



NEWSLETTER 62

AUTUMN/WINTER 2010

GROUP NEWS

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EDITORIAL

The picture below of the **Old Bath Bridge in 1895** by **John Maggs** is one of the many treasures held in the Victoria Art Gallery which we shall be visiting as a group this coming January. It was spotted while looking through the new Catalogue of Somerset paintings reviewed on page 7 - A unique reference book that should be bought before they sell out; It is available from the VAG bookshop. Also, for those of you who have not picked up, there is currently a most relevant exhibition for HBRG members just opened there entitled 'Life in Victorian Bath'. It will be on show at the Gallery until 2 February 2011. Admission is free and it is open from 10.00-5.00 Tuesday - Saturday and from 1.30-5.00 on a Sunday.



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MEETING REPORTS

THE WAREHOUSE OF THE FOP

Tuesday 13th April 2010 Museum of Bath at Work

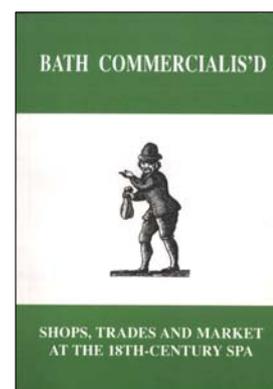
Speaker Matthew Winterbottom

Abstract Michael Rowe / Nigel Pollard

To entice members to the AGM, Matthew Winterbottom, Curator of Decorative Arts at the Holbourne Museum spoke on the many aspects of retail in the eighteen century in a talk entitled “The Warehouse of the Fop”.

He drew heavily on Trevor Fawcett's work “Bath Commercialis'd” for which he gave great credit.

[BATH COMMERCIALIS'D by Trevor Fawcett. RUTON:2002]



Matthew gave further detailed information about the shops in the Parades and depicted, with some rarely seen illustrations, the lost shops at the end of the Orange Grove and the famous archway.

Foremost among the “Toyshops” on Terrace Walk was the Bath branch of a London Toyshop after which the title of this talk was given - The Warehouse of the Fop” which was run by a Mrs Deard. Here would be displayed all the latest trinkets, shoe buckles, canes, rings, snuffboxes, fine porcelain, decorative silver and fans, that even the most faddish could expect. However, for unique-to-Bath fans, there was an even more exciting shop belonging to George Speren in Orange Grove who offered “Bath in View” fans, of which a rare example can be found in the Bath Central Library collection and is shown below, courtesy of that wonderful website “Bath in Time”.



He described many more of the prominent crafts and trades men and alluded to the work in progress by Vanessa Brett, of the Silver Society, on the early toymakers in Bath at the end of the 17th and beginning of the 18th centuries.

WALK : CLAVERTON VILLAGE

Thursday 13th May 2010

Leader Mrs Thomas Sheppard

Notes / Reporter Nigel Pollard

Around a dozen members gathered in the centre of Claverton on this bright spring evening in May to be led on a most interesting walk by village resident Mrs Thomas Sheppard.



The Village is thought to date from at least Saxon times and used to be on the Roman road from Walcot to Bradford on Avon. The first written record is in Domesday book (1086) where one of three Chief Commissioners in charge was Hugolinus, a Saxon who was the Kings interpreter. Claverton was given to him after the conquest. He held high office in court of Edward the confessor and changed sides after the conquest. The manor at the time consisted of fifteen households which meant about 75-100 people and has remained at approx that number ever since. After Hugolinus, the Manor came into the ownership of the Bishopric of Bath and Wells until 1548 when it passed to the Crown.



Our walk, started at the Church which Pevsner describes as “over restored and of no medieval or Victorian interest”. However, as we saw it has a splendid monument to Sir William Bassett, to whom the manor passed in 1608. The Bassett’s held the estate until 1714 and after various disputes which allowed the house to fall into disrepair; it was sold in 1758 to Ralph Allan.

While Ralph Allan continued to live at Prior Park, he did visit his new estate once a week and became very friendly with the Rector Richard Graves. Allan died in 1764 and is buried in the churchyard in a splendid mausoleum after which in 1816 his great nephew sold the manor to John Vivian a Cornish lawyer.



