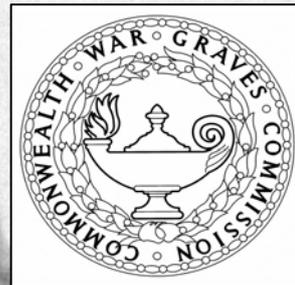


The War Graves Photographic Project

In association with
The CWGC
www.twgpp.org



News from the Front line

July 2008

Steve Rogers, Project Co-ordinator

The highlight for me over the last couple of months was to be a part of the Project's team effort in photographing the war graves in the area of Arnhem in the Netherlands. Although a considerable drive from UK we achieved our objectives, and more, by utilising the efficiency of a large group of volunteers; Rheinberg was added to the list of completed cemeteries on top of Reichswald, both of which were just over the German border. You can read further details in the attached supplement.

After a trial run with the CWGC to determine the demand for requests we have now achieved greater prominence on the CWGC website and have got our own section under Customer Services (Photographic Requests). With continued support from the CWGC offices around the world we are fulfilling more 'specials requests' albeit not currently advertised on our site.

Input of images from around the globe has continued apace with Pranav kick starting India again and volunteers like Rudy, David and Michael revisiting many cemeteries in Belgium, England and Scotland to capture those missing or not found on previous visits. This has been most helpful in getting the final tick in the box for completeness. David Milborrow is now travelling around England clearing up the missing so in the next newsletter we will give an idea of percentages complete in UK.

Bernie Barton has just delivered all of the Germans in Cannock Chase, the main German site in UK, which means the German contingent in UK is just about complete as well.

The next milestone is the Gallipoli trip in September which will complete a whole campaign of casualties over a week long tour.

Enjoy your summer and keep the camera close at hand.



**'TWGPP Team' at Reichswald war
Cemetery, Germany**

DAMASCUS by John Chapman

This spring I had the great good fortune to visit Damascus and took the opportunity of visiting the war cemetery there. Our courier was a bit nonplussed at the request as he had never had a party wanting to visit here before. Before I could make personal arrangements, seven others of our party said they too would like to go. The cemetery is located about five kilometres south west of the city centre and is hidden within an area of prickly pears with access through an extraordinary maze of back streets. Our taxi driver had to spend an afternoon searching the area before he felt confident enough to take us. Normally the cemetery is not open in the afternoons but when we were there the grounds men were busy reseeding. We were privileged to be met by the CWGC horticultural superintendent for the Middle East and the local superintendent who were very helpful and indeed took some of the photos. Several of the other members of the group brought along their cameras and helped me with the photography for the Project. One of the members is the chaplain to the Burghfield British Legion and we had a most moving service of remembrance there while a nearby mosque was reading verses from the Koran over the loudspeakers.

The cemetery was begun in 1918 with burials of men who had been Turkish prisoners of war and died in hospital and then men from Allenby's army with a large contingent from Australia, New Zealand, Africa and India, 661 in total with 74 unidentified. It was also used in WW2 for a similar mix of men 504 in total with 14 unidentified. There are also seven men from other armies and several memorials.

While the vast majority of the graves are marked by standard CWGC stones there are a number of anomalies which make producing a complete photographic record so difficult and why one cannot rely completely on the register. Before I went I was able to download the register from the CWGC website into an Access database and get it sorted into plot/grave order which is far more helpful than an alphabetic spread sheet. In this cemetery the graves are numbered only within plots and the numbers are not shown.

Within plot Q there is a mass grave with eight bodies and 4 markers each bearing two names – the grave is numbered 126 but the markers are numbered 125 to 128. Interestingly 129 is a merchant seaman Aage Henry Thorup and one wonders how he got there. When I came to organise the photos I made duplicates and labelled one with each name. Then there were three aliases and again I made duplicates with one copy labelled with the real name and one with the alias. There were three soldiers from the Greek Army with their inscriptions all in Greek, these do not appear in the CWGC list so I transliterated the Greek to label them and added them to the database. The other non-British Army were two Poles and two South Africans. Plots R & S were devoted to the African Pioneer Corps although a native South African and an Indian water carrier were included. Plot T was mainly Indians with a driver from the Cyprus regiment included.



