

ACHILLE RATTI CLIMBING CLUB

MARCH 1978

BULLETIN 68

Dear Member,

JUST a quick breather since the last bulletin and here we go again, deadlines for the AGM must be met.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The AGM will be held in Preston, on Saturday April 22nd at 2pm. As usual it will be in St Ignatius' Church Hall, Pump St. Find the bus station, cross the ring road at the rear and there is St Ignatius Church with the Hall nearby. So no excuses that you couldn't find the place.

AGENDA

1. Minutes of last AGM held on Sat 30th April, 1977.
2. Matters arising.
3. President's report.
4. Chairman's report.
5. Secretary's report.
6. Treasurers report.
7. Reports from the Hut Wardens.
8. Election of members to the Management Committee.
9. Any other business.

Please make an effort to attend, now is your chance to air your views and get it all off your chest.

DEADLINES FOR THE AGM.

1. The last day for submitting to the Secretary, notice of intention to propose new rules, or alteration to existing rules Sat 25th March.
2. The last day for the Secretary to advise members of the said new rules or alterations to rules Sat 8th April.
3. The last day on which any matters other than amendments to rules, which members may wish to discuss at the AGM., are to be received by the secretary..... Sat 15th April.
4. NOMINATIONS Ben Carter is due to retire this year from the position of Secretary, his term of office is complete. A Terry Hickey and George Partridge have also served three years but are willing to stand again. Nominations to reach the Secretary by 8th April.

News.

This seems to be in short supply this month.

1. BUCKBARROW and the NATIONAL TRUST.....further details available at the AGM.
2. Visiting Clubs at Buckbarrow.
11/12 March. Caper Montis MC.
16/18 June. Ass. British Members of the Swiss Alpine Club.
3. The Club Dinner this year has been booked for the weekend of Sat. 25th November at the Damson Dene Hotel in the Lyne Valley. This is the only hotel in the Lakes which can cater for 100 and where we can have a bar extension on Sat night.
4. There is a working weekend at Tyn Twr on March 11/12.
5. There is a rock-climbing meet at Tyn Twr on April 15/16. If you are not a rock climber but would still like to attend, please come.
6. The Junior Meet in Langdale for 10-15 year olds is on the 10/11 June. No details available yet.
7. Are there no priests in the club who are interested in a holiday on Skye this year? For dates between 22.6.78 and 10.9.78 please contact Fr. Cameron, Catholic Church, Glenfinnan, by Fort William. also John Foster, 29, Braeside Cres, Billinge, Nr. Wigan. The folk on Skye only Get Mass every eight Weeks due to the size of the Parish and would be delighted to see you. You can stay with John at Sconser, 3 miles from Sgurr nan Gillean, you really need your own transport, but if you are alone John will go on the hill with you. Please write.
8. Fosters 5 berth Caravan still has a few vacant weeks, please write to Joyce Foster at above address.
9. Micky and Ann Pooler are proud parents for the fourth time, and are all doing well. Congratulations!

REPORT ON THE CAVING MEET JAN28/29.

Saturday dawned freezing cold and wet sleet, but the assembled 10 or 11 people set off nothing daunted under Stu Evans persuasive and enthusiastic Leadership. During the day the sleet turned to almost torrential rain and we wondered how they were coping with the nice, dry pot with its huge stream passage.....

There is no formal report, just a selection of the rather hysterical conversation when they eventually returned.

They all had swollen hands from the cold and wet, and Cherie said that Sean was the first person to eat a meal in their house wearing a duvet. "It has been raining for 24 hours and melting snow as well." Dot, "The waterfall was the best bit, I opened my mouth and thought I was drowning". Stu- we were never out of the water it was up to here(waist height). George went up that waterfall like a salmon, but then he had a wet-suit. Young Mike did well in the gear he was wearing. Stu kept saying, honest its dry beyond here.

