

Baghill Farm
Haddenham
Buckinghamshire



Archaeological Evaluation Report



Oxford Archaeology

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Client: Mr B. Parker

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Baghill Farm, Haddenham, Buckinghamshire

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION REPORT

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SUMMARY

On January 11th 2005 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological evaluation at Baghill Farm, Haddenham, Buckinghamshire (NGR: SP 7400 0808) on behalf of Mr B. Parker in advance of a barn conversion. The evaluation revealed that the barn walls had been constructed directly on top of the clay subsoil. No evidence for earlier structures or features were encountered. Two earth floor surfaces associated with the agricultural use of the barn were recorded, although no dating evidence was retrieved from either of these deposits.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Scope of work

- 1.1.1 On January 11th 2005 OA carried out a field evaluation within the existing barn at Baghill Farm, Haddenham, Buckinghamshire (NGR: SP 7400 0808) on behalf of Mr B. Parker.
- 1.1.2 This was in respect of a condition attached to the planning application for the conversion of the barn into a single dwelling at the request of Buckinghamshire County Archaeological Service (BCAS) (Planning Ref. 04/2563). This was in line with PPG 16 and the Local Planning Policy.
- 1.1.3 A brief (BCAS 2004) was set by and a WSI (OA 2004) agreed with David Radford, the Archaeological Officer for BCAS.

1.2 Location, geology and topography

- 1.2.1 The barn is located approximately 20 m south of the main road and bounds the farmyard to the north, to the northwest it is bound by a residential dwelling and to the south by a small paddock. Both the farmyard to the north and the paddock to the south rise slightly towards the barn entrances.
- 1.2.2 The sites lies at roughly 78 m AOD. The underlying geology is Younger Head Deposits, overlying Portland sand and stone (British Geological Survey, Sheet 237).

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

- 1.3.1 The archaeological background to the evaluation was prepared for the WSI, the results of which are reproduced below.
- 1.3.2 The development site lies within the historic core of Haddenham, close to the medieval church (CAS 4586). The barn is a curtilage structure of a grade II listed post-medieval farm house. The current farm complex incorporates buildings, including the barn, recorded as 17th-18th century date by the listing, some of which may be earlier in origin.

- 1.3.3 Haddenham appears to have developed from a nucleated settlement around Church End in the late Saxon and early medieval period (CgMs 2002). In Domesday the Manor was held by Archbishop Lanfranc and was already sizable with 40 villagers, 15 slaves and two mills (Morris, 1978). The village remained in the hands of the Convent of St Andrew in Rochester until the dissolution when it passed to the crown. The village received a Royal charter to hold a market and fair in 1295. The settlement changed shape after enclosure in 1830-4 when the main east-west roads were built (Pevsner and Williamson 1994).
- 1.3.4 Haddenham is notable for the number of buildings constructed from witchert. Whichert or wychett, meaning white earth is the name given to the local earth building material, known as cob in other parts of the country. It is found in a belt from the Oxfordshire border north-east through Long Crendon, Haddenham, Chearsley, Cuddington, Dinton, Stone to Aylesbury and beyond to Bierton.
- 1.3.5 Dating simple witchert buildings on architectural criteria is problematic. Dendrochronology on a roof timber from a witchert cottage in Ludgershall dated the structure to 1596, considerably earlier than the date previously suggested for the building (OA 2002).

2 EVALUATION AIMS

- 2.1.1 To establish the presence or absence, extent, condition, nature, character, quality and date of any archaeological remains within the proposed development area. In particular:
- to establish whether traces of earlier structures survive on this site and to establish any relationships with the current structure,
 - to establish whether late Saxon, medieval or post-medieval occupation or boundary features are present and, if so, their likely relationship to the village plan,
 - to relate any relevant structures or features to the standing structure.
- 2.1.2 To establish the ecofactual and environmental potential of archaeological deposits and features.
- 2.1.3 To make available the results of the investigation.