There are three memorials within the cemetery. One is to ten Arab soldiers who were serving in the British Army in WW2 and whose graves are inaccessible. Another is to WW1 men from the Indian Army who are known to be buried in the cemetery and the third is to the men of the Indian Army that held out against Vichy forces in 1941.

Between us we took over 1000 photos with only an occasional duplication and usually including the 'unknowns'. Some of the newer stones were made of a purplish material which did not yield a good image but with no flowers or shrubs it was easy to get all the inscriptions and one built up a rhythm.

Digital cameras provide us with a sequence number which is very useful as I copied them before rotating and labelling them with the names and added the sequence numbers to the database so I can go back to the originals if I detect a problem – and there have been some due to sloppy typing! Unfortunately some of the photos did not turn out as expected and there were a few graves we did not photograph due to pressure of time. It was a major task labelling them all with the names but with the database to guide me it was not as bad as I had predicted.

Back Home to Wales - Daisy Dunphy

This heart-warming story came to light after receiving an overjoyed Thank You letter from Daisy Dunphy of Sevenoaks, Kent, in response to a successful photo request.

Browsing bookshelves in the comfort of local charity shops on cold, wet days led to the discovery of two books, days apart, in entirely different shops. Both books had, coincidentally, once belonged to the same person.

The books were in excellent condition considering that they were nearly 100 years old and adhesively fixed certificates inside the front cover of both of them revealed that they had been presented for "Punctuality, Diligence and Good Behaviour" to Edward Scaplehorn, a pupil at St Woolos Boys School in Newport, South Wales in the school years ending 1908 and 1909.

My immediate reaction was to want to return the books to the school and I was pleased to find, via the internet, that there is still a school bearing that name – St. Woolos Junior School on Stow Hill in Newport. In due course I did send both books to the school and they are now in the safekeeping of Miss Heather Vaughan, Head Teacher at the school who, I believe, intends incorporating the books into the school's curriculum.

But the story doesn't end there! I decided I'd like to try to trace any living relatives of Edward and my starting point was to obtain a copy of his birth certificate. He was born 9th December 1896 at 99 Commercial Street, Newport, of parents Charles Scaplehorn and Clara (nee Gooding). His father was a saddler and at the time of the 1901 census the family were living above the father's shop at 104 Commercial Street.

Because Edward would have been old enough to have perhaps served in World War One in one or other of the services research progressed with that in mind but, sadly, all too soon it was discovered that Gunner 740902 Edward Scaplehorn, 463rd Battery, 179th Brigade, Royal Field Artillery, was killed at the third battle of the Somme on 7th August 1918 aged just 21 years and was buried at Crouy British Cemetery, Crouy Sur Somme, France.



This gives added poignancy to the fact that his books are now back at his old school because, although fate dictated that Edward was never to return to his beloved Wales, his memory is now perpetuated in the form of the books. Plans are underway between me and a friend in Newport to have a more fitting and permanent memorial to him at the school and, hopefully, with the approval of the Head Teacher there will be at the school's annual prize giving an Edward Scaplehorn Memorial Cup. This award would be at the Head's discretion and would be presented to a child for 'Diligence' during the school year.

Edward may be resting in French soil but in other respects he has been brought 'Back Home to Wales'.

War Graves & Battlefields Heritage

All-Party Parliamentary Group

In the last Newsletter it was mentioned that the Parliamentary War Graves & Battlefields Heritage Group had invited TWGPP to present the project to its members. Since then the Group has gone live with its own website which can be found at www.wargravesh heritage.org.uk

Editorial – Pauline Pedersen

I have decided that there is one requisite we volunteers should always have to hand – a packet of tissues! I suspect there are very few of us who could admit to not having come across something that has not touched a cord and moved us to tears.

One such occasion occurred recently in Wolverhampton Borough Cemetery when my attention was caught by something attached to the headstone of Sergeant Kenneth Percy West, RAFVR, who died on 26th November 1944, aged 22 years.

It was a letter from his daughter, with presumably a photograph of Sgt West attached. She was one of the fortunate ones who had been able to make the journey, indeed a very long one, to pay her respects to her father. It is reproduced here exactly as she wrote it and it comes from the heart.

We know that there are numerous others who will be unable to visit the graves of their loved ones but at least the photographs they can obtain via TWGPP will compensate a little. Keep up the good work (and don't forget the tissues!).



