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| logoSURREY BEEKEEPERS' ASSOCIATIONWEYBRIDGE DIVISIONNEWSLETTER: July 2016 [**www.weybridgebeekeepers.weebly.com**](http://www.weybridgebeekeepers.weebly.com/) |

***Editorial***

It’s interesting how we sometimes change fairly firm ideas that we have held over long periods of time. My beekeeping teacher of over 30 years ago encouraged all of us to do some queen rearing, but I felt it to be a waste of time because of our lack of control over the drones who would mate with the virgins from our selected queen; also, many have the feeling that queen rearing is a complex and difficult procedure, and feel it to be too much effort and bother with little hope of any significant success. However, looking back, I have woken up to the fact that my long-lasting conclusion was flawed; over the years, I have produced many acceptable queens by the very simple patch (triangle) method. Moreover some good queens have been produced in 3-frame or 4-frame nucleus hives, quite out of line with the generally accepted wisdom that queens should only be reared in strong colonies. I recently came across five very nice sealed queen cells in a colony that I had carelessly allowed to swarm (through not reading my own hive records properly – a familiar tale?) and I heard the words of Tim Rowe ringing in my ears, “Some say squash them, I say harvest them and be happy”. So I got out some of my little used mininuc boxes (obtained in a sale years ago) and it was not much trouble to raise some of these cells into mated queens. Of course I am very well aware of the various queen rearing methods that describe optimum conditions for the raising of queens and which use large, specially prepared queen raising colonies, but these methods are intended for mass queen production rather than for us hobby beekeepers who often need at the most, only a few queens. It could be pointed out that, contrary to popular wisdom, not all swarm cells produce swarmy queens; for example what about queen cells produced from a colony that did not show any swarming tendencies the previous year? In fact, many feel that the best queens are produced from swarm cells. It could be said that commercial queen raising (forced production of 2 or 3 dozen queens at a time) is far from being ‘naturally’ produced by a colony. All very controversial, but do send in your own thoughts on this topic. If you are a new beekeeper, don’t be put off trying to raise a few queens using the simple methods I have mentioned, or yet perhaps the simplest method of all: simply splitting a colony. If you do end up with more queens than you think you need, you can pass them on to another beekeeper, overwinter them as back-up queens in nucs, or take the nucs to an auction next spring. It’s always a thrill when you see your own new queen (even if she turns out to be ‘no good’), and yet another thrill when you see her first eggs.

**REMINDERS and New Items for the near future**

**Garden Meeting at 2.30 pm on Saturday, 9th July at Sayes Court Allotments KT15 1LR**

Please see below under FUTURE EVENTS (page 3.) for details.

**Jamie Ellis talk, 1st August, 7.00 for 7.30 pm at East Horsley Village Hall**

Full details of the talk by this world famous professor from Florida were given in the May newsletter, page 3., and are on the attached flyer. The topic of his talk, ‘Addressing the sustainability of beekeeping in the 21st century’, is of interest to every beekeeper. He is an excellent, entertaining speaker and this event should not be missed if at all possible.

Please let Sandra know if you intend to be there: rickwoodsbka@gmail.com, 01932 244326.

**Surrey BKA Training Day, Saturday 3rd September**

This training day will be run by Bob Smith and others. The topic is, ‘The practical side of beekeeping’. There will be demonstrations, with appropriate equipment, of some of the common beekeeping manipulations; details are on the attached flyer.

Sandra Rickwood

*It is unfortunate that this clashes with the last Summer Meeting of our Division that was arranged in April.*

**BIBBA Conference 2016 will be held on 20-22 September on the Isle of Man**

Go to [bit.ly/ConferenceLinks](http://bit.ly/ConferenceLinks) for direct interactive links [bit.ly/Conf01](http://bit.ly/Conf01) for the website, also with full details.

Trisha Marlow, Publicity Officer, BIBBA

**REPORTS**

**Summer meeting, Sunday 12th June, hosted by Geoff and Marion Cooper at Painshill Park, Cobham**

The Garden Meeting at Painshill, hosted by Marion and Geoff Cooper, was well attended with a total of 17 members present. Our Chairman, Andrew Halstead, was asked to perform an opening ceremony for Marion and Geoff’s new shed and this was duly completed to an explosive accompaniment of party poppers.

