

A COMMENT:

As I settle myself at the computer to write something the outside air is damp, the sunshine appears to be avoiding us, the lawns are getting long, and the grass is too wet to mow.

The past week or perhaps more ten days has been a time of events for me, events I would prefer had not happened.

As many know I ride my E-bike to run my dog, this arrangement has suited both me and the dog. The dog Leo had his 7th birthday in November, early on I rode an ordinary geared bike but then five and a half years back I up-graded to an E-bike. This was a very good step forward, I have enjoyed riding this bike, over those five plus years and I have clocked up slightly over 6000 KM, but then about the first week of January the electrics of the bike died! I was back to a peddle bike but considerably harder to peddle than a non-electric bike. I consulted my bike shop only to learn that my particular bike, a Chinese manufactured machine was non-serviceable my only option was to buy a new bike!

I visited the bike shop where they had two options for me to check out, the cheaper option was \$4000 the second option was \$7,500 perhaps a dollar under, the seller claimed they were both serviceable and had Bosh electrics and were not Chinese. I decided to consider the matter; my son convinced me I should go for the dearer one. I returned next day and purchased the \$7,500 bike, a quite different bike to my old one of the past five years. But no doubt a very good bike, it has a suspension seat! This allows me to take my weight on the peddles press a lever with my left hand and the seat will rise to the height I desire, which is very good, the rider then must lower the seat when stopping to allow one to dismount the machine and get off in one piece. That is all good in theory. So, on a rainy afternoon I head off, Leo stands on the veranda looking at the rain and me thinking I must have gone rockers, its raining he thought but then comes along to keep me

company. At the first street I hear cars approaching so stop, being a novice rider on a new bike I forget to lower the seat, my boots don't reach the ground and I crash! I have a spectacular landing in the Council's rose bed (carpet rose's) I land on my right shoulder rather heavily. I now have a very painful shoulder; the pain is now controlled with the help of "Paracetamol" I'd be lost without such a drug. At the request of other's, I have sought medical help and have now been X rayed, the result no bony issues come back in a weeks' time! (I guess that is If I'm still alive).

So that is my long sad story for the start of the year. I only hope you the readers are having a better start to the year than have I so far! We are getting out of season weather. I emptied 18mm of rain from my gauge yesterday and then again today, I just wonder what there will be tomorrow.

I panicked a little on Monday as I was sent to A & E at Ash Hospital, I was told I would have to wait! That was certainly the case. I was under pressure I had visitors arriving later in the day, I needed to do a little more preparation, I abandoned my wait at the hospital and hurried home, on checking my e-mails my guests had at the last moment cancelled due to one person being ill! Phew I could relax, the X-ray happened on Thursday with no further waiting, the good news, I have no bone troubles but, I continue to have a right arm that does not work well, a tragedy, I am unable to hang my washing on the line and I have pain to contend with.

We are fortunate compared to parts of the North Island, we have no flooding, no landslides, and so far, no tragic loss of life, the ground conditions may well be soggy and wet, next month is sure to be better, the weather patten will change before long. For now, there is no drought, I think it best to be philosophical and sing the Fred Dag song "Where would we be without our gum-boots".

Have a great year cheers Denis.



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Book of the Month – Mt Somers Library

Title: 'Ash'

Author: Louise Wallace

Publication year: 2024

A review by Elles Smallegoor

A while ago Dunedin-based poet and editor Louise Wallace published her first novel, "Ash", a succinct but rich work which dives into the life of rural vet and mother-of-two Thea as it comes under pressure from different angles. At work there is the casual and not-so-casual sexism ("when does the real vet get here?" (p. 24)). Gender politics play in the background too as her male colleagues/shareholders are trying to prevent a female colleague from joining as she will likely go on maternity leave. At home, the marriage is sort of okay, but with two kids under five and both Thea and her well-meaning but frequently oblivious husband Nick working, romance is pretty much on the backburner. Her mother-in-law is supportive but also triggers feelings of incompetence and guilt. And then comes the ash: a volcano in the region erupts, upending not only the lives of her clients and their animals but also that of Thea and her family as her son's health is negatively affected. Wallace's novel examines female rage and vexation with a powerful precision.

