

THE NORTHERN MINE RESEARCH SOCIETY



Newsletter

MAY 1997

Diary Dates

7th June, 1997 - Draglines at the St. Aidans Opencast Site, Leeds.

Leader, Dr. Ivor Brown. Tel: 01924 257137. This meet is limited to 20 persons. Please confirm your attendance by telephone to the leader at least one week before the visit. Meet at 10.00 at the site entrance at NGR SE 399 287. Turn off the A642 in the village of Swillington by the traffic lights and by the parish church (signposted Allerton Bywater). The grassed overburden mounds will be seen after a short distance in front and then to the right. Note that Astley Lane has been diverted from its original route and does not appear on its present alignment even on recent maps. The main entrance is by the draglines at the end of these mounds. Bring strong boots, a helmet and a packed lunch.

As well as the visit to the draglines there will be a tour of this large site (about six miles round the perimeter). There are only six surviving draglines in the UK and two of them are at St. Aidans. One of the draglines is the oldest in the UK, imported from the USA about fifty years ago; the second is the newest, constructed on the site in 1980. Draglines are the largest walking bodies in existence and they are now being replaced by hydraulic shovels and trucks. Like the dinosaurs, they will soon be extinct unless present attempts at preservation succeed.

The draglines weigh approximately 1,150 and 2,000 tons respectively and the longer jib is two-thirds the height of Blackpool Tower. The buckets are the size of a removal van and the body is half as large as Leeds City Council Chamber.

Depending on the time remaining in the afternoon visits could be made either to the specialist galleries of Armley Mills Museum, which contains a full-scale mine railway museum and includes a collection of underground locomotives from Ruston, Hunslet and other manufacturers, or the nearby Ledston Luck Colliery preserved winding engine house and the adjoining underground sand mining area (no access is possible). Maps will be available on the day.

8th June, 1997 - Old Flockton Collieries.

Leader, Dr. John Goodchild. Tel: 01924 891871. Meet at 11.00 at the National Mining Museum on the A642. NGR SE 254 165.

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19/20th July, 1997 - Slate Mines in the Dyfi Forest and Dinas Mawddwy Area.

Leaders, John and Sue Hopkinson. Tel: 01490 420651. Meet at 11.00 (both days) at the lay-by on the A470. NGR SH 858 144. The present plan, which is flexible, is to meet at 11.00 and make a morning trip to a slate quarry. It is proposed to go underground and those wishing to do so should note that the water is about 3 feet deep. Bring a torch capable of throwing a beam of 100 feet. We shall return to the cars for lunch. A pub is handy for bar snacks 12.00 till 14.00. We shall leave the lay-by (by car) at 14.00, so allowing those not able to get there for 11.00 a chance to join in. After a 20 to 30 minute drive we shall explore at least one other quarry, mostly surface, and be finishing at around 19.00. This should give us time to retrace our steps to Dinas Mawddwy for pub meals (available till 21.00).

On the Sunday morning, we go to Cwm Cowarch (no underground) to see the crusher and in the afternoon have a choice of climbing high into the Arran Mountains in search of iron, or attempting to find traces of a two-mile railway used to transport iron-ore to Cross Foxes, 4 miles south of Dolgellau.

The distances we shall walk are not great, 5 or 6 miles, but the going is steep except for Cwm Cowarch. Although we shall try and avoid forestry, that adds difficulty to forward/upward progress. Those intending to come will find Alun J. Richards *A Gazetteer of the Welsh Slate Industry* and David Bick's *Metal Mines of Mid Wales Part 5* useful reading.

Gwely a Brecwst (B&B) at Dinas Mawddwy is available at the Llew Goch (Red Lion) Tel: 01650 531247 and at the Buckley Pines Hotel Tel: 01650 531261 and there is a camping/caravan site called Celyn Brithion immediately adjacent.

July, 1997.

As part of the International Congress of the History of Sciences, to be held in Liège in July 1997, Paul Benoit and Catherine Verna are organizing a symposium on the study of coal before the use of coke in Europe. They intend looking into all aspects of the issue, including extraction and its techniques, the economic and social production context, commercialisation and uses of coal, and are seeking papers on British work. Further details from: Dr. Paul Benoit, Université de Paris I-C.N.R.S. Equipe D'Histoire des mines et de la Metallurgie, 9, Rue Malher, 75181 Paris cedex 04. Tel: 44.78.33.73. Fax: 44.78. 33.89

11th -14th July, 1997 - NAMHO Conference.

