

St Mary & All Saints, Droxford - Statement of Significance

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www.friendsofdroxfordchurch.org.uk



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Section 1: Brief history and description of the church building, contents, churchyard and setting

Church Building

St Wilfrid may have established a religious foundation at Droxford during his mission to the Meon Valley between the years 681 to 686, but no evidence exists of an Anglo-Saxon building from that period.

The first historical mention of Droxford was not until 826, when the manor was granted by King Egbert to the Prior and Monks of the Old Monastery at Winchester. In 1086 the Domesday Book described 'Drocheneford' as being held by the Bishop of Winchester for the benefit of his monks, and having at that time a church valued at 20s.

It is thought that the present church began as a simple two-cell Norman building, with just a nave and chancel, and possibly an apse. The chancel arch, with its distinctive zig-zag carving, may date from about 1150 to 1160, and stands in its original position, but was raised by about four feet during the 19th century.



The north aisle and north chapel were first built around the end of the 12th century, and the south aisle and south chapel early in the 13th century, the Norman doorways being moved to the outer walls of the aisles at the same times. The pointed arches of the north and south arcades rise from substantial rectangular pillars, which are sections of the walls of the original Norman building. The south arcade has semi-circular corbels on its inner order.

The chapels appear to have been enlarged at the end of the 13th century or the beginning of the 14th century. It is known that both were originally dedicated to St Mary, since the will of

Roger Bryklesworth, dated 26th April 1390, bequeathed 20 quarters of barley ‘to the fabric of the two chancels of Our Lady adjoining the principal chancel on either side’. Beneath the north chapel is a substantial crypt.

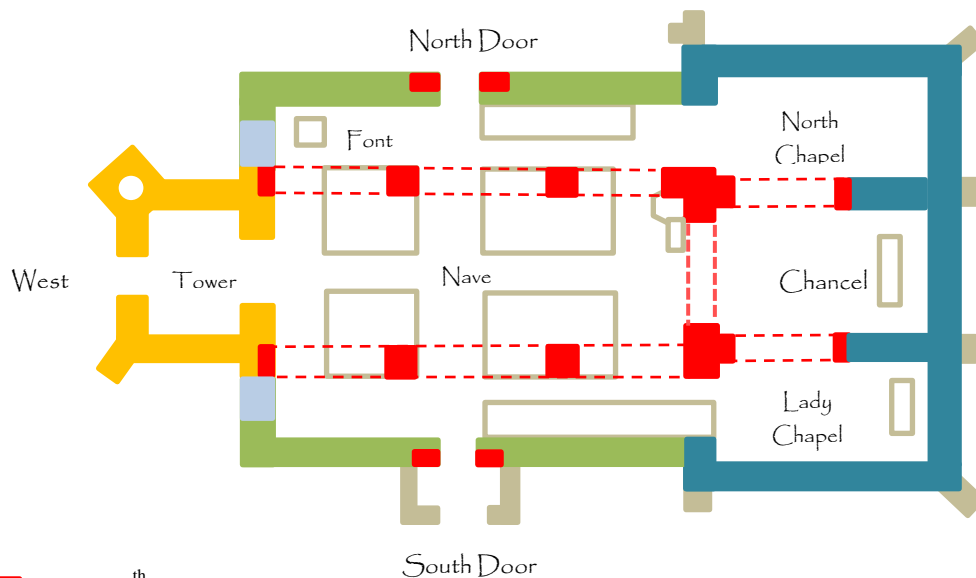
The side aisles were widened late in the 15th or early in the 16th centuries, and the Norman doorways, decorated with elaborate zig-zag, chevron and spiral carvings, were moved yet again to the new outer walls.



The tower has a square stair turret set diagonally in the north-west corner. Above the west door is a plaque with the date AD1599, which is thought to refer to the present structure, but an inventory of church goods made on 15th July 1552 included ‘Foure belles in the Steple’, indicating that an earlier construction of some sort had existed here.

The brick battlements were added later, and the *Victoria County History* of 1908 described some of the stonework around the west door as ‘modern’. The tower is fitted with a gilded clock from 1861, and surmounted by a gilded weather-vane. It contains five bells, four of them dating from the 17th century – a treble of 1606, a second from 1631, and a third and tenor from 1672. The fifth bell, from St Margaret’s Church, Canterbury, was added in 1969.

