

**JOHN MOORE HERITAGE SERVICES**

**THE BLACK HORSE HOTEL,  
11 CORNMARKET,  
THAME,  
OXFORDSHIRE**

**(SP 707 059)**

**AN**

**HISTORIC BUILDING ASSESSMENT**

**MARCH 2005**

**REPORT FOR:** Focus Design  
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## **1 Introduction**

### **1.1 Planning Background**

The Government, through the Department of Culture Media and Sport is responsible for protecting the historic environment. The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 provides specific protection for buildings and areas of special architectural or historic interest. The Department monitors the effectiveness of the controls.

The Secretary of State has a duty under the Act to compile lists of buildings of special architectural or historic interest. There are three grades of listing:

- Grade II are of special interest, warranting every effort to preserve them
- Grade II\* are particularly important buildings of more than special interest
- Grade I buildings are those of exceptional interest

The Black Horse Hotel, part of a complex of buildings situated at 11 Cornmarket, Thame has been listed as Grade II.

An assessment of features within the ground floor of the hotel, and an ancillary building to the rear has been requested in order to provide further information as to the historic significance of the material to be altered. The results of the assessment are given below.

## **2 Aims of the Investigation**

To assess and record the areas of the building proposed for alterations.

## **3 Strategy**

- 3.1 A study of all available historic maps and plans, together with a documentary search was undertaken at the Public Records Office in Oxford.
- 3.2 An analysis and photographic record of the features of the building proposed for alteration was undertaken to determine their significance to the building as a whole and to its development over time. Floor plans showing the locations of the photographs have been produced and will be included in the archive.
- 3.3 The archive will be deposited with the Oxfordshire Buildings Record.

## **4 Background and Cartographic Evidence (Figures 2-5)**

Thame fell within the diocese of Dorchester, until after the Norman Conquest when the see was transferred to Lincoln. Thame until the 19<sup>th</sup> century was known as a 'peculiar' as it fell outside the area of the diocese proper.

