

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF
AT
THE STUDIO, BURTON ABBOTS, BURFORD
ROAD, BLACK BOURTON, OXFORDSHIRE OX18 2PF

NGR SP 2870 0409

On behalf of Fiona Perry

25 August 2017

REPORT FOR	Fiona Perry Burton Abbots Burford Road Black Bourton Oxfordshire OX18 2PF
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Summary

John Moore Heritage Services carried out an archaeological watching brief at the Studio, Burton Abbots, Burford Road, Black Bourton, Oxfordshire (NGR SP 2870 0409) in April 2017. Three pits were identified during the excavations; two were determined to be medieval from pottery recovered with the fill, the other was a post-medieval feature containing pottery and brick fragments.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Site Location (Figure 1)

The development site is located on the east side of Burford Road, Black Bouton (NGR SP28700409). The site is located on Oxford Clay (BGS Sheet 236, Solid & Drift 1:50,000).

1.2 Planning Background

West Oxfordshire District Council has granted planning permission for part demolition of entrance lobby and construction of new lobby to side of existing house (15/00578/HHD). Due to the potential for the work to disturb archaeological deposits a condition (5) has been attached to the permission requiring the submission and approval of a Written Scheme of Investigation and a condition (6) requiring the implementation of an archaeological watching brief during the period of construction works. This is in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). Oxfordshire Historic and Natural Environment Team (OHaNET) has prepared a Design Brief for the work. This Written Scheme of Investigation outlines the method by which the watching brief would be carried out in order to preserve by record any archaeological remains of significance. The first part of the document is site specific while the appendices detail John Moore Heritage Services' standards and general procedures.

1.3 Archaeological Background

The proposed development, whilst small, lies in an area of considerable archaeological potential. St Mary's Church to the north-east dates to the early 12th century and was re-modelled in the 13th century. An archaeological evaluation undertaken prior to a proposed cemetery extension to the south of the church uncovered a small number of early to middle Saxon settlement features including a possible sunken featured building and post holes. A subsequent excavation revealed further Saxon domestic settlement and evidence for religious activity. The features included further sunken-floored buildings, post-built structures and evidence of metal working. A Saxon burial with associated pottery is recorded to the west of, and in close proximity to the application site. The settlement of Black Bourton is mentioned in the Domesday survey of 1086 which suggested occupation from at least the later Saxon period. The archaeological investigations described above have shown the settlement to have been occupied from at least the early Saxon period.