The plan below (not to scale) shows possible dates for the main fabric of the church.



- Mid 12th century
- Late 12th or early 13th centuries
- Late 13th or early 14th centuries
- Late 15th or early 16th centuries
- Late 16th century

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The main walls are of limestone with rubble filling. Most of the exterior has been covered in flint at different times, but this has disappeared in some areas. Little flint remains on the north chapel, which is now largely rendered. A number of put-log holes can be seen on the outer walls, used for the erection of wooden scaffolding during construction of the building.

Except for exposed stonework around the windows and arches, the interior walls are plastered and whitewashed.

The windows in the north chapel and Lady Chapel have stonework in the Decorated style, dating from the late 13th or early 14th centuries. All have cusped Y-tracery, except for the east window in the Lady Chapel, which has cusped-intersecting tracery.



The chancel window and those in the side aisles are in the Perpendicular style, dating from the late 15th or early 16th centuries. There are two clerestory windows high up on either side of the chancel, and two 19th century dormer windows on the south side of the nave.

Repairs to the stone tracery are evident on a number of the windows.

The roofs are tiled, except for those of the side chapels. The nave roof slopes down steeply over the side aisles. The chancel roof has projecting eaves and a cornice, typical of the Georgian period.

Internally the wooden ceilings are plastered except for the chancel, which is panelled, and the Lady Chapel, which is raftered. The nave has a distinctive Georgian cornice.

The floors of the nave, aisles and side chapels consist of quarry tiles, slabs and memorial tablets, forming a mixed but historically interesting surface.



The chancel floor is largely made up of a mixture of plain and patterned Victorian tiles.

Contents

The church retains a significant number of medieval features. Stone segments of the original windows of the church can be seen above the arch in the south wall of the chancel, and there is a rough staircase in the north pillar of the chancel arch which once led to a rood loft, its exit now being above the pulpit. The north chapel has a piscina and an aumbry. Another piscina is hidden behind the sanctuary panelling in the chancel, and there is a third piscina in the Lady Chapel.



The Lady Chapel also houses the Purbeck marble figure of a woman, thought to be part of an altar tomb installed early in the 14th century by John de Drokenesford in memory of his mother.



John de Drokenesford was the son of a local squire, and was at times Rector of Droxford, Keeper of the King's Wardrobe to Edward I, Chancellor of the Exchequer to Edward II, a chaplain to the Pope, and Bishop of Bath & Wells. It is believed that the marble figure was removed at the time of the Puritans, but was recovered from a nearby field early in the 19th century, and restored to the church.

The arch between the Lady Chapel and the chancel rests on two carved heads, characteristic in style of the early 14th century.



To the left of the altar in the Lady Chapel is a medieval stone niche with an ogee canopy and panelled base, probably dating from the late 14th century. Within the canopy is a design of roses and miniature vaulting.



The south and east walls of the north chapel display the remnants of an extensive area of wall painting, with floral sprays set in a masonry pattern. There are also traces of medieval paint on the niche in the Lady Chapel, and on the stonework of the south arcade, which has the faded remains of a pattern of intertwined red roses.

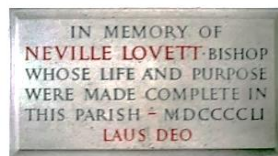


There are four mass dials on the exterior of the church, two on the jambs of the south doorway, and two on the south wall of the Lady Chapel.

Graffiti appear in a number of parts of the church, on both stonework and woodwork. Some have names or initials, and a few are dated, the earliest identified so far being 1765. Others may be significantly older, and there are a number of ritual protection marks, including one daisy-wheel or hexfoil design.



The earliest of many memorials in the church is a black marble floor slab in the north chapel to Edward Searle, who died in 1617. An unmarked slab next to it may be of a similar date. Nicholas Preston, rector from 1642 to 1650, and again from 1660 to 1664 after a break imposed by the Puritans, lies under a light brown marble slab in the south aisle. A number of members of the Morley family, who lived at the Manor House, are commemorated by impressive 17th and 18th century wall memorials near the font. A more recent memorial is dedicated to Neville Lovett, first Bishop of Portsmouth from 1927 to 1936, who retired to Droxford in 1946.



