

COMMUNITY CALL

COMMENT - VILLAGE UNDER THREAT

Ashley Green doesn't look like much on the map. A small crossroads with a village green, a church, a cluster of houses and some community buildings. The full extent of the sporting life in Ashley Green extends to a set of swings and a climbing frame.

Like many of us I moved out of London 15 years ago to give my children a better life and have found myself falling in love with the little village of Ashley Green in this rural corner of England. We have typical towns on either side of us but we actually live in a lovely part of the Chilterns where you can walk out of your back door, go to the local pub, feel entirely at home in the local church and can feel part of a community again.

That is the thing that has always surprised me about Ashley Green. It might not look like much but the sense of community is extraordinary. Periodically it has been suggested to us that we have to carry out all sorts of studies to see whether the community works well but the fact is we already have everything and more than most nearby villages have.

We currently have a strong Community Association which works with the church and the Parish Council. We provide great support both in terms of our toddler group and support for the elderly and disenfranchised. We communicate in great ways including through our Website, our Bulletins and through this newsletter.

Generally speaking, we get on with things by ourselves. We have never troubled local government bodies for huge amounts of support. The people of Ashley Green are marvellously generous with their time and money and we have pretty much always done what we have needed to do pretty well.

Every now and again, however, we seem to suffer threats from the outside which seems almost insurmountable. It is at times like this that we really need to rally together even more to make sure we try and keep Ashley Green special.

In this issue of the Newsletter you will read about the District Council's "Local Plan", the issue of ownership of the Old School which we might lose and the need for the Ashley Green Community Association to have an injection of new blood to maintain its high profile - all issues which will greatly impact us here if we sit idly by and do nothing. Please do read carefully and consider how you might be able to help with all these threats.

Roger Watts

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What's On Summary 2016

EURO 2016

**See the matches on the big screen
in the Memorial Hall
11th June to 10th July**

VILLAGE FAIR 2016

June 18th on the green

Details of all events and activities are on the Website and in the Notice Boards.

VILLAGE BULLETINS

The AGCA Village News Bulletins have been running for over three years now and are available by Email to everyone. You don't have to be an association member to receive them. Simply send in your name and Email address to:

David Harmer: davedharmer@aol.com

ASHLEY GREEN "FREEBAY"

Just a reminder that the village "FreeBay" service is still operating. It allows people to advertise things they no longer need and which are looking for a good home - Free of Charge. They can also ask for items that they are looking for. Details are all on the Website.

OVERVIEW

The Community Association has been in existence for over 30 years in its current form and has been most successful in maintaining the buildings under its control so that they are available for use by villagers and others. They are used for staging events for the village put on by the Association and are also available for hire by anyone who needs first class accommodation for their activities and events.

Just now, however, we are - as you can see from the lead article above - facing a number of issues which might threaten the very existence of the Association itself and could reduce the facilities we have, and hence our ability to serve the community as we have been able to do to date, and as we wish to do in the future. We can report that, while waiting for the Old School lease to resolve, Chiltern have been carrying out some long overdue maintenance to the exterior of the building and the Community Association has been able to put the internal maintenance and cleaning of the Old School and Memorial Hall on a more sustainable basis. It is so important we are able to continue to provide facilities for village voluntary groups.

None of the work we do is possible without the help of the team who form the Council and Executive of the Association, but we need to ensure that people in the village continue to support us, and we do need more people to come forward to help the process by joining in with some of the organising teams. We need new blood and fresh ideas to keep things alive.

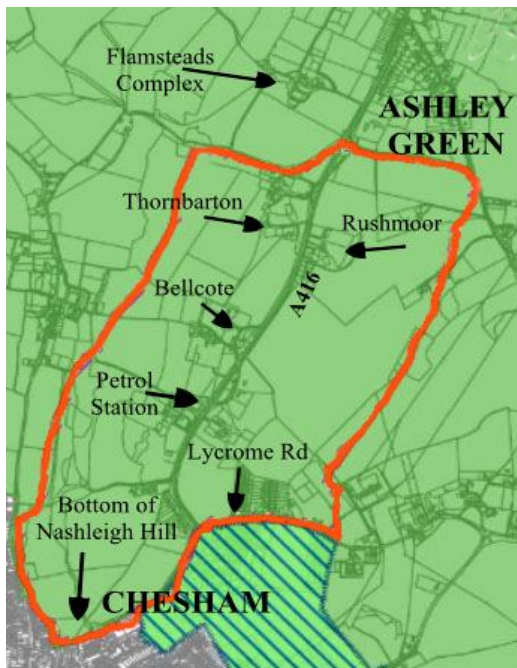
Can you help with just a bit of your time? See Page 3 for more information!

