

# The Oaks Historical Society Inc

Est. May 1979

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## Newsletter

June 2023

## Wollondilly Heritage Centre & Museum

# THANKING OUR PARTNERS

Last Thursday we hosted an informal get-together at the Museum to thank our funding partners, whilst we had a schools education program underway. Veolia, Simec, Hi –Quality Group, TRN Group and NSW Govt generously supported our upgrades resulting in vastly improved facilities and user space for our community. It is rare that others get to see what takes place during this program and observe our passionate ‘Schoolies’ volunteers in their roles working with the school group. Whilst thanking our partners, it was an excellent opportunity to showcase some of our activities and expertise and see the great work our volunteers do. After a walk through and a look into Store 2 we concluded the tour at the Outdoor/BBQ area with of course a BBQ lunch.



Our funding partners at the outdoor seating area along with Councillor Gibbs & Jessica from Wollondilly Library



Above left-The Team from Simec

Above- Observing the School Activities

Left –our volunteers with Councillor Gibbs

Right—The boys from Hi-Quality





# President's Report

Trish Hill

Welcome to winter officially, hope you're all keeping warm! Its been a busy month here at the Museum with quite a few things happening. We've had a few morning tea group bookings and our school groups every Thursday as well.

Again, thankyou to Veolia, Simec, Hi-Quality, TRN and the State Government for the support you've given us and we are thrilled with what we've been able to achieve.

A sad month for us with the loss of Joe Carlon. Our deepest condolences go to Shirley, Noelene, Debbie, Julie and Lynne and their extended family. Both Joe and Shirley have been an integral part of our museum family from the beginning.

Thanks to Dennis Ashton and Geoff Howe for their contributions to our newsletter this month. It is great to have additional articles and stories from a different perspective. To David Campbell a huge thankyou for our new mural on the wall of our outdoor BBQ area and producing it in such a short timeframe ■



## IN MEMORY OF JOSEPH MAXWELL CARLON

Joe was born at Nurse Taplin's maternity hospital in Oxley Street Camden, on the 9<sup>th</sup> June 1935 and was the only son of Charlie and Flo. He was the 3<sup>rd</sup> of 4 children having 3 sisters Betty, Yvonne and Angela. He spent his childhood and early adult life living in Burratorang Valley, a place that remained in his heart. The family lived in the Blacksmith Shop next door to the Central Burratorang Post Office, where his grandmother, Elizabeth Maxwell was the Post Mistress. When Joe was 5 years old the Carlon family bought the house which was on the Catholic land, next door to Burratorang Central Hall. It was right on the road going through the Valley, with the Wollondilly River flowing just behind the house. Joe had many happy memories of growing up in his beloved Burratorang Valley and shared many stories of his time in the Valley. He loved his horses especially the Creamy Pony, as he called her. He competed in the horse races at the Burratorang Race Track which was behind the pub. The horses were his form of transport as the family had no car. On his 20<sup>th</sup> Birthday, June 9<sup>th</sup> 1955, Joe had to leave the valley due to the construction of Lake Burratorang and he moved to Alpha Road Camden with his parents. On the 7<sup>th</sup> June 1958, Joe married Shirley Tickner at St Paul's Church in Camden and they went on to have 4

daughters. An incredibly hard worker his entire life, Joe started out working on a Tomato Farm in the Valley. He then got a job at Wollondilly Extended Coal Mine. Whilst working he also studied where he got a Diploma in Tractor Training Service in 1958. He even took the books with him on their honeymoon to finish studying. Joe then went on to get his own truck to deliver timber to CSR in Pymont. He did well with that, but was then asked by a Mining boss to deliver Pitt Props to the local mines. With an incredible work ethic, he would cut the trees down, bark them, and then load the trucks on his own by carrying the props on his shoulder. He was also able to employ other local people. His final employment was for Clutha where he drove trucks and welded shed frames and gates, across many mine sites. Joe you will be sadly missed ■





## Family History & Local Archive Report

Sue Davis

**Name changes or different spellings** can be confusing especially when looking for names of ancestors. Recently we had some descendants of Hoolahans and discovered in our Family History files that there have been 7 local spellings used for this family – Huolohan, Holohan, Wholohan, Hoolahan, Hulohan, Hoolehan and Hulooghan. Another researcher found that her Fulcher ancestor was actually Fletcher when we looked through the family history files at our museum. Mistakes can easily be made from a misinterpretation of a typist or scribe. I spent a lot of time looking for my Great Grandmother on NSW Births Deaths and Marriages. Her name was Amy Rebecca Cox but had been listed as Rebecca Amy Cos. Sometimes we just need to try and work out what someone may have been thinking at the time! There is also the possibility that an ancestor changed the spelling of their name due to a family dispute! This is often how O'Malley became Malley and so on. Don't give up when you go looking for those elusive ancestors.