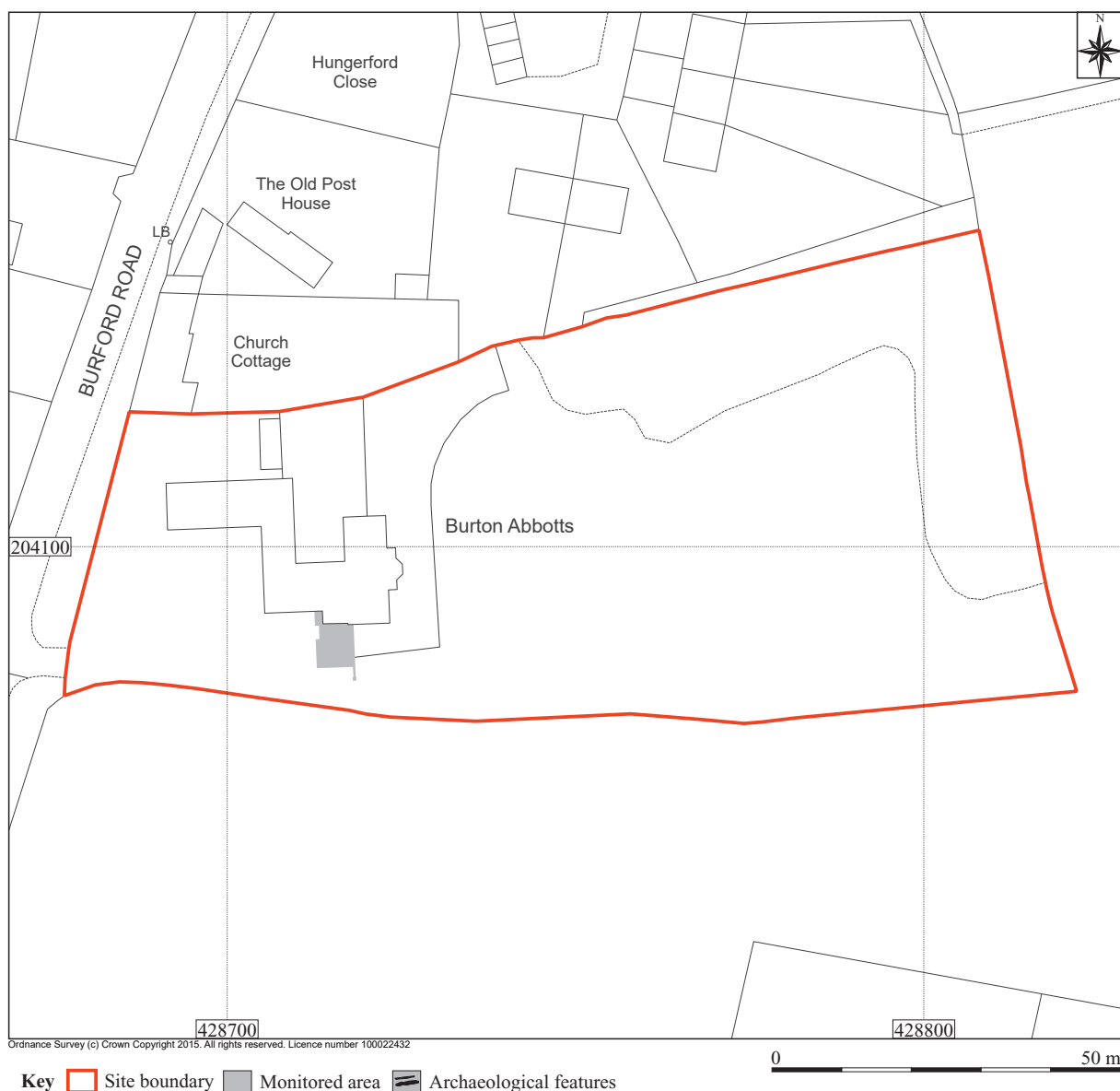
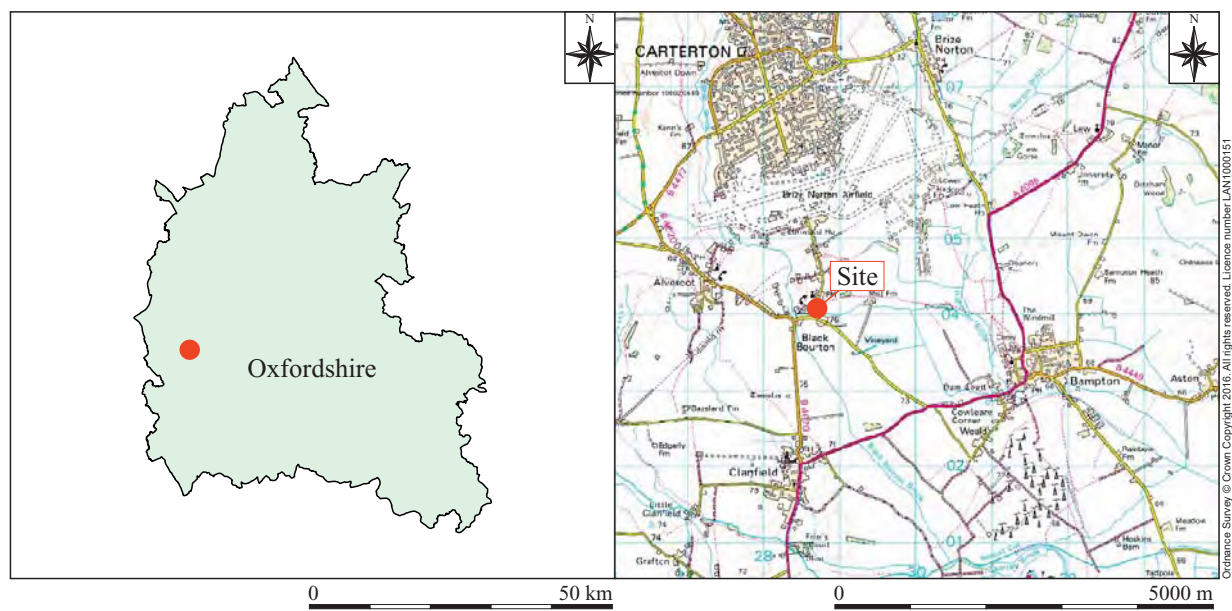


Figure 1: Site location

2 AIMS OF THE INVESTIGATION

The aims of the investigation as laid out in the Written Scheme of Investigation were as follows:

- To make a record of any significant archaeological remains revealed during the course of any operations that may disturb or destroy archaeological remains.

