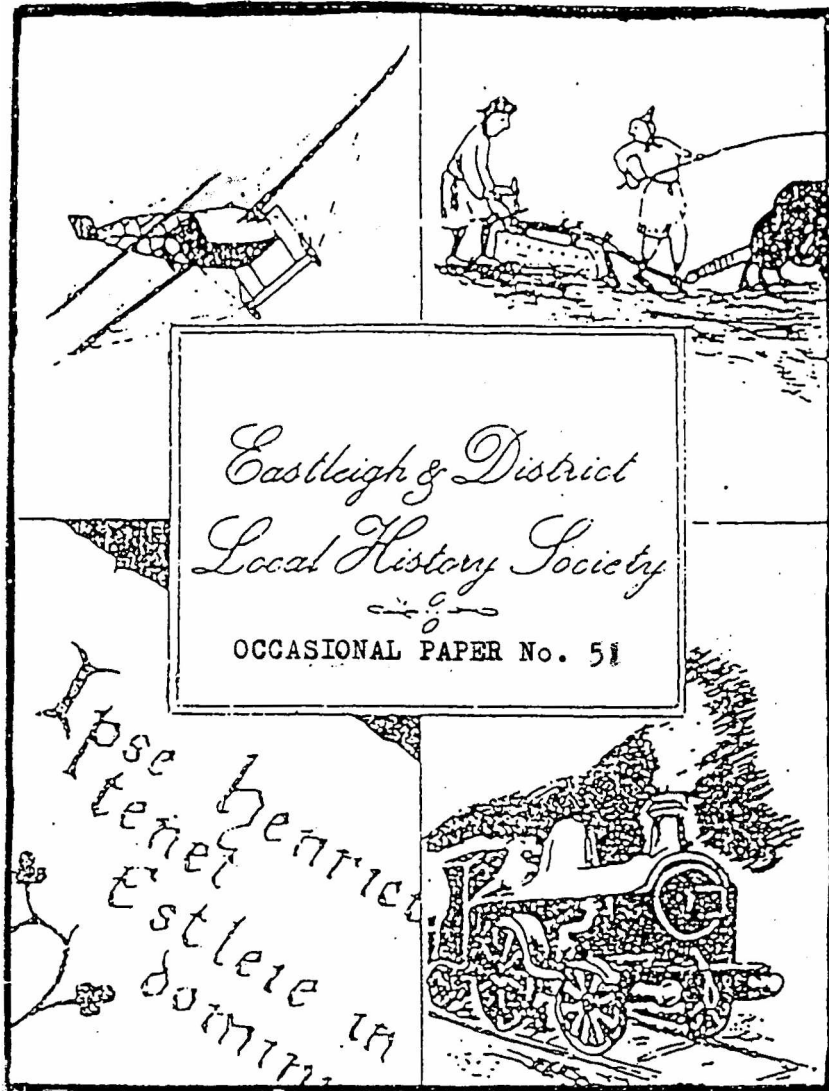
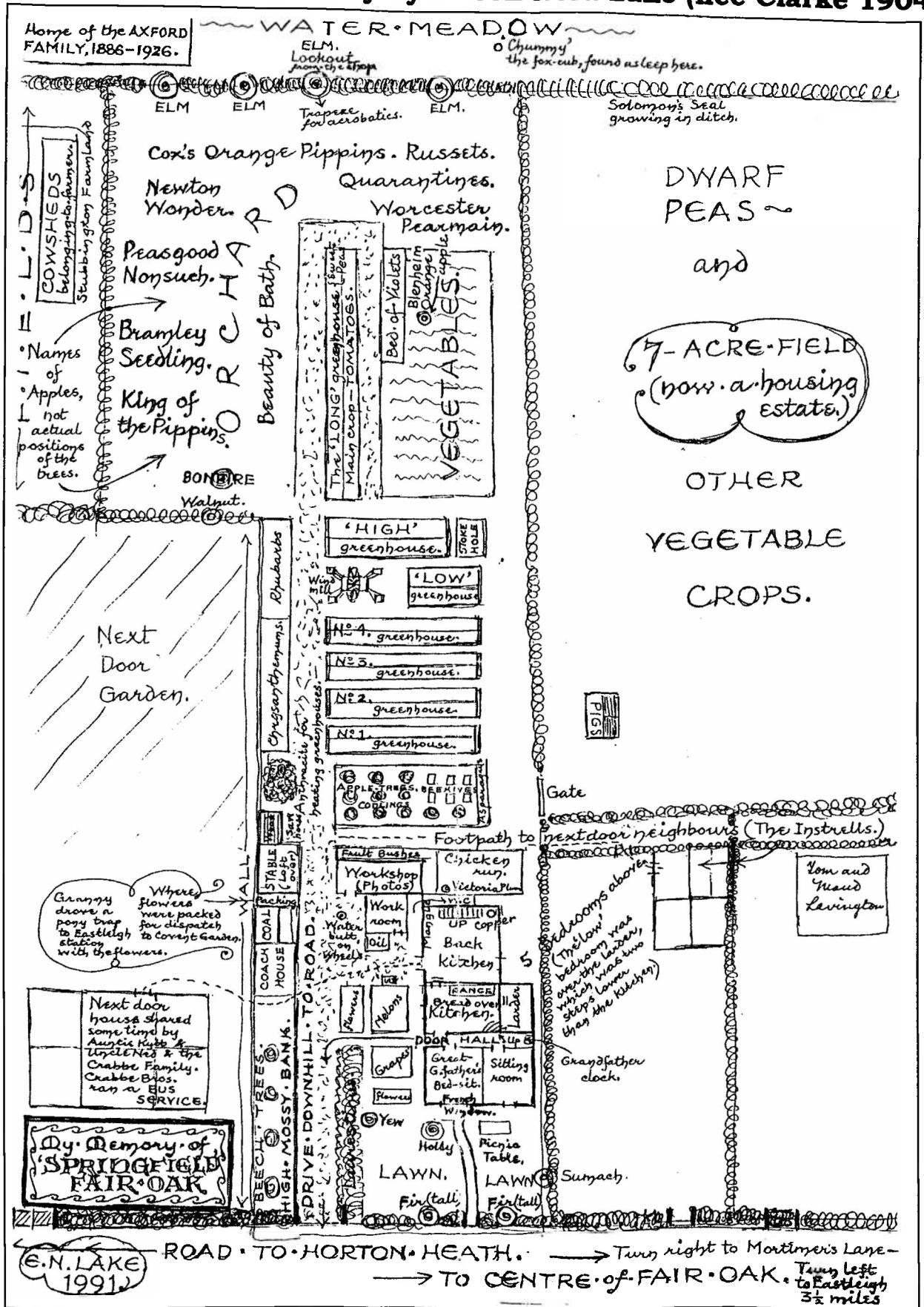