One name change that is not through spelling interpretations through the years is **Museums of History NSW**. This includes the **NSW State Archives**. At first the website looks different but on using it the changes can be absorbed. On visiting the State Archives recently, the signage (new logo pictured) is different but the service is still the same and very helpful. The reason for the changes comes from this explanation on the website:

*“ Museums of History NSW is changing the way our past is understood and our future will be experienced.*

*This new ‘home’ for the history of NSW brings together the historic houses, museums and collections previously in the care of Sydney Living Museums with the vast archives and records in the NSW State Archives Collection. Dedicated to engaging people in our past, Museums of History NSW provides greater access to these assets and to a broad range of stories about our social, cultural and political histories and identities.*

*As custodians and storytellers, we are committed to preserving and presenting NSW’s unique history. Our places and collections comprise some of the most significant historical material in the country. With this as our foundation, we bring history to life through diverse voices and viewpoints, supporting audiences of all backgrounds to gain fresh perspectives and understandings of their past, present and future.”*



Therefore, don't let name changes confuse you, embrace them and you will enjoy the journey into family and local history ■  
Happy researching!



## Acquisitions Report

Allen Seymour

This month has been very busy. There are some Garden Lover magazines from 1971, a book on Pansy-the Camden Tram, and a Macarthur Country Tourist Guide for 1993. There is also an apple peeler which differs from our existing one and a two foot carpenters rule. We've received the marriage register from the Buxton Community Church as well as a folder of documents relating to the church. There is a 1994 booklet on the centenary of Buxton Primary school and a photocopy of the Commonwealth Bank deposits made at Buxton between 1919 and 1973 (incomplete).

On the mining front we have received a box of items which include a plan showing proposed workings at Appin

Colliery and a number of booklets on the coal industry and some of the companies involved such as Kembla Coal & Coke. The unions have been represented with a number of union publications and some receipt books for union membership from Appin mine. There are commemorative belt buckles for Oakdale and Brimstone mines, various stickers, some training videos and DVD's. Included are some photos taken underground which appear to show a training exercise as the miners are wearing self-rescuers and dark goggles.

We are reviewing items in our collection that can be incorporated into the proposed dairy exhibition ■

# A PRICKLY JOB-WORKING FOR THE WATERBOARD

Compiled by Dennis Ashton

From the late 1940's and during the 1950's as the Metropolitan Water Sewerage & Drainage Board (the Board) commenced obtaining private property and Crown Lands in Burratorang Valley for the construction of Warragamba Dam and the area that would be filled with water and the adjacent catchment area for water quality protection, it realized it had a future problem with several weeds including prickly pear.

At the time, noxious weed control was carried out under the Local Government Act, pest animals under the Pastures Protection Act but Prickly Pear control was under its own Act, the Prickly Pear Destruction Act 1925, administered by the Prickly Pear Destruction Commission (PPDC). Prickly Pear found its way into Wollondilly Shire and Burratorang Valley in the early 1900's.

Some properties within Wollondilly Shire and Burratorang Valley had notices placed on them for the control of this pest plant prior to the Board involvement in the area.

After being served notices for its control by PPDC on land that it purchased or resumed some control was carried out by a bush gang from the Nepean Forestry Depot (Nepean Dam).

Dealing increasingly with noxious weeds within and pest animals in the other catchments as well as Warragamba, the Board decided to form a gang to specialize in control of the problems on all its lands.

After Warragamba Dam was completed, the first Overseer of Pest Control was appointed in 1963. George Smith, who transferred from his Ranger position to take on the task, had previously worked for a private contractor in the valley clearing operations then with the Board's own clearing gang.

He knew the Warragamba and other catchment areas well and assembled a gang of six men, all local and some who had lived or worked within the valley prior to Water Board, most had a previous connection to the valley by work or family.

