

WILTSHIRE BOTANICAL SOCIETY



Barbara Evelyn Nicholson Ecosystem Artwork Posters 1974. Print. Chalk Grasslands
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Edited by Martin Buckland

EDITOR'S FIRST PAGE



Summer 2026

When I last wrote to you just a couple of months ago, I advised you that the Flora Committee was working hard toward the completion of the new Flora of Wiltshire. At the time we had completed around 80% of the species accounts as well as finishing many of the other articles pertaining to the county.

Since then, we have achieved nearly 95% of our goal however, this would not have been possible without the creative skills of WBS member, Wayne Ford, who is designing the layout of the whole book and taking us through to publication. As you may well have guessed from this issue's cover, we are very near completion, and you are the first to see the cover image of the Flora. A couple of sample page mock-ups can be

seen on the following page.

We are also in the process of negotiating with Summerfield Books, who will have the sole rights to sell and distribute the books on behalf of the society after the following offer.

The Flora of Wiltshire 2000 – 2025 is expected to cost around £45.00 plus postage and packing however, there will be a pre-publication offer to members and friends of the society of 20% off the full price although the actual cost and discount have yet to be finalised.

At this stage we need to know how many of you will want to purchase a copy. This will help us to decide on the print run, which will affect the price. So, if you expect to order a copy then please send an email to Martin Buckland at martinbuckland8@gmail.com or you can write to him at WBS, 40 Middle Ground, Royal Wootton Bassett, SN4 8LJ by 31st July 2026 please.

Diary date: Please reserve Saturday, March 13th 2027, on your calendar; not only will this be our AGM, but it will be the official launching of the Flora. Members will be able to collect their pre-ordered copies fresh from the printers.

Other news: By the time you read this newsletter we will be at the half-way stage in our annual field meetings programme. One of the trips, at Morgan's Hill, had to be cancelled due to forecasted horrendous weather, otherwise meetings have been reasonably well attended and thoroughly enjoyed. Other pleasant news is that our membership continues to grow slowly. After the hiatus of 2024 when we sadly lost several members due to a variety of reasons, the membership has risen over the 100 mark once again.

Write-ups: Member, Julie Wheeler has provided us with a lovely read on her experiences at the Broken Bridges meeting which is just what we'd like our members to write about. So, I'm calling on other prospective authors, can you write your take on a field meeting? Please volunteer, we'd love to hear from you, and you do not need to be a great botanist to contribute. We want to hear about *your* experience, what you enjoyed and what surprised you. If you're unsure of some or all of the scientific names then don't worry, these can be filled in later. Go on, have a go and volunteer to author at a future meeting and let us know what was exciting to you. – Ed.

Papaveraceae

Papaver

Papaver atlanticum (Rat.) Cass. *orchestrate*
Atlas Poppy
 A perennial of garden origin which escapes and is generally found in peaty cracks, roadides and waste ground, usually close to habitation. An increasing species.
 Mural count 1981-1999: 3
 Mural count 2000-2025: 13
 Mural change: +333%



Papaver somniferum L. *orchestrate*
Opium Poppy
 Includes *P. orientalis* subsp. *arsinifolium*. An annual grown in gardens and as a commercial crop. Its cultivation near houses and across the countryside is reflected in its widespread occurrence in the wild.
 Mural count 1981-1999: 114
 Mural count 2000-2025: 344
 Mural change: +202%



Papaver rhoeas L. *orchestrate*
Corncock Poppy
 An arable plant which once colonised fields in summer. Now much reduced in frequency and distribution, particularly in Salisbury Plain and the Marlborough area. Its occurrence on waste ground possibly accounts for its seemingly widespread distribution but agricultural intensification has brought about a marked decline in population size.
 Total count 1981-1999: 778
 Total count 2000-2025: 947
 Total change: +17%
 Mural count 2000-2025: 500



Papaver dubium agg. *orchestrate*
Include *P. dubium*
P. dubium is an annual plant that is most usually associated with arable land, particularly on lighter soils. It now also be found as a casual on disturbed roadides and waste ground. Until 2000, the two species *P. dubium* and *P. hensei* were classified as subspecies. *P. dubium* subsp. *dubium* and *P. dubium* subsp. *hensei*. They are morphologically very similar but the one very



can be differentiated by the size of the very early seedling. This is a feature that not all records check for and therefore *P. dubium* agg. has been used to cover potential mis-recording.
 Total count 1981-1999: 383
 Total count 2000-2025: 438
 Total change: +14%
 Mural count 2000-2025: 330