Happy Fair Oak Days at "Springfield"



"SPRINGFIELD", Botley Road, FAIR OAK.

An illustration from memory by Eileen Nora Lake (nee Clarke 1904)



of her grandparents' home 1886 to 1926

Happy Fair Oak Days at "Springfield"

Adapted by **Sandra Naish** from an original story
by **Wendy Jane Hobbs**



**JOHN E. AXFORD OUTSIDE HIS FAIR OAK HOME
NAMED "SPRINGFIELD"**

My interest in the Hampshire village of Fair Oak, three and a half miles from Eastleigh, stems from my father's childhood memories. My father was **Eric John CLARK** born 22 July 1907, who lived with his three sisters, **Eileen Nora** born 1904, **Joan Mary** born 1912, **Enid Elizabeth** born 1914 and their widowed mother, **Dorothy Maria Clark** (nee **Axford** born 1883). The family lived with his grandparents **John Edward AXFORD** (1856 -1934) and **Dinah** (1851-1924) at "Springfield", Fair Oak, which was a detached house situated in Botley Road. It was the home from 1886 to 1926 and market garden business of the Axford family with extensive greenhouses, vegetable gardens, orchards and a seven-acre field.

There was a windmill in the garden, which pumped water up to irrigate it and the greenhouses. "Springfield" lay back behind a large five-bar gate, situated on the brow of the hill in Botley Road, just south of the existing traffic lights at the junction with Eastleigh Road, Fair Oak. On a 1968 OS map coming from the direction of Botley through Fair Oak, the named Springfield site is shown past Fair Oak Primary School

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with Wyvern Secondary School behind it. Sadly, the grounds have since been sold off and a new development of many houses is now built on the site, in a road today named Cotsalls. The house is still there today, but quite hidden from view.

In this photograph John Edward Axford is leaning against his greenhouses. Son Gilbert is at the very top of the windmill.