Dear Dad

There are many things that I didn't get to know about you as you were taken from me far too soon. Things like the colour of your hair & eyes and the sound of your voice. I often wonder what you may of been like as a child & where you lived as a child I don't even know your birthday or who or what my grandmother your mother looked like. There are many, many questions we could ask but one we don't have to we know that you were a hero giving your life at such a young age not because you were called to defend your country but you stepped forward and volunteered. I look now at my children your grandchildren & see them getting on with their lives, lives that may not of happened but for the courage of you & young men like you. Each day I am proud of them working hard & being responsible parents. I hope that you are also proud of my only son who stands before you today with respect.

I have many regrets. I know that you had a chance to hold & hug me I do regret not being able to hold and hug you back or tell you I loved you but that day will come. Untill then you will always be my hero.

I love and miss you your daughter Barbara x

Sydney Australia

The Photographer



We have been asked about the image of the photographer depicted in the heading of the Newsletter. Who is he? Where was he and when was it taken?

The photograph was given to us by Chris Lofty, (Media/Publicity) of the CWGC and in reply to the above questions he said: 'I'm afraid I can't help you. I came across the image in an old folder; it was not much bigger than a postage stamp and very faded. There are no clues as to its origins as it wasn't with anything else significant!'. So, if anyone out there can throw any light on the matter do let us know.

Sergeant Alf Knight. 2nd Bn. The Queens (Royal West Surrey Regiment)

Buried in London Cemetery and Extension, Somme. Commemorated in Mitcham (Croydon Road) cemetery.

To emphasise the importance of photographing what we call 'Family memorials' the following abridged letter may be of interest.

Dear Steve, Thank you so very, very much for your prompt reply. When I first opened your e-mail I expected it to be just an initial reply, however, to open the attachment and to see Alf's memorial simply just took this old soldier's breath away; I really cannot thank TWGPP enough. As I write, I am simply welling up with emotion.

The photograph has arrived at a very poignant time. Tragically my father, who is 86 and served at Alamein, is terminally ill with cancer and hasn't long left but has asked me to pass on to you his deep gratitude for the work



Alf was a territorial soldier (4th Queen's) for twelve years before the war. He was posted to the 'quiet' Somme sector around Fricourt / Mametz, and until July 1st 1916, according to the War Diaries, was engaged in the usual duties of a line regiment at the front. On July 1st he went 'over the top' at Mametz (the Battalion suffering 300-plus casualties), and from here the Battalion played a key role in the attack at High Wood on the 14th July. The Secunderbad Horse attacked alongside the Queen's right flank, where again the Battalion sustained over 300 casualties. Sadly, on the 1st September, whilst in Devil's Trench at Delville Wood, Alf was killed in action. He was buried, wrapped in his ground sheet, in the trench, and never being recovered, was listed on the Thiepval memorial. However, in the 'clearances' of the 1930's his body was recovered, and he was laid to rest at High Wood Cemetery.

Alf's death cast a great, great shadow over the family, his brother Sid, having transferred to the Machine Gun Corps, could not bear to come home and elected to remain in Palestine- his last deployment area in WWI; he subsequently joined the Palestine Police Force. Alice, Alf's dear wife, never spoke of Alf. Her only display of a connection to Alf being his medals pride of place in her front room at Cranmer Road, Croydon -the grief was simply too much for her. Alice later died of cancer in 1942 and my father last saw her as he left for the desert campaign in North Africa.

For myself, I've visited the spot where dear Alf fell at Delville Wood (the CWGC kindly providing me with the trench map reference from his body's recovery), his grave, his family home, Croydon Parish Church where he is remembered, and in addition have researched files from the National Archives and Surrey Records.



As such, I'm sure you can see just how much the photograph you sent me has meant. However, it has left me utterly vexed. I know Alf was much respected, so much so that his old firm, Roffey and Clarke, installed a plaque to him in the Croydon works. I knew my great grandparents, Alf's parents, were buried in Mitcham Cemetery, but, because of the sheer size of the cemetery I have as yet to walk through to find their graves. I now plan to drive up to Mitcham Cemetery to pay my respects to Alf, and to clean his memorial (this really is a heartbreaker for me).