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CAVING MEET Cont..... (Read each sentence as a separate para)

All those fadders kill me. Dot had to go to the pub on Sat night, she couldn't face all those stairs in the house, up to the toilet. I've never been as pissed off in all my life. Harry will be shooting the biggest line you've ever heard in the pub next week. Clive couldn't get through that hole, so we left him. Young Mike walked through it and Harry never touched the sides. We left Clive for an hour, he was alright he had some fruit polos....Harry and the fags. He wanted me to climb down two pitches to give him a light, hes a nutter, that bloody carbide lamp is no use at all. Clive only had one cigarette in eight hours. Harry passed one back to me, a lit one and everybody got hold of it in a different place, by the time it reached Clive it was a soggy mess and disintegrated! We met three blokes from Bristol University and they said "Isnt it beautiful down here". Real head-the-balls they were. But it was warm when we got lost coming back across the moor. What! soaked to the skin and 12 inches of crisp snow.! Lets make this a regular meet shall we? Young Mike was the only keen one the next day,

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A REMEMBRANCE OF CYRIL BULMAN, died DEC. 1977

by BISHOP PEARSON
(FOUNDER PRESIDENT)

In about 1935 or 1936, I started in Blackpoola Catholic Boys Association, which became quite famous, and was known as the C.B.A. One of our activities was to go regularly to the Lake District, and particularly into Langdale. I had a succession of Morris 8 Tourers, the advantage being that you could put the hood down and pile in as many boys as you wanted, vertically of course. It was in the Langdale Valley that we first came across Cyril Bulman. He was at the Old Hotel in those days, and his wife was Sally Armstrong, who came from the Woolpack in Eskdale. Cyril himself came from Eskdale. Sally's sister Nellie, was married to Albert Black who had the New Hotel. And so we came to know them both very well. I found out, to my amazement, that Cyril knew and spoke of the Ampleforth monks, as though they were almost brothers. It seems that in those days, Ampleforth went every year and spent several weeks in the Langdale Valley, or in previous years in Eskdale. Cyril spoke for example, always of Cuthbert Rabnett; he always spoke of Basil, Basil Hume the Cardinal; of Michael; of Barnabas Sandiman and so on. And that relationship had continued amongst the older monks, to this day. In those days our particular climbing ground was on Pavey Ark, and I taught the boys rock-climbing, and also we would take whole teams of them over Jacks Rake. Once, when we were heading back for Blackpool I was telling them about my visits as a climber to the Alps, and how I used to stay in the Alpine Club Huts. One of the boys, a boarder at St. Josephs College, Blackpool, named John Schofield, said, "Why can't we have a hut, instead of having to go back every time?" I said, "Well its just not possible here". He said, "You told us once, that there is

REMEMBRANCE Cont.....

no such word as can't". I took the challenge, because whatever one says to youth, you must never contradict.

The very next time I told Cyril what had happened. He said, "I've got a place for you". I said, "You've got what?" He said, "You see that little place near the New Hotel, standing on its own, over the barn, and it looks straight up onto the waterfall in Mill Ghyll?" I said, "Yes". He said, "Well part of it has been adapted; there is a little kitchen, a nice lounge, and the big barn part itself which you could use as a dormitory. It is just rough, with nothing in it". "But how much would it cost us?" I said. "Twenty five pounds a year", he said. That was the kind of man he was. He said, "I will not want it as long as the War is on", so that must have been late 1939, and we had it until well after the war.

That was the start of the Achille Ratti Climbing Club. It was the beginning of the establishment of a permanent place, which resulted in the idea of a club, first of all for the CBACC, The Catholic Boys Association Climbing Club, which eventually became the Achille Ratti Climbing Club. So that is the history of the founding of ARCC.

Cyril always had a great friendship for me, we got on extremely well. He admired immensely, the spirit of adventure of the boys; all the climbs they did; the way they came up in the winters; the way they said the first Mass on the summit of Scafell Pike on the 16th July, 1940. He also had a great respect for their behaviour. There was one occasion, I think it was in 1947, when Cardinal Griffin and all the hierarchy came for a weeks Youth Conference, but with all kind of plays, demonstrations, various army, airforce training corps, giving exhibitions at Stanley Park and so on. The finale was a visit by Cardinal Griffin and myself and Bishop Flynn to Langdale, where Brother Joseph, the Saverian who used to bring boys from Clapham College, did a climb on Scout Crag, which they watched through binoculars from the road side. Afterwards, we had coffee with Cyril Bulman, who by that time had moved to the New Hotel. Cyril took at once to the Cardinal and vice versa, but not to Bishop Flynn, because he couldn't understand a word he said.