In particular:

- To record any evidence relating to the known Saxon and later remains in the area while noting the possibility of burials being located.

3 STRATEGY

3.1 Research Design

John Moore Heritage Services carried out the work to a Written Scheme of Investigation agreed with the Oxfordshire Historic and Natural Environment Team (OHaNET), the archaeological advisors to the West Oxfordshire District Council.

The recording was carried out in accordance with the standards specified by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (2014).

3.2 Methodology

Archaeological monitoring was maintained during the course of all excavations for the new build that would potentially disturb or destroy archaeological remains. This included the excavations for foundations where they were considered to impact on archaeological layers.

There was no archaeological observance of the demolition of the entrance lobby or the eastern boundary wall. These were removed by the contractors before the archaeologist was asked to attend site.

An archaeologist was present during the excavation of the 15 meters long foundation trenches for the new lobby. The trenches were c.0.8m wide and between 1.2m – 2.15m deep (Fig. 2).

Where archaeological horizons were encountered they were cleaned by hand and excavated appropriately to a maximum depth of 1.2m. Features extending below the 1.2m mark were machine excavated to expose the underlying geology, as required by the contractor. The resultant spoil from the works was visually scanned and searched for dating materials. Standard John Moore Heritage Services techniques were employed throughout, involving the completion of a written record for each deposit encountered, with scale plans and section drawings compiled where appropriate. A photographic record was also produced using 35mm format black and white film and digital cameras.

4 RESULTS

All deposits and features were assigned individual context numbers. Context numbers without brackets indicate features i.e. pit cuts, numbers in () show feature fills or deposits of material.

The lowest identified layer was a light brown yellow sand and gravel level (104), identified as the geological layer.

Observed in the section of the westernmost foundation trench were two negative features, pits 106 and 108. Pit 106 was the largest feature recorded; its visible width in Section 1 was 1.8m (see Fig. 2), and it extended towards south beyond the limits of the excavated area. The considerable depth of the pit (bottom recorded at c. 2m below the current ground level), combined with the narrowness (0.8m) of the foundation trench prevented the manual excavation of the feature for safety reasons. However, the pit was exposed to its full depth by mechanical excavation, revealing a preserved depth of c. 1.5m, truncated in its upper portion by modern activities related to the construction of the current driveway. The feature had a slightly rounded base and concave sides, the eastern being severely disturbed by post-medieval pit cut, 110. A single fill (105) was observed, a compacted, dark-brown grey silty clay deposit containing frequent small stones and gravel. Fragments of medieval pottery, possible brick or tile fragments, animal bone and slag were recovered from the deposit.

Pit 108, was to the north of pit 106, with a visible width in section 1 of 1.2m (see Fig. 2), extending to the west beyond the limits of the excavated area. The depth of the pit was considerably shallower than the one to the south. It was exposed to its full depth by mechanical excavation, revealing a preserved depth of c. 0.5m, also truncated in its upper portion by modern activities related to the construction of the current driveway. The feature had concave base and sides. It had a single fill (107), a compacted, dark-brown grey silty clay deposit containing frequent small stones and gravel. Fragments of medieval pottery were recovered from the deposit.

Pit 110, was to the southeast of the most substantial pit, 106. It was filled with a single fill (109), very similar to that of (105). Fill (109) was a compacted, dark-brown grey silty clay deposit containing frequent small stones and gravel, however, fragments of post-medieval pottery and brick were recovered from the deposit. It is possible that rather than a cut feature this may have been a post-medieval surface, garden soil or other levelling deposit as it appears to contour in a rather un-cut like manner in the western section (see Section 1). The interface is diffuse with poor distinction between the medieval pit fill, (105) and post-medieval deposit, (109). However, the cut can clearly be distinguished in the interface between natural (104) and the pit fills. Again, due to the considerable depth of the trench (c. 2m below the current ground level), combined with the narrowness (0.8m), safety prevented the manual excavation and full characterisation of the feature.

Above the post-medieval deposits and medieval pits, there was a series of modern layers associated with the modern surfaces, driveway and PVC drainage pipes. There was a levelling layer (103) to the NW made of firm, mid-greyish brown silty clay and (116) to the SE answering to the same description. It is likely that they were previously the same layer, truncated by the modern driveway surfacing actions.