Lastly, until I viewed the photograph of Alf's plaque, I hadn't realised what a truly, truly fantastic service TWGPP are providing. This really has meant such a great deal to us I simply cannot express the joy you have brought to my father and I. My sincerest regards and best wishes, Adrian

Sgt A Knight

Memorial stone at Mitcham Road, above by David Ayling

No Question Too Trivial...

This friendly and interesting feature comes from volunteers Margaret & Eric Cutress who are working for us in France. They hope it may inspire more of you to visit that country and offer helpful planning tips.

First, a quick introduction of myself. My husband Eric and I became interested in TWGPP through a visit to my uncle's grave in Italy but, as we live in Bavaria, we are unable to take part in the organised photographic trips. So, as we keep our caravan in Colmar in the Alsace region of France, we got in touch with Derek and volunteered to photograph the graves in that area, not an easy task as they are very widely spread out. However, this led us to many places which we may not have otherwise visited and has enabled us to meet many interesting local people. You may be already guessing that I am writing this with an ulterior motive in mind, well, it is true. Just as the graves in our allocations are 'out of the way', there are many other sites on Derek's list which are off the beaten track not always quite literally as I know that there is one site in the Ardeche which can be reached by steam train. No, do not all volunteer at once! France is a very beautiful country, holding many pleasant surprises for those who are prepared to 'go it alone' on holiday, so if you feel like a visit do find out from Derek what he still needs to allocate and try to include a few sites into your trip. As to general information, you are always welcome to contact me on vonCutress@t-online.de. I have travelled in France for more years than I would care to admit and have acquired much useful information and can also help with campsites for those who have caravans. No question too trivial. So, now on to some of our own experiences while photographing.

We set out one day to photograph several graves in Ranrupt and one in Colroy-la-Roche, two villages only a few kilometres apart, among beautiful country scenery. We reached Ranrupt but were unable to find the war cemetery there so decided to drive on to Colroy-la-Roche where we knew that the war grave was in the churchyard and to see if we could find the war cemetery on the way back. We did this and were touched to find that local people appeared to keep the grave decorated with flowers. We returned to Ranrupt which appeared to be deserted, apart from one very elderly man who was dressed in a rugby shirt, shorts with large flowers on them, green Wellingtons and pushing a wheelbarrow. Eric decided that I should ask him for directions, so we stopped. As we did so I noticed that his face lit up but did not realise that it was because he had seen our German number plate. Of course, being in France, I spoke to him in French, his face dropped and he said "Oh, can't you speak German?" I should have realised that at his age German had probably been his first language due to the very complicated history of the region. So I said that of course I could and he was so pleased to have someone to chat to that it was only a good half an hour later that we were able to continue on our way with his very exact and complicated directions. We would never have found the cemetery without him as it was tucked away along a farm track. It was a cemetery of several nationalities including, to our distress, a memorial to '89 unknown Bavarians' who had died in WW1. Our task for the day completed we drove off to look for lunch.

On another day we decided to drive to Fraize where there are three war graves in the town cemetery, some distance across the Vosges mountains, so we would look for lunch on the way. Thus we arrived in Fraize at about 2.30pm, just when the inhabitants were finishing their Sunday lunch. We parked our car near the centre of the town and started to look around for the cemetery, without any luck. We saw a car stop and park so I asked the driver if he knew where the cemetery was. He had had a somewhat more liquid lunch than us but explained that as there was no parking nearer the cemetery he would escort us there as he was on his way to visit the grave of his mother. It was quite a long walk to a very large cemetery on the side of quite a steep slope. We had told our new friend on the way why we wanted to visit. He knew the graves well and said he would take us there as they are not easy to find. So first we admired the rather splendid grave of "Mother", then went on to take our photos. He waited with us all the while, as if he thought we might come to some harm, then escorted us back to the entrance in case we got lost, before returning to the purpose of his own visit. We quite frequently find such concerned kindness from local people on our expeditions, especially when they find out why we are there.

