey brown with reddish hue clay loam with occasional angular stone frags <30mm whitish slate. | 0-0.25m |
| 102 | Natural | Mid red brown with abundant angular stone/slate <150mm | 0.25m+ |
| 103 | Cut | East to west aligned ditch with a flat base and concave very shallow sides. It is 2.45m wide and 0.14m deep. Filled with 104. | 0.14m |
| 104 | Fill | Mid grey brown with reddish hue clay loam. Tertiary fill probably the result of ploughing. It was very similar to the topsoil. It contained rare slate fragments <60mm and rare charcoal flecks and fragments <10mm and disintegrated pottery fragments. | 0.14m |
| 105 | | | |
| 106 | | | |
| 107 | Cut | East to west aligned ditch with a flat base with concave sides that are shallow on the southern side but steep on the northern side. It was 3.2m wide and 0.4m deep. It is filled with 108 and 109. | 0.4m |
| 108 | Fill | Mid pale grey brown grey loam secondary fill derived from erosion of the bank/sides. It contained moderate slate fragments <70mm and contained 'dissolved' daub or burnt clays that accounted for 20% of the fill. It also flecks of charcoal. Lower fill of ditch 107. | 0.08m |
| 109 | Fill | Upper fill of ditch 107. Mid pale grey brown clay loam with abundant angular slate frags <100mm and charcoal flecks. Tertiary fill created as a result of ploughing. | 0.34m |

| | | | |
|----------|--|---|-----------------------------------|
| Trench 2 | Dimensions: 20.1m x 1.5m | | |
| | Max depth: 0.33m | | Ground Level: 179.93m–180.57m aOD |
| | Coordinates: E 217969.4990 N 63296.7425 and E 217982.7015 N 63281.7135 | | |
| Context | Category | Description | Depth |
| 201 | Topsoil | Greyish mid to dark brown clay loam. Heavily rooted throughout with established turf above. It contained moderate, sub angular-sub rounded stones/slate throughout <70mm. clear horizon with the natural. | 0-0.3m |
| 202 | Natural | Mid reddish brown sandy clay with abundant sub angular to angular slate throughout <70mm | 0.3m+ |
| 203 | Cut | Cut of south-west to north-east aligned field boundary ditch. It has a concave base with flat concave sides. It is very shallow and possibly truncated by later agricultural activity. It was 3m wide. Contained fills 204 and 205. | 0.22m |
| 204 | Fill | Primary Fill. Mid to light bluish grey silty clay with abundant sub angular to angular flints <70mm. compacted. Primary fill result of initial silting of ditch. Fill of 203 | 0.1m |
| 205 | Fill | Dark greyish brown silty clay loam with occasional sub rounded stone <20mm. Secondary fill of shallow ditch. Dark colour suggests organic material present; possibly even the establishment of turf or other plants. Fill of ditch 203. | 0.15m |



| | | | |
|-----------------|---|---|--|
| Trench 3 | Dimensions: 20.3m x 1.5m | | |
| | Max depth: 0.35m | | Ground Level: 180.96m–182.66m aOD |
| | Coordinates: E 217998.2390 N 63269.2715 and E 217998.4925 N 63249.1750 | | |
| Context | Category | Description | Depth |
| 301 | Topsoil | Mid greyish brown clay loam. Heavy rooting throughout. It contained moderate angular slate <50mm. Well established turf above. | 0-0.3m |
| 302 | Natural | Reddish brown sandy clay with abundant slate throughout that's <200mm. Natural fades in colour to a pinkish grey at approximately 0.5m in depth. | 0.3m+ |
| 303 | Cut | Cut of east to west aligned ditch with a concave base with flat to convex sides with a moderate to gentle slope. It is 0.5m wide. It was heavily truncated through agricultural activity. Possibly part of a field system. Filled with 304. | 0.14m |
| 304 | Fill | Light greyish brown sandy clay with abundant sub angular slate inclusions <50mm. Secondary fill cause by gradual silting up of feature. Fill of 303. | 0.14m |

| | | | |
|-----------------|---|--|--|
| Trench 4 | Dimensions: 11.2m x 1.5m | | |
| | Max depth: 0.35m | | Ground Level: 182.68m–183.12m aOD |
| | Coordinates: E 218003.0530 N 63241.3195 and E 218014.5085 N 63241.6055 | | |
| Context | Category | Description | Depth |
| 401 | Layer | Topsoil dark greyish brown clay loam. It contained small (<30mm) subangular to angular stone/slate inclusions that were moderately sorted and moderate small (<30mm) rounded pebbles. It has well established turf above the layer with heavy fine rooting throughout. | 0-0.33m |
| 402 | Layer | Natural mid reddish brown sandy clay with abundant angular slate <100mm. | 0.33m+ |



Site and trench location plan

Figure 1



Plate 1: Trench 1 viewed from the south



Plate 2: Trench 2 viewed from the south-east


| | | | |
|---|---|---|--------------------|
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Plate 3: Trench 3 viewed from the north



Plate 4: West facing section through ditch 103


| | | | |
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Plate 5: West facing section through ditch 107



Plate 6: South-west facing section through ditch 203



| | | | |
|---|---|---|--------------------|
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Plate 7: West facing section through ditch 303



Plate 8: View of the Site from the south

| | | | |
|---|---|---|--------------------|
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