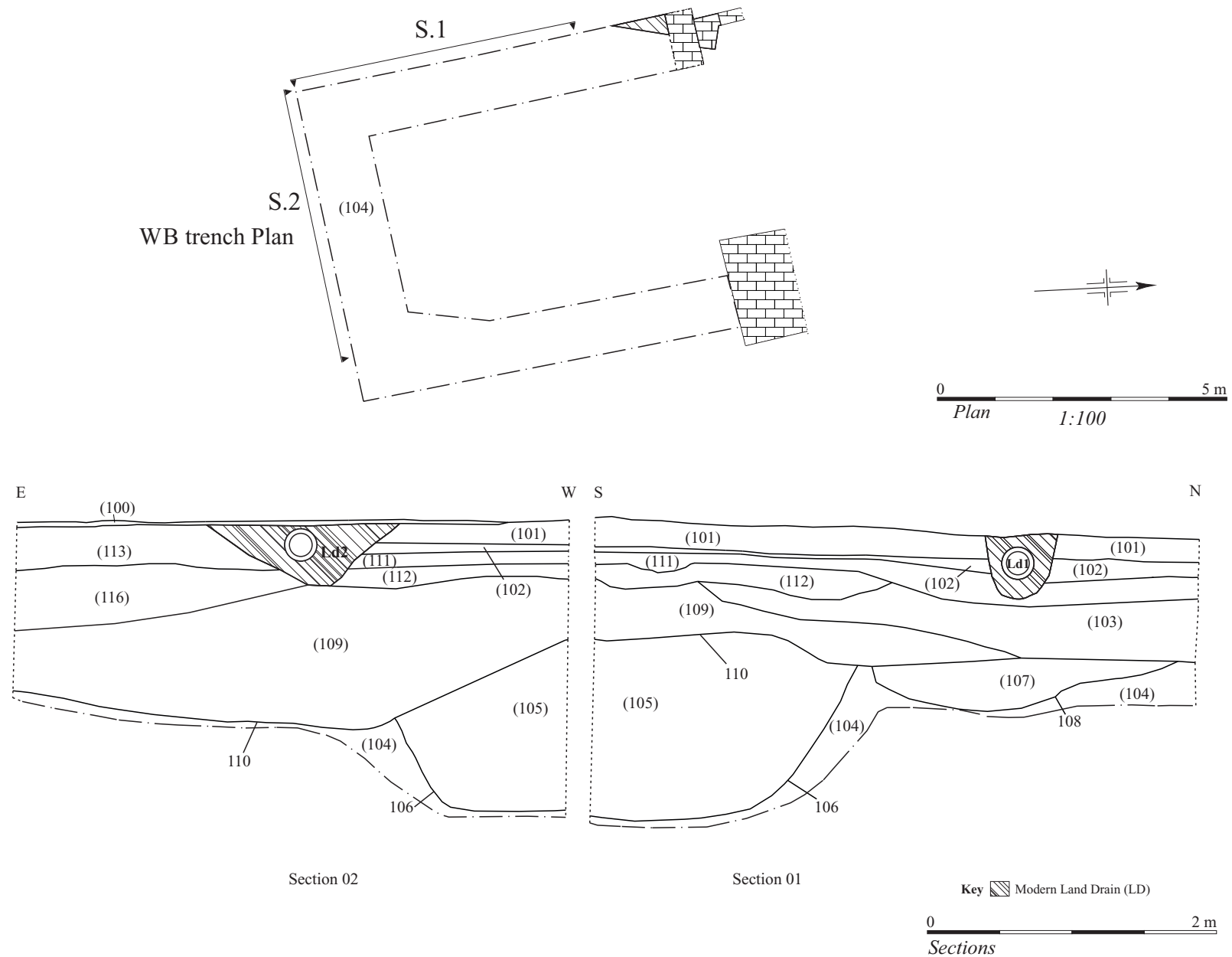


Figure 2: WB trench plan 01 and sections 01 and 02

Layer (113) is the garden soil layer to the SE of the service line which makes up the eastern boundary of the drive. It is 0.4m thick, friable mid greyish brown clayey silt with occasional gravel. This was the surface prior to construction works which have resulted in a thin layer of gravel from the driveway deposited over the top, (100).

