



Bowral



Mittagong



Berrima



Moss Vale

BERRIMA DISTRICT HISTORICAL & FAMILY HISTORY SOCIETY Inc.

Founded 1960

Located in the Wingecarribee Shire,
Southern Highlands of NSW

ABN 29 362 616 937

NEWSLETTER

No 520 September 2019



From the President's Desk

In 2018 Mount Gibraltar Landcare and Bushcare Group under the leadership of Jane Lemann set about raising funds for the rebuilding of the stone stairway

providing access from Cliff St Bowral to the old Bowral lookout and picnic area. The stone staircase is located within the Mount Gibraltar Heritage Reserve and is listed as a significant site by the NSW Heritage Council.

The original stairway constructed in the 1930s using depression labour consists of over 200 steps rising 70 metres. The steps were made from Bowral Trachyte obtained from the adjacent quarry. In recent years the stairway has fallen into disrepair necessitating a complete restoration. The local group undertook to raise the significant funding required to complete the restoration which included repairing or replacing steps, providing cement stabilised footpaths between flights of stairs and lining the edges with stone to clearly define the path and reduce erosion of the area. All work was carried out by professional stonemasons. The restoration work was recently completed and is now open for public access.

This project has been professionally executed and is a credit to all involved. Anyone willing and able to ascend the stairway will appreciate the scale of the project and its significance to the heritage of our local area.

Berrima Public School will be celebrating their sesquicentenary in November and our Berrima District Museum will be creating an in-house display. Using part of the Digital Gallery as well as school memorabilia, it will constitute a most worthwhile exhibition.

An opportunity will be presented at our next general meeting on 26 September to learn about the Local Studies Collection at the Wingecarribee Public Library in Bowral. Information Services Officer Billie Arnall will present an overview of her role and speak about some of the highlights of the collection. See page 3 for a more detailed description of Billie's presentation.

Ian Mackey

MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS DUE 1 OCTOBER

Please see page 2 for payment options

GENERAL MONTHLY MEETINGS

SEPTEMBER 2019:

Thursday 26 September at 2:00pm

SPEAKER:

Ms Billie Arnall, Information Services Officer, WSC Public Library, Local Studies Collection

OCTOBER 2019:

Thursday 24 October at 2:00pm

SPEAKER:

Frank O'Rourke on Archduke Franz Ferdinand visit in 1893

AFTERNOON TEA is served following the speaker.

Members please bring a plate or a donation.

NOTE: on the first Wednesday each month, at 1pm the **Family History Interest Group** meets at the Mittagong Archives



Senior Vice-President's Column



Bruce Moore

A fun 1950s holiday road trip

The occupants of the '53 Morris Minor in the photo

below look like three escapees from Callan Park Asylum for the Insane, quite petrified, bewildered and in urgent need of their medication.

Don't worry; it's how we all looked when passengers in this car in the 1950s.

The car stood for everything British and was seen in old B&W movies driven by stern schoolmasters, district nurses and local vicars. The first Morris was going to be named the Mosquito, a reminder of the famous WW2 wartime fighter-bomber. I see no resemblance at all.

My mate Ross owned one of these Morris Minors. At age 19, for our first really independent holiday away from home, we drove to Coolangatta for a week in this machine. Our destination was a holiday house (bunkhouse) called Stella Maris.

It took 3 days! We left Sydney stocked to the gunwales with brawn sandwiches, warm PJ's, sensible singlets (suggested by mothers) a tomahawk, entrenching tool and sleeping bag (recommended by fathers). None of these accessories was ever used.

Constantly stopping for refreshments, sampling orange juice at Mangrove Mountain, listening to the bellbirds near Gosford, enjoying hearty milk shakes at the Oaks at Hexham, we were in no hurry. Neither was the Morris.

Finally we camped at a mate's place in Forster where we bunked down on his verandah. After a solid sleep, we spent the second day slowly chugging up Bulahdelah Mountain, negotiating punts across swollen rivers at Port Macquarie, Kempsey and Maclean, finally reaching Lismore by nightfall.

From memory, we arrived over the border in Queensland at the end of the third day, just in good time for the ping-pong championships at the guesthouse.

After a week of surfing, learning the Greenmount rock, trips to Currumbin to see lorikeets land on your head, we headed home and did the drive all over again.

