

# Llancarfan Society

## Newsletter 81 May - June 1998

This time last year I apologised for the delayed Newsletter, blaming our aged computing system. At long last, we have moved into the 20<sup>th</sup> century with a new computer, printer and scanner so the quality, content and layout of future numbers should be much improved but the changeover has caused another delay. I shall try to remedy the situation by sending out Newsletter 82 close on the heels of this one. There is plenty of material available at the moment thanks to the kindness of many contributors and the flurry of activity amongst those collecting information for the book.

### **Llancarfan Vagrants** by Graham Jenkins

As one gets older memories of childhood can sometimes flash so vividly before ones eyes that one starts to recall people and events that seemingly had long since been forgotten.

I do not know what triggered my own memory to recall the various vagrants who used to frequent the village more than 60 years ago but I felt it would be useful to record these memories in the hope that it might stimulate others of my generation to write down their own reminiscences.

As a child I remember "Grandpa Milsom" who was an old grey-bearded man who walked slowly with the aid of a stout hazel stick. When in the village he would knock at doors begging a few coppers or food. My grandmother who lived at Broadhayes always gave a thick slice of bread and dripping and filled his can from the teapot which was always on the hob. Grandpa Milsom was a kindly old man and we children were encouraged to respect him and not be afraid of him,

**Addresses:** Contributions for the Newsletter (which will be very welcome) should be sent to the Editor, John Etherington, Parc-y-Bont, Llanhowell, Solva, Haverfordwest, Pembrokeshire, SA62 6XX or e-mail me at:-

**[eth.pbont@virgin.net](mailto:eth.pbont@virgin.net)**

We will also be pleased to print short announcements of village functions but they must be sent in writing, at least 2 to 3 months in advance. Subscriptions and problems with mailing: to the Membership Secretary, Phil Watts, 23 Heol Sirhwi, Cwm Talwg, Barry, Vale of Glamorgan, CF62 7TG. Agenda items and correspondence for the Committee to the Secretary, Sheila Mace, Pel-y-Dryn, Llanbethery, Barry, Vale of Glamorgan, CF62 3AN. Arrangements for visits to sick members: Len Fairfax, Summit View, Aberthin, Cowbridge, Vale of Glam. (Cowbridge 772654).

### **Dates for the Diary**

Annual Dinner at the Fox and Hounds, Saturday, September 26. £12.50 per head.

Closing date for tickets August 29.  
Early booking is essential.

Quite the opposite was true of Swansea Royal (I have no idea how he acquired the name) who usually appeared during the spring and summer months. Adults as well as children were afraid of this bedraggled man with long dark greasy hair. When he knocked at doors he would quickly be given a crust in order to get rid of him although what he really wanted was money to spend in the pub. Doors - never locked in those days - would be quickly bolted and barred when this “gentleman of the road” was in the village and we children were kept indoors until he had left the vicinity. This sometimes seemed an interminable period as he would sit on the Twyn above Broadhayes for long periods of time when he had failed to obtain money to buy alcohol..

Another though perhaps less regularly seen visitor to the village was “the Robin Man” so named by the villagers at the time because he constantly talked to the birds. I remember him less vividly but I do recall he was considered to be a potentially dangerous individual and children were kept indoors when he too was known to be abroad.

These men were colourful characters who should not be forgotten. Grandpa Milsom had roots in the Heol y March area, I seem to remember, but the origins and ultimate fate of the other two are a complete mystery. Does anyone else recall these or other “men of the road” visiting the village in the early ‘30s? Perhaps we should all dig deeply into our earliest memories and set items of interest to paper before they are lost to future generations for ever.

- **Annual General Meeting**

A short A.G. M., on 20 March After the opening formalities, 37 members heard reports from the Chairman, Treasurer and Newsletter Editor. The meeting then proceeded to election of new officers and committee members. Except for Geoff Burrows, who asked to stand-down, last year’s committee was re-elected with the addition of Mr Tony Lewis. The Officers for 1998 are Chairman, Phil Gammon; Vice-chairman, Alan Taylor; Secretary , Sheila Mace; Treasurer Sue Taylor; Asst. Treasurer, Marjorie Hobbs; Membership Secretary , Phil Watts & Newsletter Editor, John Etherington. Committee members are: Len Fairfax; Andrew Griffiths; Derek Higgs; Tony Lewis; Mick Mace; Ruth Watts & Val Watts.