Papaver leicopalae L. *orchestrate*
Yellow-faced Poppy
 It persists along field margins, disturbed soils, and roadside verges. Following agricultural intensification and ground disturbance, where competition allows seedlings to establish readily. Accounts in the previous list may have included the similar *Papaver dubium* but records awareness of the identification features has undoubtedly contributed to the increase in records.
 Mural count 1981-1999: 31
 Mural count 2000-2025: 94
 Mural change: +303%



Papaver rhoeas, Dilton Marsh, Wiltshire
Papaver rhoeas (Corncock Poppy) in flower. Its vivid red petals marking disturbed ground and arable fields in early summer. Photograph by Paul Bowler

Papaver carmelicum L.

Witch Poppy

Naturally scarce. An introduction in Wiltshire, widely grown in gardens, from which it has escaped and naturalised. Found mostly in shaded situations, such as the base of walls in urban settings, often in cracks and sheltered crevices, and occasionally along shaded paths, damp corners, and old masonry, which serves its preference in the soil for woodland and cliff habitats, where it is recognised, protected and with limited direct sunlight and consistent moisture, allowing it to persist in otherwise marginal sites.
 Mural count 1981-1999: 11
 Mural count 2000-2025: 98
 Mural change: +795%



Roemeria

Rough Poppy

CP Red List: VU
 VC1 RPR, Rare, VCA RPR, Common. Regenerates free-draining chalk or sandy soils. Found in arable areas and largely restricted to south Wiltshire. Northern records are from Babin Farm, Bishop Cleeve (TK 4000) and the Speen side (VC 4000). The increase in records may reflect agricultural intensification schemes benefiting field-edge conservation.
 Mural count 1981-1999: 81
 Mural count 2000-2025: 150
 Mural change: +83%

Roemeria argemone L. & C. *orchestrate*

Pearly Poppy

CP Red List: EN, England Red List: EN

VC1 RPR, Rare, VCA RPR, Common

A species of free-draining chalk or sandy soils.

Once widespread, it is now largely confined to

arable field edges and corners, where the

application of herbicides has left some areas

relatively undisturbed. It formerly thrived

along margins and areas of reduced

competition, often persisting where traditional

practices have continued. It has undergone a

marked decline in the north of the county,

with records all but ceasing around the late

1990s, suggesting a significant contraction in

range. Populations in the south, however,

remain comparatively stable, with thresholds

in suitable habitats where conditions continue

to support its persistence.
 Mural count 1981-1999: 43
 Mural count 2000-2025: 87
 Mural change: +102%

Roemeria argemone

CP Red List: VU

VC1 RPR, Rare, VCA RPR, Common

Regenerates free-draining chalk or sandy soils.

Found in arable areas and largely restricted to

south Wiltshire. Northern records are from

Babin Farm, Bishop Cleeve (TK 4000) and

the Speen side (VC 4000). The increase in

records may reflect agricultural intensification

schemes benefiting field-edge conservation.
 Mural count 1981-1999: 81
 Mural count 2000-2025: 150
 Mural change: +83%

Chelidonium

Greater Celandine

CP Red List: VU

VC1 RPR, Rare, VCA RPR, Common

A plant of walls and other man-made

structures, as well as urban back and waste

sites, where it readily exploits disturbed and

fertile soils. Usually linked to habitation,

it is often found in towns, villages, and along

transport corridors. Favoring dry, open

conditions with reduced competition and

freely draining substrates. It commonly

establishes in cracks in masonry, along

pavement edges, and in neglected corners

where periodic disturbance prevents

dominance by more vigorous species. Scattered

throughout the county, and often locally

abundant, it shows a clear association with

built environments and areas of regular

human activity. There is, however, a notable

reduction in the south-west and of

Marlborough, where suitable habitats appear

more limited, more intensively managed, or

Introduction

Environmental Stewardship in Wiltshire

By Pat Woodruff

Nature conservation in Wiltshire, as across the rest of the UK, depends on a wide range of organisations working in partnership. These include government bodies, large and small charities and very many private landowners. This network forms a complex web – one that is generally strong and capable of withstanding minor changes. Ultimately though it is the government, through its system of grants to farmers, foresters, charitable trusts and others, that determines the direction of public spending on nature and the countryside. The impact of farming techniques on biodiversity is currently much discussed and the article in the previous section of this book, concerning the fate of many of our native arable weeds, underlines the importance of this subject.