THREAT 1 - LOCAL PLAN DEVELOPMENT

All planning authorities in the UK are having to look at how development is addressed in their area over the next 20 years. At Christmas time Chiltern District Council and South Bucks Council issued their “**Local Plan**”.

This came somewhat out of the blue and initially looked like a bolt through the heart of Ashley Green. At 67 pages long it contained maps showing many areas in the Chiltern District highlighted for “Employment” and “Housing” development.

Most significantly for Ashley Green it showed an area of 172 hectares (about the size of **250 football pitches!**) spreading from Chesham right up to the village, to be given over to “Employment” development.



That area is ringed in red in the map above

In this case that means industrial units, hotels, supermarkets, warehouses and the like. The reasons for the selection of the areas marked on the maps, however, were not clear.

We were given a ludicrously short period of time to respond, but fortunately, the depth of feeling in the village was such that we managed to organise a meeting with the head of the Council and the head of Planning to try and understand what they were proposing. This meeting was well attended by a large proportion of the village - about 200 people - in the Old School on 3rd March.

It would appear that 12 months ago there was a previous consultation at the start of the planning process, but nobody in Ashley Green knew about this - neither the Parish Council nor the Community Association.

The consequences of that seemed to be that things should be moved to the boundaries of Chesham and which manifested as the area described above in the “**Local Plan**”.

At the meeting, mentioned above, the Councillors attempted to explain the reasoning behind the plan and the process into the future. The film and slide show they used certainly did bring some clarity.

The plan itself was rather verbose, the maps confusing and the whole difficult to understand but it finally emerged that the Council projected that probably only 2 (Yes only **TWO**) hectares would actually be required in the whole of the Chiltern District.

So why mark 172 hectares in their maps for our area alone to start with?

They confirmed that there was nothing in the plan to suggest that the land marked on the map at Ashley Green would even be considered since there were many other areas in the Chiltern District equally suitable.

The validity of the plan had to be called into question at that point, particularly about the way their maps bore no relation to what was actually expected or realistic but which had caused great alarm to all who had seen them.

The meeting concluded with people being invited to write to the Council to express their concerns, with supporting evidence, and these submissions would be used in the next phase which would take place up to October 2016 when the Council would examine and evaluate the plan in detail to produce a “**Full Plan**” which would, again, be open to public consultation.

Given that there was still some confusion about what was documented in the plan and what the Councillors had explained, a Freedom of Information Act request was put in to try to understand on what basis the details in the plan were recorded and the response included the following:-

“There is no identified size of land. This is an employment area of search for the purposes of consultation and basis for undertaking further work. As an area of search there has been no specific criteria used other than officer judgement.”

You will each have to make what you can of that answer since it underlines why there has been confusion and concern.

When the “**Full Plan**” is complete we will have to be vigilant to ensure that this contains no surprises and does not change to the detriment of the Green Belt and to our village. We must be prepared to continue our campaign. Watch this space.

NEW YEAR PARTY

Back in 2007 the Community Association held a New Year Party in the Old School. It was for people had not been invited to any other party and did not want to spend the evening simply staring at the TV. A good time was had by all.



Last New Year a similar event was staged on the lines of:-

“Bring your own food and drinks and let’s see what happens”. Attendance was smaller than in 2007, but 15 people turned up to spend the evening in a very convivial way with some music, some games and toasts to 2016.

Happy New Year!

THREAT 2 - OLD SCHOOL LEASE



The Community Association was formed over 30 years ago. It is understood that it began because, not long before, the Post Office had been lost, the School had been shut, and someone had made a proposal that the School building site should be converted to residential use. It was realised, at this stage, if these buildings were lost, the community would be left with little soul.