His depot was run from his house at Fraser Street Tahmoor and after his retirement in 1975, the gang moved to Nepean Depot (near Nepean Dam, Bargo).

With advice and equipment obtained from the PPDC, work commenced on the prickly pear problem in Burratorang Valley where it was found growing over a vast area including in tree branches, on tops of fences and rocks and in places, completely dominating the area.

The PPDC provided (at cost) a set of six back packs made from modified stainless steel fire extinguishers mounted on a light aluminum frame, leather straps and with canvas

padded shoulders. It had a pressure cap with a gauge, hose about a meter long with about a 60 cm wand complete with a trigger and adjustable nozzle. After putting in the set amount of mixed spray, pressure was obtained by pumping it up by hand with a tyre pump, up to 100 psi.

The spray was made of 245T pesticide mixed with carrier oil or diesel.

The prickly pear plant has a beautiful yellow flower when in bloom and could be seen covering an entire hillside at Commodore on the Cox arm of the dam from Narrow-Neck fire tower which prompted investigation and a track put in for control.

The plant also has both long sharp spines and small spines with hooks that get caught in the skin. A pocket knife with pick and tweezers was normally carried.

A lot of work was carried out from boats and barge as, at the time, there were few roads and tracks to navigate around the lake edge, although old Wollondilly Council

roads and property tracks were eventually linked to form a fire road system that can still be utilized today.

As it was difficult to access the area, it was usual to work 9 hour days for 10 days straight, needing a day to get into the area and another to get out, so actually only 8 days full on work, then 2 days off.

Camping away, living conditions were tough and either in tents or iron clad camps. All gear had to be bought in, including 2 small gas fridges, meat safe, portable gas stoves, gas lights, gas bottles etc. Meat was usually boiled on the first night to make it last a bit longer and canned milk and food was used to supplement fresh supplies. Rabbit was also part of

the staple diet. Later, a bit more comfortable camp at Yerranderie Court House then, the Police Station was utilized. Originally road access to the Wollondilly arm of the lake was via Bullio or by barge to the edge of the lake to an old road or then, still open paddocks. The barge could be picked up at Warragamba or Nattai landing.

In later years the Board completed a fire road (called W4) along the lake edge connecting parts of old original roads and tracks from Valley 1 coal mine to the Wollondilly River.

On the Cox arm, access was via barge or a long drive from Jooriland to Yerranderie, along Scotts Main Range to Butchers Creek. Continued over page.....



Pictured -Prickly Pear Control -from Australian Womens Weekly 1954

## A PRICKLY JOB WORKING FOR THE WATERBOARD continued...

The 200 litre drums of spray (carrier was oil or diesel) were bought up by barge. These were either picked up by vehicle (Land Rover early days and Land Rover or Toyota in the late 1960's early 1970's ) or pulled up the hills from the foreshore by the handy billy (block & tackle-triple & double) to be set up for spraying operations, all by walking the hills and valleys to get to the pest plants.



Some tracks were purpose built for access to prickly pear. These tracks were put in by the locals working for the Board who knew where to put them, Haley Chalker off Mount Cookum track to Commodore and Bob Cochran up the Tonalli River, Taylors area Wollondilly River and other locations just a couple of examples.

When 245T was banned in the mid 1980's another pesticide was trialed by injection with a modified drench gun pack (permit required) and later still a gas-powered light backpack, both successful, but a better method was sought.

Trials during the early to mid-1980's with the cactoblastis moth (*Cactoblastis cactorum*), already in the valley, proved unsuccessful so the matter was discussed with PPDC officers who suggested perhaps the cochineal (*Dactylopius coccus*) insect may work in the area. Arrangements were



made for them to deliver at the appropriate time of the year (late spring). They came in mesh onion bags packed with *cochineal* infested prickly pear, specially bred at Bingara, NSW. One ton at a time. Long tong type tools were

supplied to handle the prickly pears.

Initial trials were carried out in the Murphys Flat cliffs and the cliff line at Gunderluck where an elevated mesh platform had been constructed to monitor *Cactoblastis* progress, initially but later used to monitor the *Cochineal* insects.