*This moment was captured on camera by Richard Hignett and David Parker (see the two attachments).*

Various methods of queen rearing were discussed and demonstrated. Several Apidea queen rearing units and some larger colonies had already been given queen cells raised by some of these methods. Those newer to beekeeping were encouraged to try queen rearing on their own queens as an alternative to purchasing expensive queens from other sources. However, as an experiment, Marion and Geoff have purchased a specially bred “hygienic” queen from LASI (Sussex University) and are looking forward to seeing how well this queen and her progeny cope with the varroa mite.

Beginners then had the opportunity of seeing a large working colony as opposed to the somewhat smaller units they had experienced at the teaching apiary. A colony undergoing a Bailey comb change was also shown and the method explained.

This was followed by a presentation of various methods of clearing bees from supers in order to extract honey. The equipment demonstrated ranged from the familiar Porter escapes to other innovative ideas, some of which were new to many of those present.

An excellent tea (provided by the members, as is now customary) followed and despite earlier fears the weather remained fine for the duration of what was a very informative and enjoyable meeting.

Rob and Chris Chisholm

**Nosema test results**

Some more samples have been tested. These have been added to those published in the last two newsletters giving the following overall totals:

**Infestation level Number of samples**

nil 5 (5)

low 3 (3)

medium 10 (10)

high 22 (19)

The figures in brackets are the overall figures given in the June newsletter.

While ‘interpreting’ these results, it should be borne in mind that Nosema spores are always most numerous in spring, when these checks were done.

Anne Miller, updated by Geoff Cooper

**Surrey County Show – Honey Show Results 2016**

The full results will be found in the attachment or on the Surrey Show website.

Successful Weybridge members’ results are extracted and listed below (in alphabetical order):

Geoff Cooper frame of honeycomb 2nd

Andrew Halstead gift honey set 4th

gift honey, light medium or dark 1st

light honey 3rd

medium – dark honey 2nd

soft set or crystallised honey 3rd

Jane Hunter photo 2nd

honey biscuits 2nd

wax blocks x 3 1st

wax 425g block 1st

with the Ken Reed Trophy and

the Blue Ribbon Best exhibit in show

David Parker gift honey, light medium or dark 3rd

cut comb 2nd

interesting – informative exhibit 2nd

soft set or crystallised honey 1st

*Please inform me of any omissions or errors. –Ed.*

**FUTURE EVENTS**

**Garden Meeting at 2.30 pm on 9th July at Sayes Court Allotments, Addlestone KT15 1LR**

This will be a meeting in 2 parts; firstly in the allotments where Chris Burnett will show us his top bar hives, and secondly after a short walk across the fields to Sue Lawes’ garden where there will be an opportunity to find and mark queens, or practice marking drones.

Please bring contributions to share for tea; drinks will be provided.

Please let Sue know if you intend to come - email (slawes@hotmail.co.uk) or phone 01932 843209.

**Directions :**

Turn off Liberty Lane into Sayes Court Farm Drive.

Continue onto Orchard Way.

Turn left into Brookhurst Close.

Turn right into Templefield Close and park in the allotments car park at end of the road.

The allotments gate will be open; walk down towards river and turn right to Chris's apiary in the far corner.

Sue Lawes

**August Meeting, 20th August**

There will be full details next month, but David advises that he has wood (from skips…) and plans to produce crown boards, roofs, dummy boards, Snelgrove boards, clearer boards, ekes and entrance blocks, so be thinking if you would like to make any of these – or other items.

**Dates and topics for the rest of the Summer Meetings**

Full details of each will be given monthly in the newsletters.

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| **Hosts** | **Date** | **Main Subject** | **Secondary Subject** |
| David Parker | 20th August | Make it Session | Guildford and Weybridge Divisions joint meeting |
|  | 3rd September | End of Season Social | Location TBC |
|  |  |  |  |

David Parker

**ITEMS OF LOCAL INTEREST**

**Waitrose donation to Weybridge Beekeepers**

*We have received the following from Martin Major:*

Just to let you know we were selected by Waitrose in Weybridge and at the weekend I collected a cheque for £347 which I have given to Michael.