The following pages have been provided by individuals representing a range of organisations whose work influences conservation across Wiltshire. One body in particular, the Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO), part of the Ministry of Defence, plays an unusually large role in conserving both flora and landscape in this county through its work on Salisbury Plain. The species accounts and maps which form the main body of this book are testimony to the significance of this large tract of land on the distribution of much of Wiltshire's flora. In contrast, smaller charities such as the Species Recovery Trust operate on a very different scale but their work is no less valuable. All have a part to play, and it is hoped that the diversity of work carried out by each of these organisations stimulates the reader and provides optimism for the future of the important habitats and diverse flora which Wiltshire is fortunate to support.

Overview of Natural England conservation work in Wiltshire
 Natural England is the Government's adviser for the natural environment, with day-to-day delivery covering protected sites, agri-environment schemes, designations, sustainable development casework, licensing, Species Recovery Programme, Local Nature

Galopsis argentea, RSPB Winterbourne Down, Wiltshire
Galopsis argentea (Red Hemp-nettle) growing against the side of a stone wall.

Winterbourne Down – a scarce arable specialist of light, chalky soils. Its tiny stems and vivid pink-purple flowers marking one of the last strongholds of a plant once more widespread across southern Britain.

Photograph by Patrick Gasham



WWT Green Lane Wood

April 25th 2026

Leader: Matt Calloway

A group of 17 people met for the first meeting of the year; a mix of Green Lane Wood volunteers and WBS members that included a couple of new faces. Matt Calloway, site warden and our leader for the day, gave us a brief history of the wood and how it was obtained by the Wiltshire Trust. [It was left to the Trust in 1999 by its previous owner who used to live in a cabin within the wood.]

First meetings are often more of a social affair, however on entering the wood we instantly got down to botany matters with a quick lesson on sedges; finding Remote Sedge *Carex remota*, Pendulous Sedge *C. pendula* and Wood Sedge *C. silvatica* in close proximity. The main footpath was quite sheltered from the sun which allowed Lesser Celandine *Ficaria verna* to continue to show in full flower whereas elsewhere it had all but dried up and disappeared for the season. It also allowed Kat to search for any of the various forms including one that has its bulbils in the axils of its stems rather than below ground; I don't believe she was successful.

Another plant relishing the sheltered path and found in some abundance was Goldilocks Buttercup *Ranunculus auricomus*. The flower petals of this species are typically distorted, poorly developed or just missing (I don't know why) so it was pleasing to see some Goldilocks buttercups looking 'proper' for a change, photo right.



Wood Speedwell *Veronica montana* was plentiful in places and many of us stopped to admire a wide, flowering patch of it. There were odd clumps of Hairy St John's-wort *Hypericum hirsutum*, although not in flower but they stood out from the other vegetation with a silvery shimmer. It was also pleasing to be able to show off a small population of Town Hall Clock *Adoxa moschatellina* that still had a few flower heads visible. There were quite a few flowering Primroses *Primula vulgaris* and Bluebells *Hyacinthoides non-scripta* were plentiful in places and looking particularly attractive mixed together with copious amounts of Greater Stitchwort *Stellaria holostea*.



Walking out into an open area, a fine, crisp Early Spotted Orchid *Orchis mascula*, photo left, was a delight for many. Overall, the paths were very dry to walk along but we came across an area that would normally have been a lot damper given away by False Fox-sedge *Carex otrubae*, Common Comfrey *Symphytum officinale*, Jointed Rush *Juncus articulatus*, Water Mint *Mentha aquatica* and Meadowsweet *Filipendula armeria*. Matt paused by a pond to explain that there were several round ponds in the wood that were believed to have been the result of bombs dropped in the second world war; presumably intended for Trowbridge.