The Board tried growing its own *Cochineal* insects in cages in the Court House at Yerranderie and in an old miner's shack on

W4 fire road (opposite and east of Jooriland), but with only limited success, so relied on NSW Agriculture to provide the insects.

After a few years it was observed that a great reduction of prickly pear had occurred and the insects had moved about, infecting more areas.

So successful was this method of control the PPDC, then later, NSW Agriculture provided insects on an annual basis and distribution carried by boat along the foreshore and rivers, vehicles and on foot to various locations and in joint operations with NPWS, investigation of prickly pear in remote and isolated areas then later distribution from NPWS

helicopter.

Bags of cochineal infested prickly pear were also distributed to willing adjoining private property owners along the Wollondilly and Cox Rivers.

It was estimated that after the introduction of the *cochineal* insect, a reduction of prickly pear in the area was over 90%, all without the use of any chemical control.

This was one of many successful initiatives carried out by the Board to control pest species within the area ■

Pictured: Top -Barge at W4 1984 /Centre-Coxs Arm pest gang 1973  
Bottom-December 1993 release at Bonnum Pic.

## HONEST AND STRAIGHTFORWARD—KEITH PERCY JOHNSON by Geoff Howe

A casual glance at *The Sun* two days after the outbreak of World War Two set Keith Johnson on a path of military service that ranged from square-bashing in the RAAF to the front-line in New Guinea. A tall, lean 19-year-old, he read a report about the shortage of wireless operators – many skills were at a premium in the expanding armed services. A painter by trade, he had studied part-time at the Australian Radio College in Sydney the previous year to better himself. His application, sent to the recruiting centre in Ultimo the next day, was not successful; repairing radio sets and operating a service wireless were different skills. Despite experience as an aluminium polisher and welder, entry as a fitter was equally unsuccessful. However by early January 1940, he was accepted as a trainee rigger, reporting at RAAF Laverton in Victoria at the end of the month for four-weeks basic training. He was described as having a “good style and neat appearance”.

Next stop was the No 1 School of Engineering at RAAF Ascot Vale, Victoria where he qualified as a flight rigger at the end of May and was promoted Leading Aircraftsman with effect from July 1. As his civilian references had pointed to his honesty, straightforwardness and industriousness, his conduct sheet was unblemished. Posted to RAAF Archerfield in Queensland, he was attached to No 23 Squadron which operated Avro Ansons (pictured top) and De Havilland Tiger Moths →



on maritime reconnaissance and anti-submarine patrols off the Queensland coast. Therein lay a problem; his mother, Hilda, was an invalid and her home in Marrickville was too far for visits on leave. Regardless of whether the Johnson family were supporters or members of the Labor Party, Charlie Lazzarini, the MLA for Marrickville, took up the case. In September, 1940, he was posted to No 4 Squadron at RAAF Richmond which was converting to Wirraways.

Johnson was dogged by poor health. His feet were badly calloused as a result of ill-fitting shoes as a child. The difficulties began with drill and marching at Laverton, com-

pounded by standing on his feet for work as a rigger. He spent several periods in hospital with various doctors assessing his condition. His left index finger had also been injured in an accident six years earlier. On December 28, 1940, Johnson was discharged as medically unfit. He later received the War Medal.

A month earlier, he had married Olive (Ollie or Nellie) Piper at St Clement, Marrickville, the couple living at Illawarra Road, Marrickville. His paternal grandmother, Hannah, was born into the Organ family which traces its roots back to Gloucestershire at the time of the English Civil War. Her grandfather, Elias, had brought his family to the Colony in 1835, settling in the Illawarra. At the end of the First World War, the Johnson family were living at Corrimal, perhaps with Organ family.

The Oaks Historical Society Newsletter (April, 2023) published extracts from Johnson’s diary about his service in New Guinea with the Second AIF. Vivid descriptions, despite his education at Canterbury High School being cut short after the death of his father, Stephen, in 1931. No records of his New Guinea service exist which may suggest he enlisted under a false name. Being declared medi-

cally unfit by the RAAF would have complicated his volunteering.

Johnson died in 1970, Olive in 1995; both were interred at Woronora Cemetery ■

ROYAL AUSTRALIAN AIR FORCE. Form P.F. 66. (Revised May, 1938).

Application for Enlistment as an Airman in the PERMANENT AIR FORCE. ~~CITIZEN AIR FORCE~~

(Strike out that which is not applicable).