On today's highways, this car would be downright dangerous for the occupants and for other vehicles.

Once a Morris Minor rolled on a dirt road. The passengers were taken to hospital with *minor* injuries.

Berrima District Museum

THE STORY CENTRE

OPEN WEDNESDAY to SUNDAY
and EVERY DAY during NSW School
Holidays and on Public Holidays

HOURS

June, July and August: 10am to 3pm;
September to May: 10am to 4pm

Groups welcome at other times by
arrangement. Ph: Lyn 02 4862 1626
or John 0434 623 402.

Museum: Phone 4877 1130 or
email bdmuseum@bigpond.com

Managed and operated by members
of our Society who volunteer their
time and expertise.

Membership Details

Please note that all membership
enquiries and changes of address
details should be addressed to:

The Membership Secretary
c/- the Society's postal address
or email: bdhsarchives@gmail.com

MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS

That time again!!

Renewals are due from 1 October.

A renewal form is enclosed with this newsletter. We are happy to receive payment by cash, cheque or money order, OR funds can be deposited to our bank account, details of which are shown on the Renewal Form.

NOTE: If depositing funds to our bank account, please ensure that your initial and surname are used as a reference.

PLEASE RETURN YOUR COMPLETED RENEWAL FORM AND COPY OF BANK RECEIPT by mail or email, as this helps the Membership Secretary to keep track of the many payments to be processed.

Bundanoon Book & DVD Sale

On Saturday 19 October, a book and DVD sale will be held by Bundanoon History Group, from 9:00am to 4:00pm, in the Soldier's Memorial Hall, Railway Ave, Bundanoon.

If you have books or DVDs to donate, for pickup prior to the event please contact Peter Goulding 0419 639 531 or Don Gray 0429828765.

Proceeds will support the Bundanoon Heritage Trail. If you enjoy browsing, make a note of the date and head to the Bundanoon Hall, where you may discover some unexpected bargains.



1950s icon of its day. Photo: Bruce Moore

September Speaker: Billie Arnall

Billie Arnall is the Information Services Officer for the Local Studies Collection at Wingecarribee Public Library.

Billie will provide our meeting with an overview of her role and speak about some highlights of the Local Studies Collection.



The Local Studies Room opened in 2011, focusing initially on gathering and organising the material already held in the library collections covering the Wingecarribee Shire Council local government area.

Since then, through transfer of records from Council storage and by acquisition, the collection has grown to over 47,000 items – books, documents, photos and oral histories.

Wingecarribee Public Library partnered with NSW State Archives in 2013 to become one of only seven Regional Archives Centres in the state. This enables the library to manage and provide access to government records of local significance.

Several early infectious diseases registers are part of the collection, which may not sound like rivetting reading, but they provide a real insight into public health concerns of the day. They date from the late 1890s where childhood diseases such as measles and scarlet fever appear all too often, along with typhoid and tuberculosis.

The library has worked closely with our Society over many years with the collections complementing each other. Council and official records make up the major part of the library's holdings, whilst our archive holds more private records and material relating to people, plus an extensive photographic collection.

The Local Studies Room is located in the Old Town Hall, Bowral. It is open on Tuesday and Thursday afternoons from 2pm to 4pm when Billie is in attendance to help with research, or just show people around the bright and welcoming space.

The September meeting will be held in the BDH&FHS upstairs room at our Mittagong Research Centre.

Assistance will be provided for those who have difficulty getting up and down the stairs.

Tour to Wollondilly Heritage Centre

We have arranged a bus tour for members to the Wollondilly Heritage Centre at The Oaks on Sunday 13 October 2019. Cost is \$20 which covers the bus, morning tea and entry to the centre. Bring or buy your own lunch, tea and coffee will be available at lunch time. Bus will leave at 9:30am from the parking area at Mittagong Railway Station. Seats are limited and must be booked and paid for by 7 October.

Victims of John Lynch Remembered

To mark the graves of six local victims of John Lynch, the notorious murderer executed at Berrima in 1842, the Society has installed a plaque in the graveyard at All Saints Church of England, Sutton Forest.



On Sunday 8 September the plaque was unveiled and blessed by the Rector, Rev Jeremy Tonks. A group of our members joined with members of the All Saints congregation to witness the ceremony, followed by afternoon tea in the Church Hall.