This event will be hosted by The Peak District Mines Historical Society. The conference will be based at St. Elphin's School, Darley Dale, Matlock, Derbyshire. The centre will have facilities for camping and caravans as well as residential accommodation. Catering facilities will be available to all those attending the event.

The theme of the conference will be "Mud and Water" and a number of eminent speakers are being invited to give short papers on the subject. Our Recorder, Mike Gill, will be giving a paper entitled "Blood is Thicker than Water". A full programme of industrial visits, surface walks and underground trips of varying difficulty will be arranged. It is expected that the Saturday Evening Social will be very informal. Further details and booking forms may be obtained from John Thorpe, The Old Bakehouse, Cobden Road, Matlock, Derbyshire, DE4 3JR. Tel: 01629 582521.

25th -27th July, 1997 - South East Kent Study Weekend.

Organised by Subterranea Britannica, the event will be based at Wye College, near Ashford. Participants will explore a number of underground structures in this part of Kent. The soft Upper Chalk has been excavated for a variety of commercial purposes but, more significantly, it has been the subject of extensive burrowings for defence from Roman through to Cold War times, resulting in a variety of fascinating sub-surface defences. Further information may be obtained from: M. Tadd, 3 Nutfield, Redhill, Surrey, RH1 4JL. Tel: 01737 782 3456.

19th - 27th July, 1997. Gold Prospecting Field Course.

A one week field course based at Leadhills leading to 10 credits at university level 1. Closing date for applications is 2nd June, 1997. Further details from Dr. Rob Chapman,, School of Continuing Education, University of Leeds, Leeds, LS2 9JT. Tel: 0113 233 3190.

9/10th August, 1997 - Arkengarthdale Lead Mines.

Leader, Clive Torrens. Tel: 01969 624721. Meet at 10.30 at the lay-by opposite the CB Inn. NGR NY 999 031. Surface walks and underground.

18th October, 1997 - Autumn Meeting.

See page 9 of this newsletter for more details.

Meet Report

After the AGM and dinner on Saturday 22nd March, six members, led by Clive Torrens visited Wet Groves Mine, near Carperby in Wensleydale. Raistrick describes Wet Groves, in the face of Ivy Scar, as very interesting, where a rich vein of galena has been worked in large open cuts and in small caverns. He describes the spoil heaps as being rich in good specimens of baryte and fluorite, with hydrozincite too.

We parked by the minor road on the North side of the River Ure, where a stream runs alongside it. Clive informed us that a 'Dales Retreat' mini-village existed here until the 1930s, and boasted its own cinema facilities. No trace now remains, so presumably all the buildings were of wood. After briefly looking into the drainage level, begun in 1765, which is at the same altitude as the road and stream, we climbed the track to ascend 80 m or so to Ivy Scar, passing on the way a waterfall with Pelton Wheel still in situ. This provided electricity for the projector and lights at the village (but why is it situated half way up the waterfall and not at its foot?).

We went straight underground at Wet Groves; the tips have been extensively re-worked, but a surface foray could be interesting. After a very short level stretch we descended steeply for a bit, and then came to a plank of wood marking the top of what can best be described as a spiral staircase which has got the stairs missing. A 20 m line secured to solid (?) rock gave comfort to the more apprehensive/nervous amongst us, and the descent continued the full 80 m we had climbed up in the open air, until we were down at drainage level water level, where there is a pool in a chamber about 12 m across, and a "waterfall" of calcite. After 20 minutes of random exploration of seemingly random passages (no major stopping in evidence) we sought to return. The way back up is not desperately obvious, but we got it right eventually, and climbing the stairless spiral staircase was in fact easier than going down same. Within 3 hours of leaving them we were back at the cars.

Verdict : 8 out of 10 for interest. 10 out of 10 for physical effort. Dry and clean. Not the place to venture into without a guide.

Reference : Raistrick Vol 1 "*The Mines*" Dunham Vol 2. p99.