However, sometimes the locals are not so friendly! One grave on our list is at Rambervillers, a long way from almost everywhere except a village where, on August 15th (a bank holiday in France) there is a huge second-hand book fair - an irresistible temptation for me. There is a small sign post in the middle of the village saying 'Rambervillers 15km', so with lots of books in the back of the car we followed the signpost. It was mid-afternoon when we arrived and the town appeared to be completely deserted, not so much as a bar open, but we soon found the war cemetery located, as is often the case, in a separate section at the back of the town cemetery. The local soil is very dry and sandy and all of the French headstones were leaning at strange angles because of this, giving the place a somewhat surreal appearance. The one Commonwealth grave which we were to photograph was very easy to pick out, although right in the middle of the others, it was the only one still upright. We had started to make our way towards it when I spotted a man watching us from the shade of the dividing wall. As we moved along so did he, acting as children do when playing a stalking game, although he was quite elderly! He kept parallel with us as we moved along the row, stopping to watch while we took our pictures. By now, with my sense of humour, I was finding it difficult not to laugh in a way quite inappropriate to a cemetery. Wondering what he thought we were doing I started to approach him to speak, but he fled..... Continued

Continued So we started to walk back to our car only to find that he had been hiding on the other side of the wall, and resumed following us – We never did find out what he wanted! Leaving the town behind we found a much pleasanter route back to Colmar on country roads than the main road route we usually take to the book village and were even able to find a bar open for coffee on the way. So another example of how our work for TWGPP leads us to discover new things. I hope I have managed to inspire at least a few of you to take to the roads of France and look forward to hearing from any of you who have any questions which you feel I might be able to answer. I shall always answer as soon as possible, but I do spend a lot of my time in Alsace!



BT Community Champions

Long time volunteer Dave Docherty, who is employed by BT, surprised us a couple of weeks ago by announcing that he proposed that the project be awarded a BT Community Champions award for our efforts. This proposal came to fruition and we were awarded the sum of £215 which is being utilised to purchase a projector so that we can publicise our TWGPP to other organisations. Well done Dave.

Meet the Team or 'When in Rome'

As mentioned earlier in the newsletter TWGPP is now working closely with the offices of the CWGC that are spread around the world. The team based in Italy recently had a photo call at the Roman walls of Aurelian. We regularly correspond with Claudia who provides images not already held in the areas of Western Mediterranean Area (Italy, Malta, Tunisia, Morocco, Algeria, Hungary, Austria, Spain, Portugal, Gibraltar, Croatia).

From left to right:

Mrs Donatella Boggio, Mr Stefano Esu, Mrs Antonella, Mr Walter Macaddino, Mr Jeremy Gee, Mrs Daniela Meo, Mr Jean Pierre Nelson, Mrs Claudia Scimonelli, Mr Sante Di Giuseppe. Staff not in the picture: Mr David Craig Chalmers and Mrs Silvia Castagna



Date for your Diary – Annual Meeting

Just a reminder that this year's annual meeting has been arranged for Saturday, 1st November: venue Royal Air Force Museum, Cosford, Shifnal, Shropshire. Cost: £15 per person to include coffee on arrival.

The museum is accessible by road (ample free parking on site), rail or bus and there is a licensed restaurant and café. There will be time during the day to visit the museum and admission is free. See www.rafmuseum.org

A booking form will be sent out with the next Newsletter but please note the date and make every effort to attend. Apart from anything else the meeting provides an opportunity to meet other volunteers and swap information and ideas. We look forward to seeing you at the RAF Museum, Cosford.

Forgotten War Graves – by Steve Hamilton www.western-desert.de

A few weeks ago I discovered a large number of forgotten war graves just east of Tobruk. The original cemetery stems from the 1930's and contains Italian soldiers killed in clashes with the famous "Lion of the Desert" Omar el Mukhtar. From a distance the cemetery, which is surrounded by a wall, appears to be an old desert fort and so it must have appeared this way to British and Commonwealth troops when they arrived in the area in early 1941. Believing that it was an enemy position the Allies shelled the so-called fort. However, from its location and the amount of destruction it could well have been British warships that did the damage.

You can imagine the damage caused by shelling a cemetery, grave stones and human remains would be everywhere and so it is today. At some point the Italians' remains were re-interred outside the cemetery walls encased in concrete. Next to these is a large number of what we call "real battlefield graves", that is, shallow graves covered in stones forming a long cairn so often seen in old photographs. These are obviously casualties stemming from the fighting in 1941 and '42. My years of experience in the desert have taught me not to be too rash about these finds as often a sand filled foxhole can also resemble a grave. Arab graves, so often found, face east and the dead are never placed in a coffin. The decisive moment came when human remains were uncovered.

