

KENSINGTON (KC)
CHELSEA

KCHWB

Colwyn Foulkes and Partners

64/64a Kensington Church Street, Kensington, W8 London
ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF REPORT

NGR TQ 2550 7990

Planning Ref: TP/98 1205

Oxford Archaeological Unit
May 2000

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ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF
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SUMMARY

Oxford Archaeological Unit carried out a Watching Brief at 64/64a Kensington Church Street for Colwyn Foulkes and Partners acting on behalf of Mr. Adrian Harrington. Trenches excavated for the underpinning of foundations and the reduction of floor levels within the building formed the intrusive work of the development and these were monitored. No archaeological deposits or remains were present within the development area. Potentially undisturbed early strata was seen under the street-side wall. These layers indicated that potential archaeological levels could survive exterior and to the south of the development area. These layers were recorded and tied into Ordnance Datum to aid future investigations in the area.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Location and scope of work

- 1.1.1 In April 2000 Oxford Archaeological Unit (OAU) carried out a Watching Brief at 64/64a Kensington Church Street (Fig.1) for Colwyn Foulkes and Partners acting on behalf of Mr. Adrian Harrington.
- 1.1.2 Conditional planning permission had been granted for the redevelopment and extension of 64/64a Kensington Church Street. This work included the reduction of floor levels (to accommodate a new mezzanine floor) in the room at the rear of the building (Fig.2) and a ground floor extension at the front. Whilst the extension will occupy an area previously disturbed by a shop front, the reduction of floor levels would have destroyed any archaeological deposits present. The site lies within an Archaeological Priority Area designated in the Royal Borough's Unitary Development Plan and therefore the Archaeological Advisor to the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea recommended that an archaeological condition be attached to the planning consent.
- 1.1.3 A Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) detailing the methodology of a Watching Brief on the intrusive works of the development was prepared by OAU and agreed by the Archaeological Advisor to the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea.

1.2 Geology and topography

- 1.2.1 The site lies towards the middle of and on the eastern side of Kensington High Street (TQ 2458 7997). The site lies at 26 m AOD. The geology is third terrace gravels of the River Thames overlying London Clay (Geological survey of Great Britain sheet 270).

1.3 Archaeological [and historical] background

1.3.1 The development site lies within an Archaeological Priority Area designated in the Royal Borough's Unitary Development Plan. However, little fieldwork has been carried out in the area and therefore little is known of the archaeology. The earliest evidence of human activity in the Kensington area is provided by the occasional findspot of Palaeolithic stone artefacts, often located sealed deep within the Thames Valley Gravel deposits upon which the majority of the Borough is situated. No settlement sites or significant concentrations of artefacts have been located in the Borough. There is no evidence of substantial Roman settlement in the Kensington area which lay substantially to the west of the Roman city of Londinium, although it has been suggested that both Bayswater Road/Notting Hill Gate and Kensington High Street may follow the line of Roman roads, heading west from the City towards the important Roman town of Silchester. The area contains no evidence of Early Saxon activity. The village of Kensington, the medieval core of which is located to the north of Kensington High Road is mentioned in Domesday Book (*Chenesiton*) which indicates that the settlement can demonstrate pre-Conquest roots. The site lies within the area of the medieval village. Kensington Church Street was originally a country lane running between Notting Hill Gate and the centre of Kensington village. Until 1864, the road comprised two streets (Silver Street to the north and Church Lane to the south) split by a toll gate. St Mary Abbots Church, which dates to the 12th century, is situated at the southern end of the road.

1.4 Watching Brief aims

- 1.4.1 To preserve by record any archaeological remains which the ground works removed or damaged within the development area.
- 1.4.2 If significant archaeological remains had been discovered the OAU representative was present so that all parties could have been notified that an archaeological find had been made, for which the resources allocated were not sufficient to support a treatment to a satisfactory and proper standard. All building work would have been halted until the remains had been suitably investigated.
- 1.4.3 To make available the results of the investigation.