After the main business of the meeting, members were educated by an illustrated talk on the history of the European Celts, given by Mr K Brassil, Archaeologist and Educator, National Museum & Galleries of Wales.

- **Chairman’s Report - A.G.M. 1998** by Phil Gammon

I would like to start by noting that our Secretary, Sheila Mace, is not here tonight and by wishing her best wishes for a speedy and full recovery from her hip-operation. Good wishes to other invalids who we know are not with us this evening.

The last year saw a good programme of social events. For the May Walk, Dr Madeleine Gray followed-up her most interesting talk at the last A.G. M., by taking us to

Liege Castle and beyond, so that we could see and recognise for ourselves some of the features of which she had spoken. After a fair start, persistent rain failed to damp enthusiasm for conversation, reminiscences and history, both ancient and more modern - which continued here in the hall after as many enjoyed picnic lunches.

Boules - on Bastille Day, at the Petanque tournament run by the Cardiff-Nantes Fellowship at Pentwyn, your representatives managed to go one better than in the previous years; we beat the French team in the final with some devastatingly destructive play and we have the trophy to show for it! This seems to have generated sufficient interest for the committee to have arranged our own tournament. So do sign up for the 4 April!

Hog -roast: once again Margaret and Arwyn Rees had ordered, together with the actual roast, a marvellous, warm and sunny day. The supplier of the roast did get lost on the way to Pen-onn and there were a few anxious faces for a while. The good cheer and camaraderie amongst friends, old and new was evidence of the success and popularity of this event throughout the community.

St John Ambulance Lunch: our one time chair, Mick Mace persuaded us to take a table at the fund -raising lunch at Dyffryn. We enjoyed a good meal in fine surroundings whilst supporting a good cause.

Annual Dinner: This was our tenth anniversary and the Committee felt that this particular dinner deserved a better venue - maybe more upmarket than this hall. We would have preferred to remain within the community but circumstances did not allow so we enjoyed ourselves at the Bear in Cowbridge.

We were glad to welcome our President and his wife for the first time in several years. As the evening mellowed Sir Keith Thomas entertained us with sparkling reminiscences which inspired Phil Watts, Gwynne Liscombe, Tony Thomas and others to contribute tales of their own. Another good evening.

Whist-drives have been held as usual, also the December meeting which is becoming established as a successful wine and cheese party. This year it was enhanced by Mollie Vincent at the keyboard accompanying the singing of favourite Christmas carols.

For all of these events and for conducting the business of the Society, I would ask you all to join with me in praise of all the hard work and enthusiasm of the committee. They are great! All they ask of me is that I try to keep some sort of order at our meetings and that I be the front-man, to stand up in front of our gatherings and speak to you from time to time. All of them play their part and some are a real power house: I thank them most warmly on your behalf and mine.

Finally during the year we have confirmed that we have ample funds to proceed with the publication of the book, *Llancarfan a Vale Village*, and several members have started on the necessary research to add to the accounts of items accumulated in the Newsletters over the last ten years. I will end this review of the year by looking forward with some confidence to the continuation of the Llancarfan Society.

### **Llancarfan on the World Wide Web** by Graham Brain

With its roots firmly placed in the 5<sup>th</sup> century, Llancarfan has nestled in the valley of Nant Carfan as the centuries have slipped by. The Llancarfan Society, over the past ten years, has documented various aspects of Llancarfan's history and, on a regular basis, distributed this information in Newsletters to members all over the world.

As the new millennium approaches, to complement the Newsletter, it is also to be published, with other information about Llancarfan on the World Wide Web. Newsletters 79 and 80 are already posted on the site together with other details of the Society.

If you wish to visit the Web site you will require a computer, modem, telephone line and an account with an Internet Service Provider such as Force9, Compuserve or AOL.