The victims named on the plaque are Thomas Smith, labourer at Oldbury, John and Bridget Mulligan of Wombat Brush near Berrima, Bridget's two children John and Mary aged 18 and 13 years, and Kerns Landregan, who was murdered at Mittagong.

John Lynch (1813-1842) was an Irish convict who arrived in 1832, aged 19 years, and was an assigned servant at Oldbury in Sutton Forest. In 1835 he and two others were charged with the murder of Thomas Smith but were acquitted. Lynch then embarked on a robbing and pre-meditated killing spree between Sydney and Berrima, charming his victims into trusting him and then murdering them while they were unaware of his intentions. Of his ten victims, it was for the murder of Kerns Landregan that Lynch was convicted at Berrima Court House on 21 March 1842 and hanged the following day at Berrima Gaol.

BDHS Research Team Report

Frank M Mitchell

Recently we received an interesting enquiry together with a document prepared for a web page regarding an Italian prisoner of war who had engaged in farm work in the local district during WW 2.

As the 1945 Sun headline below reveals, many POWs spent time in Australia. Little is known, however, of those who worked in the local area.



Sun (Sydney), Sunday 7 October 1945, page 4

It was thus a pleasure to receive this enquiry and material. Usually it is our team that sends out the research, sometimes sadly without much thanks, so we are grateful to our contributor, Joanne Tapiolas.

Joanne wrote up the personal reminiscences of an elderly gentleman in Queensland whose uncle, Sebastiano Di Campli, was an Italian prisoner of war working on a Moss Vale farm/s from April 1944 until March 1945. Sebastiano had been captured as a POW at Bardia, Libya, Northern Africa. He was sent first to India, then later to Cowra, NSW, where prisoners of war were engaged in farm labouring tasks. Many of these men were recognised for their valuable contribution at such times of critical labour shortage.

Here are some extracts from Joanne's covering letter to our Society:

"Moss Vale had a prisoner of war control centre: N13 PWCC Moss Vale, which was an office/HQ staffed by Australian Military Forces personnel e.g. Captain, interpreter, truck driver and 2/3 NCOs. It was the thirteenth such centre set up in NSW to co-ordinate the allocation of Italian prisoners of war to farmers."

"My research has concentrated mainly on Queensland Italian prisoners of war and I am overwhelmed by the photos that Qld farming families have which were taken with their Italian POWs. I found that sometimes the memory needs a little jolt. I am also overwhelmed by the photos that Italian families have shared with me ... taken over 70 years ago on Queensland farms."

"For Sebastiano there are photos of him in India and Libya and his faded Australian red kit bag with his

POW number. Plus the family is lucky to have a Cowra group photo which he is in. Those six years that the Italians endured as prisoners of war in India and Australia obviously meant something to them. Sebastiano was a baker so this might mean something to a Moss Vale family and they probably had an Aussie name for him like Sam or Sibby."

"My research is a personal interest and, where possible, I try to connect people to this history both in Australia and Italy. I would appreciate any assistance or suggestions you can provide."

- Kind regards, Joanne Tapiolas, Townsville, Qld.

We wonder if any readers have recollections or a special interest regarding local farming families and the Italian prisoners of war? If so the Research team would be pleased to hear from you, and can provide a link and connection to the contributor.

Family History Group Meetings

Denise Mackey

On the first Wednesday of each month our vibrant, enthusiastic Family History Group meets at the Archives Research Centre to discuss anything and everything relating to our family histories.

Ideas are exchanged, strategies suggested, inroads made with some of those long term challenges commonly known as "brickwalls" sustaining deep impressions. Resources at the Archives are used in our quest to conquer with much assistance and expertise exchanged in our self-help group. Our research skills have been further expanded on the occasions when some of the group have generously shared their knowledge of specific topics including the Sands Directory, English Family History, Trove and Irish Family History. In August we revisited "brickwalls" and at our September gathering we followed up the suggested strategies and ideas using the resources at the Archives.



Several FHG members sharing information at the September meeting: Denise Powers, Marg Muntz, Alan Barker, Alan Deck, Paula O'Rourke and Ian Mackey.