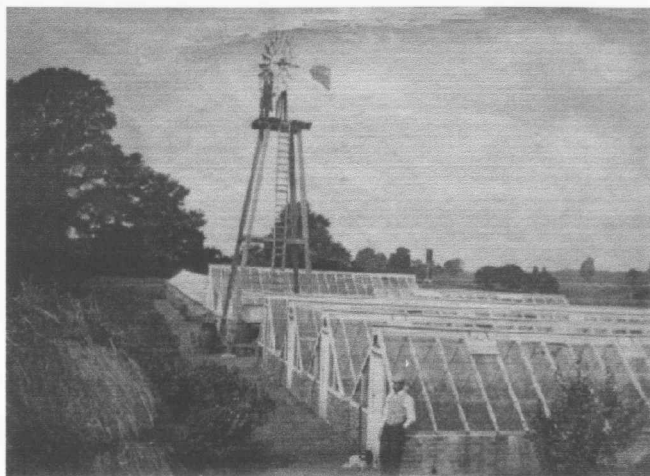
In 1991 my aunt, **Nora LAKE** nee **Clarke** aged 87, made a drawing for me showing Springfield and the market garden from her memory of it. It shows a five bedroomed detached house with many workshops, outhouses, greenhouses heated by anthracite, and a large orchard behind, at the bottom of which was a water meadow. Nora named about ten different English apple tree varieties being grown. There was a footpath to the house of their neighbours, the **INSTRELLS**, and beyond them lived **Tom and Maud LAVINGTON**. The house next door in the Horton Heath direction was shared sometime by her Aunt Kytt and Uncle Ned, and by the **CRABBE** family. Nora recalls that it was the Crabbe Brothers who ran a bus service in the village. A photograph of Nora circa 1907 shows her with **Mr VOKES** in the trap drawn by Beauty the pony. Nora's great-grandfather, John Axford occupied a bedsitting room with the family, and her drawing shows his as the room at the front downstairs with the French window.

My father came to live at Springfield when his mother was left with four children, ranging in age from 10 years to 6 weeks. He was her second child, but only son of **Sydney CLARK** (1876-1914). My grandmother was left penniless because her husband died without keeping up the insurance payments, so they had to give up their home in Bournemouth where Sydney had been manager of the Labour Exchange, and come back to Fair Oak and live with her parents. What a dilemma for her.

My father had many happy memories of his years spent at "Springfield", and he remembers particularly how they grew tomatoes, roses, sweetpeas and chrysanthemums. As a boy he bunched up flowers, and what he remembered most was the smell of the sweet peas. He always grew sweet peas in his garden every year when he was alive. I try to grow them too, but mine are never as big and scented as his were. The smell of freshly picked tomatoes was another memory and he told me they used to help box them up and then get up very early the next morning to take their produce by pony and trap to the nearest railway station, which he thought was probably that at Shawford, although Aunt Nora's map states that her Granny drove a pony trap to Eastleigh Station with the flowers. All produce including fresh flowers was sent by train to Covent Garden. The Axfords were obviously a well-known supplier as they are listed in Kelly's Directory from 1895 to 1903 as florists.