2 WATCHING BRIEF METHODOLOGY

2.1 Scope of fieldwork

2.1.1 The watching brief comprised the monitoring of hand excavation of two 2.75 m deep x 0.90 m wide trenches (to 23.05 m OD); one against the south west and one against the north east wall of the building, which were for the underpinning of these walls (the north wall was considered deep enough and sturdy enough to preclude the necessity of underpinning) and the machine excavation of the internal part (to 23.50 m OD) of the room during which the south wall was shuttered and underpinned.

3 RESULTS: DESCRIPTIONS

3.1 Description of deposits

In reflection of the minimal archaeological presence the fairly complex modern sequence has been summarised and does not include detailed mortar and soil descriptions, brick sizes etc.

The earliest deposits revealed during the program of work were a sequence of apparently undisturbed layers under the southern (street side) wall of the site. These comprised a 0.35 m thick yellow-grey clay (20) overlain by a 0.10 m deep dark silt (8) that in turn was overlain by a 0.10 m thick yellow-grey clay (7). No finds were retrieved from these deposits and they were only visible in the south eastern corner of the south western underpinning trench (the floor reduction across the site did not attain great enough depth to expose these deposits).

It was clear that deposits 20, 8 and 7 had been removed by a large steep sided cut (23) within the development area.

Stratigraphically the sequence continued with wall 5 = 11 = 12; the rear garden wall of 14 Vicarage Gardens which also formed the northerly wall of the development site. This wall was recorded to a depth of 2.75 m (within the underpinning trenches) at which point it still retained even coursing and flush pointed mortar. This indicates that it was either originally visible at this level or that its construction cut was wide enough to allow work on its southern face.

No relationship was visible between wall 5 = 11 = 12 and cut 23, however the fills of cut 23 (19, 18 and 4 = 17 - a sequence of silty dump deposits containing industrial brick fragments and 18-19th century pottery) clearly abutted the wall.

No clear relationship was visible between walls 21 and 13; which formed the south western and north eastern (respectively) limits of the extension area, and the uppermost infill layer (4=17). These walls were faced only to the depth of 1 m after which they were of brick rubble and cement construction, therefore it is likely that they were trench-built foundations, flush-cut into deposit 4 = 17 and that the excavation of the underpinning trenches removed their construction cuts.

Walls 21 and 13 abutted wall 5=11=12 and both contained brick archways enclosing brick rubble filled voids at their northern limits (see Fig 4). It is possible that these archways originally joined within the centre of the site forming one continuous structure, however neither archway exhibited signs of having been cut.

To the centre of the development area the dump deposit 4=17 was overlaid by a layer of concrete that supported a modern but disused internal brick wall (6) that had been buried under the existing floor deposits.

3.2 Finds

Several sherds of pottery were recovered from the site for spot dating. The earliest material was from context 18 and was dated to the 18th-19th century. No finds have been retained for deposition.