By now our walk had taken us to the grand entrance gates to the Manor which unfortunately, together with a balustrade and some grand steps are all that remain of this once important House - although the aerial view attached does give some added vision of its setting. While it was Vivian’s architect, who put his client off restoring the original manor in favour of building a new one further up the hill - what we now know as the American Museum, it was his son George who we have to thank for saving what is left.

It was a most interesting walk, and more details of the history of the village are available to those interested.



WALK: NEWTON PARK, THE GATEHOUSE, THE MANSION AND THE CASTLE

Thursday 10th June 2010

Leaders

Graham Davies & Mike Chapman

Reporter

Nigel Pollard

The usual enthusiastic group of members met on a cool but dry evening to examine the great 18th Century landscaped estate of Newton Park.



The first part of the walk was lead by Graham Davies who as only just retired from Bath Spa University whose campus is now Newton Park, was a most able guide. While the park contains a 14th century keep and gateway of St Loe's Castle, Graham suggested a walk back in time so we started with the “new” 18th century house, shown adjacent.

The 18th century house was originally built for Joseph Langton from a prominent Merchant Venturer's family from Bristol who commissioned Lancelot Brown in 1761 to improve the grounds. Langton died in 1779 and was succeeded by



his daughter Bridget, who in 1783 married William Gore, of Barrow Court, Bristol. Gore subsequently changed his name by royal assent to William Gore-Langton. Bridget died in 1793 but William continued to improve the grounds, calling in Humphry Repton in 1796. The 19th century saw little change, but further improvements were carried out between 1902 and 1914 by Algernon Gore-Langton. In 1914 it became the Countess Temple Hospital for wounded soldiers and was owned by Lord Temple until his death in 1940. The estate was then purchased by the Duchy of Cornwall and the core built area let on a long lease to Newton Park College, now Bath Spa University.

The 14th century Castle Keep was our next stop which while called a keep is, as Mike informed us, actually a large, fortified tower built as part of a fortified manor house. Altered and remodelled much in later centuries it was further restored in the 19th century.



To the west of this is further architectural treasure in the form of a 15th century gatehouse, again much restored but which opens out onto a beautiful college quadrangle.

Finally, to bring us full circle and back to the reality of the 21st century, to the side of this quadrangle the University Authorities have had repaired and re-erected the Georgian gates that once graced the entrance to the estate – but were a few years ago damaged in a traffic accident.



BATH ORGAN BUILDERS IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

Thursday 9th September 2010 Central United Reformed Church, Argyll Street.

Speaker Gordon Curtis

Abstract Gordon Curtis/ Nigel Pollard

Our most knowledgeable speaker set the scene at the beginning of the 19th century of an agricultural nation with organ building concentrated in the area of London around Soho and organs found predominately in the larger town churches such as Bath Abbey. At this time the largest provincial firms were in the industrial regions of Yorkshire and Lancashire but the 1861 census showed a greater than average concentrations of activity also in Gloucestershire and Somerset, mainly around Bath and Bristol.

Here in Bath it was noted that most lived around the London Road area of Walcot, something the speaker attributed more to the availability of suitable housing in this area than a desire to concentrate work in one area as had happened in London. Most notable amongst the dozen builders considered were Charles Spackman Barker, son of the artist, the Clark brothers, William Sweetland, Henry Griffen and William Stroud. Barker worked mainly in France but the others' work was mainly in the West Country.

Most important was William Sweetland (1822-1910) and we were given some insight into his life and work as an organ builder, architect and artist who built some 300 organs, mostly in Somerset and neighbouring counties but with groups of three or four instruments scattered south of a line from the Wirral to the Wash. Both Griffen and Stroud worked for Sweetland and they formed a partnership in 1895 taking over the premises of Clark & Son at 24 Somerset Buildings. Their work followed Sweetland's pattern in terms of sound and quality and the firm continued in business until 1945 building about 75 organs, mostly in the West Country and South Wales. Sadly today there are no organ builders working in Bath.



The talk was followed by a concert given on the William Sweetland organ in the church given by **Nicholas Stuart**, Organist at Walcot Methodist, URC Argyll and St John's South Parade churches.

Nicholas Stuart gave us an admirable demonstration of the type of sound Victorian builders created towards the end of the century. His selection of pieces showed the variety of tone available to the player and also typified the programmes that were regularly performed by 19th century recitalists with a mixture of original pieces, including Brahms's last compositions for organ, and arrangements of popular orchestral and choral works. He delighted us with his playing which showed well the characteristics of the Argyll organ.

