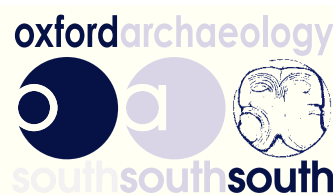


Land North-East of Bridgwater Somerset

Phase 4



Archaeological Evaluation Report




October 2012

**Client: CgMs on behalf of Hallam
Land Management Ltd**

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Land North-East of Bridgwater, Somerset

Phase 4 (School Site)

Archaeological Evaluation Report

Written by Brian Dean and illustrated by Georgina Slater

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Summary

On the 9th and 10th of August 2012 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out a field evaluation on land to the north-east of Bridgwater, Somerset. This evaluation follows three previous phases of evaluation trenching conducted by OA in 2009-10 and 2012, of which Phase 1 (48 trenches) and Phase 2 (30 trenches) were the main investigations. Phase 3 (3 trenches) and the current Phase 4 (2 trenches) are much smaller in scale, being designed to fill gaps in coverage within the overall development area.

The current evaluation comprised machine excavation of two trenches (numbered 83 and 84, following on from previous phases), each measuring 50m by 2m and excavated to a maximum depth of 1.2m.

No archaeological features were identified in either of the trenches. A fragment of 16th/17th century AD pottery, recovered from the topsoil layer within Trench 83, was the only artefact round during the investigation.

A uniform alluvial sequence was observed throughout.



1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Location and scope of work

- 1.1.1 Between the 9th and 10th of August 2012 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out a field evaluation of a proposed school development forming part of a wider development known as Land to the North-East of Bridgwater, Somerset, centred on NGR: ST 315 387 (Fig.1). The evaluation was undertaken on behalf of CgMs for Hallam Land Management Ltd.
- 1.1.2 This phase of work followed on from three previous phases of evaluation conducted by OA across the wider development area in 2009-10 and 2012 (OA 2010a; OA 2010c, OA 2012). The evaluation consisted of two trenches, each 50m long and 2m wide (Fig. 2), both of which were machine excavated to a maximum depth of 1.2m.

1.2 Geology and topography

- 1.2.1 The site lies in the valley of the River Parrett, within the Somerset Levels, at a height of c 6m above Ordnance Datum. It is bordered to the east by a new access road, to the west by the Penzance to Bristol Railway, to the north by a new Morrisons distribution warehouse, and to the south by a new residential development. Current land use is pasture.
- 1.2.2 The underlying geology is identified as deposits of Upper Keuper Marl, overlain by bands of riverine alluvium, interspersed with isolated peat deposits. The Holocene alluvial sequence in the area is estimated at up to c.22 m thick (OA 2008).

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

- 1.3.1 There are no records of archaeological features or finds from the earlier or later prehistoric periods within the site and there is only limited evidence from the vicinity of the site. However, previous archaeological investigations within the Somerset levels have revealed significant evidence for occupation and exploitation of the wetland resources from the Mesolithic to Iron Age periods. The paucity of known evidence from the area of the site may be a function of its proximity to the tidal floodplain of the River Parrett, as seasonal inundations are not conducive to settlement. Any such prehistoric evidence that is present would, however, have been sealed by a substantial thickness of later alluvial deposits (CgMs 2009).
- 1.3.2 There are no Roman remains recorded within the site, although remains of this date have been recorded within a 1 km radius of the site. These comprise a major settlement (and possible port) on the former course of the River Parrett on the Crandon Bridge to Puriton road, and a large linear settlement at Down End and Chilton Trinity, to the west of the application area. Roman roads and salterns have also been recorded in the vicinity of the site.
- 1.3.3 The site appears to have been in agricultural use from the Saxon to the post-medieval periods, although only a few medieval finds have been recovered. The deserted medieval village of Horsey, a Scheduled Monument (SAM No. 33729), lies to the east of the site, on the opposite side of the M5.
- 1.3.4 To further examine the potential of the site, a geoarchaeological assessment of the application area was undertaken (OA 2008). This involved a geophysical survey (combined with LIDAR data), and a programme of boreholes and test pits.