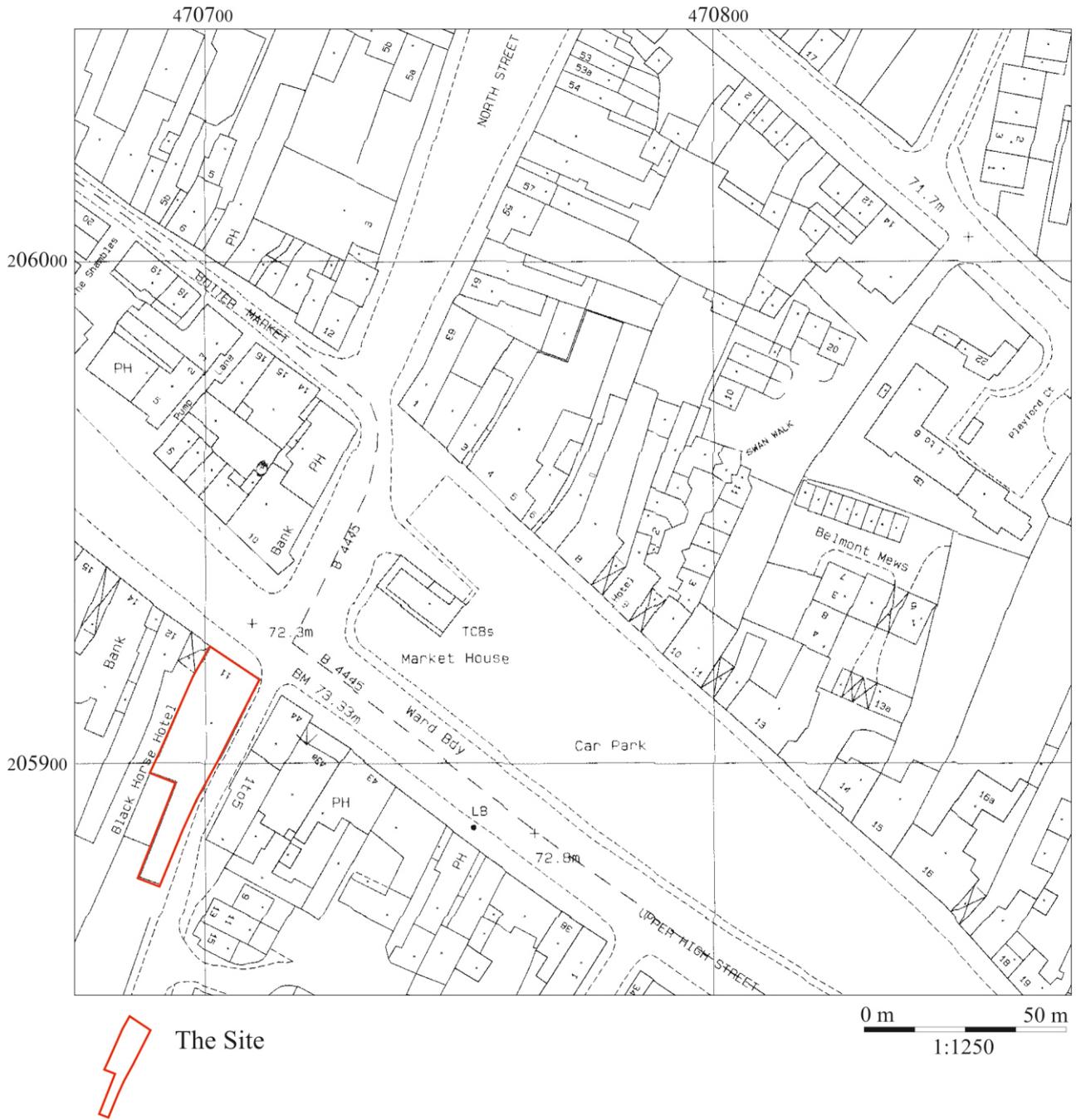


Figure 1: Site Location Plan

The original town developed around the church (Old Thame), dedicated to St Mary the Virgin, which dates in present form from c.1240 as it was rebuilt by Bishop Grossteste of Lincoln.

New Thame was a planned extension ‘planted’ by the Bishop of Lincoln in the 13<sup>th</sup> Century on land previously under the plough. The market town retains its medieval street pattern with very clearly defined long narrow burgage plots and lanes (Munby & Rodwell 1975). The Black Horse Hotel is situated on such a long narrow plot, at the corner of Rooks Lane and Cornmarket (NGR 470700 205900).

The earliest available map showing the property was the 1823 Inclosure Map (Figure 2). The map shows the property as comprising three separate buildings: a large front block with an elongated building adjacent, stretching back along Rooks Lane; abutted by a further rectangular building at the rear.

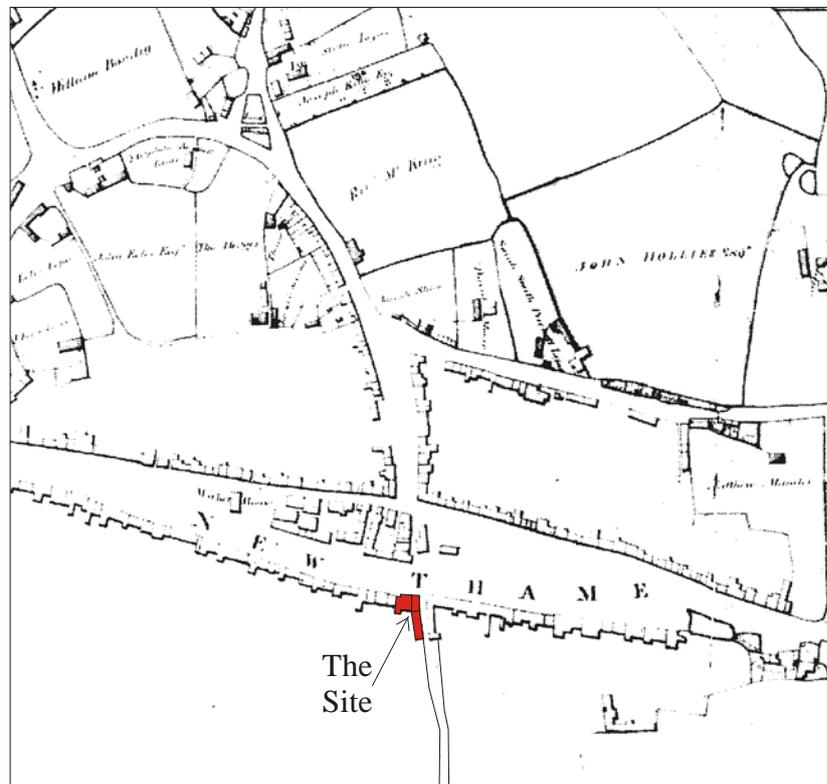


Figure 2: The 1823 Enclosure Map

By the issue of the first edition Ordnance Survey map (henceforth OS), the site showed the front buildings as a single block (Figure 3) with a long rectangular block to the rear fronting onto Rooks Lane, and a further narrow building opposite, abutting the property boundary to the west. The second edition OS map (1897) shows the same configuration but portrays the long building on the Rooks Lane frontage as comprising five abutting units. A further building had been added to the south also abutting the property boundary (Figure 4).