The concert program was as follows:

Henry PURCELL	Symphony and Chorus from Come ye Sons of Art Fairest Isle
Johannes BRAHMS	How blest are shepherds from King Arthur Chorale Preludes from op.122: Herzlich tut mich erfreuen Herzlich tut mich verlangen O Welt, ich muss dich lassen
Alexandre GUILMANT	from Eighth Sonata, op.91: Andante sostenuto
Maurice RAVEL	Le Jardin feerique (transcribed for organ by P.O.Ferroud)

The HBRG were joined by guests from the Wiltshire and Bath and Bristol and District Organists' Associations



FREEMEN OF THE CITY

Tuesday 19th September, 2010 ST, STEPHEN'S CHURCH, LANSDOWN

Speaker Bill Hanna

Abstract

Bath has twenty seven Charters - tools that progressively gave citizens rights of self-government.

Of these Charters that granted by Elizabeth I in 1590 confirmed the assumption by the city of powers previously exercised by the Bishop and the Prior; it recognised that civic government should be exercised by a body corporate consisting of a Mayor, aldermen and up to twenty common councillors; new members being elected by the council for life from amongst the freemen of the city. The council was thus a self-perpetuating body. It also formed the total electorate that had the right to send two members to Parliament. In 1661 and again in 1812 Freemen challenged this restricted franchise, claiming unsuccessfully that all freemen should have the right to choose the Members. It was not until the Reform Act of 1832 that the electorate in Bath was increased -from 30 to 2835 voters..



The Charter gave the council the right to 'make from time to time of the inhabitants of the said city free citizens and burgesses of the said city...'. It also set out that two markets were to be held each week and that 'No stranger who is not a Freeman of the city is to sell in the city without the licence of the Mayor' thus giving economic advantage to the Freemen who could also form cartels to control prices and wages..

This privileged status could be gained by servitude, by gift or by purchase. To become a Freeman by servitude a man had to serve a seven year apprenticeship to a free citizen who resided or carried on business within the old city liberties. Time-served apprentices could set up their own businesses or become journeymen - working as employees for others.

As the city grew crafts, trades and businesses grew with it and the trading privileges of the Freemen were weakened. In 1619 the citizens had been awarded a tract of pasture known as Barton Farm in the north west of the city that was managed by the Corporation mainly for dairying, with the Freemen entitled to a share of the profits of the rents. The income was not great, the Freemen were unable to force the Corporation to allow building on the area. As the city became more stylish it required better provision for riding, exercise and promenade for its visitors. In 1879 the Freemen agreed to the establishment of The Royal Victoria Park, "feeling it will materially add to the welfare of the city as also to the comfort of visitors and inhabitants generally". This decision was not entirely altruistic: of those who came to it the majority were in involved in businesses serving visitors to the city.

The Corporation had unlimited powers to create freemen other than by servitude. It could 'elect' a freeman on payment of a fee which varied by trade or profession.. In 1752 it also agreed 'that women who are following a trade and have no husbands should pay 10guineas for their freedom'; men paid 20gns. The right to allow purchase or gift of freedom was ended in 1835.

The Corporation had also had the right to create 'Mayor's Freemen', granting the Freedom of the city to those who had performed outstanding service: for example, Nelson who was recuperating from wounds in the city, accepted the Freedom, although he never collected it.

After 1835 the city could still elect Honorary Freemen as a mark of esteem; Trevor Fawcett in his 'Bath Administered' describes how "Bath honoured royalty, gentry, MPs, national heroes, with Freedom documents presented in a silver or gold box; the city basked in the credit of its presentation".

Bath continues to honour individuals or groups by the award of the Freedom of the City the latest, and first woman, being Amy Williams in 2010.