The address of the site is:

**[www.llancarfan.force9.co.uk](http://www.llancarfan.force9.co.uk)**

The Society can also receive e-mail relating to the web site or administration at:

**[llansoc@llancarfan.force9.co.uk](mailto:llansoc@llancarfan.force9.co.uk)**

E-mail for the Newsletter or for the Editor, John Etherington, should be sent to:  
**[eth.pbont@virgin.net](mailto:eth.pbont@virgin.net)**

If you have any facts pictures or documents which may be of interest to those visiting the Web site please contact Graham Brain at the Llancarfan Society e-mail address or the Editor, John Etherington. Remember, John is still looking for good quality photographs for inclusion in *Llancarfan, a Vale Village*

### **Photographs maps and diagrams** by John Etherington

The Newsletters have been published since 1987 without any illustrations. Now that they are being written on modern equipment it will be possible to include photographs, maps and other illustrations with the limitation that photographs will reproduce in black and white because of photocopying. The World Wide Web is not so limited and Graham Brain has already posted colour-photographs of Llancarfan, including the restoration of St Cadoc's. These will be a source of great nostalgia for members in far-flung places (or even Pembrokeshire!).

Please write to me if you have anything which members might like to see - just tell me what you have or send a photocopy - I will arrange proper copying later in the year so you don't have to send your precious pictures through the post.

I am particularly keen to find a photo' of locomotives and rolling stock on the old railway line between St Athan Road and St Marychurch Road. I have asked before and intend to put a request in the *Western Mail* if this appeal comes to nothing. Phil Watts' article on barn-conversions, in this newsletter, also reminds me that we have no photo's of several of the old barns in working condition. Can anyone help?

## **Church kneelers**

Jean Veysey has written to us with a very kind and brave offer to sew tapestry kneelers for the first 50 folk who send a request to her. The kneelers will be ready in time for the service of blessing which the Vicar intends to hold when the present restoration of St Cadoc's is completed.

She tells us that she has already sewed *Four Seasons* kneelers for each of her four children and is currently working on the grandchildren!

The cost of a standard kneeler would be about £20. More details appear in the last church Bulletin and there is a

brochure related to designs in St Cadoc's Church.

Jean may be reached at Bonvilston 781693 or at Ty Ganol Cottage, Llantrithyd, CF71 7UB

## **Bellringing in Llancarfan: from now to the Millennium** by Phil Watts

Most people will be aware that the bells in Llancarfan church tower were in an unfit condition to ring due to the bad state of the wooden frame and the porous state of the roof and walls of the tower.

This matter is being rectified by implementation of Phase II of the St Cadoc's Church restoration plan achieved by the aid of grants and local fund-raising. We have been promised that the tower and bells will be in position to ring in the second millennium.

Another crisis could arise. Having achieved the replacement of the bells, and the tower made safe and waterproof, we may not have enough competent ringers to ring in the next century. Allowing two years to train a novice ringer, now is the time for would-be ringers to offer themselves for training. Currently there are 40,000 ringers in the UK. Estimates are that another 10,000 will be required suggesting that South Wales needs another 500.

Currently the bell-ringers of Llancarfan ring alternately in the towers of Bonvilston and Penmark. Unfortunately, for practice-nights and special occasions, such as weekdays, Christmas and Easter we only have enough ringers for one of the churches at any one time. There is a need for a bigger pool of ringers that could be called upon. If we were asked to ring simultaneously at the three churches of Bonvilston, Llancarfan and Penmark we would not be able to do it. To ring in the millennium we are being asked to ring for five minutes at mid-day services in all churches to give thanks for the past millennium and to seek blessing for the next. We are seeking learners and competent ringers to come forward to make the day a success locally. Currently, the Llancarfan, Bonvilston and Penmark ringers practice on Tuesday evenings from 7.30 -9.00. If anyone is interested, please contact the nearest churchwarden, nearest P.C.C. or Tower Captain. Alternatively, ring Phil Watts at 01446 738501 or the Vicar, Malcolm Davies at

01446 750241.

### **Visitors To Rhoose And Llancarfan** by Phil Watts

On September 23<sup>rd</sup> last year, Phil. Ruth and Kath Watts spent the day with Tom and Doris Lougher who were visiting UK from Coquitlam, BC, Canada. They were both staying with John and Christine James in Rhoose and, as I reported elsewhere, attended the Annual Dinner at the Bear Hotel in Cowbridge. While parked in Fonmon Road my attention was attracted to the number of people from Llancarfan who have taken up residence in Rhoose. Trevor Evans has just moved from Broadclose, Moulton, to Fonmon Road. While talking Trevor, more visitors arrived; John Williams and his wife from Neath called for tea. John used to live in Bridge House (the new one), and left Llancarfan about 15 years ago.