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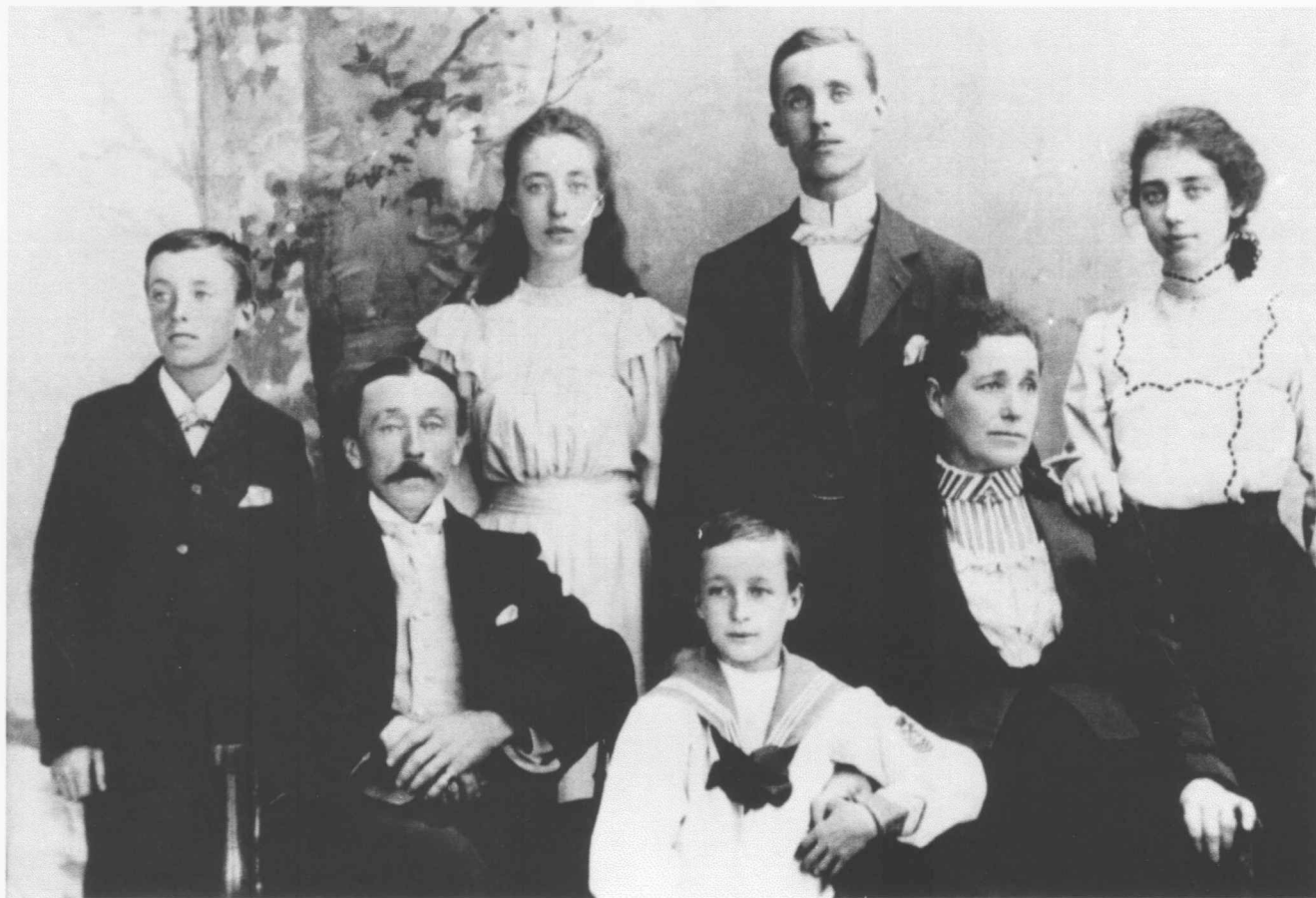
The Axford family in 1902 featured in this photograph are (left to right) Standing: Gilbert Richard aged 15, Kathleen Charlotte aged 17, Edward Guy aged 23, Dorothy Maria - my grandmother aged 19.

John Edward and wife **Dinah** (nee **BALL**) married 5th June 1880 at Twyford, Hants. They are shown seated here with youngest son Alec John aged 13 at the very front holding his mother's hand. **Kathleen Charlotte AXFORD** (born 1884 and known as



Kytt) married **Edwin Tom Seaward READ** - "Ned" (1890-1968) in July 1913 at Fair Oak. Ned and Kytt's wedding photograph was taken at Springfield and includes Ned's brother and two sisters, plus two vicars, the **Rev. SIDEBOTTOM**, and Rev. Guy Axford.

John AXFORD Senior (1820-1916), Kytt's grandfather, was still alive then as an elderly man with a flowing beard in the wedding photo and he is also pictured here circa 1915 between Dinah and John E. Axford with Kytt and Ned Read behind them.



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Edward Guy AXFORD (1881-1960) was a Vicar at various churches in the North East of England and an Army Chaplain during WW1. He married **Margaret ELLIS** in 1917 at Wakefield. **Gilbert Richard AXFORD** (1886-1960) emigrated to Alex Creek, Canada. He came home in 1923, married **Annie Maude HOWARD** at Eastleigh and then returned to Peace River, Alberta, Canada in August 1925. He died in 1960 at Nanaimo, British Columbia, Canada.