- 1.3.5 The geoarchaeological assessment revealed four zones of sedimentation. Two of these (Zones A and C) represented large channel systems, one a channel edge environment (Zone B) and one an area of alluvial floodplain undisturbed by former channel activity (Zone D). The channel systems contained localised peat deposits located between 2 m and -2.5 m OD. These deposits have the potential to contain waterlogged structures from the Neolithic and Bronze Ages. They are overlain by considerable depths of later alluvial deposits which have the potential to contain remains of Roman, Saxon, medieval or post-medieval date (OA 2008).
- 1.3.6 The wider site has been subject to three previous phases of evaluation, as required by the development programme. The Phase 1 evaluation took place from December 2009 to January 2010 and consisted of 48 trenches (OA 2010a). The Phase 2 evaluation, comprising 30 trenches, took place in April 2010 (OA 2010c). The Phase 3 evaluation, in March-April 2012 consisted of 3 trenches (OA 2012). None of the previous trench investigations identified significant archaeological features within the top 1.2m of the alluvial sequence and no finds were recovered. Several linear features were identified, all of which cut through the subsoil and were identified as drainage ditches of recent origin. Associated depressions on the ground surface were still visible in some locations. A modern pit or ditch terminal was also identified. In all three phases localised deeper test pits were excavated to a depth of c.2.2m into the alluvial sequence, which also encountered no significant archaeology.

1.4 Acknowledgements

- 1.4.1 The evaluation was commissioned by Rob Bourne of CgMs on behalf of Hallam Land Management Ltd and the trench location plan approved by Steve Membrey of Somerset County Council.
- 1.4.2 The fieldwork was managed for OA by Stuart Foreman and conducted by Brian Dean with the assistance of Tom Black.



2 EVALUATION AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Aims

General

- 2.1.1 The aims of the evaluation were to determine the location, extent, date, character and state of preservation of any archaeological remains surviving within the study area. Attention was to be given to remains of all periods including evidence for past environments, with provision for environmental sampling included.

Detailed aims and objectives

- 2.1.2
- (i) To determine or confirm the general nature of any remains present.
 - (ii) To determine or confirm the approximate date or date range of any remains, by means of artefactual or other evidence.
 - (iii) To determine or confirm the approximate extent of any remains.
 - (iv) To determine the condition and state of preservation of any remains.
 - (v) To determine the degree of complexity of the horizontal and/or vertical stratigraphy present.
 - (vi) To determine or confirm the likely range, quality and quantity of any artefactual evidence present.
 - (vii) To determine the potential of the site to provide palaeo-environmental and/or economic evidence.

2.2 Methodology

- 2.2.1 The trial trenching methodology adhered to the requirements set out in the Phase 2 written scheme of investigation (OA 2010b).
- 2.2.2 Both trenches were excavated to the depth of the main zone of construction impact, the top 1.2m of the sediment sequence. Roman and later sediments could potentially have been present at these depths. Any surviving prehistoric remains were expected to be at greater depth, based on the geoarchaeological assessment (OA 2008).
- 2.2.3 Both trenches were scanned with a Cable Avoidance Tool prior to excavation.
- 2.2.4 Trenches were excavated using a toothless ditching bucket under close archaeological supervision. Topsoil and subsoil were stored separately and reinstated in reverse order of excavation.
- 2.2.5 A representative section was cleaned, photographed and recorded within the trenches where excavated to 1.2m (Fig.3, Plates 1-2). A digital photographic record was maintained.



3 RESULTS

3.1 Introduction and presentation of results

- 3.1.1 No archaeological features or significant artefacts were identified in the course of the evaluation.
- 3.1.2 Descriptions of all deposits and details of trenches are tabulated in Appendix 1.

3.2 General soils and ground conditions

- 3.2.1 The sediment sequence in all trenches was uniform. A topsoil layer 0.18 - 0.25m thick sealed subsoil (a ploughsoil formed from re-worked alluvium), which was between 0.1m and 0.25m thick. This subsoil sealed the underlying alluvium.
- 3.2.2 The alluvial deposit was generally mid brown grey silty clay, becoming greyer with depth and with occasional iron staining. The base of the alluvial sequence was not reached in either of the trenches. According to the geoarchaeological assessment the Holocene sediments are up to c. 22m deep within the overall development area (OA 2008).