*Various Waitrose stores have raised funds for us before, so it would be well worth approaching your local branch to ask them to consider us as one of their Community Matters charities – if you would like advice on how to go about this, ask Martin (majormajor7@gmail.com). Our registered Charity Number is* **1026386***. Martin is happy to advise and to forward a copy of the letter he has used – he’s obviously good at this, having now successfully done it twice; once you are accepted you can request this every 12 months.*

*Martin has put a note and a photo of the cheque presentation on the Weybridge and Surrey websites. He is the webmaster for both of these sites – do look at them for this and other information; the links are below*:

<http://weybridgebeekeepers.weebly.com/news.html>

<http://www.surreybeekeepers.org.uk/news.html>

**National Honey Show, 27th-29th October**

The June Newsletter from Val Rhenius, Publicity Secretary, is attached.

**Hornet supplied with food for its young, at my expense**

The five queen cells mentioned in the Editorial appeared to be very fine ones, so we decided to use them to raise some queens as the parent colony had been a good one in all respects. Two of the queen cells were placed in mininucs, and there was soon a virgin queen in each of the boxes. The other 3 sealed cells were placed elsewhere. A few days later, just as we arrived at the apiary, I saw a very large European hornet entering, then leaving, one of the mininucs. On inspection we found the main brood area completely cleared of bees and most of the wax, while a significant number of bees were ‘sheltering’ in the stores part of the nuc beyond the queen excluder. Our new virgin queen had obviously been among those taken by the hornet. The mininuc that had ‘lost’ the virgin was one of half a dozen that I had aquired from an auction, beautifully made from 18 mm ply, but with what I would now say was too large an entrance, a circular hole 20 mm in diameter. The second virgin was in an old ‘Apidea’ (ex. Ernie Chant) and we wondered if this professional box has an entrance which was designed to prevent the entry of hornets: the rectangular hole, although apparently large enough for a hornet to get through, is positioned in such a way that the hornet might have to bend its body through a right angle to get into the hive. Any thoughts on this? Just in case of an invasion of the second mininuc, we partially covered this entrance with a plastic label leaving a slot a little higher than a queen excluder slot to allow the virgin out to meet her suitors. Eleven days after this we were excited to see brood in all stages in this mininuc, and so were able to transfer the new queen to a nucleus hive. We do not have much experience of mininucs, and so are disappointed to have lost this virgin; on the other hand it was very fortunate that we happened to see what was probably the last visit of the hornet; finding the nuc in the sad state described would otherwise have been difficult to explain.

Geoff C.

**Some experiences with swarms during June**

This month has had some fun and games with swarms.  These are notes on some of them.

I was called to a house with bees in an airbrick.  The owner was a lady who had just lost her husband and so was selling the house.  We discussed what she could do as the bees were putting off prospective buyers.  I went home to think about things we could do and was called 2 hours later as the bees had issued as a swarm.  I went and collected it and I hived the bees in a hive at home.  The following morning they absconded and settled in a tree in my garden 20 ft. up.  Using an extending ladder I was able to dislodge the cluster which fell on a sheet placed under it.  I put the skep over it and was lucky that the queen was there.  This time I hived it with a queen excluder over and under the brood box.  On inspection three days later they had drawn several combs and the queen was laying.  Unfortunately this queen was failing and was only laying drones so I have had to requeen it. I had explained that another swarm could come out in a week to ten days.  I was away the next week when she rang again.  Another cast had come out and flown off and she had been badly stung and spent 6 hours in A & E.  I went around on my return to find another lot of bees coming out.  They settled in two groups on her neighbour’s drive.  I merged them and later in the evening went to remove them.  However once the skep was in the car there still seemed to be a lot of flying bees.  I looked around and found another swarm in a different part of the garden.  The air brick has now been sealed off unfortunately with all the comb and with some bees still inside.  This is very bad practice as the old comb should have been removed and all traces of honey removed before sealing.  Unfortunately the lady could not afford to do this due to the cost as it was not in my range of skills.

 I received a call from a nursery group in Surbiton about a swarm that was affecting the children’s play area.  When I got there the swarm was hanging from a branch at head height over the public footpath on a busy road junction.  I caught the bees in the skep and had to wait for half an hour for the flying bees to join the queen.  I could not leave the skep until dark on the public footpath so took them away leaving the flying bees to disperse as the nursery had closed for the day.