60 years ago, a local tragedy averted

The story of a school bus in difficulty at the Bong Bong River crossing in July 1959

The local district is often inundated by rain. On Wednesday 22 July 1959 the *Southern Mail* reported that torrential rain had begun to fall about 9pm on the Monday night. The rain and wind caused considerable damage, particularly in Bowral, with many sheds unroofed and houses flooded. Trees were uprooted, falling across roads and fences and damaging electricity and telephone lines. Sheep were marooned on the Bong Bong River's southern bank.

A school bus from Moss Vale, while crossing the Bong Bong Bridge (built in 1916) around 8:30am on the Tuesday, was carried off the bitumen by a strong current on the Bowral side and became stuck in the water, leaning at a dangerous angle. Tragedy loomed for the trapped passengers. One of these was 15-year-old Moss Vale schoolgirl Narelle Bower, nee Hodge. Her reminiscence of that day follows here.

"It was not unusual for the Bong Bong River to flood, it happened most winters. Water would stretch for as far as one could see across the paddocks. But this time was different. Robertson had 740 points (188 mm) of rain the day before, sending a 10-foot flood of water down the river.

In those days there were two buses from Moss Vale to Bowral in the morning and returning in the afternoon, taking children and a few adults to and from Bowral's schools and businesses. The first bus at 8.25am crossed the river without incident. Five minutes later, the second bus with 35 children (I was one of these) and 10 young business women on board, drove through the flooded road on the Moss Vale side of the bridge, but on the Bowral side – although the water was not very deep – the current was stronger and the bus was forced into a ditch at the side of the road, and there it stayed, tilted at an angle, the driver unable to open the door and the floodwaters rising. I was 14 years old at the time; the following is as I clearly remember it.

The driver told us to move to the higher side of the bus. Everyone was quiet and well-behaved. Suzanne Badgery decided that, since we obviously weren't going to get to school on time, she was going to have her lunch there and then, and proceeded to open her sandwiches and eat them.

My mother told me that Mr Everett Hindmarsh was working up on the hill at *Wongabri* and saw what happened. He telephoned both the Moss Vale and

Bowral police, but both of them told him to phone the other station. In desperation, he phoned the Bowral ambulance station which contacted the NRMA and, after some time, four ambulances and two tow trucks arrived, with a rescue squad including Ambulance Superintendent Napper, Kevin George of Gregory Motors (the NRMA Service Station) and Detective Sergeant Woodman.

They strung a rope from the flood post to the bus, and then from the bus to a post on the bridge. We climbed out the rear exit window and were carried, one by one, across to the middle section of the bridge. I remember saying to Mr Napper "It's all right, I can walk across", but he said firmly "I will carry you", and it was probably a good thing he did, as the water was up to his waist and flowing strongly. At that stage, the bus was in over 4 feet of water. Once we reached the bridge, we were able to walk through the shallower stretch of water on the Moss Vale side of the bridge.

Apparently, the front wheel was close to going down the steep embankment. If this had happened, it could have been serious. The last person out of the bus was the driver. He must have been in shock because he simply sat on a rock by the side of the road and did not speak to anyone. I don't remember how we all got home. I think another bus dropped us off at our homes.

When I got home, my tunic was wet through so Mum hung it up beside the fire. I had the rest of the day off school. Later that morning, Wendy Whatman (Gorham) came to my house and said she had left her gloves in the bus, and did I want to see if they were still there. We walked down to the river. The bus was by then parked by the (Moss Vale) side of the road. Muddy water weed was draped over the floor and seats. The water had reached to about 6 feet. Wendy found her gloves under the seat – and a frog as well."

The present-day Bong Bong bridge opened in 1975.

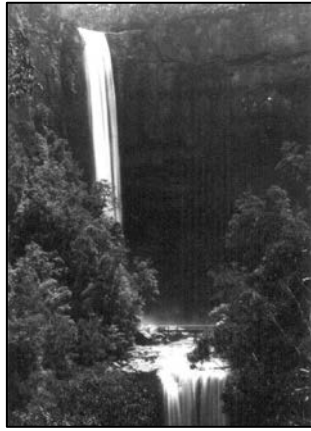


This photo appeared in the *Moss Vale Post* on 23 July 1959 with the caption 'Ambulance officers (left to right): Kevin Savell, Jim Nicholson and Superintendent Arthur Napper wading through the flooded river. The stranded bus is seen behind them.'