Figure 3: The Site at the time of the 1881 edition Ordnance Survey map

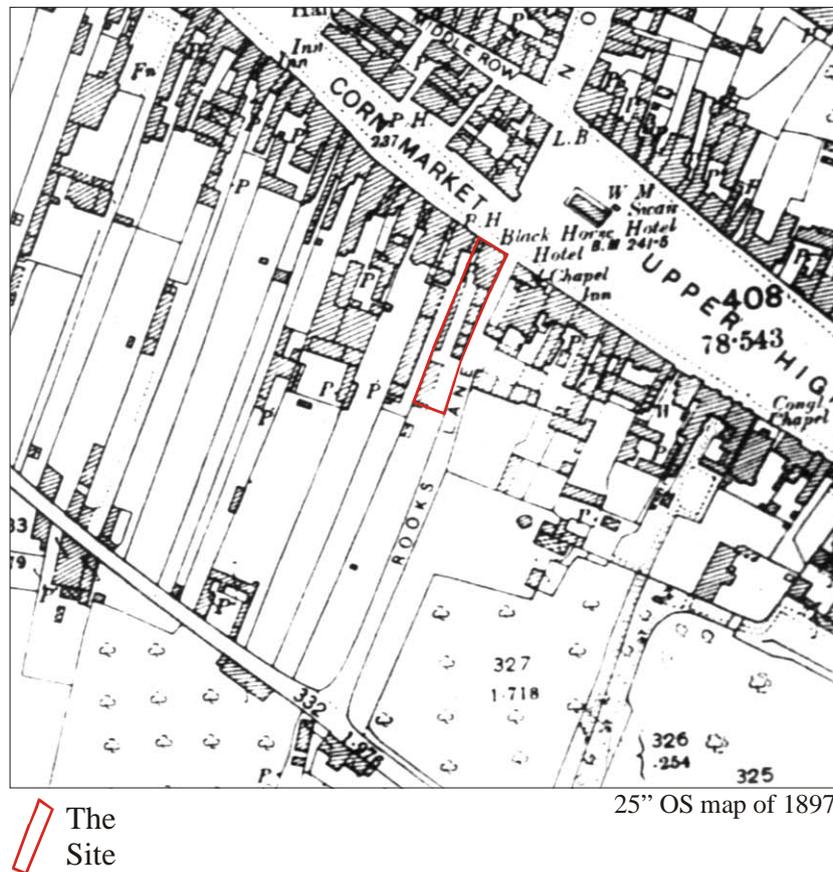


Figure 4: The site at the time of the 1897 edition Ordnance Survey map

As shown on the OS maps, the property was known as the Black Horse Hotel since at least 1881. Mention is made of the property operating under the name of 'The Fleur de Lys' as early as 1838 (Clarke 1978). Kelly's Directory of 1911 describes the property under the proprietor William Dunk as providing good commercial accommodation including 'motor garages' and stabling. The provision of such amenities continued into the late 1930s, early 1940s as shown on a postcard from that era (Figure 5).



Figure 5: Postcard of the property c. 1940

That the property has undergone many changes and adaptations in response to changing fashions and requirements in the hotel trade over time can clearly be seen. The elevation fronting onto the Cornmarket no longer retains the Georgian pediment and the late chimneys to the Rooks Lane building are no longer *in situ*. The internal development of the buildings have also been subject to much modernisation and those elements intended for alteration under the current proposals are discussed below.

## 5 Discussion (Figure 6)

### 5.1 General description

The main building facing onto Cornmarket is under a render of rusticated stucco over brick. The Georgian character of the front elevation is retained with the exception of the pediment that is shown in Figure 5. The main building is two-storeys in height, with the ground floor entrance comprising a 20<sup>th</sup> century door with windows of the same date to either side. The windows remain within the original 19<sup>th</sup> century surrounds. The 16-pane sashes to the first floor are typical of the mid-Georgian period. Within the property, it is clear that many modifications have been carried out. Elements of the early buildings that once occupied the site can be seen in the form of spine beams with elaborate chamfer stops. The jowl post at the junction of the building