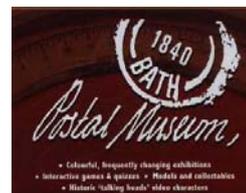


VISIT - THE BATH POSTAL MUSEUM

Tuesday 18th November, 2010 THE POSTAL MUSEUM

Speaker Ann Hopkins-Clarke

Abstract Michael Rowe /Nigel Pollard



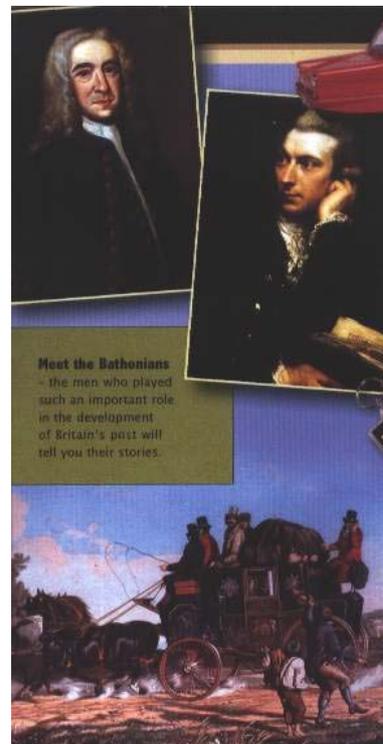
The existence of the Bath Postal Museum can put down to the foresight and enthusiasm of two people, Mr and Mrs Swindells and it was therefore a great privilege to have Audrey Swindells to introduce the evening and pass us on to Ann Hopkins-Clarke, a Trustee of the Museum, to give the main talk.

The Swindells had originally run the Bath Stamp & Coin Shop on Pulteney Bridge and it was there that enthusiasts used to gather and discuss the desirability of forming a permanent display about Bath's two famous communication entrepreneurs Ralph Allen and John Palmer.

While initially looking at what had been the home of the young John Palmer in Lilliput Alley they finally took on part of a house in Gt Pulteney Street and in 1978 having contacted interested people, formed a Trust which then was registered with the Charity Commissioners. It opened formally with a grand party in April 1979 and while initially called a display, very soon after opening people began to arrive with additional items of interest they wished to donate, and with funds raised to purchase yet more items and collections of Bath Postal History, it very soon became a proper museum.

In 1984 the lease of 8 Broad Street, the site of Bath's main post office, where the first stamp in the world had been sent from, came onto the market. Funds were raised from the British Philatelic Trust to purchase the lease and the Council agreed to subsidise the rent. The new Museum opened in 1985 with another party and celebrity friends Richard Briers and Leslie Crowther plus a message by pigeon from the late Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother.

Unfortunately after eighteen years, Central Government called on all Local Councils to maximise "Best Value" for their rented properties and this ending of the subsidised rent forced its closure. However, with the help of Stephen Green of Future Heritage, a new home was found under the present Post Office down the road which opened for business in 2006.



Post Script - Empire Exhibition, Wembley 1924

In the years after the first World War, Great Britain was still very proud of its Empire. The Empire had been built up during Queen Victoria's long reign and around 1900 vast tracts of the Earth's surface were coloured red.

The establishment of the British Empire Exhibition was first suggested by Lord Strathclyde in 1913. The Great War of 1914 - 1918 made such an exhibition impossible but the plan was revived in 1919 by the British Empire League. It was decided to delay the opening until 1924 to allow full consultation with the Overseas Dominions and to allow all the Empire time to take part. H.M. King George V consented to become Patron and the Prince of Wales became President of the Board of Control. The exhibition was opened by H.M. King George V and Queen Mary on St. George's Day 1924

Great Britain's first commemorative stamps were issued on the same day. King George was as is well known a philatelist but was not in favour of the issue of commemorative stamps but consented to the issue of a set for the Empire Exhibition.



Only two further sets were issues during his reign. He must be spinning in his grave at the vast number now churned out each year by Royal Mail

BOOK REVIEWS & RECENT PUBLICATIONS

Oil Paintings in Public Ownership

SOMERSET

Publisher:

The Public Catalogue Foundation 2008

ISBN 978-1-904931-52-2

£ 25.00

This splendid book is the Somerset volume of a national series designed to record all the oil paintings in public ownership, county by county.

Privately funded by generous sponsors, this lavishly illustrated, hard back book has, as its local Patron, Malcolm V. L. Pearce and is supported by Bath and Northeast Somerset.

The Patron of the Foundation is HRH the Duchess of Cornwall.

All oil paintings, in whatever condition and whether or not on display, have been subject to high quality digital photography by Daniel Brown who has done so much to record Bath on the Bath in Time website.