At about that time we lost our hut. We had become very attached to it, and it had had many people staying there. Since then we had acquired Dunmail Raise and the hut in Wasdale, but to lose Langdale was quite a blow. Still we could not grumble, The rent had never changed, and now Cyril needed it to be converted into accommodation for his own growing family. He promised that if ever anything came available that he knew about, he would let us know.

One day I got a telephone call from him. All the derelict buildings, the barns and so on next to the Fell and Rock Climbing Club, which was the Raw Head Farm House, were his, and all the land right up the fell side. He was going to put them on the market and the reserve price was £2,000. We had the first offer, otherwise it was going to be auctioned, and we had £11 in the bank. However, I said, "Cyril, we'll buy it". And so it was that we came to acquire the present Bishop's Scale. How we paid for it is not really the

KISHTWAR 77

By

MARTIN BENNETT

August 11th 1975, was an eventful day for me. It was my birthday, I crashed the car into a Chamonix bus and then met a bloke in the Bar Nationale whom I hadn't seen for two years, who asked me if I'd join his team and go climbing in the Himalayas!

Once I'd got over the birthday celebrations and spent days clearing up the crashed bus business, I started to think about whether I really wanted to climb in the Himalayas. I finally decided that the only way to find out was to go.

Two years later, almost to the day, the first half of our ten man team, set off in two Sherpa vans kindly loaned by Leyland Cars, for Kishtwar in the Kishtwar Himalaya. The rest of us followed by air, three weeks later. We had two objectives in mind, the idea being that our rather large party would split into two groups when we got to our base camp, and tackle both peaks simultaneously. To me the more attractive proposition was Sickle Moon - at 21,570 ft the major peak of the area. To some members of the team the fact that it had had a previous ascent (in 1975 by a 26 man Indian Army Team equipped with a helicopter!) detracted from this and they preferred an attempt on our other objective, an un-named unclimbed peak of 20,970 ft facing Sickle Moon across the Kiar Nullah (gorge). This conveniently split us into two teams of six, and four members although the personnel of each wasn't finally decided until we the day before we split up.

As far as I was concerned, the trip began at Preston station where I boarded the Euston train and met my three travelling companions who had got on in Carlisle. The boredom of this section of the journey was to some extent alleviated by frequent trips to the bar for exorbitantly priced beer and butties. More pints at Heathrow departure lounge, and cheap Scotch on our Air India jumbo helped to maintain our euphoria until we disembarked into a monsoon rainstorm and a temperature of well over 90° at Delhi. Here we enjoyed the only part of the expedition that was anything like luxurious - Roger had a contact who met us at the airport and drove us to his very grand home in the Diplomatic Enclave of New Delhi (His father is a Cabinet Minister, no less). We stayed with him for not much more than 24 hours and were treated to the finest Indian food I've ever tasted, local whisky (I couldn't tell the difference between it and the real thing!) and a quick tour of the city. By mid-afternoon on the next day we were on the night train to Jammu, in Kashmir and at 8 o'clock the following morning we boarded a ramshackle bus for the most spectacular ride you can imagine, up a single lane dirt road barely clinging to the side of a precipitous gorge, sometimes over a thousand feet above the River Chenab. Our driver was a charming and quite mod Sikh gentleman who obviously had more faith in the shrine hanging in the front window than we had! (As we left the bus we noticed a sign on the back saying "In God we trust"!) The twelve hours we spent on that bus seemed interminable but we finally arrived at Kishtwar and were met by the overland party who showed us to our comfortable quarters and ordered for us an

REMEMBRANCE Cont.....

story here. But as you know it was mainly done from Blackpool, by the adventurous spirit and hard work of the members there.

Cyril in the meantime, found Hotel work too much for him, and his son John took over. Cyril moved with Sally to a cottage on the far side of Loughrigg Tarn. After several very happy years there, he became ill, went to hospital for an operation, but he always had a very bad chest, and unfortunately the strain on his chest after the operation was too much for his heart, and as you know he died towards the end of last year. His ashes were taken to Eskdale. Unfortunately I could not go to the ceremony, because I was away in Rome. However in January of this year, on impulse I jumped into the car on a gloriously bright day with snow on the tops, and drove over to Eskdale and went to the Woolpack. Who should I see, hanging clothes on the line, but Sally. She was overjoyed when she saw me, and I went in and had coffee, and we talked for the best part of two hours, of times past. Of how Cyril had always had a great friendship for me, and for all the members of the Achille Ratti; how he valued it.