Edmond and Gwyn Richards from Whitton Rosser live just up the road, Eileen Howells, Peter and Joan Badcock live nearby. Gillian (Liscombe) and Shane Wilford also live in Rhoose. Ruth and I were negotiating for a house in Rhoose just after Christmas 1996.

Add to this the Griffiths, Tuckers, Maimie Watts, John Gardner, Vizards, Tom Taylor, Muriel Bonney - all people who moved from Llancarfan to Rhoose many years ago. These folk could form a Rhoose branch of the Llancarfan Society! Others that come to mind are John Harbottle (now deceased), Stan Mortimore, Courtney Morgan and the Hartland family with Llancarfan connections.

### **Advertisement sites in the parish of Llancarfan** by Phil Watts

It is to be noted that Pancross Barn has been renovated and undergone a change of use to become a dwelling house. For years now, the double doors facing Crosston have been a favourite place to advertise local events. It is to be hoped that the new residents will not be too upset having notices pinned to their front door. It would be one way of making sure that at least one person read the notice, perhaps one more than when the doors were in their former condition!

Pancross Barn has been a landmark for many years and it is possible that the little plane that flies around in small circles also uses it as a landmark! Those of us with long memories will recall Pancross Barn being used as a Home Guard reporting point, and those of us with longer memories will have heard it said that it was used as a hanging place for robbers. It was certainly used by Tudor Liscombe as Home Guard Commander to brief his men and as a stopping point for the Home Guard patrols covering the road from Aberthaw *via* Llancadle and Aberogwrn to Treguff.

The loss of Pancross Barn as a bill-posting site is a setback in the continuation of traditional village advertising. We have already lost the Blacksmith's Shop door, the Baptist Vestry door, the Wesleyan Chapel double door, Ty To Maen garage door, the barn door in Llancadle and similarly at the farm in Llanbethery. We are about to lose the barn doors at Pen-onn Farm where planning permission has been granted for conversion to a house.



This loss is compensated by more official sites in each of the hamlets of Moulton, Llancadle, Llanbethery, Llantrythyd as well as Llancarfan where the minutes of the Community Council meetings are displayed. The Tennis Club also has a notice board at the entrance to the court on School Hill,. In commemoration of the Silver Jubilee a notice board was also placed on the wall of the village hall. The indiscriminate posting of notices is now on telephone and electricity poles, fortunately or unfortunately, depending on how you view these intrusions - there are plenty of them!

### **May Walk** by John Etherington

The May Walk commenced on a really beautiful early morning, attended by about 120 people plus 20 dogs or so! All of this was thanks to organisation by Alan Taylor, Phil Watts, Phil Gammon and others. A historical commentary was given during the walk by Dr Maddy Gray, Tutor in Local History in the University of Wales, Cardiff. The route took us from the Community Hall to the field entrance at Ty To Maen, along the valley bottom to the lands of Gowlog and then a return loop through Llanvythin and Garnllwyd with the last lap along the Conjunction pathway beside the leat which fed water to Old Mill. A few stragglers had the chance of looking at the mechanism of the water ram in the garden of Old Mill by invitation of Vanessa Newton. The ram originally pumped water to the fields and houses of Pancross and beyond (article in Newsletter 5 and letter from Tony Thomas in Newsletter 6). Maddy Gray talked at Llanvythin about the monastic origins of the site and pointed out the hummocky remains of the deserted village in the field to the east of the house. Many people were unaware of these remains and considerable interest was shown. At Garnllwyd another halt allowed Maddy to talk about the origins of the house and mill. Phil Watts pointed-out the mill as his birthplace "many years ago".

Returning to the community hall a small group partook of a picnic lunch and others sought refreshment at the Fox and Hounds where the internationally known folk Cwmni Dawns Werin Caerdydd gave a display which was much appreciated.

### **Great houses in the 17th century** by John Etherington

Graham Jenkins of Barry has been undertaking a search for the early occurrence of the names Price and Griffiths in Llancarfan. When he mentioned this to me I looked for the earliest list of names amongst the Society's records. This is the Glamorgan Hearth Tax Assessment of 1670.

The Hearth Tax was introduced after the restoration. to remedy a shortfall in the finances of Charles II's royal household and government. The Hearth tax was chargeable by the number of hearths in a house (and thus the approximate number of chimneys).