Those from Droxford who died in the 1914-1918 war are remembered by a rectangular alabaster tablet on a blue mosaic background, surmounted by a red mosaic pediment, to the left of the north door.

The altar rails are from the late 17th century. Matching oak panelling was installed early in the 20th century.



Galleries were erected at both ends of the nave in the 18th century, but removed in 1847. There are still marks where the west gallery was located. The present pine pews replaced Georgian oak pews at the same time.

An extensive local history complements the material evidence to provide a valuable insight into the daily lives of past inhabitants and congregations, and the demands placed upon them by the ongoing maintenance of the church. In 1684 the churchwardens reported that ‘... all is well ... saveing ... that the rooffe of our Church and some of the Windows want some small mending which shall be done forthwith’. On 9th April 1765 the Vestry resolved that ‘a new Pulpit and Reading Desk (shall be) erected in the Church at the expense of the Parish’. On 5th September 1827 it agreed ‘.... That more air should be given to the church by Casements etc, to the windows and that in the course of the ensuing spring the Church be whitewashed’.

Historical sources include minutes of the Vestry and Manor Court Baron. Local publications of some merit are *800 years in Droxford* by G.D. Hope, and *Droxford in the Meon Valley* by Kenneth Ward, a photographic record of the village with images going back to 1870. Informal 'memorabilia' began early in the 18th century, and continued for over 200 years. A comprehensive and detailed 'Church Recording' was carried out by NADFAS in 1995.

The names of forty-seven rectors of Droxford are known, beginning with a mention of Peter Rusciniol in a Papal Register of 1231. Four years later another Papal Register records that he was too busy to reside at Droxford, and gives him permission to appoint a vicar in his place.

One of the more notable rectors was Thomas Bilson, who held the office from 1583, when he was also Warden of Winchester College. He was appointed Bishop of Worcester in 1596, and Bishop of Winchester the following year. After the death of Elizabeth I he became spiritual adviser to James I, and preached the sermon at his coronation on 25th July 1603. He was a leading member of the team that compiled the King James Bible, and himself wrote its dedication to the king. Thomas Bilson is buried in Westminster Abbey, where he lies between the tombs of Edward III and Richard II.

A number of rectors have memorials in the church or the churchyard, and images exist of almost all the rectors going back to Dr James Chelsum, who was incumbent from 1782 to 1801.



Dr Chelsum is shown here with William Garnier (1801 – 1831), who was married to Lady Harriet North, daughter of John Brownlow North, Bishop of Winchester; J.A. Griffith Colpoys (1831 – 1868), who married Anne Sumner, daughter of John Bird Sumner, who became Archbishop of Canterbury; Stephen Bridge (1868 – 1886); John Vaughan (1902 – 1910), Residentiary Canon of Winchester Cathedral; Jacob Stephenson (1910 – 1926); and Leonard Sumner Etheridge (1926 – 1945).

An early photograph shows the church as it would have been during the latter part of the 19th century, when it was considered to be of the 'extreme Evangelical' type. It has religious inscriptions on the stonework, and on the panelling behind the altar. The pulpit is located under the chancel arch rather than in its present position to the side. The rood loft access has been covered with plaster, and there are several more rows of pews than there are now.



In 1903 Canon John Vaughan carried out a major restoration and re-ordering of the church. The number of pews was reduced, and the pulpit moved to its present position. The Jacobean altar rails that had been removed during the Victorian period were restored. The sanctuary itself was panelled in fine dark wood, and the religious scripts removed. Many of the medieval features of the church that had previously been hidden were revealed once more. After this restoration the church appeared much as it does today.

Despite this physical re-ordering, St Mary & All Saints remained evangelical in its theology until the time of Canon Leonard Etheridge. When he introduced robes for the choir on Easter Day 1934, two members left in protest, but the congregation and parish came to appreciate the fact that their Church was now no longer 'peculiar' in the ordering of its services.

The pulpit is a Victorian copy of a 15th century design, and was given to St Mary & All Saints in 1882 by the congregation of St Matthew's, Denmark Hill, where the Reverend Stephen Bridge had previously been minister. The brass eagle lectern was the gift of Mr Richard Redfearn Goodlad of Hill Place, in memory of his wife who died in 1867.