The School was originally built by Lord Chesham on his land for the benefit of the community and the school buildings were used for many years by the Local Authority until the school closed in 1982. The Community Association was formed and began to use the buildings for many community uses such as Pilates, the Young Actors, Yoga, Toddlers group, the Lunch and Chat group, WI, Art group and many more.

There was a significant court case between Lord Chesham and Chiltern District Council to decide ownership when the School closed, which undoubtedly cost both parties a lot of money, but the case was never resolved and the ownership of the building never settled. Nevertheless, publicly, Lord Chesham was content that the buildings be used in perpetuity by the community.

This threat arose again about 15 years ago. At that stage no-one had the energy to try and resolve matters and a “gentleman’s agreement” was reached whereby the Council maintained the exterior of the building and the Community Association maintained the interior. We deal with both The Green Room and The Wykes Room as well. No rent is paid.

Out of the blue, the Council have just again raised the issue of their belief that they own the building and that they now want to charge us thousands of pounds in rent and make us responsible for all the repairs and maintenance.

Simply put, the Community Association is not sufficiently well funded to do this and, if the Council persisted in this approach, many believe the Association might have to lose the use of the building or, in the very worst case, cease to operate.

This would be a huge loss to the village and counter productive to what local governments are trying to achieve. At the present time we are resisting the fact that the Council have a good Title, although this is rather a secondary issue. The fact is that if they wish to formalise matters, they might be able to do so, but it would need to be at a rent that we could afford and that, frankly, would be very little. Similarly, if we took on responsibility for the exterior of the building the cost would be such that, again, it would be unlikely that we could afford to do this.

Matters are for the moment with Chiltern District Council for them to come back to us about how they wish to proceed. At this stage, we have not approached the press to help in any campaign in support of our continued use of these buildings.

Your views would be very helpful on this issue and your support most welcome. Should you have experience in the resolution of such matters from a legal perspective we would welcome your getting in touch as soon as you can.

Email roger.watts@tridentbc.com or davedharmer@aol.com

THREAT 3 - COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION



The Ashley Green Community Association consists of a body of volunteers who make things happen in the village. They look after our buildings, run various groups, improve the facilities, and put on events like the Village Fair, Bonfire Night and many other things.

It is a group of normal people, who just want to give something back to the community. I joined 15 years ago because I wanted to be part of a community and frankly the best thing to do is to just get engaged. It’s never taken up a great deal of my time but it has been enormous fun and I’d like to think I now know a lot of people in the village.

Of course, these things ebb and flow and the downside is that some of those on the Community Association are getting a little older and have “served their time”, or have moved away and so a few people have dropped off the list. Over the course of the last couple of years it’s been increasingly difficult to get more people to help out and keep the Association going.

The principal thing the village is lacking at the moment is a small group who might occasionally help organise putting on events. In the past we have held Balls, Burns Nights, Barn dances, Disco nights, Race nights, Quiz nights and many others. If you look back through the picture gallery on the website you can see we have had a great time.

(Lots of pictures on our website at:-
www.ashleygreen.org.uk/picture_gallery.html)

They are not big events but they do raise large sums for the Community Association which can then be re-invested in improving our facilities and our help for the community. If we don’t put on events then we are in danger of stagnating.

The world is changing. We are now in an era of new media and social networking. However, I can’t understand why you want to come and live in a lovely place like Ashley Green and, having got here, not want to be part of the community. It doesn’t take much effort and is so rewarding.

What we really hope is that some of the newer and younger families in the village will realise that what we’ve got here is really quite special but that it will only be special if you put in a bit of effort and get involved.

Thinking forward, we are keen to put disabled toilets and upgrade the kitchen facilities in The Old School, and then improve the insulation in the buildings so that our heating costs are not so ludicrously high. This might include new windows in the buildings etc.

There is always a need for money but to do this we have to raise some cash by putting on events.

(continued from Page 3)

Sometimes we do things that don't always work out although we try hard. We have had some strange comedy nights, some sporting events with a very few attendees and the film club has, sadly, "died". But certain things always go down well and it is help with those that we need.

So - would you consider getting more involved in your village and coming along to take an active part in what goes on here?