Yet another in a public place.  The entrance to the opticians in Weybridge!!  Here I was able to leave the basket as it was set back off the footpath.  The opticians were very appreciative and sent a donation of £100 to our division.

The next in Woking again on the public highway alongside the footpath to the leisure centre.  Whilst collecting this one 4 classes of school children passed in crocodile lines to go to the sports field - some spectator gallery giving me cause for concern over the safety of the kids.  Teachers seemed unconcerned.

I collected a very large swarm on 12th June and hived it.  When I checked it on 19th the bees were still there but not a single frame had started to be drawn.  I checked again as I was preparing to feed them on 22nd to find that they had begun to draw 2 frames.  I think the main flow had started so I did not feed.  By yesterday they had drawn 6 frames and now had nectar and pollen in abundance.

On a Saturday I was called to a swarm in Addlestone and went to put it into a Nuc box.  It had come out of a feral colony in a pine tree behind a fence at the end of their garden.  I could not collect it that evening so went first thing the following day.  However they were very active so agreed with the owners to collect in the evening.  I sat down for lunch that day when the phone rang.  Another swarm in Addlestone - different road.  I went to collect it to find that this garden was the other side of the fence of the previous one and the tree was in this garden.  So I put this swarm into another box and went back to the other garden to check the status there.  I was told that all the bees came out of the nuc at 1.00 and flew away.  I quickly returned to the second swarm and put the queen excluder over the entrance.  I do not know whether they were the same swarm but think it may have been.  That evening our Buzz group met and one of the members followed me after the meeting and has taken the swarm - I hope all is well now.

Two days later I get called to a building site in Weybridge.  The swarm is 5 meters up an oak tree.  There was a crane on site so I suggested that I go up in a basket on the crane.  Squashed due to Health and Safety!  We tried taking the skep up by crane, Shaking the swarm with the crane no joy.  Then there was a surprise visit from Health and Safety – that was lucky I may have been up in a basket!!  Eventually we used a rope to break off the whole branch which came crashing to the ground.  Fortunately the bees went back onto the fallen branch and the skep was placed over them.  Then came the rain but the swarm survived.

Michael Main

*Oh, the joys of a swarm collector.*

**In the press…**

There are interesting reports on the anaphylactic reactions and venom desensitization therapy of David Parker in the Daily Mail and Simon Cavil in the Express; see the links below:

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/health/article-3628109/How-bee-stings-DEADLY-ve-stung-Rise-adults-suffering-life-threatening-reactions.html>

<http://www.express.co.uk/life-style/health/674409/anaphylaxis-allergic-reaction-symptoms-bee-stings>

**ITEMS OF GENERAL INTEREST**

**“Killer” bees in Mexico**

*Our member, Chris Burnett, has sent us the following interesting report after his recent visit to Mexico*:

I was touring in Mexico in particular the Yucatan peninsula looking at Myanmar ruins in April, if you do go, choose Feb or March. The Mayan population was far more advanced than in the UK up till 1600.

On one of my overnight stays at an old hacienda on the edge of Chichen Itza site, we were given a tour of the hacienda in their extensive forest and gardens. It was to have a talk on plants and trees. When it was finished we passed the resident guide’s house and there were bees drinking out of two bowls of water.  I was informed to stay well clear as they were dangerous. They even do not let the birds go there and frighten them away.

I learned that before the conquest around 1620 the Mayans had bees but they were smaller than the European bees so consequently they had less honey than the ours. The amazing feature was that they bred out the sting. Also because honey was so important the bee keepers were the most revered in the village. So you can see no protective wear was needed. Then came the Europeans and brought in their bees and they mixed and still no protective gear was needed. Then came the African bee and mixed it all up and they now have protective clothing. They used the honey for eating and medicinal purposes.

I hope to find a picture of the bee God and will send it under a separate cover.

I was cross last year. I missed out visiting hives just south of the arctic circle in Russia. Bees are not normally a thought on my holidays, they just seem to happen. Now my brain has woken up to this on my next two trips I might stumble across some by chance.