He was as straight as a die, a real countryman of the Lakeland Fells. He was also a man of culture, as you can tell from the kind of education that he gave to his children. Certainly Achille Ratti C.C. will always be very fond of his memory, because he was really a man's man, and but for him I doubt if the club would ever have come into existence. We must always remember that. In the meantime let us keep in touch with Sally and his daughter and son-in-law at the Woolpack and with John and Jane in Newlands and let them feel that they belong.

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FOR SALE

$\frac{1}{2}$ pint petrol, SWEVA stove. Lightweight, very little used, and in new condition. List price January 1978 was £19.70. Will accept £10. Phone Cherie Wiggins Kendal 24486.

WANTED

Lightweight 2 man tent, suitable for backpacking.
Joyce Foster (address at end).

KISHTWAR Cont....1

provided us with sleeping accommodation, storage space and a marvellous mess (in the military sense of the word). So far the weather had been for the most part overcast, but our first morning at base camp was glorious and gave us our first glimpse of the mountains. Dominant was a beautiful peak of 19,000ft known as the Cathedral, very much like the Drus in shape; but of more interest to us was, just peeping out from behind a large rock buttress, the snow clad summit of Sickle Moon. Our un-named peak cannot be seen from Sarbal. The mountains are of Alpine grandeur and proportion but of course here they start where most Alpine peaks end. The other major differences and advantages over the Alps are that all but one of the surrounding peaks are unclimbed and, once our porters had gone there were only thirteen of us (our group had been augmented by a liaison officer, a cook, and a mail runner) to enjoy them.

On Tuesday 20th September we at last started trying to climb a mountain. The four of us who had arrived early at base took loads and wandered off toward the Sarbal glacier intending to establish an advance base beneath the northern flanks of the West ridge of Sickle Moon. As it worked out we didn't get there because five minutes away from base camp we came across our first real problem. The glacier stream that looked tame from a quarter mile away was in fact a raging torrent! We eventually found a reasonable place and began to wade across, holding on to one another as if our lives depended on it, as they nearly did. We ended up swimming the last few yards with loads on our backs, in four feet of icy water moving at twenty knots. After we'd shivered, cursed, wrung out our jeans and put them back on we set off up the boulder strewn glacier as planned, discussing how we could bridge the river. The epic river crossing was repeated in reverse, in the dark, on the way back and it was a pretty knackered and bedraggled group who fell into base camp, passed on the good news about having to build a bridge and broke open the medicinal whisky that night. The bridge was built by everyone (or at least with everyone's advice) the next day, after an hilarious nude crossing by our oldest member Arthur (he's 54) and drew the shortest straw and therefore became the guy we threw the first rope to. The term bridge is a bit grand for what we finished up with, it was more like a Tyrolean traverse. Enjoyable exercise though this may have been, it was another day wasted, and from then on each time the team had to cross the river, it meant an hour at the start and end of every day's march jumaring across and dragging heavy sacks afterwards.

During the next few days we all got pretty fit humping big loads from base camp to the two advance bases, stocking each with sufficient food, fuel and gear to sustain prolonged attempts on the two mountains. Each of these camps was three or four miles and about two thousand feet above base camp. It was on one of those marches that Pete Thompson stumbled and fell, under his 60lb load, which dislocated his shoulder as he hit the deck. It took large doses of fortal

KISHTWAR Cont.....