The following particulars have been obtained from the applicant (in full) JOHNSON KEITH PERCY 27 MEL STREET, MARRICKVILLE, SYDNEY, N.S.W. 24th APRIL, 1940

(1) No other names (in full) None

(2) The year of birth 1921

(3) The place of birth Sydney, N.S.W.

(4) The date of enlistment 24th APRIL, 1940

(5) Married or Single SINGLE

(6) Are you a British Subject or a Naturalized British Subject? BRITISH

(7) What was the Nationality of your Parents at their birth? BRITISH

(8) Trade in which it is desired to enlist None

(9) Particulars of experience (to be supported by copies of references) – (a) at trade in which it is desired to enlist: Have had about 9 months training in radio at the Australian Radio College

(b) at any other occupation: None

10. Did you serve an apprenticeship? (Give full particulars): None


11. Educational Qualifications (including technical education): 3 years at Canterbury High School

Signature: [Signature]

RAAF FORM - 66A. [Stamp]

# Reminders, News & Info

WEEKEND ROSTER	
JUNE	
Vivian & Bob	Saturday, 3
<b>Trish &amp; Kevin</b>	<b>Sunday, 4</b>
Debbie & Allen	Saturday, 10
<b>Kaye &amp; Jim</b>	<b>Sunday, 11</b>
<b>Pam &amp; Margaret</b>	<b>Monday, 12</b>
Sue & Helen	Saturday, 17
<b>Bev &amp; David</b>	<b>Sunday, 18</b>
Laurette & Phil (Working Bee)	Saturday, 24
<b>Marlane &amp; Cheryl/Kate</b>	<b>Sunday, 25</b>



## General Meeting

**Monday, June 5th 2023 at 7pm**

Guest Speaker Marjo Hallowell on her follow up book about the people of Bargo

**Monday, July 3rd 2023 at 7pm**

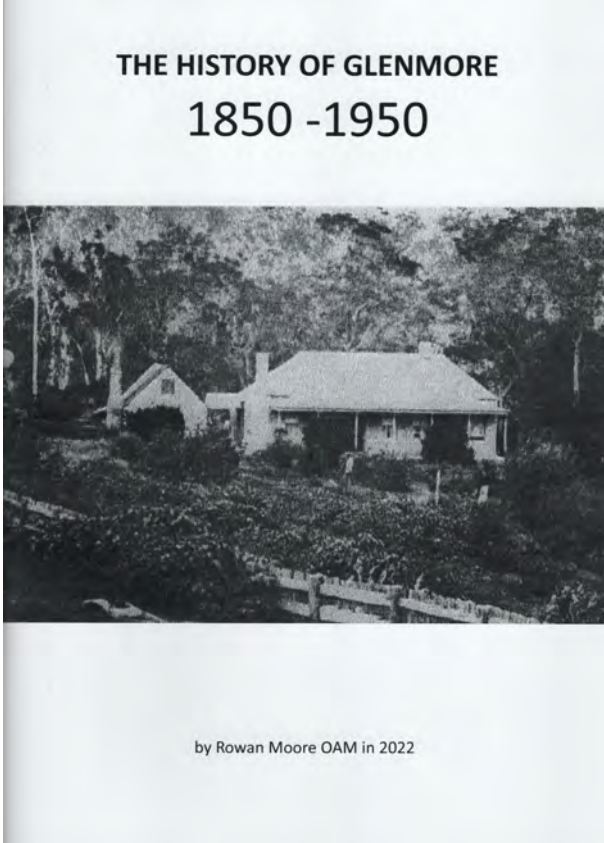
Mick Weber from NPWS Oakdale

## THE HISTORY OF GLENMORE

### 1850-1950

By Rowan Moore OAM 2022

Glenmore is a small community on the Burratorang Road, 10 km from Camden and 4 km from The Oaks. It is a delightful little hamlet situated amongst the hills between Mount Hunter and The Oaks. Governor Macquarie described this area as "Beautiful open forest, rich ground containing the richest and finest grazing I have ever seen in any part of the colony."



**THE HISTORY OF GLENMORE**  
**1850 -1950**

by Rowan Moore OAM in 2022

Glenmore is best described as the valley under The Oaks and opening out to the flats of Mount Hunter.