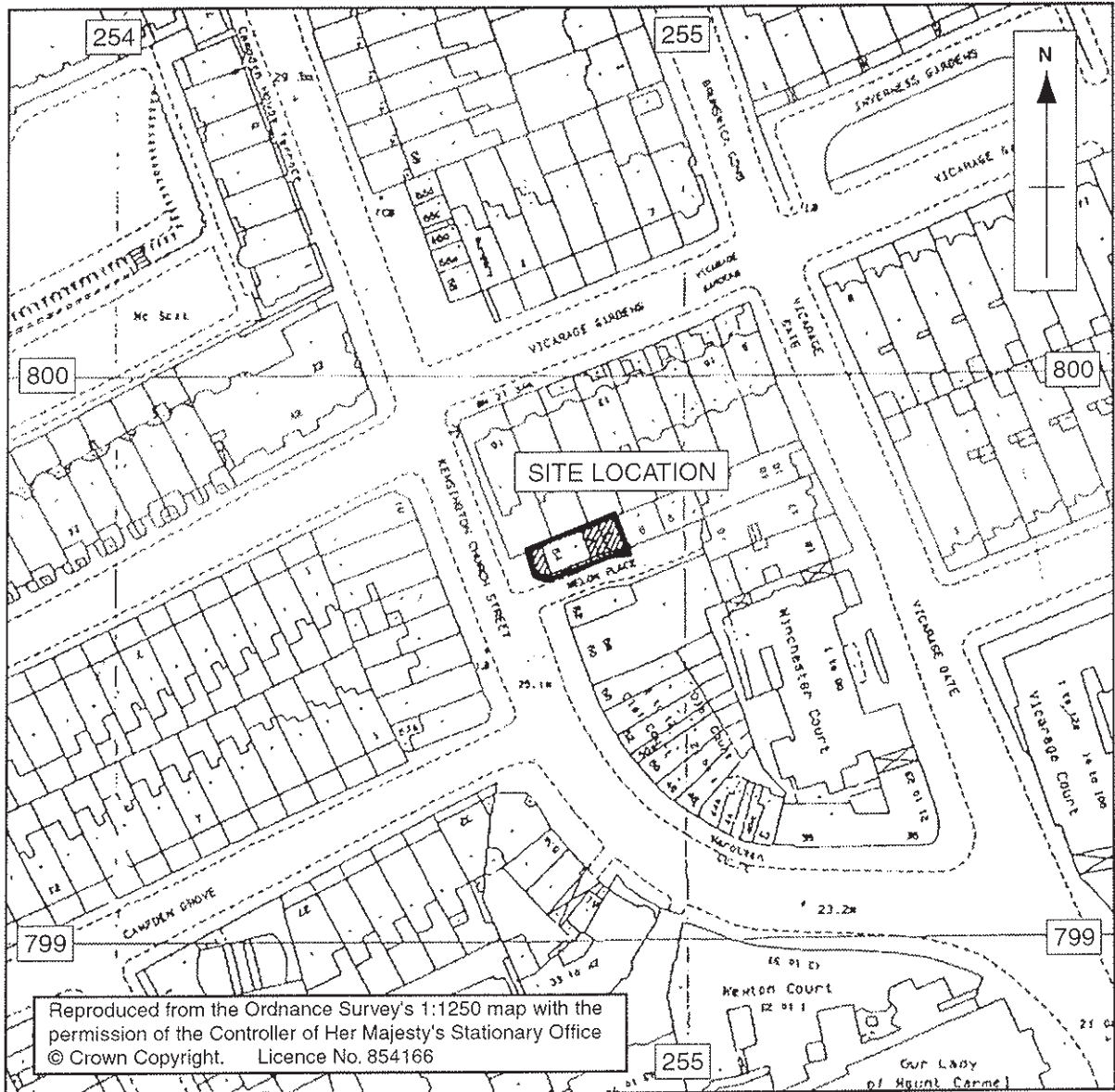
4 DISCUSSION AND INTERPRETATION

- 4.1.1 All archaeological deposits or remains that may have existed within the rear building of 64/64a Kensington Church Street have been removed to a depth of at least 23.05 m OD either by terracing or landscaping associated with the construction of the rear garden wall of 14 Vicarage Gardens (one of a block of eight Georgian buildings to the north of the site) or possibly the later construction and subsequent destruction of a (Victorian?) vaulted basement or large brick drain that was apparent in the north eastern and south western walls of the building (although it is not clear that these features ever formed one construction that ran through the building).
- 4.1.2 The Watching Brief has shown that potential archaeological levels may survive up to a height of 23.6 m OD under the road immediately to the south of the development.