A number of other features of the church are of fairly recent times. The font is copied from a Norman design. Its wooden lid, added later and inscribed 1980, is decorated with an ornate wrought iron cross.



The neo-Jacobean oak screen was designed in 1935 by the eminent architect Sir Charles Nicholson, at the time when he was working on Portsmouth Cathedral.



The main altar table in the chancel was made in recent times by a local craftsman. The reredos in the Lady Chapel was given by her family in memory of Hannah Talbot-Ponsonby, and is dated 6th January 1952. It shows the Lamb of God in the centre, lilies on the right, and the Sacred Monogram IHC on the left.



The church is well endowed with stained glass from many of the leading designers and manufacturers of the 20th century. The two south windows of the Lady Chapel were installed in 1903, depicting the risen Christ with St Peter on the left, and Mary Magdalene on the right. They were designed by George Daniels of Clayton & Bell.



The single-mullion window in the west wall of the south aisle, depicting the Virgin Mary on the left and Simeon on the right, was made in 1909 in the studios founded by Charles Eamer Kempe. It has the company signature, a sheaf of wheat, in the bottom right hand corner of the left hand light, superimposed with the black tower of his heir, Walter Tower. The scrolls above and below Mary contain text from the *Magnificat*, whilst those above and below Simeon are from the *Nunc Dimittis*.



In the west wall of the north aisle is another single-mullion window, dating from 1920. It shows St Nicholas on the left and St Christopher on the right, and was manufactured by James Powell & Sons, also known as Whitefriars Glass, a company that had existed since the 17th century.



The east window of the Lady Chapel, installed in 1938, is a memorial to the Reverend Stephen Bridge and his wife, Margaret. The Virgin and Child are depicted at its centre, surrounded in the four corners by St Francis preaching to a collection of birds, St Wilfrid with the masons building St Mary & All Saints, St George slaying the dragon, and St Stephen speaking in his own defence. The window was designed by Martin Travers, who at the time was chief instructor in stained glass at the Royal College of Art.



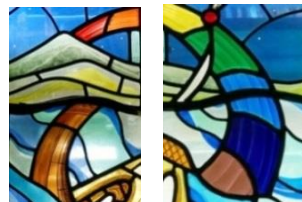
The stained glass in the east window of the chancel is a memorial to members of the Hulbert family, installed after the previous window was damaged during the Second World War, and shows the Nativity, with below it the Annunciation. It was designed by Christopher Webb, one of the leading designers of stained glass during the first half of the 20th century.



The window adjacent to the font in the north-west corner depicts the Creation. It was designed in 1982 by Carl Edwards of the Fulham Glass House, who also produced stained glass for Liverpool Cathedral, the House of Lords, and the Temple Church in London.



In the south-east corner is a two-light window by Vanessa Cutler, a contemporary exponent in the art of stained glass. It commemorates the year 2000 millennium, and shows Noah's Ark in the flood.



The church has recently benefitted from the acquisition of a good quality electronic organ, which can support a wide variety of musical events, takes up little space, and is economic to maintain. A number of electronic audio systems have also been installed.

Other recent acquisitions include upholstered oak chairs for use in the Lady Chapel and chancel, funded by a grant from the Diocesan Mission Opportunities Fund, and donations from members of the congregation.



The children's corner has been improved with furniture made by a local craftsman, also funded by the Mission Opportunities Fund and local donations.

A small exhibition describes events leading to the invasion of Normandy on 6th June 1944, when Winston Churchill and other allied leaders were based in a railway carriage at Droxford Station, to be close to General Eisenhower and other military leaders nearby at Southwick.

Other temporary displays outline the history of the church and the local community since Anglo-Saxon times. These will shortly be enhanced and coordinated into an integrated heritage presentation by a professional specialising in this subject area, with funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund and the South Downs National Park Authority.

Among the more attractive but transient contents of the church are flower arrangements composed by an enthusiastic group of local volunteers, which complement and enhance the historic and architectural features of the building. Some of their impressive displays for Harvest Festival 2016 are shown below.



Heating in the church is provided by a boiler and somewhat dated, unattractive and inefficient radiators. Electric lighting was first introduced in 1932. The nave and side aisles are now lit by gilded wrought iron coronas, and there is a variety of light fittings elsewhere.