The publication includes references from records of the Moore family, The Oaks & Camden Historical Societies, The Camden Pioneer Register and Marlane Fairfax writing of Glenmore Cemetery.

This little publication is available from our Museum shop at a cost of \$10 ■



### Membership Fees 2023/2024

**Single- \$10.00**

**Family - \$18.00**

**Newsletter postage is an additional \$12.**

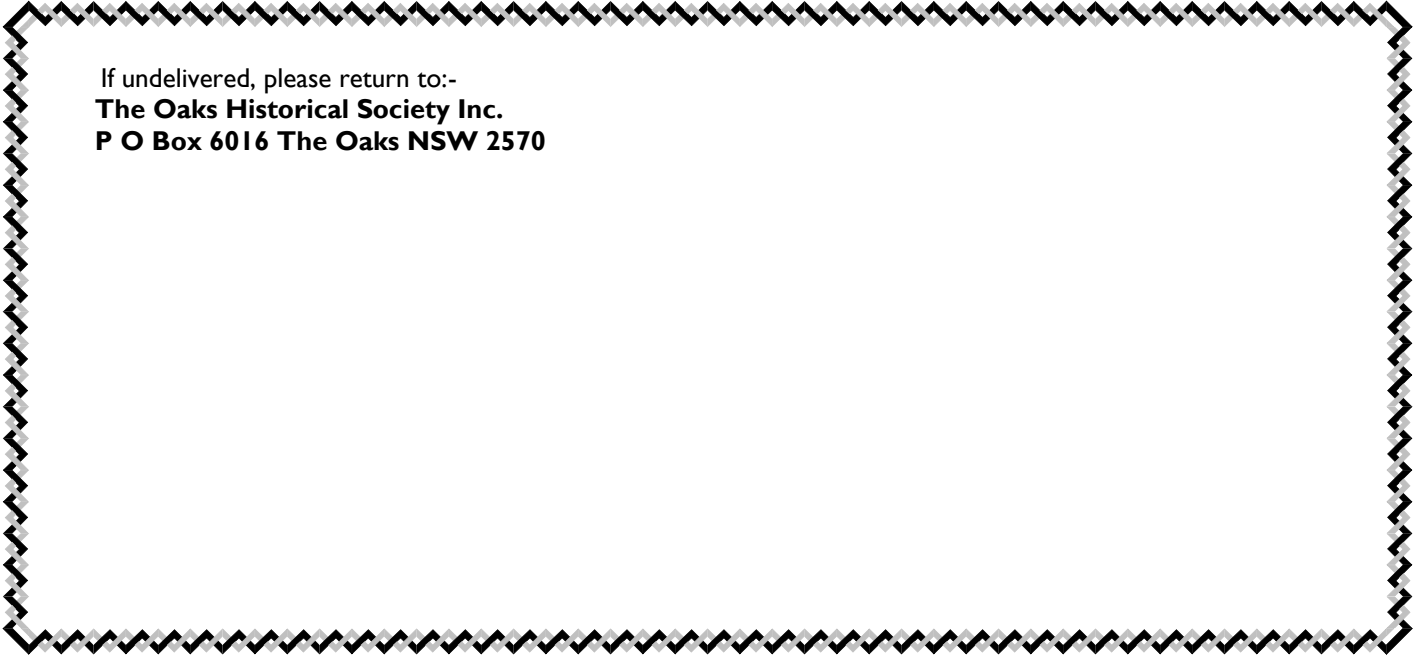
**Emailed newsletters are free.**

Our Bank details below are for direct credit & please use your surname for the transaction reference.

**Account Name:** The Oaks Historical Society Inc.

**BSB: 062516 Account # 00904093**

**MONTHLY MEETINGS:** The Oaks Historical Society Inc. holds its meetings on the first Monday of each month (except January) at the Wollondilly Heritage Centre & Museum, 43 Edward St. The Oaks starting at 7.00pm. The next meeting is our General Meeting on Monday on June 5th followed by the general meeting on July 3rd 2023. Our patron is Judith Hannan. The Oaks Historical Society Inc. takes no responsibility for the accuracy of the articles, papers or reviews that appear in this newsletter. The statements made or opinions expressed are not necessarily those of The Oaks Historical Society Inc. Copies of the minutes are available.



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