I have informed the Italian Military Attaché in London, as there are known Italian graves there. There are no official Italian war cemeteries in Libya, all the Italian war dead have been repatriated by the order of the Libyans; this again stems from the Italian invasion of Libya in 1911 and the Libyan resistance. It is my belief that the "real battlefield graves" may well contain British or Commonwealth dead of the Second World War. They could of course be Italian and buried by the Allies, but the fact remains that there are now far too many graves on the outside of the original cemetery than could have been inside.



Thank you – Excerpts from the mail box

I can't quite explain how touched I was when I saw the photographs. My mother was a little overwhelmed. She said she wished his parents and my great uncle and aunts had seen them. The telegram was the end of the story. Now she feels he is not forgotten and he is named where he died. It was a priceless gift from you to my mother – She said she is ninety and he was killed 90 years ago this year. Never forget just how appreciated you are and how important your work is to families. We are eternally grateful to you. With warmest regards Katrina.

Thank you. This is great. Living in Australia I would probably never get to see this in person. My mother Violet was married to Leonard Rayment at the time and has never seen this. Keep up the good work. Cheers Lesley Swift

Thanks for the downloads. Gives me goosebumps to see my great uncle's name on that magnificent monument. Gone - never known but not forgotten. Sincerely, Eileen.

Have today sent a request for hard photographs via the link you supplied. I am deeply appreciative of your prompt response, it has been so competent and full of goodwill. Would you also, please, convey my thanks and best wishes in the same terms to Chris Scibberas. Bless you all. Warm good wishes, Diana Withers.

I was delighted that photographs have been taken of the graves in Damascus, and in particular that of my uncle Lieut. H.J. Aish. I have a couple of photos of his grave with just a wooden cross, so it is nice to have an up-to-date one, especially as no family member has been able to visit it. Thank you very much. It is a very worthwhile venture. Elisabeth Mason.

Thank you so much for the photos. They are fantastic. I'm sure he as will the rest of the family, be truly grateful for them. Much appreciation; what you do is so thoughtful. Regards Stephani Preston NZ.

June and I thank you and all concerned in getting the two pictures which I have printed and also saved for future. Once again a Big thanks to all.

“NUMBERS ARE BORING” - FACT or FICTION? - Derek Mountjoy

What do the following numbers have in common? **1707 - 70 - 61 - 29**

At first glance they look like a random sequence of numbers that have just been written down. In fact all of these numbers have a great significance for The War Graves Photographic Project in France.

1707 - This is the number of sites that have either been completed or allocated to a volunteer. There is still a long way to go before the whole of France is completed as there are over 2,900 CWGC sites in the country, but a huge inroad has been made in the last six months.

70 - Seventy is the number of Departments (similar to a County) in France where we have allocated or completed all sites. Unfortunately we still have Somme, Nord and Pas de Calais etc not on that list, so if any of you wish to take a holiday in France you know where to go!

61 - The number of sites completed last month. May is normally a reasonably quiet month for completions, with the main thrust on allocation of sites to volunteers – over 120 this year. We were, therefore, pleasantly surprised to have so many sites being sent in.

29 - Now the smallest number is a wonderful number. It is the number of sites completed in June by one volunteer and her “merry bunch of men” (sounds like they found some wine somewhere ???!).

One of our British volunteers took a week’s holiday in Calvados and completed the twenty-nine sites or, to put it another way, **1%** of all sites in France! Many thanks Anne and company.

1 - Not in the list above but a number I like very much. It is the minimum and if you wish maximum number of site(s) that we would like to allocate to you when you volunteer to photograph in France or in fact anywhere you are travelling (or living – more about that below). Not a large number is it?

One of the nice things that happened in the last few months was an increase in the number of French volunteers. Welcome aboard Michel, Gilles, Francis and Laurence. Laurence has taken the time to translate our Volunteers Guidance into French and we have already used these translated notes for new and existing volunteers in France and Belgium.

Over the last few months we have had nearly twenty new volunteers who live in France. Look out in future Newsletters for some of their stories (I hear one even had a chauffeur drive him around the cemetery to photograph a memorial).

Lastly, one more number **1220** - The number of sites still to be allocated and completed. The end is not in sight but the outlook is *GOOD*.

The War Graves Photographic Project is a voluntary organisation and can only achieve its aim of photographing all of the war graves around the world by volunteers helping. If you feel that you would like to help us in this task, please contact us at:

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