The main body of the work is taken up by straightforward first-person narration in which the reader follows the day-to-day life of Thea as she navigates her days at home and, later in the book, at work:

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I walk in loops because the only other option is open road. Grunting, sweating, I push the bulky pram up the gravel hill. I am on maternity leave, which I seem to have taken to with the spirit of an angsty chihuahua.

‘Just join the programme – you get free membership!’ Nick keeps encouraging. He is a marketing advisor for an online exercise programme aimed at rural women. The point is that I want to actually leave our house. (p. 10)

This passage, part of the opening page, sets the mood for the following chapters. The physical up-hill battle is symbolic of things to come. Thea’s response to her husband’s well-meaning remarks points to simmering frustrations. The passage also reveals a lot about her character. Thea is presented as a self-reflective, determined woman of action who knows what she wants but also realises others fail to notice her needs or struggles. In a few sentences, then, Wallace deftly foreshadows the novel’s main concerns and developments.

The narrative is interspersed with pages that render the novel distinctive and more powerful. Wallace the poet is at play here. There are numbered and titled “Figures” which convey thoughts or experiences illustrative of Thea’s life. One page, for instance, called “Figure 5. (Checking In)”, only contains the phrase “areyouokay?areyouokay?areyouokay?”, and so on. This is repeated six lines, after which the phrase only appears occasionally and then ends with “and then they stop asking” (p. 32). Other pages called “(Morning)” are particularly powerful. They detail every little action that happens on a particular morning, such as “changelucydirty nappyinbagnappybabinbin”



(p. 20). They show the multitude of demands on Thea before she has even left the house to go to work. The “(Fieldnotes)” sections quote verbatim a farmer client who swears every other word (“faaaark”) while complaining about “the mrs” (p. 45). This is only a small selection. Taken together, these poetic pages bring home to the reader in a complex way how every little experience is a meaningful building block in a person’s consciousness. It’s the little things in life, added up, that come to define our behaviour and thinking, if not our identity.

“Ash” is a compelling vignette of modern womanhood in rural New Zealand and an impressive debut.

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The Old Post Office Library



Our first library news for 2026!!

And a big thank you to the editor Jeremy, for continuing on with this essential community newsletter for the time being. I know many people who look forward to this community link and we all owe Jeremy much gratitude for his stellar efforts.

We are applying this month for our annual book grant from the Ashburton District Council so we can keep up the excellent standard of new books coming to our shelves. There are plenty of exciting books coming through this next year so we need those funds to make sure we can purchase them.e.g. A new novel from Elizabeth Strout, (Olive Kitteridge, My Name is Lucy Barton, Tell Me Everything,). Her new book is 'The Things We Never Say' and looks to be in the same vein as her others. So a book to look forward to.

And likewise for Deborah Challinor's new book where she continues the story of Tatty Crowe . 'Black Velvet and Vengeance'. Her other two books about the same character have been very popular with our readers.

I have picked up a secondhand copy of Phillip Holden's beautiful book 'Station Country... the Collection'. It brings all three books of Holden's highly successful series about high country station farming together in one volume: Back-country Life in New Zealand Dtation Country, Returning to the BZ Back Country, and 'The Last Muster'

This is a truly magnificent book and a fabulous read for everyone interested in our high country heritage. I imagine it will be a popular book, so please take care of it and treat it gently.... it is secondhand already and has been well read.