John Hopkinson

Annual General Meeting and Dinner

This year the AGM and Annual Dinner were held at The Wensleydale Heifer at West Witton. The event was attended by twenty eight members and guests and was voted a resounding success by all those your Editor spoke to. The idea of having the meeting at noon, followed by a meal in the afternoon seemed to be a winner. The food was excellent. Unfortunately, due to driving commitments I was unable to sample the brews on offer, but was told by those who did that there were no complaints in that department. On behalf of the committee and all who attended, I should like to say thank you to Clive Torrens, our Secretary, for organising a most enjoyable event.

Northern Mine Research Society - Summary of 1996 Accounts

Income

1996 Subscriptions	£6189.00
Donations	233.50
Subs b/f from 1995	15.00
Tax refund	504.09
Annual Dinner	262.80
Pies & Peas	45.00
Publications	10.50
Unpresented cheque	6.99
Investment a/c interest	313.78

Expenditure

Subs to other Societies	£53.00
Donations	20.00
Annual Dinner	262.80
Pies & Peas	20.71
Hire of hall for Pies & Peas	20.00
Printing & stationery	2222.09
Transfer to Publications a/c	2700.00
Insurance	20.00
Newsletter postage	197.33
Treasurer's expenses	35.51
Editor's expenses	29.01

Totals **£7580.66**

£5580.45

Cash Flow Income - Expenditure = +£2000.21

Account Reconciliation

	Current a/c	Investment a/c	Total
Opening balance	£1249.00	£2791.96	£4040.96
1995 unpresented cheque	-200.70		-200.70
Cash movement	-313.57	2313.78	2000.21
Unpresented cheques at 31.12.96	59.51		59.51
Invoice not yet received	20.00		20.00
Closing balance	£814.24	£5105.74	£5919.98

Membership Statistics - 1996

Category	1995	1996	Change
Full	360	400	+40
Family	49	54	+5
Overseas	9	10	+1
Honorary	5	5	0
Total Members	423	469	+46
Total Subs	£5661.50	*£6189.00	+£527.50

*This is the actual subscription income for 1996. The calculated nominal figure should be £6207.00. The shortfall is due to one member paying three years subs in advance, creating an excess of £45.00 in 1995 but leaving a shortfall of £15.00 for the years thereafter. Also, one of the overseas members sent only £15.00 instead of 18.00

Northern Mine Research Society - Publications Account 1996

Income		Expenditure	
Sales	£6400.50	Printing	£9130.88
General account	2700.00	Postage	1563.05
Donations	10.00	Photographs	21.20
Records	1295.00	Stationery*	973.27
Interest	58.05	Motor expenses	9.58
		C. J. Hindle	15.00
Totals	£10463.55		£11712.98

Cash Flow Income - Expenditure = -£1249.43

* This figure includes
1995 expenditure

Account Reconciliation	Current a/c	Investment a/c	Total
Opening balance	£784.27	£1650.67	£2434.84
Income			
Expenditure	-705.58	-543.85	-1249.43
Closing balance	£78.69	£1106.82	£1185.51

Stock on Hand at 31.12.96 £15,750

Society Officers for 1997/98

The following were elected as Officers of the Society:

President	Mike Gill
Vice-President	Bob Burns
Junior Vice-president	Sallie Bassham
Secretary	Clive Torrens
Treasurer	Colin Hindle
Editor	Hazel Martell
Librarian	Eleanor Greenough
Recorder	Mike Gill
Newsletter Editor	Keith Nolan

Recorder's Report to the AGM

A steady flow of requests for help from members and non-members has stimulated some very useful discussions and brought about donations of records material in return.

Robert White tells me that the first schedulings of lead mining sites under the Monuments Protection Programme are coming through. As yet, the scheduled sites are:

West Stonesdale Engine Shaft

Plate Hole dressing floor at Beldi Hill

Wharfedale Mine at Kettlewell

Redscar Mine at Appletreewick.

Ed Dennison is surveying the Bolton Park Mine dressing floor for the Yorkshire Dales National Park together with two buildings on Grassington Moor.

The University of Lancaster Archaeological Unit is about to begin surveying the area around Scargill smelt mill - also for the YDNP.

I have had a copy of Ed Dennison's report on the Keld Side smelt mill in Swaledale, but have not yet had time to comment on it.