3.3 Finds summary

- 3.3.1 A single sherd of pottery was recovered from the topsoil deposit 8300 in Trench 83. This was from a large jar dated to the 16th/17th century AD (Geraldine Crann, pers. comm.).

4 DISCUSSION

4.1 Reliability of field investigation

- 4.1.1 Ground conditions were good, with ground water encroaching at c 0.9m but not causing any difficulty. The trench sides remained stable during excavation. There is therefore a high degree of confidence that any significant archaeological features present within the upper 1.2m of the alluvial sequence would have been apparent.

4.2 Interpretation

- 4.2.1 No significant archaeological remains were encountered. This conclusion confirms the results from previous trenching in the wider development area, without adding significant new information. The thickness of Holocene alluvial sediments at this location means that any prehistoric remains that may be present would not have been encountered. Prehistoric levels lie below the level of investigation, which was restricted to the main zone of construction impact.
- 4.2.2 During the historic period the site appears to have been used exclusively for agricultural purposes. Proximity to the tidal River Parrett is likely to have precluded significant settlement within the floodplain.



APPENDIX A. TRENCH DESCRIPTIONS AND CONTEXT INVENTORY

Trench 83						
General description					Orientation	NW-SE
No archaeological remains. Consists of topsoil and subsoil overlying alluvial deposits					Avg. depth (m)	1.2
					Width (m)	2
					Length (m)	50
Contexts						
context number	type	width (m)	depth (m)	comment	finds	date
8300	Layer	-	0.2	Topsoil. Friable dark grey brown silty clay with no inclusions visible.	Pottery	16th/17 th C AD
8301	Layer	-	0.18	Subsoil/buried ploughsoil. Firm mid brown grey silty clay.	-	-
8302	Layer	-	>0.9	Alluvium. Firm mid brown grey silty clay. Occasional sub-angular stone and frequent iron staining.	-	-

Trench 84						
General description					Orientation	E-W
No archaeological remains. Consists of topsoil and subsoil overlying alluvial deposits.					Avg. depth (m)	1.2
					Width (m)	2
					Length (m)	50
Contexts						
context number	type	width (m)	depth (m)	comment	finds	date
8400	Layer	-	0.22	Topsoil. Friable dark grey brown silty clay.	-	-
8401	Layer	-	0.22	Subsoil/buried ploughsoil. Firm dark brown grey silty clay.	-	-
8402	Layer	-	0.44	Alluvium. Firm mid brown grey silty clay. Occasional sub-angular stone and moderate iron staining.	-	-
8403	Layer	-	0.36	Alluvium. Firm orange grey silty clay with blue grey lenses. Occasional sub-angular stones and frequent iron staining.	-	-
8404	Layer	-	>0.16	Alluvium. Firm light blue grey silty clay with orange brown lenses. Rare sub-angular stones and moderate iron staining.	-	-



APPENDIX B. BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

CgMs, 2009 Archaeological Evaluation/Strip Map and Sample. Land North-East of Bridgwater, Somerset.

OA, 2008 Little Sydenham Farm, near Bridgwater, Somerset. Geoarchaeological Assessment Report, Oxford Archaeology client report for CgMs Consulting and Hallam Land Management.

OA, 2010a Land North-East of Bridgwater, Somerset. Archaeological Evaluation Report. Oxford Archaeology client report for CgMs Consulting and Hallam Land Management

OA, 2010b Archaeological Evaluation of Land North-East of Bridgwater, Somerset, Phase 2 Trenching. Written Scheme of Investigation. Oxford Archaeology client report for CgMs Consulting and Hallam Land Management.

OA, 2010c Land North-East of Bridgwater, Somerset, Phase 2, Archaeological Evaluation Report. Oxford archaeology client report for CgMs Consulting and Hallam Land Management.

OA 2012 Land North-East of Bridgwater, Somerset, Phase 3. Archaeological Evaluation Report. Oxford Archaeology client report for CgMs Consulting and Hallam Land Management.