APPENDICES

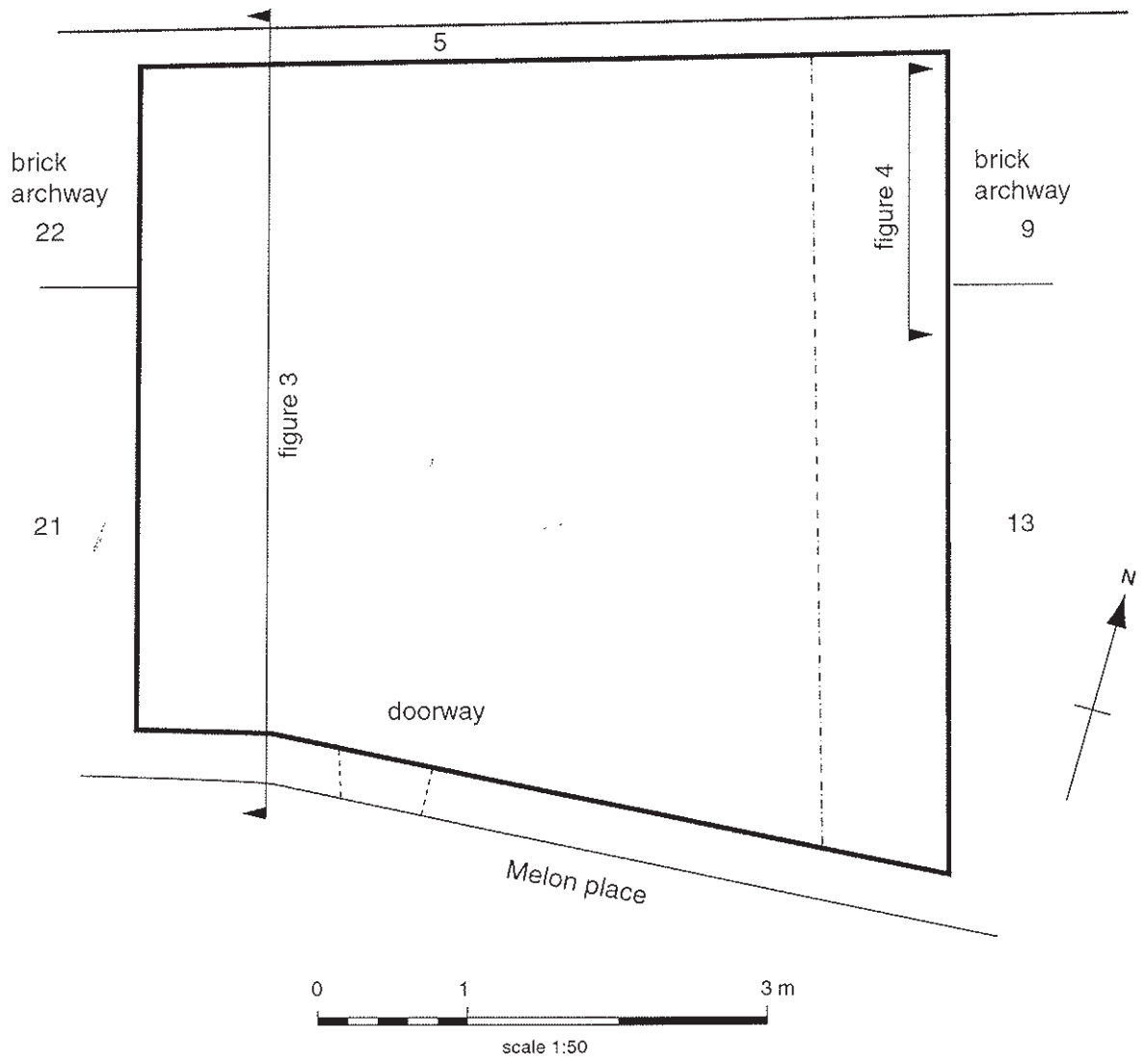
APPENDIX 1 ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY

Ctxt No	Type	Comment
1	Deposit	Existing concrete floor
2	Deposit	Make-up layer for ctxt 1
3	Deposit	Infill material
4	Deposit	Infill material
5	Structure	Wall (Rear garden wall of Georgian house)
6	Structure	Wall
7	Deposit	Undisturbed, early? clay layer
8	Deposit	Undisturbed, early? Silt layer
9	Structure	Brick Arch
10	Structure	Wall
11	Structure	Same as 5
12	Structure	Same as 5
13	Structure	Wall
14	Deposit	Infill material
15	Deposit	Infill material
16	Deposit	Infill material
17	Deposit	Infill material
18	Deposit	Infill material
19	Deposit	Infill material/ Redeposited 20?
20	Deposit	Undisturbed, early? Clay layer
21	Structure	Wall
22	Structure	Brick Arch
23	Cut	Construction/ destruction? cut