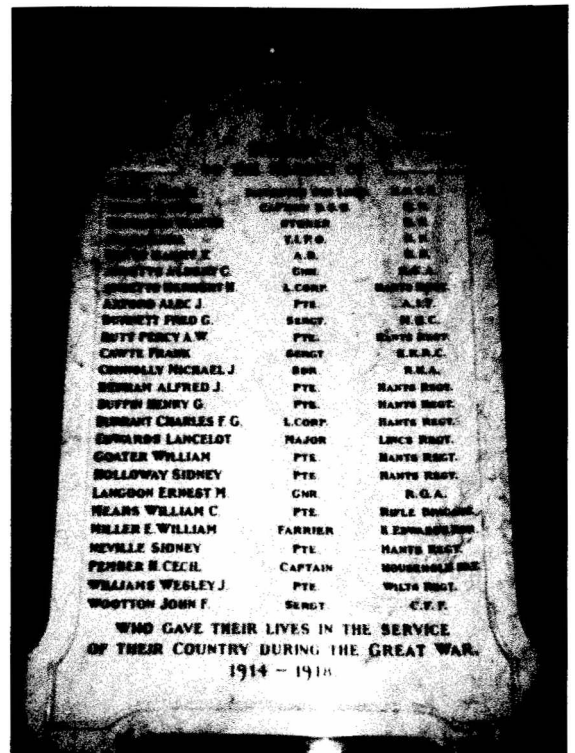
1915 - John E. Axford holding aloft the cross that his son-in-law made for Fair Oak Church.

The Axford family was very involved too with Fair Oak village church. If you attend St Thomas' Church on a Sunday,



you may see a brass and wood processional cross made in memory of the local church organist and schoolteacher, **Lilian LOCHRANE**. She was a cousin who died tragically aged 25 in 1905 and lived at "Springfield" as well. Auntie Nora told me about the cross, as their father, who originally trained as an ecclesiastical carpenter, had made it in Lilian's memory.

There is also this commemoration interior wall memorial plaque at Fair Oak church dedicated to the memory of 25 village men "who gave their lives in the service of their country during the Great War 1914 - 1918". Listed on this plaque is **Alec John AXFORD**, my grandmother's youngest brother.



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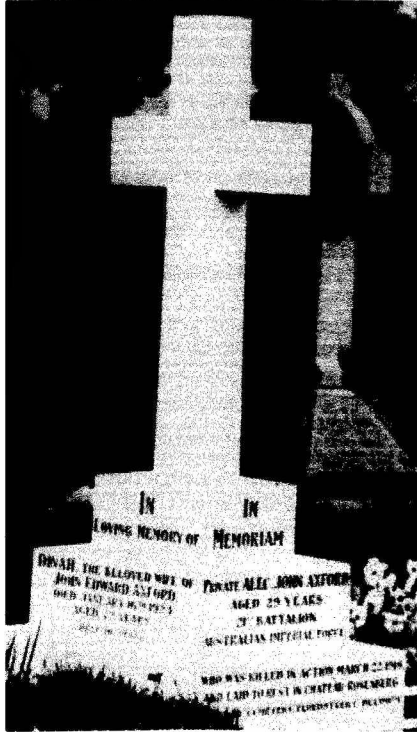


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Born 3 March 1889, young Alec ran away to sea at the age of 15, and joined the P & O line as a cabin boy. He finally settled in Australia and worked on a sheep station there. He became a jockey and later joined the Australian Imperial Force in the Great War. He was killed in action on 22 March 1918 in Belgium, which must have broken his mother's heart. His name is engraved on her gravestone in Fair Oak churchyard.



Dinah's 1924 grave at St Thomas' churchyard, Fair Oak with memorial inscription added for the son who predeceased her. Private Alec J. AXFORD (1889 – 1918) 21st Battalion, Infantryman of the Australian Imperial Force was "laid to rest in Chateau Rosenberg Cemetery, Ploegsteert, Belgium".

The subject of this article was an entry to the 1999 Eastleigh Local History Society competition, where it won a prize for author Mrs W. J. Hobbs, 124 Winchester Road, Southampton, SO16 6US. Wendy, a long-term member of the Hampshire Genealogical Society, had previously submitted it for publication in their quarterly journal, the Hampshire Family Historian. Editor Sandra Naish, being a friend, was given complete carte blanche to rewrite the story as necessary and this was done with the addition of extra material and photographs. This article is also a completely new adaptation for the Eastleigh LHS put together by Sandra Naish from Hampshire Genealogical Society material published Feb 2001 (Volume XXVII No 4). This article may not be reproduced in any form without written permission. March 2002

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