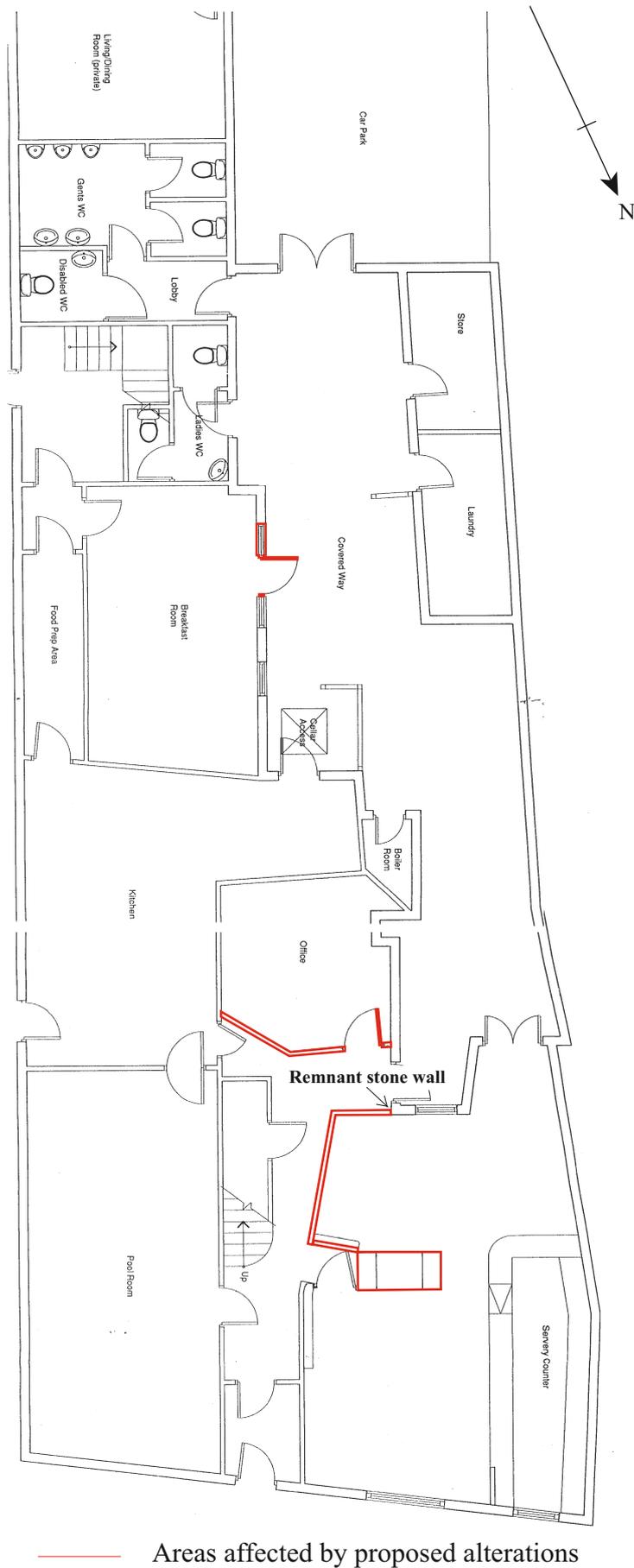


Figure 6: Site plan showing proposed areas of alteration

with the neighbouring structure survives from an earlier, possibly 16<sup>th</sup> century phase: the bracket extending from the front of the post may indicate support for a jettied first floor, long since lost in the conversion/re-build in the Georgian period. Other early elements can be seen, all of quite high status including an ornate bracket behind the bar, fixed to a carved bridging beam (also of possible 16<sup>th</sup> century origin). Survival of early features extends to the rear of the property, where the ceiling and spine beam within the current office accommodation are clearly visible.

## 5.2 The wall, glass panel and arch within the main bar and lounge

The arch intended for removal once housed the fireplaces to the lounge and bar. Alterations to remove the fireplaces were carried out in a 1984 programme of works. The glass panel and infill between the arch and the partition wall are late 20<sup>th</sup> century insertions into what was originally a doorway between bar and lounge (Plate 1).

The wall to be removed had been inserted in the present location. Remnants of an earlier more substantial rear (stone) wall to the building are still *in situ* (position indicated on Figure 6), in addition to a drainpipe, now painted over (Plates 2 & 3). The location of the drainpipe suggests that this wall was at one stage a rear outside wall of the property. The inserted angled partition wall abuts this thicker stone remnant (Plate 2).

Within the partition there is a fanlight (Plate 4) above the access between bar and corridor, this appears to be Georgian in origin and it is probable that the partition wall was inserted in conjunction with the staircase, the wall at an angle to allow space for the staircase and access to the rooms at the rear of at the rear of the property.