3 EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

- 3.1.1 The evaluation consisted of one trench measuring 6 m long by 1.5 m wide positioned along the central axis of the building within the western end of the barn (Fig. 2). The overburden was removed under close archaeological supervision by a 1.5 ton mini excavator fitted with a 0.6 m wide toothless ditching bucket. Excavation proceeded in level spits down to the top of the natural geology or the top of the first archaeological horizon, whichever was encountered first.
- 3.1.2 The trench was cleaned by hand and any revealed features were sampled to determine their extent and nature, and if possible, to retrieve finds and environmental samples. The trench was planned at a scale of 1:50 and sample sections were drawn at a scale of 1:20. The trench and the sections were photographed using colour slide

and black and white print film. Recording followed procedures laid down in the *OAU Field Manual* (OAU, 1992)

4 RESULTS: GENERAL

4.1 Soils and ground conditions

4.1.1 The site was located within a standing barn on top of a shallow rise and comprised disturbed soils overlying the natural. The boundaries and edges of the layers were well defined. Soil conditions were dry with no waterlogging encountered.

5 RESULTS: DESCRIPTIONS

5.1 Description of deposits

5.1.1 The base of the trench came down onto the top of a compact natural yellowish brown sandy clay (4), known locally as "wychett". The irregular upper surface of this deposit contained pockets of pale grey natural silty clay (3), up to 0.15 m deep (Fig. 3, sections 1 and 2). At the western end of the trench layer 3 was overlain by the remains of a tenacious reddish brown silty clay (5), up to 0.15 m thick, upon which the western limestone barn wall (6) had been constructed.

5.1.2 Within the barn, layer 5 was overlain by a friable light greyish brown clay silt (2), 0.12 m deep, which was interpreted as an earth floor surface.

5.1.3 Overlying deposit 2 and abutting wall 6 was a 0.1 m thick layer of friable greyish brown silty loam (1), representing the present earth floor surface.

5.2 Finds

5.2.1 No finds were recovered during the course of the evaluation.

5.3 Palaeo-environmental remains

5.3.1 No deposits suitable for palaeo-environmental sampling were encountered.

6 DISCUSSION AND INTERPRETATION

6.1 Reliability of field investigation

6.1.1 The percentage sample of the site (12%), the location of the trench and the consistent stratigraphy throughout the trench gives a high confidence that the interpretation of the results will apply equally throughout the development area.

6.2 Overall interpretation

6.2.1 The results of the evaluation revealed no evidence for earlier structures having existed within the limits of the barn. However, two soil layers (1 and 2), representing earth floors associated with the agricultural use of the barn were recorded. The lower of these may well be associated with the construction of the barn in the 17th or 18th century.

- 6.2.2 No features or dating evidence were encountered within the evaluation trench and given the shallow depth of soils in this area, together with the lack of scrape marks on the wytchett natural (4) from ploughshares, it is suggested that the site was formerly either wasteland or land used for grazing and therefore not settled until the construction of Baghill Farm in the 17th-18th century.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY

| <i>Context No.</i> | <i>Type</i> | <i>Depth (m)</i> | <i>Comment</i> | <i>Finds</i> | <i>Date</i> |
|--------------------|-------------|------------------|-----------------------------|--------------|-------------|
| 1 | Layer | 0.14 m | Earth floor surface | - | - |
| 2 | Layer | 0.12 m | Earlier earth floor surface | - | - |
| 3 | Layer | 0.15 m | Natural clay pockets | - | - |
| 4 | Layer | >0.1 m | Natural "Wychett" layer | - | - |
| 5 | Layer | 0.12 m | Clay subsoil | - | - |
| 6 | Structure | - | West end wall of barn | - | C17th-18th |

APPENDIX 2 BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

BCAS, 2004 *Baghill Farm, Haddenham - Design Brief for Archaeological Field Evaluation*

CgMs, 2002 *Archaeological Desk Based Assessment: Land off Thame Road, Haddenham*

Morris, J, 1978 *Domesday Book: Buckinghamshire*

OA, 2002 *The Kya, Ludgershall, Buckinghamshire*

OA, 2004 *Baghill Farm, Haddenham, Buckinghamshire: Written Scheme of Investigation*

OAU, 1992 *Field Manual* (ed. D. Wilkinson)