We need people to join the Community Association now either as a member of one of the committees, or particularly to join the small group mentioned above to get events organised.

The Community Association **Annual General Meeting** will be held in the Old School on **Tuesday June 14th at 8.00pm**.

Please come along to see what goes on and meet some of the people who try so hard to keep our Community working.
Roger Watts

ASSOCIATION MEMBERSHIP

Annual fees are very reasonable.
Per adult - £5.00 Per family - £15.00

Your contribution helps toward the upkeep of the village facilities, you get to meet your neighbours at the activities and events we stage and you also get the massive benefit of **FREE** entry to the Village Christmas Party. Contact the Membership Secretary.
Mary Axon - mary.axon@which.net

POND CLEANING ON THE GREEN

Back in February the Chiltern Society had scheduled a trip to Ashley Green and, with additional help from volunteers from the village, to clean the pond on the Green - just past the Memorial Hall on the left.



You can see from the photo here that it was in a bit of a state!!

All was set until a vigilant villager notices a lot of activity in the waters. The Frogs were in and busily making more frogs. I went to look and the water certainly looked as if it was almost boiling with all the activity that was going on.

The Chiltern Society were contacted and decided that the wildlife should be protected and postponed the cleaning until the Autumn - date yet to be decided.

Watch out for notice of when that may be, and do volunteer and come along to help.

Meanwhile, Mr and Mrs Frog can rest easy!

David Harmer

THE FAIR

ASHLEY GREEN VILLAGE FAIR

**ON THE GREEN
SATURDAY JUNE 18th
1.00PM to 5.00PM.**

Art Exhibition Stalls and Sideshows
Beer and Pimms Children's games
Home Made Teas BBQ Dog Shows

**Fun for all the family! Everyone welcome!
Come and Enjoy a Traditional Village Fair**

For information Email: shelaghwatts@btinternet.com
To book a Stall Email: jacquierose@lineone.net



Contact:- Malcolm Rimington
Email:- malc@greystoke.ltd.uk

It will soon be time for the Village Fair, just a few weeks after this newsletter arrives on your doorstep.

We do hope to see as many of you as possible there. It is great that we have a lot of new helpers with this. This is one of the days when everyone can get involved in some little way, even if it is just for a couple of hours.

We welcome anyone who would also like to help in some way - setting up in the morning, maybe helping on a stall or doing a stint at the car park.

To help, just Email shelaghwatts@btinternet.com

We have, over the years, tried to keep the Fair very much a traditional event, restricting commercial activities and putting on those things which are traditions in the English countryside.

Try not to get hit by excited dogs, hit by wayward eggs and fall over as a result of enthusiastic tugs of war.

Do please come along and enjoy this fabulous day.

ASHLEY GREEN COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION
**ART GROUP
EXHIBITION**
At the
VILLAGE FAIR
SATURDAY 18th JUNE 2016

1.00pm - 5.00pm
in the
Memorial Hall

ASHLEY GREEN ART GROUP

The Art Group is now over 30 years old and was the first group to be recognised as an integral part of the Community Association.

Our members come from within the village and further afield and while, over the years, the membership has changed the evenings are always filled with enthusiasm and enjoyment.

Here are some examples of some of our members work.



Wells next the Sea - Barry Holt



Bosham - Gerry Hunting

In the Autumn of 2015 we had a most enjoyable evening with a demonstration from local watercolour artist, Sarah Moruzzi and we celebrated Christmas with our usual dinner at the Golden Eagle, where we are served with a sumptuous meal and copious glasses of wine.

As in previous years, we will have an exhibition at the Village Fair on 18th June. This will be in the Memorial Hall where the teas are also served, and there will be paintings for sale. Please come and view, nominate your favourite painting, and then enjoy tea and cake.

St John's - our church - will be serving Cream Teas every Sunday afternoon throughout August too and we will be exhibiting in the Church as well.

Would you like to come along and be part of our friendly - and talented! - group of artists? All welcome.

We meet at the Old School on a Monday evening so just come along after 8.00pm and pop in for a look at what we are doing.