APPENDIX C. SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

Site name: Land north-east of Bridgwater, Somerset
Site code: TTNCM:247/2009
Grid reference: ST 315 387
Type: 2 trench evaluation
Date and duration: 9th to 10th August 2012
Area of site: c 0.8ha

Summary of results:

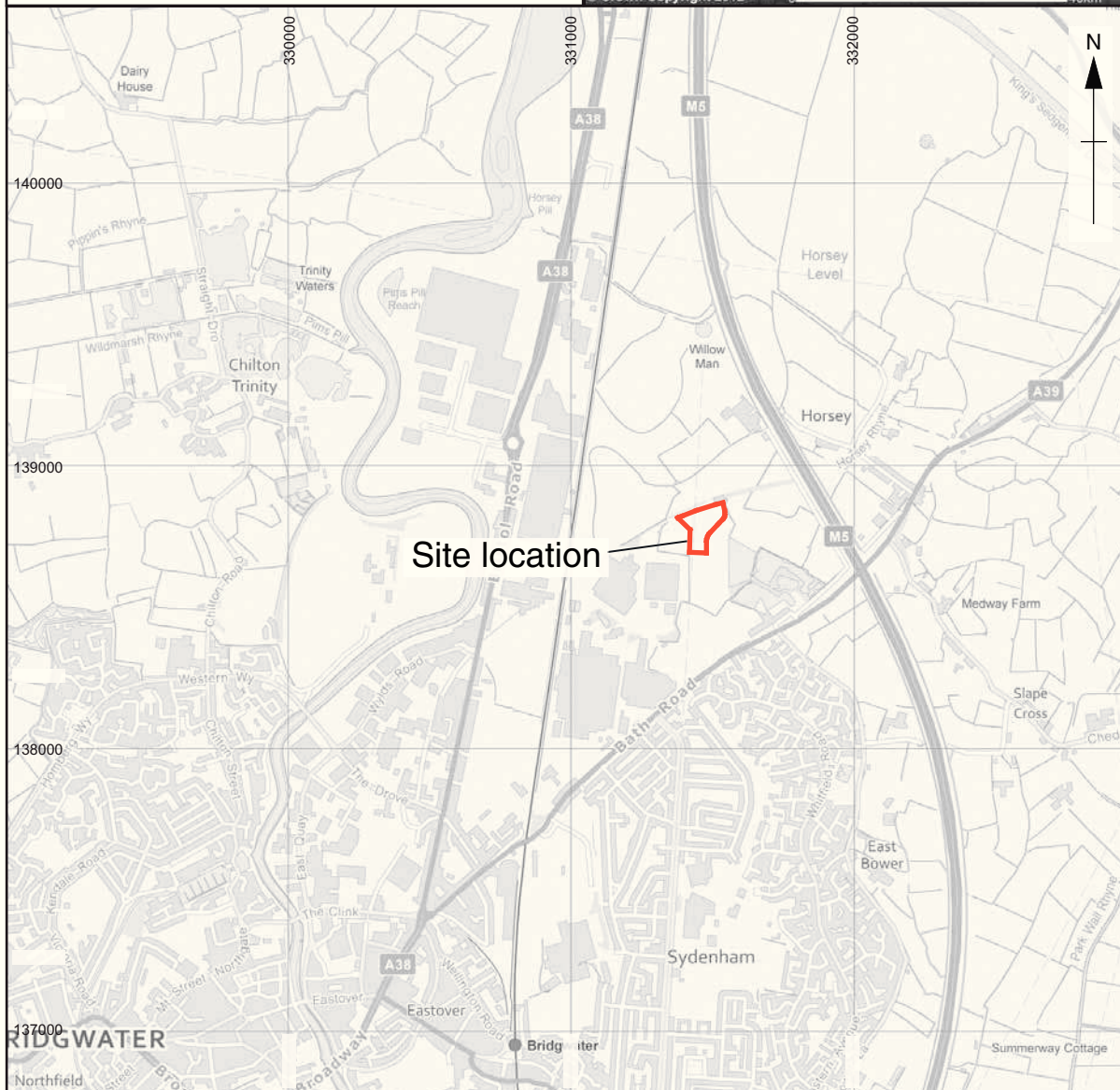
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A uniform alluvial sequence was observed throughout.

Location of archive: The archive is currently held at Oxford Archaeology, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES, and will be deposited with the Somerset County Museum in due course.