Chris Burnett

*Thank you for this, Chris. We have read a lot about these aggressive bees over the years, and it’s very nice to hear of a personal experience of them which comes to very few of us. They were obviously Africanised bees that you saw, and it’s interesting to read and hear, from a number of sources, how some of these are very ferocious and dangerous, but some appear to be relatively gentle. I know of at least two excellent books on this topic:‘Africanized Honey bees in the Americas’, by Dewey Caron, and ‘Killer Bees, the Africanized Honey Bee in the Americas’ by Mark L Winston.*

*It’s always worth looking out for beekeepers when on holiday in foreign parts; we had lovely times with two beekeepers in different towns in Canada when going there for our son’s wedding.*

*I imagine that you could find bees and beekeepers in many places that you visit. It might be an idea to search the internet to find beekeepers before you go. – Ed.*

**Bee hive protection from thieves**

This might be of interest to one or two members. The suppliers are also looking for a UK distributor, should anyone be looking for something different to do. Details on attachment.

Sandra Rickwood

**A true story from the USA**

This story was told in the 17th May edition of *The Guardian.* It ran into 3 pages, so is too long to reproduce here. The following is a synopsis of the ‘plot|’.

It opens with a detailed account of a robbery of the colonies of a bee farmer (Orin Johnson) by a bee stealer (Pedro Villafan). An explanation follows giving details of the great problems encountered in apprehending bee thieves because of the huge areas in which they operate. However, on this occasion, Villafan is arrested and is introduced to Johnson before being taken away. “I made a huge mistake”, Villafan started. “Of course you did”, Johnson interrupted, trying his best to remain composed. “l shouldn’t have done this”, the thief said, “all my bees died”.

The article (story) then continues by describing the difficulties, changes and problems in the American beekeeping industry (e.g. vast areas of monocrops such as almonds, incomplete knowledege of the effects of pesticides and herbicides, CCD…etc…etc…), much of which is fairly well known to us.

I found the last paragraph of the article very moving:

Villafan was released on parole after 48 days of his sentence. “It’s literally a slap on the wrist”, Annette Rees (of the local District Attorney office) said later. “All that time and effort. It’s kind of disheartening.”

A few months after Villafan had been sentenced, Johnson made the rounds through a couple of his bee yards where he had come across one too many dead hives. He called up a friend and fellow beekeeper who was a queen breeder (Bob Renestead) and went to buy a dozen queens from him. On arrival Renestead told Johnson that that day he was selling his last two queens of the season to a man who had pre-ordered them. A short man with square features soon appeared. “What’s your name?” asked Johnson incredulously. “Pedro Villafan” was the reply.

Villafan paid for the two bees while Johnson looked on.

There stood Villafan, who had represented so much trouble and heartache – and not just for Johnson himself but for every beekeeper who has come across a patch of empty grass where his hives had buzzed. Yet Johnson was not angry, or even worried. He just saw another outsider trying to break into the industry, maybe a ne’re-do-well, but by no means part of the card-carrying club. “I hope those are for *your* bees”, Johnson said. “Yes”, came the reply “they are”. With that, Villafan turned and walked away, disappearing into the valley.

*What an unusual article for a daily newspaper; it seems more like a parable from the pulpit. What do you think? Thank you to Anne Miller for sharing it with us. If any would like to read the full article, please get in touch with the Editor.*

**FOR SALE**

Neither the Newsletter Editor nor Surrey Beekeepers Association take any responsibility for the accuracy of any of the following entries, or for the condition of any of the items advertised. If considering purchasing bees or secondhand equipment, the prospective purchaser should take great care to ensure that the bees are not diseased, and that all equipment is sterilised before use. Inexperienced purchasers should take a knowledgeable beekeeper with them.

**Bees and beekeeping equipment for sale from a past member of Weybridge Beekeepers**

We have 16 Thorne second hand national brood boxes £10 each

18 supers £10 each

8 roofs £10 each

5 floors £5 each

15 crown boards open to offers

15 queen excluders open to offers

16 five framed nucs hand made £15 each

2 hives with bees with double brood boxes £150 each

Thorne’s 9-frame honey extractor electric. Used for two seasons. Open to offers.

2 settling tanks open to offers

And much more. All in good condition just needs cleaning.