Mike Gill

Books

Grey Gold - Sam Murphy

This is Sam Murphy's authoritative account of the Greenside silver/lead mine from its beginnings in the late 18th century to the mine's demise in 1962, during which time 156,000 tons of lead and 1,622,000 troy ounces of silver were produced. Archival material for the mine's early years is sparse, but Sam has woven the history of the subsequent Greenside companies, from the late 1820s onwards, into a fascinating story. He also gives valuable biographical detail on the mine's owners and management and their links to other mines.

The book discusses the measures taken by the company to cut costs and increase the efficiency of its operations, steps which allowed it to survive when other British mines failed. For example, like other mines, Greenside relied on water power, both for waterwheels and water-pressure engines, but William Henry Borlase's innovative use of hydroelectric power for traction, winding and lighting set it apart. When the old company eventually failed, the mine was taken by the Basinghall Mining Syndicate, who saw the need for "adequate capital, persistence of the lode to a good depth with a predominance of galena over blende, and most of all a strong mineralised vein extending for a considerable distance, but unhampered by adjoining small mines under different owners".

Late in its life, Greenside even had a place in the history of the 'Cold War' when Latter's Decoupling Theory was proved by two large underground explosions there.

One small criticism relates to occasional weaknesses in the general mining background, for example the claim that roller crushers were a 'Cornish' invention. Nevertheless, this is a minor point and does not detract from the book's value. Grey Gold, with its 481 pages and many illustrations, is highly recommended and can be obtained for £28.95 including p&p from Moiety Publishing, The Corner House, The Green, Tanworth-in-Arden, Warwickshire, B94 5AL. Please make cheques payable to 'S. & G.M. Murphy'.

Mike Gill

The Silkstone Disaster

Dave Williams sent an Email about this .

"The facts concerning the colliery accident in 1813 are largely incorrect. The incident was at the Husker Pit, Moorend Lane, Silkstone Common, which was a drift mine and was inundated with water after flash flooding caused by a thunderstorm. Miners were apparently trapped against air doors by the flood and twenty eight children were drowned. The youngest was seven and the oldest seventeen. This disaster led to a commission of enquiry which eventually led to the first mining legislation of 1842. This information is from *Pits - A Pictorial Record of Mining in Barnsley* by John Threlkeld.

Lodge's Almanac states: 1838, July 4. During a terrific storm of thunder and hail the valley on the south-west side of Dodworth was inundated. The water rose to such a height that it reached a coal pit on the hill side belonging to the late Mr. R. G. Clarke, of Noblethorpe, called the Moor Side Pit, and twenty-six persons were drowned, eleven of them being females. Fourteen of the largest escaped by getting into the old slit ends. Those drowned were from seven to seventeen years of age. A monument was erected in Silkstone Common churchyard as a reminder of the sad event.

John Threlkeld in *Pits - 2* refers to the Clarkes: Another important family were the Clarkes of Silkstone, who bought Noblethorpe Hall in 1792, the family being more interested in the minerals than agriculture. In the 1830s Husker and Moorend collieries were opened, followed by the Old and New Sovereign Collieries in the late 1850s and early 1860s. Towards the end of the nineteenth century the seams became exhausted and the Clarkes had to compete for markets with the bigger companies, an unequal struggle that led the family into decline after 1874.

Threlkeld gives two books in his bibliography.

The Clarkes of Silkstone. R. A. Roberts.

Labouring Barnsley 1816 - 1856. F. J. Kaijage.

There is a photograph of the monument in *The Yorkshire Miner* by Frank Machin".

Ivor Brown writes on the mystery of the man engine.

"You are correct in that the translation is wrong. I and the Caphouse Mining Museum supplied the information for the gallery "Women in Mining" at Bochum and translation was arranged by Dr. Werner Kroker of the Bochum Museum. We did not have the facilities to check how they had translated the information sent, but the mine only had a shaft with an ordinary steam winding engine and a drift entrance. The storm, which had put the boiler fire out, was also flooding the mine. The children would not wait for the fire to be re-lighted and ran up the drift, only to be drowned by the water coming down. Had they waited, the story may have been different. There was no man engine at Silkstone".

Reference

The Husker Pit Disaster, 4th July, 1838. Jack Wood. Available from Barnsley Library.