Margaret Bowler

(Contact via Email - mbowler@talktalk.net)



Overlooking Aldbury - Margaret Bowler

CHESHAM RURAL FORUM REPORT

The Chesham Rural Forum continues to meet every three months with representatives from the villages around Chesham and Thames Valley Police Force.

We are always very pleased to note that crime in our area continues to be below the national average with the majority of reported crimes being sheds or barns being broken into with tools/equipment being stolen from them, heating diesel thefts and items being stolen from parked cars.

Last year the Thames Valley overall had the 7th lowest level of recorded violent crime per 1,000 population in England and Wales and while the newest released figures for 2015/2016 shows an increase for the first time in 10 years, hopefully this position won't change.

It is important that each of us take responsibility for reporting any suspicious activity to the police. Use the 101 - the non-emergency number - or 999 if a crime is being committed.

The police will respond to calls. However if none are forthcoming it is likely that resources will be directed towards Chesham town itself as evidence will dictate that their need is greater than ours.

In February there was a police operation using the Automatic Number Plate Recognition device which focused on rural crimes and in particular vehicles using the rural back lanes to move around.

It is important that as we do live in a rural environment that we take extra care with our homes and cars. It is easy for an opportunistic thief to slip into our house through an open window while we are busy in the back garden or for them to steal from cars if valuable items are left on display.

Hopefully with diligence and care we will all enjoy a glorious and crime free summer.

Jacqui Rose

SNAKES ALIVE AT THE WI



So you thought the WI was all “Jam and Jerusalem”? Well, the February meeting of Ashley Green’s WI was more snakes-and-adders, than Jam and Jerusalem.

Occasionally we have an open-meeting, where we like to throw open our doors to non-members, family and friends, particularly when we have a speaker who may interest so many different people. So in February our speaker, Trevor Knight, arrived with all his family to give us a truly hands-on talk about snakes.

His family included his wife, 3 children and an assortment of pythons, differing sizes from a small 2 feet green python, to



some very large snakes that required great strength and careful handling to manoeuvre out of their boxes. He explained that he only owns and deals with non-venomous snakes, namely pythons (which judging by the faces of the audience was quite a relief), but on occasion has been called out by the police or the RSPCA to deal with a variety of snakes.

He is able to assist them if the snakes are pythons, but calls on his friend Mark Amey, owner of exotic pet shop, Amey Zoo in Bovington, for the more deadly creatures. Trevor’s licence to handle only covers the pythons and he is truly passionate about his subject. He told us how he spends every day handling his snakes and ensuring they are happy. He has learned to read their behavioural signals and to understand their moods. It seems even snakes have off-days.



His children also seemed confident around their enlarged family, and I must say that the smallest of the snakes seemed to have the most placid of temperaments, as his youngest daughter happily walked it around the room for everyone to see and touch. He told us how all of the pythons he owns have been bred in this country, and that he is now part of a breeding program to re-introduce these magnificent creatures back into the wild.

Unfortunately in many areas they have become endangered due to poaching for the pet trade and habitat loss.



Ladies, if this most unusual of subjects at a WI meeting surprises you, why not come and join us at one of our next meetings?

We meet the 2nd Thursday in every month in the Old School House, 7:45pm.

Our Website is:- www.ashleygreenwi.btck.co.uk

CREAM TEAS IN ST JOHN’S

Following the tremendous success of 2015, the team at St John’s will be serving **Cream Teas** in the church again this year. The Art Group will be exhibiting their work for the whole period. Do come along to sample the delights!



SUPPORT OUR FARM



On the back page of this newsletter you will see an advert for Johns Lane Farm - Our Farm. If you are not sure where this is, go along Hog Lane right to the T-junction and turn right. The farm is several hundred yards along on the left.

The Farm Shop is just up the path and you will see all the goods in the advert on display.

Where else can you get a dozen, fresh, free range (and very large) eggs for £2.80?

Why not support our farm and get some really fresh produce.

TABLE TOP SALE AND TEAS

In March the team at St John’s held a Table Top sale with Teas in the Memorial Hall. It was a great success with all tables being taken by villagers, by village groups and by people from far afield.

The church raised some well needed funds from the event to help towards the running of the church and affiliated activities. Well done everyone!