The tax proved about as popular as the more recent attempt to re-establish a Poll Tax! The assessment lists are but a partial historical source as many people were exempted if too poor to pay parish or church rates or if they occupied property worth less than "twenty shillings per annum".

One item of interest caught my eye in comparing Llancarfan with adjacent parishes. The biggest house in Llancarfan had only 10 hearths but Penmark had two houses with

more than 15. Bonvilston could boast only one large house with 8 hearths, belonging to Miles Button (I believe he was a descendent of the Elizabethan Admiral Button who resided for a time on the site of the modern Dyffryn House).

The biggest house in Penmark was recorded as:- "Lady Lewis two houses 21 (hearths)". This would have been Penmark Place which Sir Edward Lewis of Van (near Caerphili) purchased in 1615 and passed to his son Thomas in 1628. Philip Jones' Fonmon Castle was blessed with 15 hearths.

By the way, the list contains no Prices and one Griffith (Griffith and Griffiths almost certainly having been used interchangeably).

### **News of members, friends and places**

- The Vale of Glamorgan Show moves to a new venue this year, at Fonmon Castle, with Tony Thomas, Pancross, as Chairman. This will be the 63rd in which his family have shown crops and cattle at the Show, starting at the time when his father, Vivian Thomas, came to Pancross Farm in the mid-1930's. There is also another Llancaiach connection. The Secretary of the Show is Pam Harris of Penllyn who is the wife of David Harris, son of Calvert and grandson of David Harris, the former landlord of the Fox and Hounds from 1921, through the war-years.
- The golf challenge between Llancaiach and Pendoylan took place at Cottrel Park on May 5<sup>th</sup> and, unbelievably, both teams scored the same! Andrew Gibson scored 48 Stableford points, probably making his reputation (and setting his handicap) for the rest of his life! The competition raised over £200 for the church restoration fund.
- Phase II of the Church Restoration programme. Sam and Patsie Smith have written of this in various issues of the *Gem*: We had to raise just over £20,000 in order to get money from the Millennium Commission and it looks as though we have done so in a very short time thanks to the work of Malcolm Davies and the Committee . The tower has been re-pointed and the roof beautifully re-leaded. The electricity supply is now underground and a new path has been laid between Fox and Hounds gate and the church.
- Len Fairfax wrote a letter to the *Gem* in February, thanking the Fire Brigade for rescuing him from a well cavity into which he had fallen about twelve feet and become wedged, head downwards. We are all grateful that Len survived this terrifying ordeal and join with him in expressing the opinion that matters might have ended differently if Cowbridge Fire Service's full-time professional coverage had been withdrawn during the present cutbacks, to be replaced by a part-time service.
- Llancaiach's Evan Williams has recently pulled-off a double at the Tivyside Hunt Centenary point-to-point, another double with the Monmouth hunt and yet another two winners in Pembrokeshire Hunt's steeplechases. Horsemanship runs in the family as Evan's parents, Rhys Williams and Mary Evans, were both successful point to point riders. Last year Evan rode 25 winners and won the Welsh Riders Championship for the second time. Evan is now farming at Llandow and is acquiring a na-



tional reputation with wins at Warwick and Haydock Park this year and is well on the road to his 100<sup>th</sup> point-to-point winner. Llancarfan is well represented in the point-to-point news as Margaret Rees's *Sun of Chance* won in Monmouthshire Hunt's steeplechase at Llanvpley on March 28.

- Jacky Hartery of Llanbethery has requested anyone finding an injured hedgehog to contact her, as a member of the Hedgehog Preservation Society, on 01446 701966

### **Ownership and residence-history of houses in the parish** by John Etherington

In about 1988 when the Society was very young I started to compile a list of all houses in Llancarfan with details of their past ownership or occupancy (sometimes it is difficult to establish which). The list has been a most useful reference while working on Newsletters and, during the current flurry of research activity triggered by work for the book, two members, Alan Taylor and Ken Walls have volunteered to add some more recent details to these lists. I am currently transcribing information from the electoral registers from 1850 onwards, and from the censuses up to 1891. The lists are presented in both alphabetical order of house name, and as a numerical "perambulation" order to allow anyone, unfamiliar with the parish, to find a particular house on the ground or map.