To the west of the service line the driveway was observed, comprised of four layers all made up of gravel with a variety of concentrations of sand and soil. Immediately above (109) was context (112) and (111), both lower levelling deposits for the drive composed of light brownish yellow and light yellowish brown coarse sand with frequent stone. Above (111) was context (102), a hard, mid brown sandy gravel that was 0.1m thick and which thinly covered the lower levelling layers of the drive. The layers associated with the modern driveway surface were (100) and (101) and were made up of the same light yellowish brown, stone and gravel and were both approximately 0.2m thick. The material composing (100) was contaminated with a higher amount of soil from ongoing construction activities.

5 FINDS

5.1 Pottery

5.1.1 *Medieval Pottery by Jane Timby*

A small group of six sherds of pottery weighing 148.5 g dating to the medieval period were recovered. Pottery was recovered from two pits: contexts (105) and (107). Although small, the assemblage is quite well preserved with fairly large sherds.

For the purposes of the assessment the assemblage was scanned to assess the likely chronology and quantified by sherd count and weight for each recorded context. Freshly broken sherds were counted as single pieces. The resulting data can be below.

The group comprised two sherds, one a rim, in a sand and flint-tempered ware (Mellor 1994, fabric OXBF) both from pit (107). The rimsherd is from a plain cooking pot and the bodysherds has a sooted interior from use. The four sherds from pit (105) are in Cotswold oolitic-tempered ware (ibid. OXAC) and are all plain sherds from jars / cooking pots. Both fabrics were current from the mid-11th-early 13th centuries in the area.

No further work is recommended.

Catalogue:

1. Four bodysherds in Cotswold limestone-tempered ware (OXAC). Wt.42g.
2. One rim and one bodysherd in sand and flint-tempered ware (OXBF). Wt.34g.

5.1.2 *Post-Medieval Pottery by Paul Blinkhorn*

The pottery assemblage comprised 2 sherds with a total weight of 66g. They both occurred in context (109).

One of them (weight = 37g) is from the rim of a bowl in Glazed Red Earthenware, fabric OXDR in the Oxfordshire county type-series (Mellor 1984; 1994), and with a date-range of the 16th – 19th century. The glaze and fabric suggest that the sherd is from the later end of the chronology. Such pottery is a common find in the region. The other sherd (weight = 29g) is from the rim of a modern earthenware flower-pot.

5.2 Ceramic Building Material

A single fragment of fairly preserved although fragmentary ceramic building material, weighing 29g and measuring 48mm in length, was recovered from deposit (109), the fill of pit 110. No diagnostic features were preserved, preventing from any identification attempt; the date of the item remains undetermined.

5.3 Slag

One slag fragment, weighing 193.8g, was recovered from deposit (105), the fill of pit 106. The item, dense and solid, was identified as furnace slag (Crew 1995). The presence of slag indicates smelting and/or smithing activities may have occurred on site or in the immediate vicinity.

6 DISCUSSION

The earliest deposits encountered were pits (105)/106 and (107)/108; these were pits both with a *terminus post quem* of the 11th century. The material recovered were of plain cooking wares, with evidence of a sooted interior from use.

The pits above were then both truncated by post-medieval activities in the form of a pit (109)/110, though there is the potential that this was just a layer of sharply sloping garden soil. The deposit of (109) caps both the earlier medieval pits and slopes down to the east. There was post-med pottery and brick fragments within this fill layer which gave a *terminus post quem* of the 17th century.

Deposit (103) and (116) both appear to be of a similar depth, consistency and content, which lends credence to the likelihood that they were the same layer prior to modern truncation. These deposits were likely of a cultivation soil with a *terminus post quem* of the 17th century. This deposit was present throughout the whole monitored area, indicating that the area was in cultivation from at least the early post-medieval period.

Deposit (113) is a modern topsoil layer associated with recent development of the area and truncated by the extant drive. The construction of the 20th century drive and drainage resulted in the systematic deposition of (100), (101), (102), (111), and (112). These were all made up of various gravel layers with a variety of concentrations of sand and soil mixed in (Fig. 2, Sections 1 and 2).

7 ARCHIVE

Archive Contents

The archive consists of the following:

Paper record

The project brief
Written scheme of investigation
The project report
The primary site record

Physical record

Finds

The archive currently is maintained by John Moore Heritage Services and will be transferred to the Oxfordshire County Museum Service with the accession number OXCMS: 2015.213

8 BIBLIOGRAPHY

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