There is very basic cold water sink, and no toilets. Storage is limited to a few cupboards.

Significant restoration work was carried out on the tower, south roof, north chapel and Lady Chapel in 2016, supported by a grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund

Churchyard

The main approach to the churchyard is through a pair of gates mounted on brick piers in the village square. Together with an inscribed Welsh grey slate tablet on the adjacent Manor House wall, they form a memorial to those from the village who died in the 1939-1945 war.

The churchyard extends from the village square to the water meadows of the River Meon. It contains a number of memorials, at least one underground vault, and many graves of significant local interest.

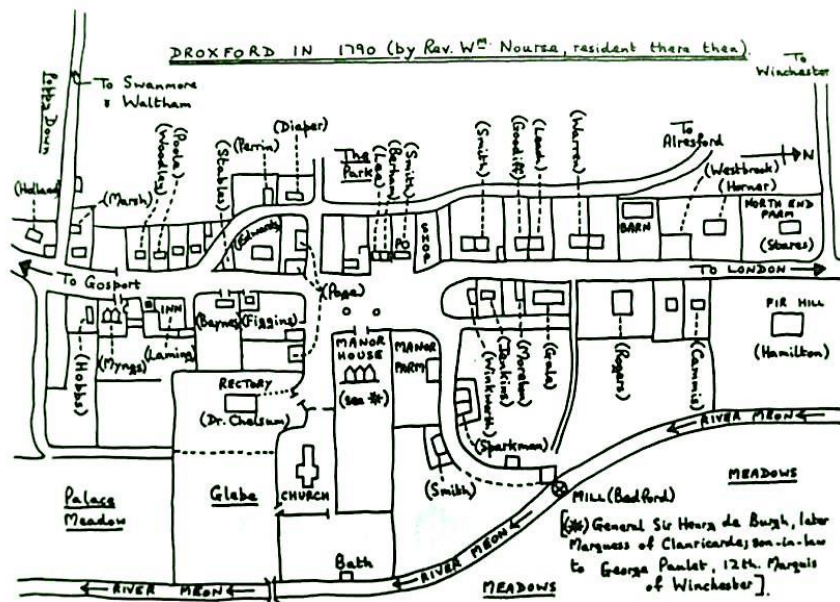
The church and churchyard are a noted habitat for lichen, and the churchyard contains a diverse collection of trees. Bird species frequenting the nearby fields and meadows include owls, herons, kingfishers and buzzards.

Setting

Droxford is strategically situated near to an ancient ford across the River Meon. A few miles away are Old Winchester Hill and Beacon Hill, both of which have National Nature Reserve and SSSI status, and are linked by the South Downs Way. Old Winchester Hill is crowned with an Iron Age hill fort, and has a number of Bronze Age long barrows. No significant Roman remains have been found in Droxford itself, but excavations have revealed the presence of important Roman buildings nearby.

An Anglo-Saxon cemetery was discovered close to Droxford Station when the railway was being constructed in 1900. It contains up to three hundred graves from the years 450 to 600.

The church and churchyard are near the centre of the village close to the square and Manor House, as shown in this map originally drawn by the Reverend W^m. Nourse in 1790.



It shows the Rectory with its glebe running down to the River Meon, where the celebrated angler Isaak Walton may have fished after his daughter Anne married William Hawkins, who was rector from 1664 to 1691. A number of the houses shown on this map still survive and give a distinctive Georgian appearance to the centre of the village, much of which is a conservation area.

In the early 19th century the rectors of Droxford and Meonstoke planted a pleasant beech walk that still links the two parishes. The Meon Valley Pilgrimage Trail links Droxford with other churches in the valley that may have been founded by St Wilfrid, and the disused Meon Valley railway line is a popular trail for walkers, riders and cyclists.

Public footpaths run close to the church through the water meadows on both sides of the River Meon, and up on to the chalk downs on either side of the valley. Some of these form part of the Wayfarer's Walk, a long distance trail between Emsworth on the Hampshire coast and Inkpen Beacon in Berkshire. The parish of Droxford is now part of the South Downs National Park.

In August and September 2015 Wessex Archaeology carried out an extensive survey of the church, areas of the churchyard and parts of the nearby Palace Meadow, using ground penetrating radar, earth resistance, and detailed gradiometer techniques.