Richard pointed out the differences in fern croziers between Male-fern *Dryopteris felix-mas* and Soft-shield Fern *Polystichum setiferum*. With the Male the leaf unravels and keeps a 'P' shape

whilst Soft-shield retains its bent over, crozier appearance even as the leaf unfurls. It was also possible to compare the differences of Wild Strawberry *Fragaria vesca* and Barren Strawberry *Potentilla sterilis*; Wild Strawberry's terminal leaflet has a pointed appearance with the centre tooth longer than the others whereas in Barren Strawberry the terminal leaflet is truncated and looks like the level teeth of a saw blade

Three-nerved Sandwort *Moehringia trinervia*, below left, growing on a rotten log was a new species to many and a surprise to them in finding out it wasn't Common Chickweed *Stellaria media*.

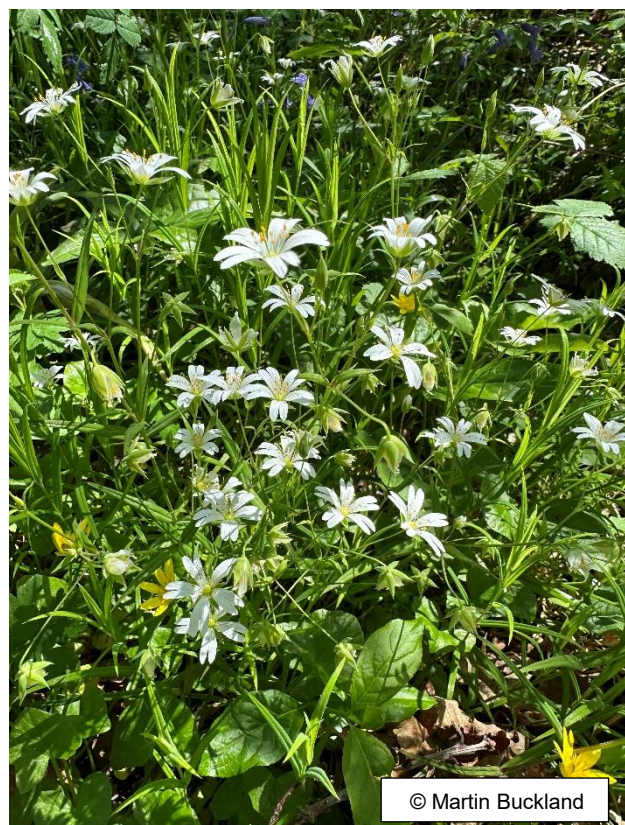
We ended our visit in the wood with possibly the nicest plant of the day – Solomon's seal *Polygonatum multiflorum*, below right.

With thanks to Matt and his colleagues for giving up their valuable time

Martin Buckland



Above left: *Moehringia trinervia*, above right: *Polygonatum multiflorum*, right: *Stellaria holostea*



Chittoe

May 24th 2026

Leader: Fran Sinclair

This meeting had to have visiting members restricted as parking at our destination was severely limited. As it was, just nine of us attended for a day's botanising in acidic heath, arable, marsh and wooded habitats.

As we gathered for the start, we admired a statuesque Welled Thistle *Carduus crispus* (nearly 2m high) and a very tall (over a metre) Rough Chervil *Chaerophyllum temulum* at the lane verge. At the off we entered through a gate into the first field that appeared to be covered in fine grasses with barely a Rye-grass *Lolium spp.* in site. What appeared to be a lawn of Red Fescue *Festuca rubra* turned out to be a mixture with much Squirreltail Fescue *Vulpia bromoides* along with other grasses including Sweet Vernal-grass *Anthoxanthum odoratum*. Carpeting the ground below the grasses were large patches of Lesser Trefoil *Trifolium dubium* and dotted around were other patches of the rusty-red inflorescences of Sheep's-sorrel *Rumex acetosella*.

The following field was to be one of the main destinations for the day however it turned out to be more than a little disappointing. One of the reasons for selecting this outing was for the array of mixed arable plants discovered here and three weeks previous on a recce they were still present in abundance however, today we were greeted with a field that had not only been herbicided but surrounded with a double fence of electric wiring. Fran was gutted and not a little put out as were we all. We were left looking for plants just outside the perimeter instead. We found the occasional Common Stork's-bill *Erodium cicutarium* and a flowering Bugloss *Anchusa arvensis* that helped the mood as did the odd Marsh Cudweed *Gnaphalium uliginosum* and Corn Mint *Mentha arvensis*.