Location of site

Figure 1



Site plan

Figure 2

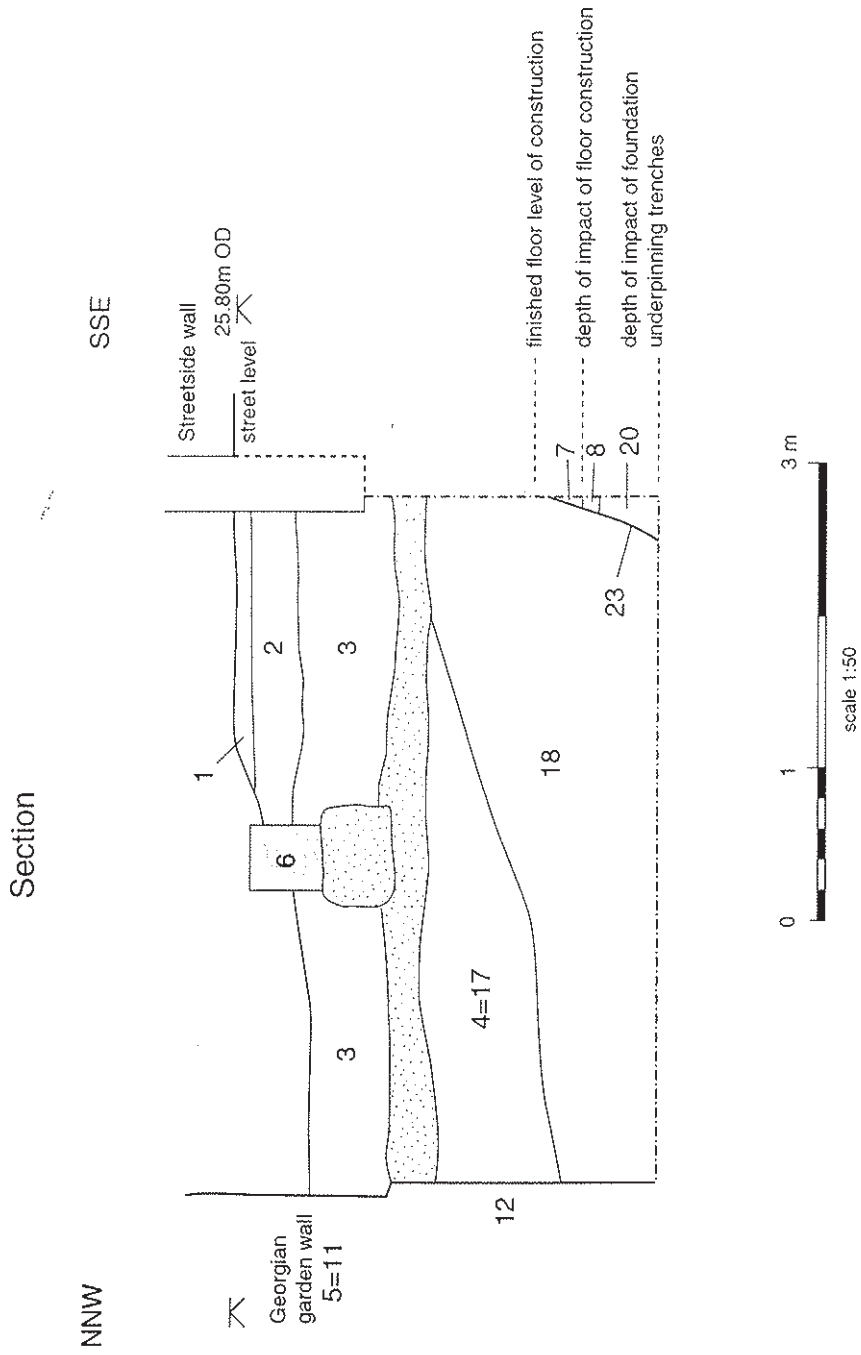


Figure 3

Section