Misadventure with lorry at Belmore

The following story was most terribly real for a local Bowral sawmiller in April 1948. It made front page news on 16 April in the *Goulburn Evening Post* under the heading 'Lorry Crashes over Belmore Falls'.

"A Fordson six-wheel table top lorry lies at the bottom of the 70-foot hole at the foot of Belmore Falls, and the only evidences that are left are fragments of the body and two seat cushions that are floating on the surface of the water. The driver, William Johnstone of Johnstone's sawmills, Bowral, is most fortunate that he was not in the cabin when the vehicle went over the edge of the precipice on its 385 feet crash into the pool at the bottom.



About 9:15pm the driver was proceeding from Robertson towards Fitzroy Falls and had reached the decline leading to the crest of the falls when he experienced a blow-out in the front off-side tyre. Being without a spare, he decided to run the lorry off the road into a small break in the scrub, which is usually availed of by picnickers.

He left the cabin to inspect the rear of the lorry to ensure that it was clear of the road for passing traffic, and as he did so the vehicle moved forward, the front wheels, which were on the edge of a clump of undergrowth, dropping off a shelf of rock on which they were standing onto a lower ledge.

The driver was still unaware that the front of the lorry had approached as closely as it had to the edge of the cliff overlooking the falls, owing to the presence of ferns and undergrowth.

He again mounted the seat and put the engine into reverse, in an attempt to get the lorry back on level ground, but it appeared to be riding about the point of balance, and the driving wheels spun around without gripping. The driver then decided to leave the vehicle in that position until next day, when he would return in another lorry and tow it out. He placed the gears in reverse before leaving.

On his return the following day the lorry had disappeared, and wheel tracks showed that it had moved off in his absence and crashed over the 385 feet precipice into the pool at the bottom of the falls. An inspection showed that the lorry had balanced on

the base of a tree fern which had given away during the night, allowing the vehicle to move forward. It is understood that the matter has been taken over by the insurance company, but no attempt has yet been made to salvage the lorry."

One can only imagine the commotion echoing through the gorge as the lorry plummeted down into the pool, witnessed only by nature's night life. A week later the *Southern Mail* (Bowral) advised that a diver had failed to locate the lorry resting in the deep pool at the foot of Belmore Falls.



Flowing out of the deep pool at the foot of the first drop, where the lorry sank, the water becomes the second drop at Belmore Falls. Photo: Philip Morton

Falling tree kills young lad and horse

During wild and blustery weather on Sunday 12 July 1891 a terrible accident occurred at Mittagong that resulted in the death of a local youth and his horse.

The deceased was Michael William Morris, son of John and Elizabeth Morris of Woodlands, a property on the Berrima Road south of Mittagong, just past the Wombeyan Caves turn-off. The lad had attended Sunday Mass at Mittagong's Catholic Church.

The *Bowral Free Press* of 15 July 1891 reported the accident as follows: "A melancholy tale has to be told of the boisterous weather on Sunday morning last and which we regret to say has brought sorrow and bereavement to the home of a well-known and well-respected family in this district. In the pride of health and strength, buoyant with youth and hope, this poor lad was struck down with terrible suddenness while returning from the House of God."

“Immediately after Mass, between 10 and 11 o'clock, he started on horseback for home. He rode along the Berrima Road quite regardless of the terrible violence of the wind, and with no thought of danger in his young heart, his only desire being to reach home, but this was not to be for as he was approaching the ironworks, a tree crashed down with terrible suddenness on top of boy and horse.”

“No warning had he, no chance of escape. It takes some time to relate these terrible occurrences, but unfortunately they take place very quickly.”



Ironmines Creek bridge on the Berrima Road, Mittagong, c1900, being the vicinity of the accident and where now is located the Mittagong RSL Club carpark entrance

“The tree was blown up by the roots, and as it fell across the road one of the limbs struck young Morris, inflicting terrible injuries, while the main portion of the tree fell right on the horse, killing him instantly. The accident was witnessed by Mrs Loseby, who was at her son's place, and she at once ran and told her son, John W Loseby, that an accident had occurred.”

“With that kindness and willingness to render assistance which is characteristic of the family, Loseby quickly went to the spot, which was about 300 yards from his house, and there found the boy lying alongside the horse, while the poor animal was pinned to the ground by the tree. He thought the boy was dead, as he noticed that blood had flowed from a wound on the head and from his nose and that it had run about six feet along the road.”