Walking down a slope we entered into an area of vegetation that was unfamiliar to most of us; it was a community of Wood Club-Rush *Scirpus sylvaticus* sprinkled with patches of Great Horsetail *Equisetum telematea* and Lesser Pond-sedge *Carex acutiformis*. Amongst these plants we found Bog Stitchwort *Stellaria alsine*, Yellow Pimpernel *Lysimachia nemorum* and a surprise for many of us, much Changing Forget-me-not *Myosotis discolor*.

It was a very warm day, and we stopped for lunch under some much need shade after which we realised we had been sitting among silky heads of Downy Oat-grass *Avenula pubescens*. On an adjacent bank Spring Sedge *Carex caryophyllea* was found along with Thyme-leaved Sandwort *Arenaria serpyllifolia* and Lady's Bedstraw *Galium verum*. Strangely, there were also several large clumps of Spiked Sedge *Carex spicata* that must have been drawing their moisture from an unseen water source for the bank was quite dry.

Into our last field and in the lee of an Alder carr woodland was a linear patch of wet ground containing scores of Cuckooflower *Cardamine pratensis* that still looked fresh in spite of the heat



and time of the year, also Jointed Rush *Juncus articulatus*, Soft Rush *Juncus effusus* and the very similar Compact Rush *Juncus conglomeratus*. On the slope walking back to the cars were many Pignut *Conopodium majus* flower heads. A quick stop in the shade of an ancient Oak together with an aged Birch and then we made our way home, quite satisfied.

Our thanks go to Fran who stepped in as leader at short notice.



Above: a landscape full of Wood Club-rush; below: Wood Club-rush flower head © both Sam Braine; below right: Bog Stitchwort © Martin Buckland



Broken Bridges, Harnham

May 31st 2026

Leaders: Anne Appleyard & Pat Woodruffe

Fran Sinclair and I arrived in Harnham to be greeted by a small but welcoming bunch including leaders Pat and Anne; David Riddle, Trustee of the Broken Bridges Reserve Trust, and Peter Thompson, a member of the Advisory Group, also joined us. David spent a little time talking about the layout of East, Middle, West and South Meadows, about the status and history of the site, the Trust's future plans and the challenges they face. Their major problem being that there has been little or no management of the meadows for many years. There are, however, plans to introduce cutting and grazing for the first time in many years. Middle Meadow was cut last year, although unfortunately they were unable to take away arisings. East Meadow has been cut more frequently over the last 15 years; hence it is less sedge dominated. It was previously under different farm management.

We set off down the wooded path of Gypsy Lane and then along the Broken Bridges footpath beside Middle Meadow. Almost straight away we could see, in and across the ditch, among the copious Hemlock Water-dropwort *Oenanthe crocata*, spikes of Yellow Loosestrife *Lysimachia vulgaris*, though not yet in flower. Once in Middle Meadow with Hemlock Water-dropwort all around the perimeter and in many places invading the central areas of the field we waded through a mass of sedges, nettles, and tall grasses, photo right, including Tufted Hair-grass *Deschampsia cespitosa* and tall False Oat-grass *Arrhenatherum elatius*. Interestingly in the fields that had been cut last year the vegetation height was about waist level, in the others it was chest level. So already small changes are evident.



We spread out and started to scan for previously sighted species and hopefully more. We were soon rewarded by a striking stand of Meadow-Rue *Thalictrum flavum* in full flower. Then as we got our eyes in we spotted many more species which were not daunted by the surrounding tall and at times thuggish vegetation: Marsh-bedstraw *Galium palustre*, Common Hemp-nettle *Galeopsis tetrahit*, Marsh-marigold *Caltha palustris*, Cut-leaved Geranium *Geranium dissectum*, Water Forget-me-not *Myosotis scorpioides*, striking plants of Tufted Vetch *Vicia cracca*, Greater Bird's-foot-trefoil *Lotus pedunculatus*, and many more, the most noteworthy recorded by Anne.

photo left: *Thalictrum flavum* in foreground with *Oenanthe crocata* at the rear © Fran Sinclair