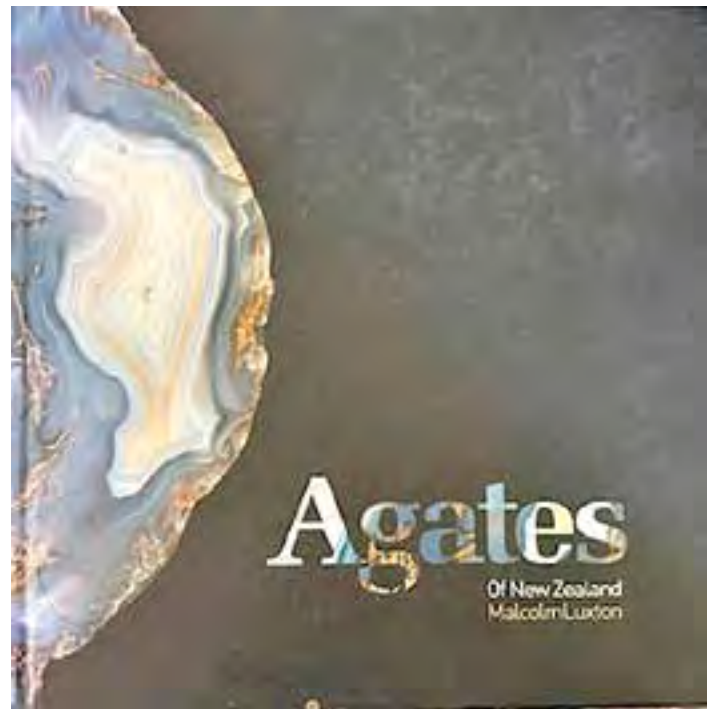
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A final plea for our missing hardcover book... 'Agates of New Zealand' by Malcolm Luxton. Sadly Malcolm died at Christmas time after a long battle with cancer. John and I had spoken with him numerous times and have been privileged to view his agate collection, a large number of which have been collected from the Mt Somer's area. The chances of finding a copy of his very excellent agate book are slim indeed and it is not likely there will now be a reprinting. We so want our copy returned to the library.

'The Shepherd's Hut' by Tim Winton.

The title of this book intrigued me and from the moment I started reading it, I was addicted! A real page turner, a bit rough in places, but a terrific read I shan't forget.

'The German Daughter' by Marius Gabriel. This is a secondhand book also but I'm not sure it has ever been read. Printed in 2024 so is relatively recent. Another page turner, set in two timelines: 1940 Norway and 1968 England. It is the story of a young woman whose parents were both Nazis and she was adopted out by an Englishman who wanted to give her a good life. She discovers she has a sister. The book follows both her parents story and the sisters tale. Very readable.

'The Bridgestone' by Sally Gardner. Historical fiction set in 1796 in England. Young Lord Hallington, recently released from prison in France, has just found out his father has died and he is set to inherit the family estate in England with one condition.... He has to be married and produce an heir, all in a very tight timeframe. He buys a wife at a wife market, a common occurrence in those times. This absorbing tale follows the couple's life together but with many secrets along the way. Highly recommended.

'One of Us' by Elizabeth Day.

Betrayal, old bonds, buried scandals: one British establishment family comes face to face with the consequences of privilege

and power. There have been very good reviews of this book....
'Intelligent, darkly humorous and brilliantly written'....
Stanley Tucci.

'The Lost Wife' by Susannah Moore.

1855. Sarah Brinton heads west leaving behind an abusive husband in Rhode Island. At a small frontier post on land claimed by both white settlers and Native Americans, she finds a new husband as well as acceptance and kinship among the Sioux women at a nearby reservation.

But trouble is brewing, the Sioux resent the rampant theft of their lands and conflict breaks out. Sarah finds herself lost between two worlds.

This book is based on fact.

'Flashlight' by Susan Choi. Another book which was shortlisted for the Booker Prize. The blurb on the back cover says it is a masterpiece that moves between the post-war Korean immigrant community in Japan, suburban America, and North Korea, and tells the astonishing story of one family caught up in the tides of twentieth century history. This book has had rave reviews.

We are trialling having the library open on Saturday afternoons so anyone willing to volunteer for this library shift please contact Kath Schikker. 021 0584 112

Happy reading.... A very pleasant way to spend these rainy days while we wait for the sun to reappear and we can remember summer days.