Opencast Scheme Seeks Approval

Plans have been submitted for opencast mining at Pontblyddyn in North Wales. Telford based Clay Colliery wants to dig out 120,000 tonnes of coal and 50,000 tones of fireclay over 16 months in a scheme which would create 20 jobs. The site covers 81 acres but the working area would be limited to about 27 acres. The coal will go to power stations and the clay will be used by local brick manufacturers. If the scheme is approved work will begin on site in the autumn.

Deeside Chronicle. 7th February, 1997.

A. S. Mousdale

Weardale

Our Weardale correspondent, Roger Bade writes from darkest Surrey.

"I am very grateful to John Lawson for his piece on the Nenthead - Weardale connection. In the latest *Friends of Killhope Newsletter* Sir Kingsley Dunham confirms that there is no physical connection between Coalcleugh and Killhope. I now need to find out whether, in the past, Sir Kingsley examined plans of the two ends or examined the foreheads.

I have just received *The Bonny Moor Hen, The Journal of the Weardale Field Study Society*, No. 9. 1997. Copies are available from Mrs. M. Manchester, 81 Front Street, Sunnyside, Co. Durham, DL13 4LW, for £3.00. Cheques should be made payable to Weardale Field Study Society.

Of interest is an article covering the Weardale Iron Company and its early leases in Stanhope parish. The article contains some discussion and a photograph of the "Ruins of Furness, Stanhope Dene". This was a pig iron furnace probably demolished in 1915. The article does not state where in Stanhope Dene it was situated. Does anyone know? (*According to my references it was around NY 989399, but I stand to be corrected - Ed.*) The journal also contains an article on the "Battle of Stanhope", including a nineteen verse version of *The Bonny Moor Hen*.

Which leads quite nicely into the next piece.

Mining Ballads

Ivor Brown writes.

"I have at least three ballads relating to the Snailbeach mining area in Shropshire. They date from about 1870 to 1890 but there is no evidence of any music remaining or remembered. The area was very much "Primitive Methodist" orientated and the ballads relate to the miners' chapel life. One concerns the happenings at a prayer meeting and by coincidence names several of the victims of the later Snailbeach disaster of 1895. Another concerns the death of three of their preachers in the 1895 disaster. Only two of the seven killed were not heavily involved with chapel life. The ballad was written by the minister, the Rev. J. Cope and goes along the lines of:

Andrew, George and Joseph are to pilgrims' city gone;

With faces bright and robes most white, they were shining like the sun;

.....and so on for three fairly long verses".

John Hunter sent an Email from Wyoming.

"There was a recording made of the song, "The Bonny Moor Hen" by Steeleye Span in the 1970s on their album called "Original Masters".

Your Editor has several Steeleye Span albums stored in the attic, but not this one, although I do remember a coalmining ballad they recorded called "The Blackleg Miner" on one of their very early albums. Can anyone out there help?

Roman Lead in the City

During recent archaeological work at Regis House in the City of London three Roman pigs of lead have been found. Two were stamped on the upper surface IMP VESPASIAN AUG and the third was stamped IMP VESPASIANI AUG. All three had additional stamps on the sides BRIT EX ARG VEB. All three had incised or stamped marks at the end, possibly of the mine concession holder. The ingots, all 0.6 metres long and weighing 170 lb. are thought to have originated from Charterhouse-on-Mendip.

London Archaeologist. Winter 1996. Vol. 8 No. 3.

Roger Bade

White Coal

In an article about Barden, North Yorkshire, reference is made to "white coal".

"Ellers may refer to an elling hearth used to make white coal for smelting". Estate accounts for 1705/6 record the sale of 166 loads of white coal or chopwood at 6d. per load.....to the Earl of Burlington's lead smelting mill at Grassington.

What is white coal? How is it prepared in a hearth? Are white coal and chopwood the same or different and if different, why do they cost the same?

Reference

Tracing the Evolution of an Estate Township; Barden in Upper Wharfedale. Beaumont T. & Heather M. Local Historian. Vol. 26 No. 2. May 1996.

John Seaman

Halkyn Mountain

Abandoned lead mines, some hundreds of feet deep, are opening up across windswept moorland on Halkyn Mountain creating a death trap for walkers and livestock. Members of the award winning Halkyn Countryside Committee are planning further surveys to establish the extent of the problem and are advising visitors to the area to steer clear of potential trouble spots. The conservation group is also expected to appeal to Flintshire County Council to press for Welsh Office funding towards making the moors safe. Chairman, Bryn Ellis said that Prince Charles offered his personal congratulations when he met members on Halkyn Mountain in 1972 to present an award in recognition of their efforts to cap shafts.