Scale at 1:25,000
Contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown copyright and database right 2011

Figure 1: Site location

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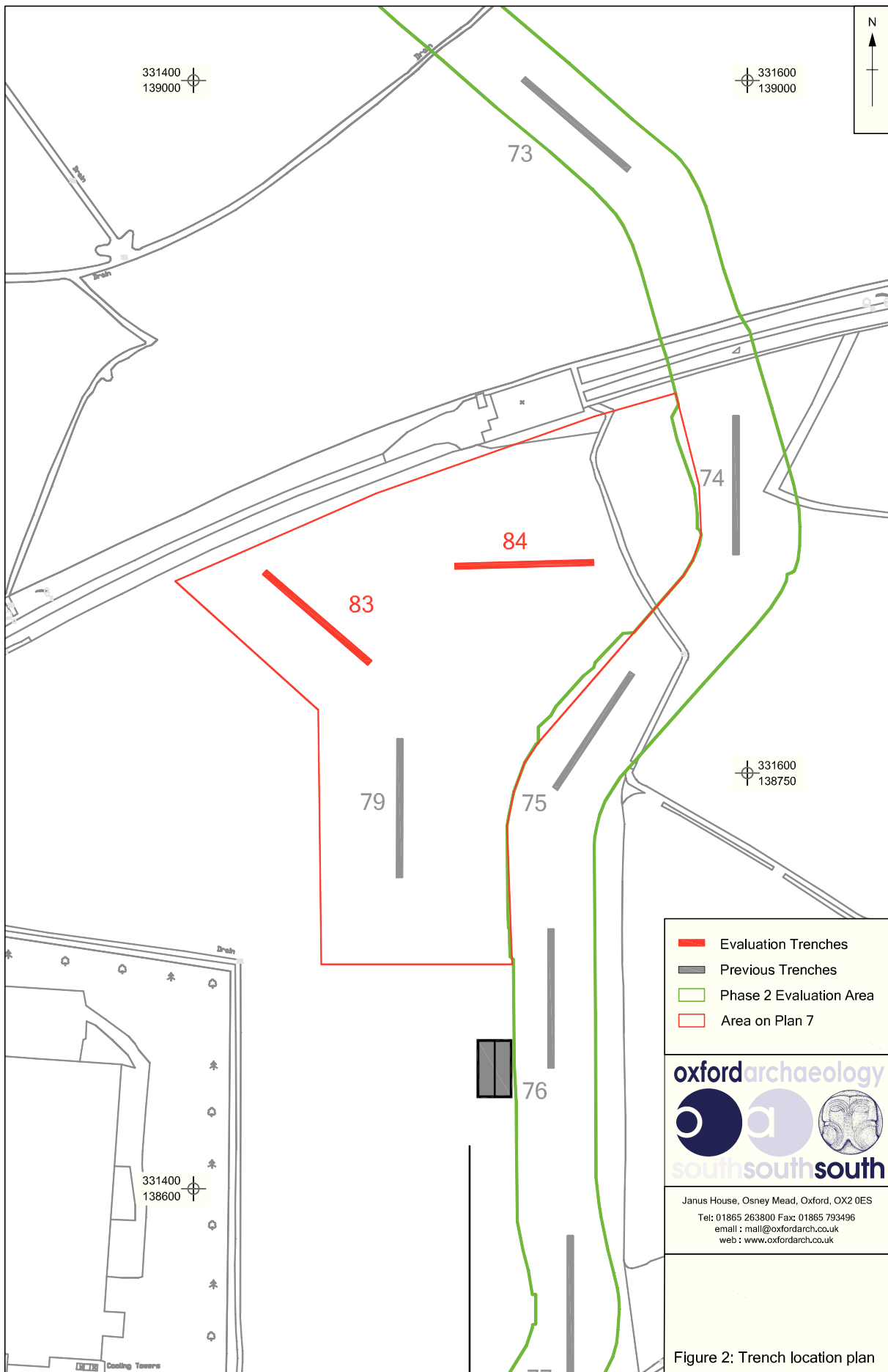


Figure 2: Trench location plan

CHECKED BY: LJH 15.10.2012



Plate 1: Trench 84 example section



Plate 2: Trench 84 general view looking west



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