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Network of trained veterinarians being established for potential biosecurity outbreaks

Minister for Biosecurity Andrew Hoggard has today announced a partnership between the Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI) and The Veterinary Council of New Zealand (Vet Council) to establish VetNet-Biosecurity, a network of trained veterinarians that can quickly respond in major biosecurity events.

MPI's Biosecurity New Zealand Tiakitanga Pūtaiao Aotearoa works to prevent exotic pests and diseases from significantly damaging the country's economy, environment, and way of life. New Zealand's veterinarians are a vital part of this system, providing early detection, veterinary care, and analysis.

VetNet-Biosecurity has been formed with the Vet Council to ensure a network of trained veterinary professionals can be called upon to provide an immediate and strong response if New Zealand was to face a biosecurity emergency such as foot and mouth disease (FMD).

A significant biosecurity outbreak would impact New Zealand's people, economy, and primary industries.

Veterinarians play an important role in maintaining and protecting our animals and primary industries by reporting suspected cases through MPI's exotic pest and disease hotline and by providing trusted advice and clinical management.

MPI will provide free training through the Vet Council for all New Zealand-registered veterinarians. Training will involve veterinarians applying their skills to a wide variety of biosecurity scenarios, such as foot and mouth disease.

Vet Council CEO and Registrar Iain McLachlan said the Vet Council would be encouraging all veterinarians to take advantage of the training. Given the nature of the potential biosecurity issues, it is expected there will be a higher uptake from large animal veterinarians.

"Veterinarians are the professionals working at the frontlines on our farms and in clinical practice, so their skills will be essential in any biosecurity response," he says. "Not only are they working with animals, so they can detect and report warning signs early, they are trained to provide treatment and have built trusted relationships in their communities and the wider veterinary sector."

For more information about VetNet-Biosecurity visit: <https://vetcouncil.org.nz/Web/VetNet-Biosecurity.aspx>



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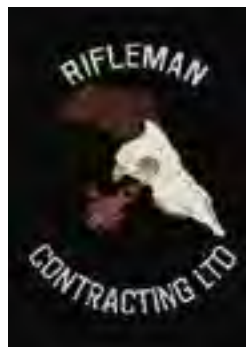
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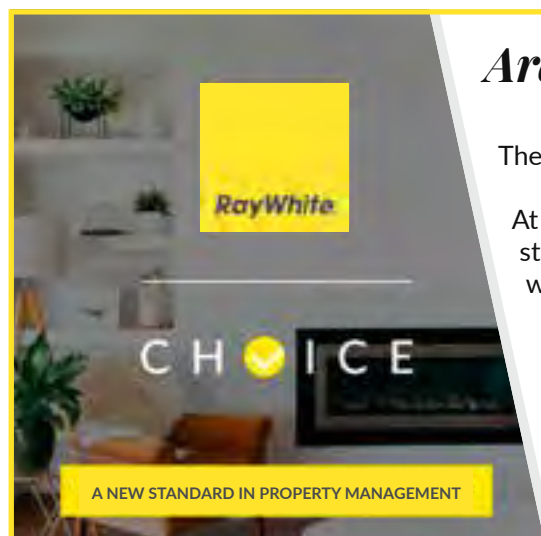
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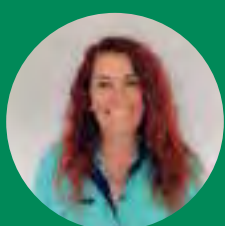


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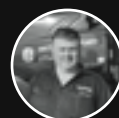


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Update from The Mount Somers Foothill Museum

First, we wish to thank the sponsors for their support for our Christmas BBQ by their kind donations of prizes etc.

The Mount-Café and Bar, Razorback Nursery, Smith Farms, Mayfield Service Centre 2024, the Gordons. Also thank you to the committee members for their generous donations to the 1st prize of the Monster Grocery Raffle.

1st Prize Grocery Hamper - #47 Wendy Burgess

2nd Prize Dinah Osborne - #99 Voucher

3rd Prize Tony – bus driver - #22 Plant

We are making steady progress with our renovations; we have new carpet and have purchased two display cabinets.