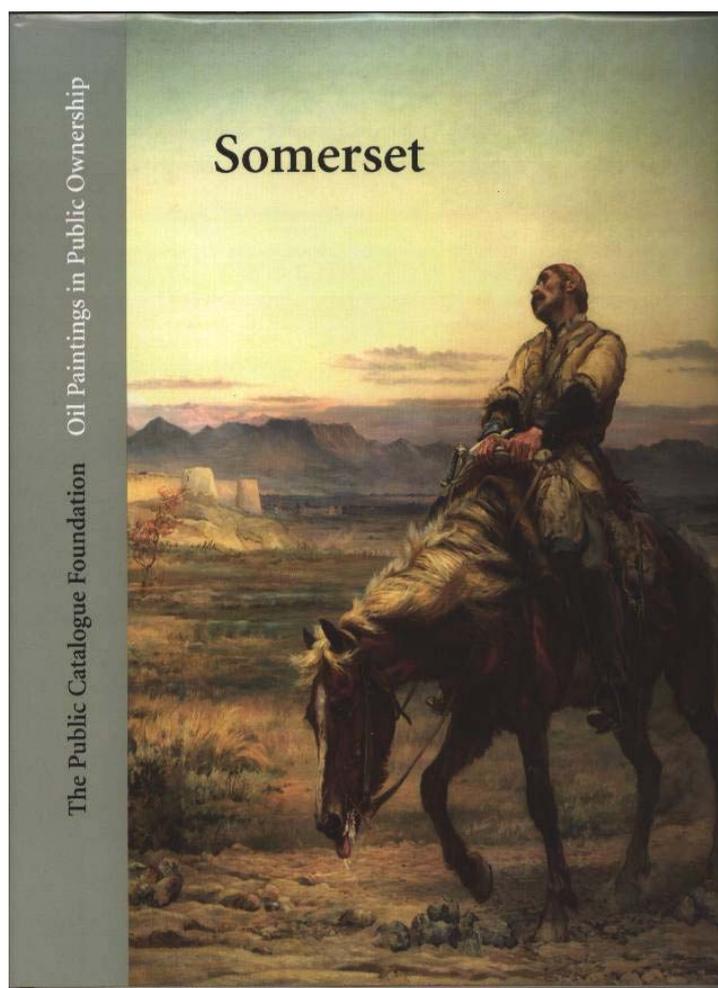
There are over 600 pictures illustrated from the Victoria Art gallery (VAG) alone, along with all of those in the main public rooms and council offices in Bath.

All the other museums in the city, the universities, the Mineral water Hospital and BRLSI appear.

There is no need to fear that this is just a parade of portraits of Victorian councillors. The VAG collection covers most genres from 1540 to the present day. There are pictures from the Fire and Rescue services, the Fleet Air Arm Museum, The RNLI the Bishop's palace and many other locations in Somerset, some of which would not spring to mind at once. A relatively small number of pictures escaped capture but they are listed.

This handsome book is produced to the highest quality and is full of delights and surprises. It is available from the desk at the Victoria Art Gallery or from Michael Rowe who will arrange delivery for those not able to get out or not feeling strong enough to carry it. (01225 461902).

At £25 it is an extraordinarily good buy and those people who have seen it expected it to be £60 at least. It is a perfect Christmas present for anyone interested in art or history. Of the price paid for each book bought through the VAG, £20 is ring fenced for the conservation of oil paintings in store and not presently fit for exhibition.



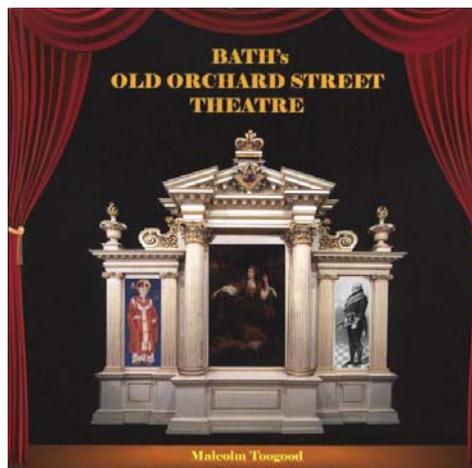
Bath's Old Orchard Street Theatre

by Malcolm Toogood 2010

Publisher: Cepenpark

ISBN 978 0 9564230 0 9

£ 9.95



Most members will know an outline history of Bath's first Theatre Royal, from Theatre to Chapel to Masonic Hall. However, to have it all in one book is most welcome and Mr Toogood has added much interest to it by adding a number of biographies of some of the most interesting characters that make up its history or in his own words some "Influential Bathonians".