Pevsner, N, and Williamson, E, 1994 *The Buildings of England: Buckinghamshire*

APPENDIX 3 SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

Site name: Baghill Farm, Haddenham, Buckinghamshire

Site code: HADBF 04

Grid reference: SP 7400 0808

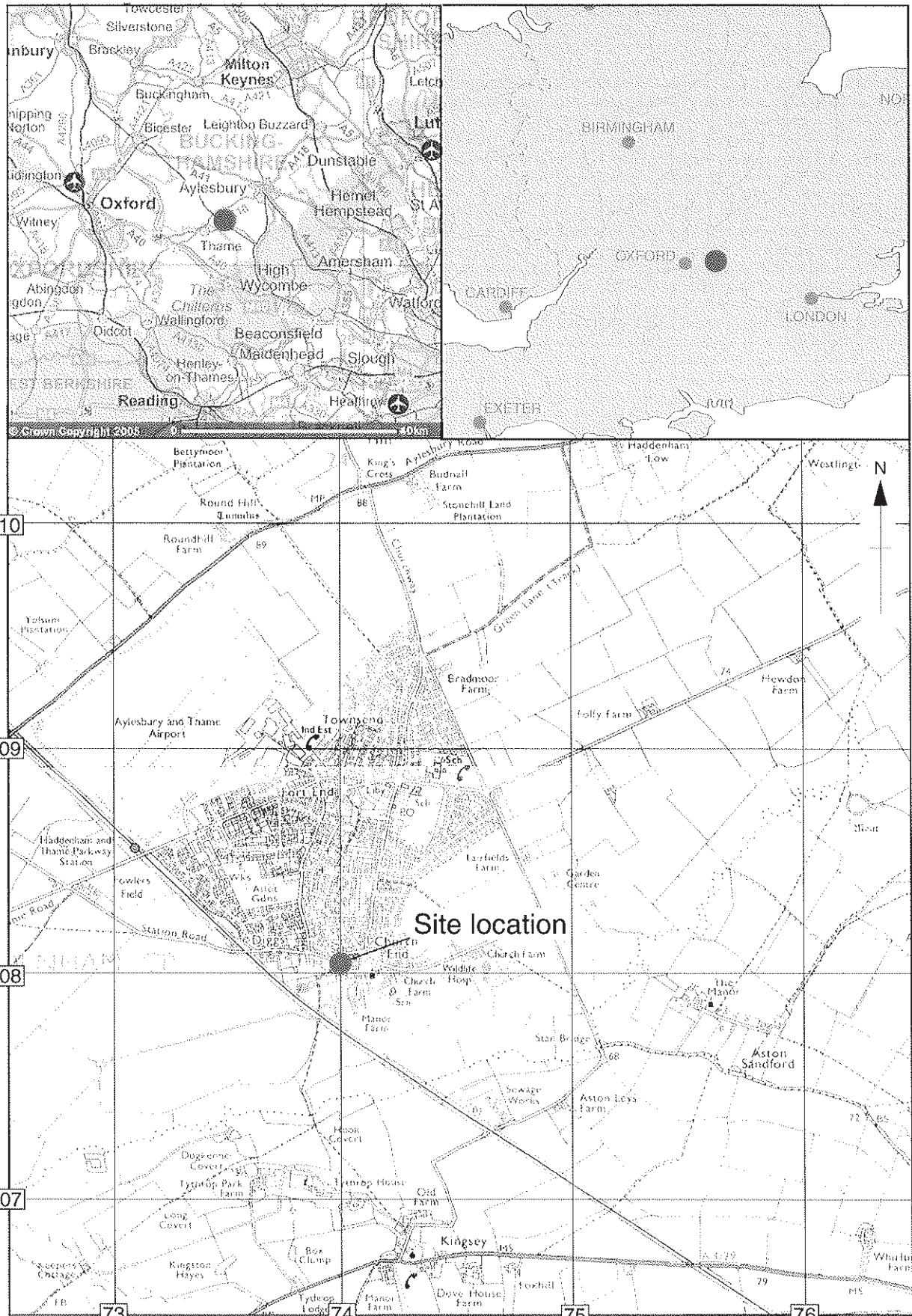
Type of evaluation: Single 6 m x 1.5 m machine dug trench

Date and duration of project: 1 day, 11th January 2005

Area of site: 9 m²

Summary of results: Earth floor surfaces associated with agricultural use of standing barn directly overlying natural deposits.

Location of archive: The archive is currently held at OA, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES, and will be deposited with Buckinghamshire County Museum in due course, under the following accession number: AYBCM:2004.181.