Please contact Stephen Sore on [Aquilasore@mail.com](mailto:Aquilasore@mail.com) 01784 465323 07943 0619

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**Apiary clothing for sale**

**Bee Togs Apiary Clothing - Clearance Sale Special Offer**

Special offer for the clearance of Bee Togs apiary clothing.  Suits £55, Jackets £45.  Contact Martin Major direct on 07973 653575 or email at [BeeTogs@gmail.com](mailto:BeeTogs@gmail.com). You need to contact me direct as these cannot be bought from the web site at this price.  Hurry whilst stocks last.

**Bees for sale**

**In due course we will have available a number of COLONIES WITH 2016 MATED QUEEN (National Standard Brood Frames)**

Price for 1 brood box full with mated 2016 Queen, bees, brood at all stages and stores: £195 (Larger colonies will be available at extra charge).

For more information, please contact me - details below. (Feel free to contact me if you wish to see the bees beforehand.)

**NUCS can be pre-ordered**

6 Frame Nucs (National Standard frames) with 2016 mated queen.

Supplied in 6 frame Poly Nuc. Price: £140 + £20 nuc deposit which is refundable on return.

5 Frame Nucs (National Standard frames) with 2016 mated queen.

Supplied in 5 frame Correx Travelling Box. Price: £145.

The Nucs will have a mated 2016 Queen, locally reared from our gentle breeding stock, together with a combination of her brood in various stages, and stores.  The Queens will be marked white.

These nucs will probably be available from end of June onwards (maybe earlier, depending on weather and mating season).

**Astrid Bowers-Veenman** (Hog’s Back Bees) Location: Ash Green (between Guildford and Farnham, just off the A31)  Distance from Weybridge: 12 miles (as the crow flies)  **Tel.No.: 01252 330229 / Mobile: 07803 069798**

**Email:**[**astrid@coginternational.co.uk**](mailto:astrid@coginternational.co.uk)

**STOP PRESS**

Those registered on Beebase have just received the following alarming email from the National Bee Unit:

Beekeepers may wish to monitor their colony food levels closely over the next month as many colonies, particularly those which are strong and had their spring honey crop removed, will be at risk of starving. In some parts of the UK, the weather is still cold and foraging opportunities for large colonies are few and far between. It is important to check and monitor all your colonies feed levels, if you do not wish to open them up because of poor weather, lift below the floor, in turn, on both sides of the hive to see how much it weighs. Where the hive is light, liquid feed should be applied directly above the bees. Feed can be prepared from refined white sugar and water mixed at a 2:1 ratio or one of the proprietary ready mixed syrups available from Beekeeping equipment suppliers. More information about mixing up sugar can be found in the Best Practice Guidelines no. 7 <http://www.nationalbeeunit.com/index.cfm?pageid=167>  Large starving colonies of bees will take 1 gallon (approx. 5 Litres) of syrup very quickly while smaller colonies will take half a gallon (approx. 2.5 Litres). After feeding, heft the hives again and check the weight and if in doubt feed some more in a few days. <https://secure.fera.defra.gov.uk/beebase/secure/beekeeper/unsubscribe.cfm?id=2177>

*I have noticed that some of my own colonies have needed feeding this month. Feeding in June is something I have never known in the past 30+ years but it still came as a shock to receive the above communication. Do ensure that you are all registered on Beebase in preparation for any further serious bee information that they issue. When feeding at this time of year, it is advisable to supply the syrup little and often. If sugar syrup is stored it could mix with the nectar that we hope will soon be there, and there will not be ‘pure honey’.*

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| **Dates for your diary** | | | | |
| Saturday | 9th July | 2.30 pm | Summer Meeting, Chris Burnett & Sue Lawes, Top-bar hive, queen finding and marking | p. 4 |
| Monday | 1st August | 7.00 pm | Jamie Ellis - “Addressing the sustainability of beekeeping in the 21st century” | p. 1, flyer and  May, p. 3 |
| Saturday | 20th August | 2.30 pm | Summer Meeting, David Parker,  ‘Make-it’ session | p. 4  Full details next month |
| Saturday | 3rd September | tba | End-of-season social event | Details later |
| Saturday | 3rd September | All day | SBKA Training Day | p. 2 |
| Thurs - Sat | 27-29 October | All day | National Honey Show, Esher | March p. 4 and attachments |

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