exceptionally large curry. It was September 8th, the day after Martin Boyson, Malcolm Howell and Will Barker had arrived to try Flat Top and Paul Nunn and his team had departed for their attempt on Barnaj --- we were in fairly distinguished company. I was to spend a further day or two in Kishtwar awaiting the opening of the bank in order to draw money to pay for the thirty ponies that would carry our food and equipment on the initial stage of the seventy mile walk to base camp. The rest of the team set off on pouring rain early next morning, leaving just two of us and the Flat Top team in Kishtwar. Thirty-six hours later Mal and I set off in pursuit of the expedition and, picking up stragglers on the way caught the main body of the party at Kiar, the last village, where we payed off the ponymen and began what proved to be a six day wait in the village before porters became available. --- it was harvest time and they couldn't leave the fields. This exceptionally frustrating period was spent re-organising the packaging of equipment and food into fewer, heavier loads; the re-setting, the zeroing of our spring balance so that the porters, when they eventually arrived thought they were carrying 55lbs not 65lbs! In between times we slept, ate, bathed in the hot springs, flicked scorpions out of our pits, negotiated porter rates of pay with the lamherdar (headman) and smoked the strange looking local 'tobacco', which seemed to induce a weird and soporific effect.

Eventually we managed to procure twenty-six local porters and the services of a nomadic character of the Gujar tribe and his ten ponies and off we went, with some trepidation, as the locals maintained that the path above Kiar was impassable for ponies. As it transpired what they meant was that it was impassable for loaded ponies. Ever tried humping seventy pound boxes up mod. rock scrambles with nothing to tie 'em on your back and a 266 ft drop on one side? Not much fun! Only two incidents between there and base camp worthy of a mention. We learned to live with the fleas we'd collected a week earlier and which defied all attempts to eradicate them, (they finally deserted us when it got a bit colder), and we met three Japanese climbers returning from an attempt on what we now considered to be our un-named peak. Fortunately for us they had failed, due to prolonged bad weather and something they described as "fouring locks", (say this with eyes slanted and teeth protruding for best effect). Having given the third degree and established that they hadn't climbed our mountain, we pressed on and reached base camp in two groups on the 19 and 20th September -- just a week later than anticipated.

Sarhal, as our base camp site is known locally, is at 12,100ft and provided for us a fairly luxurious haven, situated as it is above the flood plain of a glacial stream beside a tiny lake, with a fresh water spring and surrounded by subtly coloured alpine flowers. Its best feature is however its four spacious, dry, unoccupied unoccupied shelters used in summer by the Gujar people, who come up and graze their sheep and goats on the high pastures. These huts

KISHTWAR Cont.....

and five of us pulling to reduce the dislocation, and of course Pete was out of load-carrying for some while.

Finally the day came when the team split into two and, carrying final loads, mostly personal gear we set off to occupy the advance bases and begin reconnoitering our intended routes. As far as Sickle Moon was concerned we faced no major set backs from then on in the way of route finding, everything worked out as we'd guessed it might. We had selected a new route on the N.W. Face, following a curved rock/ice rib which culminated on the main West ridge of the mountain about 2,000ft below the summit. The weather having previously regaled us with much rain and the odd heavy snowstorm at base camp now turned kinder and only a couple more days were lost due to it. The pattern from then on was one of very cold, clear nights, followed by beautiful mornings deteriorating by about 2.00pm. into cloud and light snowfall. The high winds we'd been warned were prevalent in the Himalaya at this season were thankfully almost absent. It was however intensely cold most of the time as we didn't get much sun; it only got onto our face of the hill by 11ish and began to be obscured by cloud on most days by about one.

We didn't spend much time at advance base, it was really only a staging post and not very comfortable, two tents erected on boulders and having to suffice sometimes for six of us. Water was available for only about an hour in the middle of the day when the glacier streams melted. Filling bottles necessitated a dice with death, grovelling on all fours under a precariously balanced glacier table which also provided a roof for our food and equipment store. I wasn't sorry therefore when, after we'd established a Whillans Box on a snow shoulder at 16,00 ft, Bill and I were selected to occupy it right away and start looking at the route above there, where things got a bit steeper. This also meant we got out of three or four days load carrying up the steep moraine and hanging glacier to camp one. I'd had enough of that on the first time up there. On that day, after carrying a load up, digging a platform, erecting the Box and lugging boulders to tie it down, I had a blinding headache when we got back to advance base and wrote in my diary "..... perhaps the hardest day on the hill I've ever had ". It was also the highest!