Once the results have been analysed and presented, it is likely that more important historic features of St Mary & All Saints and its surroundings will come to light.

Section 2: The significance of the church (including its contents and churchyard) in terms of:

(i) Its special architectural and historical interest (TBA)

Whilst a number of individual features of St Mary & All Saints are of local architectural or historical interest, not many would attract a wider audience, and they have often come about and been superimposed in seemingly disconnected ways. But together they contribute to the very significant impression of a village church that has evolved organically over the centuries, both as a building and as the centre of a local community, best illustrated by a brief review of its history.

The substantial walls of the nave and chancel retain much of their original Norman fabric from the middle of the 12th century. Pointed arches were cut into them at the end of that century and the beginning of the next to open into Plantagenet aisles and side chapels, and the Norman doorways moved to the new outer walls. The doorways were re-located yet again when the aisles were extended early in the Tudor period.

The existence of two side chapels with aisles suggests that this was an active and well-patronised village church during the middle ages. Numerous medieval features and the remains of wall paintings still suggest how it might have looked and functioned before the Reformation replaced colour, images and Roman Catholicism with empty spaces, whitewash and the Book of Common Prayer.

The tower is thought to be late Elizabethan, replacing an earlier steeple of unknown date. It contains four bells from the 17th century. The fifth bell came from Canterbury in 1969. The battlements were added sometime after the tower was built, and some of the stonework around the west door is more recent still. The tower clock was re-gilded and a new weather vane fitted in 2016.

Iconoclasm returned with the Puritans, but the Restoration of Charles II brought new altar rails, which are still in place today, and now protect a sanctuary floored with multi-coloured Victorian tiles, and a 20th century altar table. Other floors are made up of a varied mixture of tiles, slabs and memorial tablets also dating from the 17th to the 20th century.

Wall memorials in stone, slate, plaster and brass cover much the same period, reflecting a cross-section of village life over the past four centuries. Extensive graffiti sometimes give up their meaning, but more often than not perplex with regard to their origins and symbology.

Some of the roofs and most of the ceilings are Georgian, but the dormer windows are Victorian. The Norman chancel arch was raised by about four feet during the same period. The pews, pulpit, and many of the other furnishings and fittings of the church are from the 19th century. They remind us of the Evangelical period of the church, and still dictate by their presence much of the way in which the building can be used today.

Restoration of the medieval features and re-ordering of the church took place in the first decade of the 20th century. The earliest stained glass in the church is from the same time, and was followed right up to the Millennium by a succession of windows from some of the leading designers and manufacturers in the country, some with traditional designs, and others more in keeping with contemporary tastes.

The font, the neo-Jacobean oak screen, and the sanctuary panelling are all from the 20th century, but adopt the styles of earlier periods. The reredos in the Lady Chapel dates from 1952, but its Sacred Monogram IHS takes us back to the early church.

Central heating and electric lighting also came with the 20th century.

The lack of toilets and the very basic catering facilities reflect earlier attitudes to the use of the church, but are out of place in the 21st century. The recent acquisition of an electronic organ, more comfortable seating, and improvements to the children's corner have started to make St Mary & All Saints a more comfortable and enjoyable experience for all ages.

Our understanding of the early years of the St Mary & All Saints is largely based upon interpretation of its material features, and the occasional record of a specific event, but since the latter part of the 17th century an extensive local history has evolved. This provides the present community with a strong link to many of the generations who have frequented the church in the past, and illustrates how they continually modified and adapted the building and its contents to meet both local needs and the wider theological and social demands of their own particular times.

Although St Mary & All Saints is an ancient and impressive village church, it is not in itself an exemplar of one particular architectural style or ecclesiastical movement. Nor is it just a collection of items of architectural or historical interest. Its most significant and very distinct characteristic from the time the Normans first built the church has been the very process of change, adaptation and accommodation that has resulted in the many diverse and sometimes contradictory elements that make up what it is today, and which somehow manage to harmonise with each other to contribute to a continually growing historical and architectural heritage that is greater than any single part.

(ii) Any significant features of artistic or archaeological interest (TBA)

Section 3: Assessment of the impact of the proposals on the significance defined in Section 2 (To be completed with each faculty application)

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