This first section of the book is in three parts that cover its three lives:

Part One - Theatre 1750-1805

Part Two - Chapel 1809-1863, and

Part three - Masonic Hall 1865 to date

Part Four covers the "Influential Bathonians" noted above that make up a very varied group from the actress Sarah Siddons to the Industrialist John Stothert, via the churchman Bishop Baines. The complete list which includes a further actor, a property developer and two painters, is as follows:

Sarah Siddons (1755-1831), Bishop Peter Augustine Baines (1786-1843), John Lum Stothert (1829-1891), John Wood the Elder (1704-1754), James Quin (1693-1766), William Hoare (1707-1792), Cecile Agathe Adelaide Riquet de Caraman (1768-1847), John Joseph Barker (1824-1904) and Thomas beach (1738-1806).

Altogether a most interesting read, and particularly well timed as our current Theatre Royal re-opens following its own modernisation.

Salute to the Village

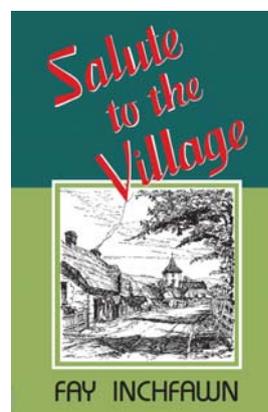
by Fay Inchfawn

Publisher: Folly Books 2010

ISBN 978-0-9564405-0-1

£ 9.99

An account of life in Limpley Stoke during WW 2.



Fay Inchfawn was the pen-name of Elizabeth Rebecca Daniels who was born in Portishead, near Bristol, in 1880.

This small paperback was written by a lady of means who enjoyed indifferent health and who was used to life at a slow pace in a very protected environment.

Her account reveals the slowly emerging realisation that life would never be the same and that the preparations for the accommodation of evacuees in the village would disclose exactly who would do all the work.

The somewhat primitive fire watch training, the building of pillboxes, the loss of family to various forms of war service and the disaster of an outbreak of foot and mouth disease are described in text interspersed with poems.

An amusing description of an air raid warning whilst shopping in Jollys and the vibrations of the bombing of Bath paint vivid pictures.

First published in 1943, the book is republished in paperback in 2010 by Folly books.

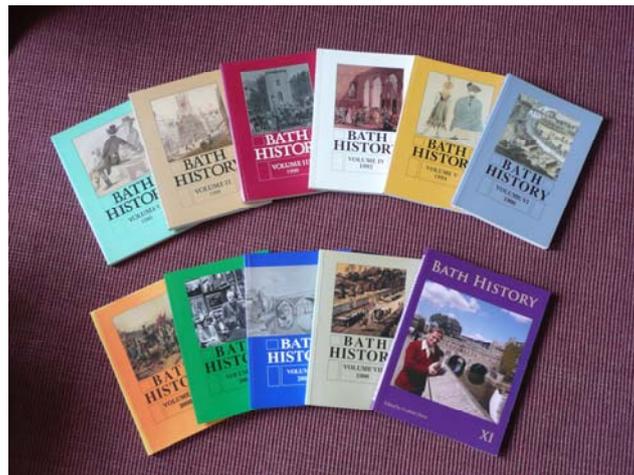
HOME THOUGHTS FROM ABROAD: NO: 2

Wall Memorial -

T. King of Bath 1766



This fine marble wall memorial was noted on a recent visit to Northumberland in the church of St Michael in Alnwick. It is also mentioned in the current Pevsner Guide to that county 2002.



ARE YOU EAGERLY AWAITING THE NEXT ISSUE OF “BATH HISTORY”

AND

WOULD LIKE TO HELP ENSURE ITS CONTINUED SUCCESS WITH A
DONATION?

THEN

- Please contact the Chairman Michael Rowe (01225 461902) for ways you can help-

Editor: Nigel Pollard

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