Camp one was in what I described in my diary as the most beautiful place in the world, perched on a narrow ridge jutting out from the face, surrounded on all sides by majestic, virgin peaks. It was also safe from avalanche and stone fall. Immediately above was a face of some 3,000 ft which we intended climbing by way of the curved rib mentioned earlier. The first 1,000 ft or so was mixed snow and ice and rock of about grade 1 and 2 which had to be climbed early in the day as it was raked by avalanches in the afternoons, when the sun got round. Higher up, the rib became more clearly defined and was safe from avalanche danger. On our first day above camp one Bill and I, perhaps foolishly, soloed this first section carrying 1,000ft of light fixing line. This of course saved a lot of time, and on reaching our high point for the day we descended, abseiling down the line and fixing it for future ascents as we went. In the days that followed,

KISHTWAR Cont....

food, fuel and gear were brought up to camp one and the route pushed out as far as a rock buttress we came to know as The Tower. This was about 600ft high, very steep and unavoidable. We thought that it was this tower that would provide the key to the route - and originally intended to fix-rope the whole of it, return to Camp 1 and have a rest day, then take off for the summit from the top of the tower. Robin Andrews and I went up to climb the tower one day, but found that severe rock-climbing at 17,000ft is pretty exhausting work. We managed to fix rope on less than half of it. Nevertheless, that would have to do - we now had only five days left before porters were due to collect us and our gear from base camp.

Accordingly, on October 8th, myself, Bill Hodgson, Robin Andrews and Stuart Hepburn made an early start, climbed to the top of the fixed ropes and, carrying bivvy sacks and food and fuel for three days "had a bash". Three more rock pitches of about-severe -but-it-felt-harder took us to the top of the tower where we thought the technicalities would end. Wrong again! That's when it got harder! We found it impossible to traverse off the rib as we had planned and had to keep on climbing it to the point at which it abutted on the West Ridge. This involved us in two more days of climbing some rock but mostly ice pitches now, of Scottish grade III/IV. Although none of these pitches threatened to stop us, they did make for very slow progress and so, after two very cold bivouacs, when we finally made it onto the Ridge, we were at the end of our food, gas and tether. Furthermore it was snowing heavily, and at just over 19,000 ft we were still some 2,000ft from the summit. Add to this the fact that Bill and I hadn't felt our feet for a day or so and perhaps you'll understand why we reluctantly made the decision to turn back, even though the difficulties were now behind us. The retreat was an epic in itself, performed in worsening weather, the last half in the dark trying to salvage as much gear as possible without wasting any time. Despite a few harrowing moments however, we were down at Camp One where the lads had heard us coming and had a brew on, by 9.30pm, not much the worse for wear, but tired and disappointed. The annoying thing about our failure was and still is, that if we'd still had the week we lost early in the trip waiting for porters and building bridges, Robin and Stuart who were free of frost-bite could have gone back up after a rest, and with the fixed rope now on the tower and most of the hard sections above, they could have been on the Ridge in a day, and then----who knows?

Still its no use iffing, next day we dismantled Camp one, put it on our backs and with a last wistful look ambled down to advance base, assed that to our biggest carry yet (a good job it was all downhill), and carried on down to Sarbal base camp. There we were lifted from the doldrums by brews, food, sleep and best of all, the news that the lads had made the first ascent of the un-named peak. It is intended to name it Janam, which is Urdu for birth, because it was Roy May's birthday on the day he stood on the summit. Their ascent and our overland journey home are tales which will have

KISHTWAR Cont...

to keep until later. On October 12th the porters arrived as planned to take us back to Kiar, and thence to Kishtwar. I think I enjoyed the walk back down those beautiful valleys more than any other part of the expedition. For the first time I was perfectly relaxed, with no fears of unfitness or inadequacy or worries about the route, the weather, the snowconditions etc., just a pleasant stroll with nothing on my back except a sleeping bag and toothbrush, and a pair of training shoes on my slightly swollen feet, enjoying the balmy climate and the autumn colours as we descended below the tree line.

Taking the thing as a whole; flight out, walk in, climbing, climbing, drive home, it was undoubtedly the best holiday I've ever had and one which has set the standard for future excursions. Anybody fancy Bolivia?

M.J.B. 4.2.78.

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Editor would like to thank sincerely those people who have sent articles. I am sorry that there is no prize for those who wrote to point out that they had spotted the deliberate spelling mistake in January's bulletin. Next bulletin due in June/July, please send me news, views and please send some articles!

See you all at the ACM.

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