NNE

SSW

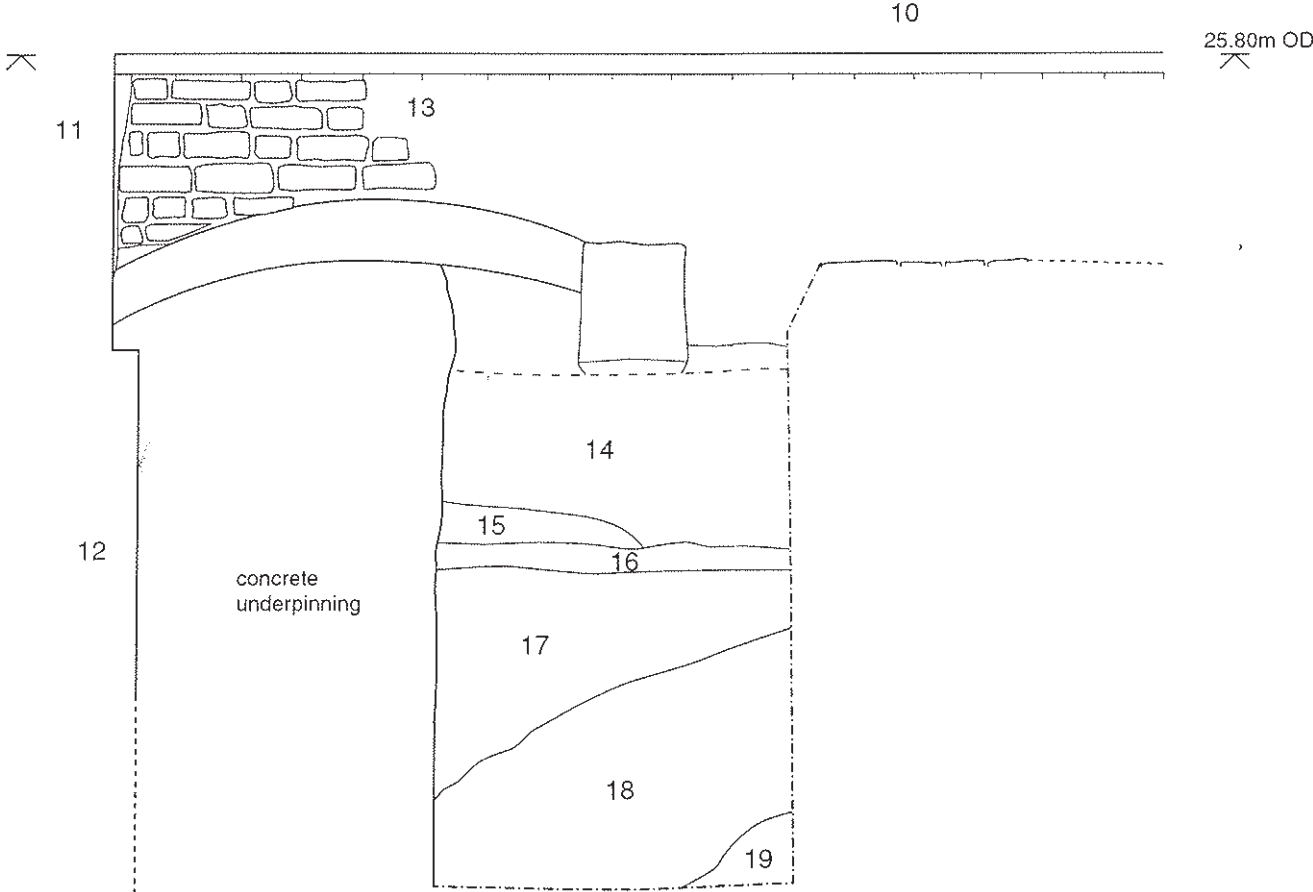


Figure 4



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