“To carry the body to the nearest hotel was Loseby's first thought and the boy was carefully and tenderly lifted. It was then discovered that, although unconscious, he was still alive. Loseby at once called out to his mother to go for a doctor, which she quickly did, while he with every possible tenderness carried the sufferer to Kingham's Coach and Horses Hotel. Dr Smythe arrived soon after and found that the boy was suffering from a serious fracture of the skull and other injuries. He held out no hopes for the

poor boy's recovery and less than an hour later Michael passed away. After death it was found that in addition to the fracture of the skull, the boy's arm was also broken and there were many other severe injuries about the body and head.”

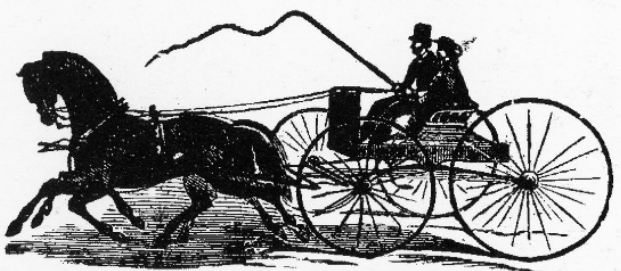
The *BFP's* report continued that “the news of the terrible occurrence was quickly spread about, and on all sides genuine sorrow was expressed. Among the first to hear of the accident was Thomas Morris, of the Exchange Hotel, and he told the police, little thinking at the time that it was his brother's son that had been so suddenly killed. During the day residents of Bowral and Mittagong visited the scene of the accident. Those who did so saw nothing more than a horse lying dead under the tree, and the life's blood of poor young Morris, but it conveyed some idea of the fearful suddenness of the event. The tree fell across the horse's loins and broke both hind legs.”

“A magisterial enquiry was held at the Coach and Horses Hotel, Mittagong, on the Monday evening, before Mr H Childs, JP, when evidence similar to the above facts was elicited, and a verdict returned that the deceased was accidentally killed by a falling tree on the main road at Mittagong.”

On the Tuesday morning the funeral and a special service for Michael William Morris took place at the Catholic Church, Mittagong. This building, which opened in 1889, remains in service today. The cortege then progressed to Berrima, with a large number of relatives and sympathising friends taking part in the sad procession.

Coach and Horses Hotel, Mittagong.

THOMAS MORRIS.



Best Brands of Spirits, Wines and Beers kept in Stock.
FIRST-CLASS ACCOMMODATION.
 Board and Lodging; Good Table kept.—Billiards
 Good Stabling.—Inspection Invited

The Coach & Horses Hotel was at the corner of Berrima Rd and Pioneer Sts, Mittagong. Thomas Morris had been its licensee (1886 to 1891) prior to holding the Exchange Hotel licence. Fred Kingham was publican at the Coach & Horses in 1891. The building was de-licensed in 1896, and used as a boarding house until demolished in the 1900s.

- History articles compiled by Philip Morton

Berrima District Historical & Family History Society Inc

PO Box 131 Mittagong NSW 2575 ☎ Telephone (02) 4872 2169

email: bdhsarchives@gmail.com ☎ web: www.berrimadistricthistoricalsociety.org.au

- ARCHIVES:** Cnr Old Hume Highway and Bowral Road, MITTAGONG.
OPEN: Mondays, Tuesdays 10am-4pm and Saturdays 10am-1pm. Closed Public Holidays.
Library collection contains reference books, journals and a general collection.
- MUSEUM:** Market Place, Berrima. Tel: 02 4877 1130. Email: bdmuseum@bigpond.com
OPEN: 10.00am to 4.00pm, Wednesdays to Sundays, and during school and public holidays.
Museum Committee: Harlan Hall (Project Manager), Lyn Hall (Graphics, Exhibitions), Sylvia Carless (Roster), Harold Wall (Human Resources) and John Schweers.
- MEMBERSHIP:** Any person wanting to join the Society may do so at any stage during the year by completing a form and paying the appropriate fee. Joining Fee \$10.00 – Single \$25.00 – Family \$35.00.
- AFFILIATIONS:** Royal Australian Historical Society, Museums Australia Inc and NSW Association of Family History Societies.

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