Oenanthe fistulosa © Pat Woodruffe

I was delighted to see for my first time Tubular Water-dropwort *Oenanthe fistulosa*, photo left, and I know others were relieved to see that it was still present. I was also intrigued to see how some species competed by growing much taller than I would have expected, maybe with the help of the extra nutrients. Notably the vetches, the Cut-leaved Geranium, and a Ground-ivy *Glechoma hederacea* that Peter could not immediately identify because of its unexpected height! As we wandered through, we could see flattened patches where probably deer had created well-hidden spaces to lie. We saw only a few butterflies, but Peacock butterfly caterpillars were seen as black squirming masses on many a patch of nettles, docks were decimated by masses of Green Dock-beetle larvae with the occasional metallic green adult, and there were a good many day flying moths, including the beautiful Burnet Companion. Bush crickets and other insects flew or jumped aside from time to time as we

walked through and birds serenaded us from the hedgerows and woodland. So, we were definitely not alone!

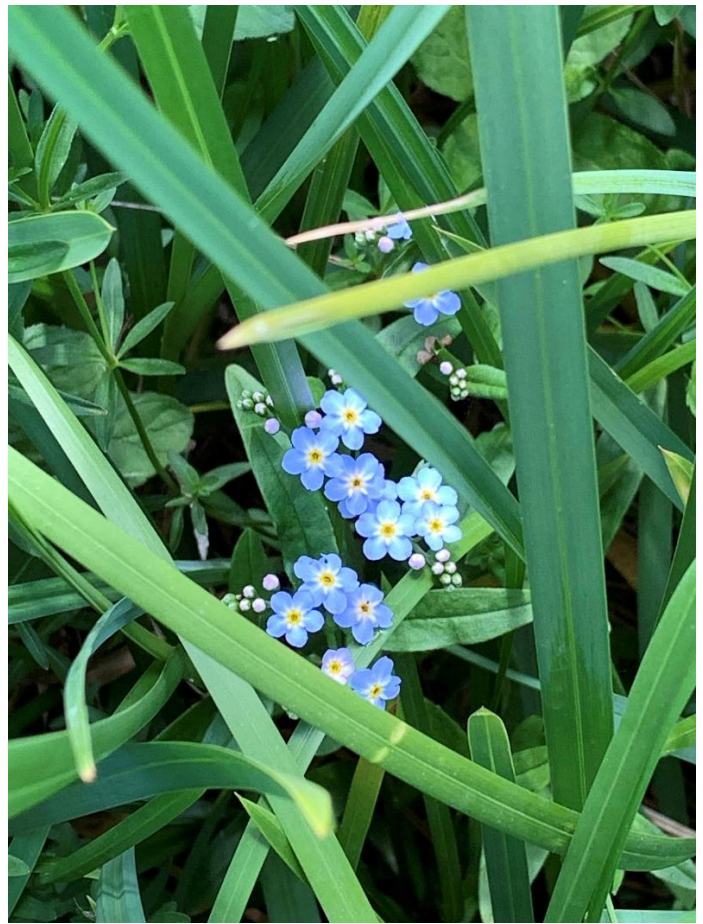
Just as I thought we had seen it all, in the last field, South Meadow, David found two delightful little Southern Marsh-orchids *Dactylorhiza praetermissa*. Satisfied that we had found what we hoped for and more, we wandered back down the track. At one point the groups' line suddenly became a huddle as Fran had seen a rather large and impressive longhorn beetle. We each reached for our various apps on phones and concluded that we were most probably looking at a Variable Longhorn Beetle *Stenocorus meridianus*. Finally, at the end of the track by the road we found a very interesting patch of.... is it tormentil or creeping cinquefoil?? Four petals and five petals? A hybrid? But fertile.... So, it must be *Potentilla anglica*. What more could I have asked for! Plant species I had not seen before, interesting insects, lunch in the sunshine, and good companions who, as usual, were always happy to translate into the English names and share their knowledge and expertise with me. Thank you everyone concerned for a very enjoyable time.



Broken Bridges landscape © Fran Sinclair

Broken Bridges, Harnham

Gallery



Above left: *Dactylorhiza praeterrissima* © Pat Woodruffe; above right: *Myosotis scorpioides* © Fran Sinclair; below left: a raft of Peacock butterfly caterpillars © Fran Sinclair; below centre: Burnet Companion moth © Julie Wheeler; below right: *Stenocorus meridianus* © Pat Woodruffe



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