This is already a fairly large document and it is growing. It will not be possible to publish it in full, but a copy will be placed with Society records in Llancarfan and, together with the past Newsletters which they already hold, a copy will go to the County Archive.

I am currently indexing the past 80 Newsletters. Again, when complete, copies will be placed with the Society and the Archive and also a copy posted on the Web site. If space is available it might be worth posting the house list on the web site also.

### **Llancarfan : St Cadoc's Tower** - notes during restoration

The tower was constructed in the 14th century but most of the present structure dates back to 1877 when it was substantially rebuilt. The tower houses a ring of four bells: two of them were originally cast in 1646, one in 1664 and one in 1690. They were all recast in 1890 by Llewellyns & James of Bristol, and their original inscriptions were recast in facsimile . They are:-

**Treble** G.D. I.H. 1646 A.T. HUGHES VICAR 1890 LLEWELLINS & JAMES BRISTOL.

**No. 2** THOMAS BASSET GENT JOHN THOMAS GENT CRESTOVER JENKINS C.W'DENS A.T. HUGHES VICAR 1890 LLEWELLINS & JAMES BRISTOL.

**No. 3** SIR THOMAS LEWIS KNIGHT O JOHN THOMAS CHRISTOPHER JENKINS: CWO 1664 I.P. RECAST IN MEMORY OF ANN PRICE CLARK LEWIS BY G.T.C. 1890 LLEWELLINS & JAMES BRISTOL. A.T. HUGHES VICAR

**No 4** JACOB GIBON GEORGE MATHEW CHURCH WARDENS TEE A.T. HUGHES VICAR LLEWELLINS & JAMES BRISTOL.

**History** The treble was originally cast in 1646 by Thomas Stone, an itinerant bell-founder who cast bells in various churches from 1627 to 1655. Bells nos 2 & 3 were originally cast in 1664 by John Pennington of Monmouth whose trademark was the obverse and reverse of a Jewish shekel and present on these bells. Bell no. 4 was cast in 1690 and 1695 by Evan Evans (1686-1724) of Chepstow.

The tower and bells were restored in 1890 at a cost of £570 and there was a further expenditure of £300 in 1907 for weather proofing the tower roof and building.

**Proposal** Scheme for restoration is to replace the existing four bells with a peal of six on a new metal frame.

### **Welsh-speaking in the Llancarfan of 1891** by John Etherington

The census of 1891 was the first in which the language question was asked. There has been argument about the accuracy of the recording as there was a flowing tide of Welsh nationalism at the time. Janet Davies comments on this in her very readable book, *The Welsh Language*, published in 1993 and a recent *Western Mail* report tells us that The University of Wales Centre for Advanced Welsh and Celtic Studies (Aberystwyth), will produce a report on the topic next year.

At present, only a small percentage of adults in the southern Vale use Welsh in everyday conversation though many children have become fluent during the past twenty years or so. Sadly, most cease to use the language on leaving school. How does this compare with the record from 1891?

The following numbers were compiled from the returns for Llancarfan Village and Llanvythin (including Pen-onn and Pancross). Beware! - the sample is of only 150 people. Twelve were less than two years old and are excluded as in the 1901 census. Another two are excluded as deaf and dumb (more of them anon, in a future article). The overall numbers, however, fit the general view of the state of the Welsh language in the Vale at that time (beware again of accepting too much speculation!).

The result is interesting. It is easy to present as no one was monoglot Welsh. Every person over 61 spoke both languages. Just over half of the 2-10 year olds spoke both and of the group from 11 to 60, over 80% spoke both.

The “English only” group is interesting. Those under 11 were all born in Wales but of those over 10 years, 12 out of 16 were born in England.

It is difficult to know what the earlier status of the language might have been but it is interesting that Janet Davies’ book maps the distribution of the use of Welsh in parish churches in the mid- 1700’s. This shows a coastal strip of “Little England beyond the Vale” with bilingualism in the parishes directly to the north - St Nicholas and Bonvilston. The coalfield was predominately Welsh at that time.

Age (years)*	English only	English and Welsh	% speaking both
2-5	5	11	69

6-10	9	11	63
11-20**	4	28	87
21-40**	9	36	80
40-60	3	18	86
60+	0	14	100

\* Children under two (12) not recorded

\*\* Category included two deaf and dumb brothers. Not used in calculation.

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