Scale 1:25,000

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Figure 1: Site location

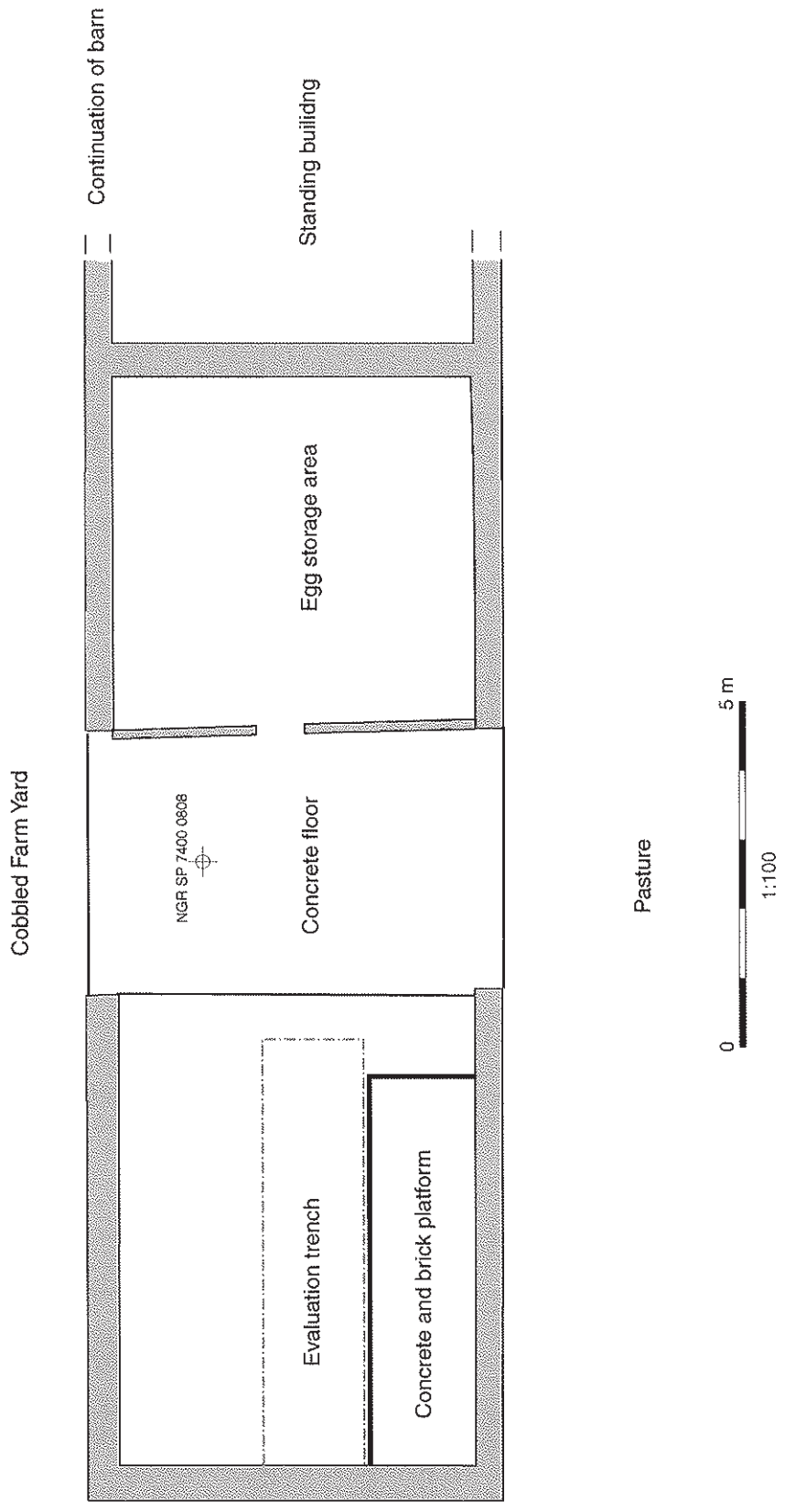
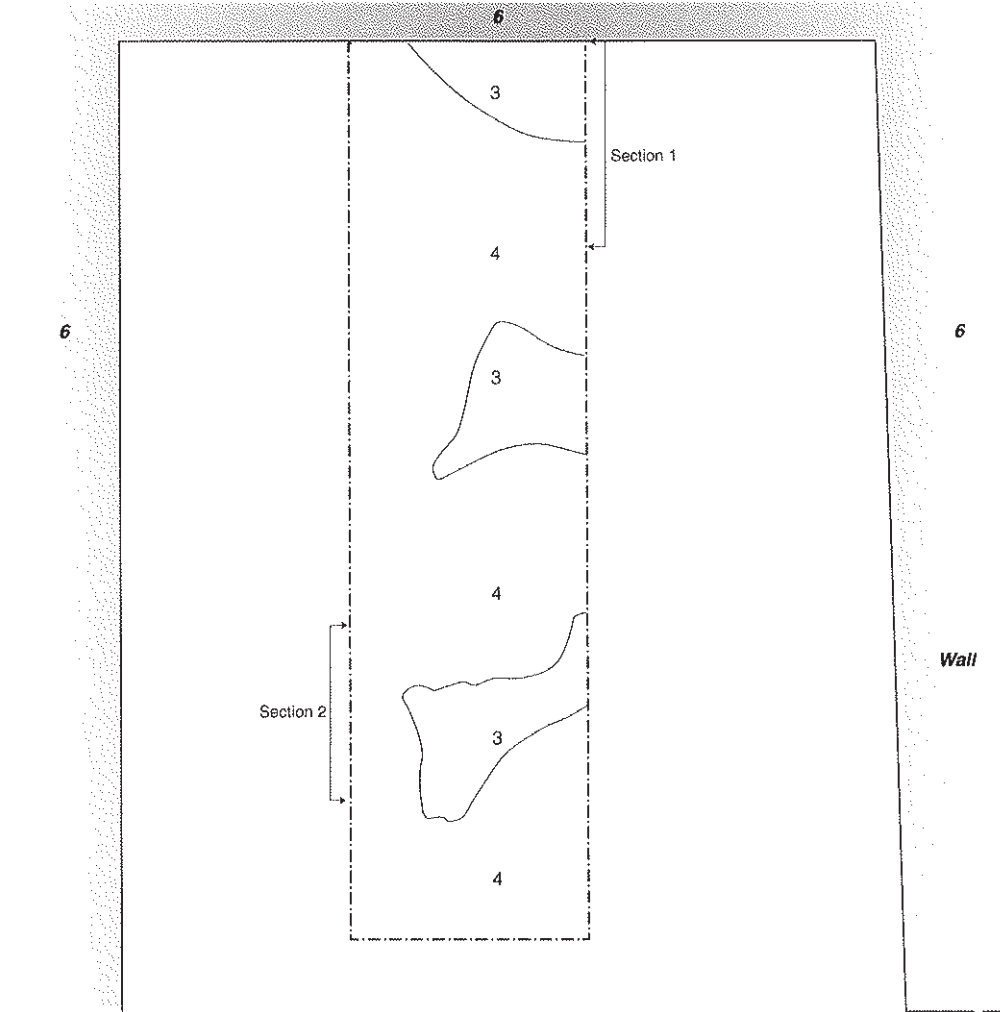


Figure 2: Trench location

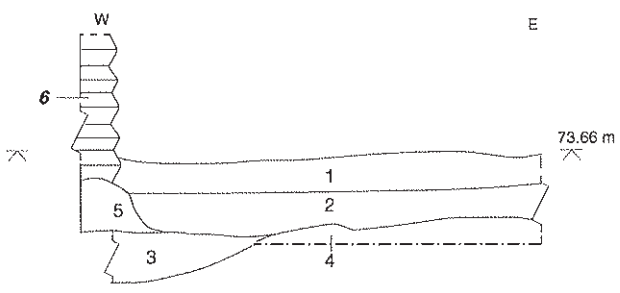


Plan 1

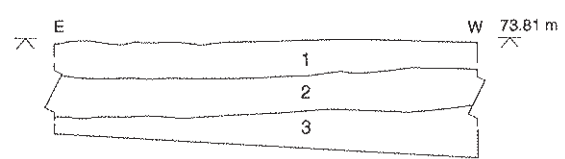


1:50

Section 1



Section 2



1:25

Figure 3: Trench plan and sections



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