All of this takes time and money which is, as usual, in short supply. If you have any ideas on how we can raise some money, all ideas would be considered.

Thanks again –

The Mount Somers Foothill Museum Committee.

JPs in the Foothills Area

Mayfield

Pauline Hewson.03 3036 397.

Grant Early.0215 141 56

Alistair Morrison. 0276 024 927

Mt Somers

Robert Schikker.0211 866 107.

Anne Marie Allan.0272 843 013.

Anne Parnham. 0277 676 056.

Wendy Millichamp.027 459 1277.

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Robert Withers.0273 030 138.

Walk Fern/Allans Track 14 January

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Photos supplied by Sanae Hydes

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Welcome to another year of fun, theory and driver training. We have hit road over January with a few new mentors and some successful driving tests.

We are also gearing up for another road code course, which we intend starting in March. The course is nearly full already. There are limited spaces available for people living in the country who do not have a New Zealand license already. The nine-week course ends with the learner license test. We can also help convert your overseas license as long as you haven't already started the process.

Summer seems to have gone awol this year, but it has given us the opportunity to train our learner drivers under different driving conditions, which is always a good thing to do. We like to train under all conditions and teach all manoeuvres, even if they aren't being tested on it. It's all about safety and giving our students confidence to go it alone once they've passed the test. And feedback from the testing officers is that our people are always well prepared for the test. It's the least we can do. And it's our amazing driving mentors along with our professional instructors David Leadley and Allan Baird who do such a great job preparing them. We can't do



Donald Shearer and Piumi Bhagya

it without a strong team behind us, so thank you to everyone involved in our programme.

Did you see the Good Sorts segment on One News in December? They showcased our programme and Donald Shearer and two of his students. If you didn't see it on the night, we have shared it on our Facebook page on the 10th December. Take a look and hear first hand from a mentor and his students what an impact it has on all of their lives.

If you would like to be part of this amazing programme, as a student, driving mentor or to volunteer in other ways, we would love to hear from you.

ISSUE ONE HUNDRED & FIVE

Please contact Wendy Hewitt on 027 611 3301 or wendy.hewitt@safer.org.nz

We are also on Facebook, just search for the Mid Canterbury Rural Driver Licensing Scheme.

The Mid Canterbury Rural Driver Licensing Scheme is proudly sponsored by Waka Kotahi, Lottery Grants Board, Advance Ashburton Community Foundation, Ashburton District Council, The Lion Foundation, COGs and Community Trust Mid & South Canterbury.

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Rural Licensing Co-Ordinator
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Thank you to Andrew & Sonya Spencer for the
peastraw, and Carr Contracting for bailing.

ANAMA Rural Women

December saw us including husbands, celebrate the festive season with a lunch. January has been quiet getting ready for 2026.

On Wednesday 18th February at 6pm at the Hotel Ashburton the Winchmore Ladies Dinner Group are inviting anyone interested to attend a dinner with guest speaker Emma Higgins, Senior Analyst with Rabobank's Rabobank Research team. Emma is a passionate advocate for rural communities.

Tickets available from <https://events.humanitix.com/winchmore-ladies-dinner>

Non-members \$55.

As children return to school we would like to remind drivers of the 20km either way rule when passing stationary school buses.

Wishing you all a happy year ahead and hoping we get some summer so harvesting can get underway .

Our group is small but if anyone locally needs support please contact us .

Kay 026 3339 513.

Don't Take Anything Personally:
Nothing others do is because of you. What others say and do is a projection of their own reality, their own dream. When you are immune to the opinions and actions of others, you won't be the victim of needless suffering.

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In the Church we often talk about being on a journey. Life is not static, it is constantly moving and we are constantly growing. We can grow in faith, we can grow in knowledge, in our relationships, in our skills; this can be as individuals and as a whole church. Our church certainly seems to be doing this as we've seen people using their talents in different ways; visitors and new people joining us, the music has been more lively, the preaching and the prayers have been more passionate, and there's been a real sense of community.