"The problem is that rain, wind, frost and earth movements have caused many of these stone built caps to shatter and collapse in on themselves" he said. "Those capped with boulders or single slabs of rock appear to be safe, but more complex caps built around a circular steel frame topped off with a reinforced stone and mortar cone are now falling apart". He says that many of these were built by supervised teams of youngsters recruited by the Manpower Services Commission. The fact that they are crumbling suggests that the mortar mix may have been wrong.

Halkyn Mountain is very popular with ramblers and their children in the summer and action may be needed if walkways are to remain safe. A major problem is the number of mines to be checked out. At the last count there were over 500 of them scattered across hundreds of acres of moorland.

Deeside Chronicle. 17th January, 1997.

A. S. Mousdale

Autumn Meeting

For the past few years the date of the Pies and Peas meeting at Sicklinghall has coincided with bad weather and there has been a feeling that the November date is too late in the year, especially for those who travel long distances to be at the meeting.

The date of the meeting is to be moved forward into October, when there is more daylight and, hopefully, better weather. However this means that Sicklinghall is no longer a suitable venue as the hall cannot be blacked out for the showing of slides.

It has therefore been decided to rename "Pies & Peas" to "Autumn Meeting" and change the venue. The Autumn Meeting this year will be held at the Cross Keys Hotel (on Otley Road, Skipton) on October 18th. There is a function room which will hold 30 or so people.

The Cross Keys has a good sized car park and is handy for the by-pass. The bus depot is about a third of a mile and the station about three quarters of a mile away. The pub can supply pies and peas or other refreshments.

Further details and a map will appear in the August newsletter.

Hilton Mine

Hilton Mine, Scordale, Cumbria (NGR NY 763 225) is within an area used by the Army as a firing range. It can only be visited on a Monday, when no live firing is carried out. The mine has to be approached on foot, which entails an hour's walk from the car park. The Army is no longer immune from prosecution and they have therefore had to put in place new rules for those entering the site.

The following procedure must be followed:

1. Write in advance to Major Miles, Warcop Camp, Kirkby Stephen, Cumbria, requesting permission to visit.
2. On arrival, report for a briefing at the camp in Hilton village. The briefing will cover, *inter alia*, all the various pieces of dangerous ordnance you may see or find, the dangers which these could represent and the limitation of liability of the Army.
3. You will be asked to sign a liability declaration after the briefing.

The Army state that if these procedures are not followed, access to the site will not be permitted. If you have entered the site without permission, you will be requested to leave.

Stone Chat - Winter, 1996

South Crofty Mine

Mr. Kevin Ross resigned as Managing Director of South Crofty Mines at the end of January. Kevin Ross joined South Crofty some twelve years ago and was appointed managing director in 1991.

His successor is Mr. David Giddings, a business executive with thirty five years experience in banking and construction.

NAMHO Newsletter

Tolgus Tin

The Trevithick Trust expects to have access to Tolgus Tin site and be in a position to operate the site this summer. The 1997 operations will be very low-key, but plans are being drawn up to return the site to a tin streaming operating condition. It is also proposed to include the site in a major historic trail which will run from Redruth Station to Portreath.

Trevithick Trust Newsletter

Finally

Thanks to all who contributed to this newsletter. Please, keep the contributions rolling in - they are very much appreciated. Contributions on 3½" discs are welcomed. ASCII text format only please. Discs will normally be returned with the following newsletter unless otherwise requested.

Contributions for the August newsletter by 18th July, please, to:

Keith Nolan, West End Cottage, Woodhall, South Duffield, Selby, North Yorkshire, YO8 7TG. Telephone or Fax: 01757 638503. Email: kjn1@york.ac.uk.

The views expressed in this newsletter are those of its correspondents and are not necessarily agreed with or shared by the Northern Mine Research Society, its Officers or the Editor. The accuracy of submissions is the responsibility of the authors and will not normally be checked by the Newsletter Editor for validity. Neither the Society, its Officers nor the Newsletter Editor accept responsibility for the content of articles submitted by individual members or groups.
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