Plate 3: Detail of drainpipe 7



Plate 1: The arch created when fireplaces were removed and adjacent 20th century inserted glass panel



Plate 2: Rear of partition shown abutting earlier wall remnant and drainpipe.



Plate 4: The fanlight above access to the bar from the passage

### 5.3 The Staircase

The style of the staircase indicates a 19<sup>th</sup> century origin for its insertion. As mentioned above, it is likely that the staircase was inserted as part of a programme of re-modelling including the construction of the partition wall in its current location.

### 5.4 The Office wall

This wall is an insertion: the position of the partition cuts across a much earlier spine beam with ornate chamfer stop, leaving only a short length exposed (Plate 6). The beam forms part of the remains of an earlier phase of buildings on the site. In its original state, the beam would have been situated in a room with a chamfer stop at either end, indicating the true length of the room. In the present situation one end is visible extending into the corridor, clearly cut across by the inserted partition. Within the office, the beam continues and remnants of the ornate stop (Plate 7) can be seen at the rear of the room (the original end of the room). Further timber framing is also visible in the wall between office and kitchen, and the ceiling joists are *in situ* (Plate 8).



Plate 5: The Staircase

The current door from the corridor to the patio area has been re-aligned, originally hinged on the side nearest the office: this arrangement was reversed when the door to the office was created post 1960. The door appears to be a re-used 19<sup>th</sup> century example. The window within is clearly late 20<sup>th</sup> century in

origin. At least two phases of modification can be observed in this location: the first of the phases was the insertion of the office wall situated to cut across the earlier spine beam. The later of the phases comprised the insertion of the door and window, carried out in the 1960s when the wall was breached to provide access from the main corridor to the office suite. The angled corner was also introduced in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century to provide access to the kitchen facilities.



Plate 6: The Office wall showing remnant of spine beam and later angled alteration to create access to kitchens



Plate 7: Detail of the chamfer-stop at the end of the spine-beam, this would have marked the original end of the room now shortened by the insertion of the late partition wall



Plate 8: The continuation of the early spine-beam into the office, with ceiling joists *in situ*

### 5.5 The door and window to the Breakfast Room

The doorway and window arrangement to the current Breakfast Room are of 1930s origin, and as such are part of a later development to the Hotel complex.



Plate 9: The 1930s doorway to the Breakfast Room

### 5.6 The Boundary Wall

This wall (Plate 10), between the Hotel grounds and the adjacent property to the west is the remains of an early boundary to the Burgage plot.



Plate 10: The remains of an early boundary marking the limit of the Burgage plot

## **6 Conclusions**

The site within which the Black Horse Hotel is situated, at 11 Cornmarket, Thame comprises the remains of an early Burgage plot. The earlier buildings occupying the site, probably of 16<sup>th</sup> century origin still survive incorporated in re-builds and modifications carried out to the premises over time. The majority of the current layout was created in the Georgian era, with much of the main building onto Cornmarket constructed at that time. The long building to Rooks Lane, originally of timber-frame construction was incorporated into the Georgian rebuild. As part of this phase of building, the partition wall to the passage and staircase were inserted. The first partition wall to the office may also have been inserted at that time. However, the insertion of the current doorway and window, and the angling of the wall towards the kitchen were all 20<sup>th</sup> century developments, suggesting that little, if any, of the earlier partition survive. The partition in any case, is a late addition, reducing the length of the earlier room. Removal of the remains of this much modified wall line would re-establish the true extent of the room in accordance with the chamfered spine beam.

Within the Bar, the panelling, glass partition and modified arch within the early chimney piece were all late 20<sup>th</sup> century alterations to the Georgian hotel. At the rear of the property, within the ancillary buildings, a high degree of refurbishment can also be seen: the current Breakfast Room is a 1930s development.

It is clear that the site was occupied from as early as the 16<sup>th</sup> century and that some elements of that date survive in the current building fabric. The current proposals for the establishment do not affect these early remains. The removal of the Office wall would do much to enhance the early features in that area by allowing the true length of the original spine-beam to be viewed in conjunction with the ceiling joists.

The probable Georgian wall of the bar and lounge, earmarked for removal, was itself a development of the original site in line with the requirements of the Hotel accommodation at that time.

## **7 Acknowledgements**

The author would like to thank Mr and Mrs Weatherstone for granting access to the hotel in its entirety, and for conducting a very informative guided tour.

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