Easter is quite early this year and so even though we've just finished Christmas the season of Lent begins very shortly in the church calendar. Lent is the time before Easter and lasts for 40 days. Traditional Lenten practices include prayer, repentance and forgiveness, fasting, and almsgiving (unfortunately I like food too much to be good at the fasting one). Lent begins on what's called Ash Wednesday. This year we will be hosting the traditional Ash Wednesday service in Mt. Somers and inviting neighbouring parishes and churches to join us.

As we get closer to Easter keep an eye out for our Palm Sunday (the Sunday before Easter) service at St. Aidan's. This will be a different church service for all ages, and will probably involve an Easter egg hunt. As always, you're welcome to get in touch any time.

Rev. Sage Burke

PARISH CONTACTS

Phone: 302 8254
Email: midcanterburyanglican@gmail.com
Web: www.midcanterbury.org
Social: facebook.com/MidCanterburyAnglican

CHURCH SERVICES

St Aidan's, Mt Somers

Feb 3rd 4pm Pint with a Priest at Mt. Somers Tavern
Feb 14th 9.30am Church Tramp to Woolshed Creek
and back (meet at the carpark)
Feb 28th 7pm Traditional Ash Wednesday Service at
St. Aidan's
Feb 21st 10am Ladies' Brunch
March 29th 10am All Age Easter Service

Mid Canterbury Connector

"The Mid Canterbury Connector community transport service is up and running again for 2026. If you live rurally, don't drive or have a vehicle, and need to get into Ashburton Township for medical, dental, WINZ appointments, to see family or friends, shopping etc, the Connector can pick you up from home, wait for you, then drop you home again. Our volunteer drivers are friendly and respectful, and our fares are very reasonable. The service operates Monday to Friday between 9am and 4.30pm. Please give us 2 days' notice if you can, so we can organise a volunteer driver. Call 03 928 8164 to book".
Lesley Symington
Safer Mid Canterbury

Introducing Hospice Mid Canterbury

Hospice Mid Canterbury (HMC) is known as a "no beds, no meds" community hospice. That means it isn't about clinical palliative treatment but about providing complementary care and support when people are dealing with a terminal diagnosis.

Here's a summary of what HMC does:

At Kōwhai House:

- ☐ Complementary therapies such as massage, reflexology and reiki
- ☐ Weekly Exercise Therapy classes
- ☐ Chair Yoga
- ☐ A monthly activity programme
- ☐ Breakaway Café for caregivers
- ☐ Good Grief Café for bereavement support
- ☐ HMC library

At Home

- ☐ Sitting and companionship
- ☐ Biographies
- ☐ Pet Walking
- ☐ Shopping and transport assistance
- ☐ Outings
- ☐ Complementary Therapies

Other services

- ☐ Counselling
- ☐ Portrait photography

How to get HMC support

Anyone in Mid Canterbury who has or is caring for someone with a life-limiting illness can make a referral. See contact details below.

On line - www.hospicemc.nz to find out more and make a referral
Phone - 03-3078387 or 0272278387 or

Email - manager@hospicemc.nz

Call in to Kōwhai House
at 70 Havelock Street

Monday-Friday 9am to 2pm.

All services are free.



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ISSUE	DEADLINE	DELIVERY
March 2026	23 February	28 February

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Mayfield Playcentre

We hope everyone enjoyed a wonderful summer break! Alongside having fun filled family holiday breaks, our committee and families have been busy giving the Playcentre a fresh lift, and the space is looking amazing for tamariki and whānau in 2026. We're excited to reopen on Tuesday 27 January, running sessions Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday from 9:15am – 12:15pm. We're always delighted to welcome new members. If you're curious about Playcentre or would like to come along



and see what we're all about, please feel free to get in touch at mayfield@playcentre.org.nz - we're happy to answer any questions.

This year we have lots of exciting things planned, including special events, day trips, involvement in the Mayfield Show, and more!

We can't wait to see everyone soon and share another fun year of learning through play.



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