One stall sold some artists material to a young girl who went away and came back later with a card she had made for the stall holder titled “A Cupful of Thanks”.



ARTIST AT HASTOE

Our own village artist - Elizabeth Foster - creates fused glass pieces, and bronzes in her studio at Ash House in Hog Lane. She regularly exhibits at the **Bucks Open Studio Event** each summer.

Last year this event was held at the Hastoe village Hall with many local artists in attendance. In the picture below, you can see her discussing some of her work with a visitor.



This year she will be back at Hastoe again where the show runs from 11th June to 26th June (12.00 to 6.00pm) with more of her work and hopes you will come along to the event.

(Elizabeth will take commissions for portraits of people, children and pets in clay to be cast in high density cement or bronze.)

See her work at www.ash-house-arts.com

PLAYTIME IN THE OLD SCHOOL

It's playtime in Ashley Green.

Every Thursday in term time 10.30 -12.00 mums and dads can bring their tots to have a great time playing in the Old School.



There is music and lots of toys and music and Maggie and Susie entertain the children while adults have time to chat and relax because playing is such hard work!

Here we can see everyone having a good time.

You can see the advert for "Playtime" on the back page of this newsletter



(We have permission from the adults to take these photos and for them to go into Community Call)

"LUNCH AND CHAT"

The "Lunch and Chat" social event takes place on Thursdays between 12 and 2.00pm. in the Old School.

This popular event offers people a chance for to get away from four walls for a while and get out and to meet other villagers for chat and a light lunch.

Here we see people with a cup of tea while waiting for lunch to be served.



We have a very loyal group of volunteers who prepare and serve the food but we can always do with more.

Do you think you can help once every 5 or 6 weeks?
We would love to hear from you if you could.

Hilary Wilson:- hilaryaw@gotadsl.co.uk,

Jacqui Rose :- jacquierose@lineone.net

NEW VILLAGER



We welcome our newest villager, **Oliver Alexander Barbour**, born 12th December at Stoke Mandeville Hospital. A brother to William (5) and Thomas (3)

To Mum and Dad. Jan and Peter Barbour and family, our warmest congratulations

LIVE MUSIC AT THE EAGLE

Saturday 3rd June 8.00pm

"THE LIABILITIES"

(See them at Buryfields this summer)

Friday 10th June 7.30pm

"TWO TONE"



The **Two Tone** event is a ticket event - at £10 per person.

Marquee, outside bar and simple Barbecue.

For more information please call

01442 863549

WELL DONE FAYE

Faye Warren, youngest daughter of Rob and Kim Warren, took part in the London marathon last week.



She raised £3400 for the charity **Children with Cancer**.
I'm sure we all say "Well done Faye!"
Here she is finishing!

ROGATION WALK

On Sunday May 1st the annual **Rogation Walk** took place with villagers, friends and their dogs who walked round the Parish boundary with lunch to start and tea to follow.

Here we see a group of walkers (and dogs) enjoying the sun.



ADVERTS

Why not advertise your enterprise/activity here? Contact us with details. Email:- davedharmer@aol.com. Tel 01442 874931

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PLAY Time

Every Thursday
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A Friendly Toddler and Baby group for anyone looking after little ones!

THE OLD SCHOOL
CHESHAM ROAD
ASHLEY GREEN
HP5 3PP

Please feel free to just turn up, we'd love to see you!
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Maggie - 07783380049

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Brand new, comfortable, chairs.
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The Old School:-
Two rooms which can be joined into one.
Will take up to 80 people.
Brand New Kitchen. Bar Area.
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(Other small buildings also available.)

Take a tour to see the halls:-
www.ashleygreen.org.uk/hall_slideshow.html
contact
The Lettings Officer - (Email only)
lettings@ashleygreen.org.uk

Ashley Green & District Community Association. Registered Charity No. 292478

Have you tried our local farm shop??

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"LUNCH AND CHAT"

INFORMAL SOCIAL GROUP
ALL WELCOME
in
The Old School Ashley Green

EVERY THURSDAY
For a "Cuppa" & Chat
and
Lunch

12.00am to 2.00pm
ASHLEY GREEN GOOD NEIGHBOUR GROUP

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