

The Oaks Historical Society Inc

Est. May 1979

The Oaks Historical Society Inc.
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Newsletter

DECEMBER 2017

Wollondilly Heritage Centre & Museum

Happy Christmas 2017



to all our members



Photos of our member's visit to the gardens at Camden Park last month organised by member, Pauline Downing. Friends of Camden Park garden group have been working tirelessly with John Macarthur-Stanham on restoring the historic gardens. The grounds and structures tell the story of how life was like in colonial Australia.



CLOSING TIMES OVER CHRISTMAS — Officially closed Christmas Eve until 26 January 2018
If visitors want to visit, contact Trish and we will open specially for you

President: Trish Hill 0432 689034 ■ Editor: Jenny Wood ■ Museum Bookings: Trish Hill or Sue 0414 703204



President's Report

Trish Hill

How fast the year has flown by.

Our Christmas party is Saturday 9th December, 6pm and if you haven't got your name on the list just give me a quick call. We have good stocks of publications which make excellent gifts under the tree and we also have available a couple of copies of Robyn Collier's new book, *'Paintings from Burratorang—The Lost Valley.'*

Robyn was our guest speaker last meeting and proved to be very popular with an excellent slide presentation and story of what led her to produce another book and the trials and tribulations involved.

I would like to thank Angus Taylor for his support with a 'Stronger Communities Program' grant to upgrade our kitchen. Better facilities will enable our volunteers to be better prepared to meet the demands of the community and increased visitor numbers.

Rotary North visited this month for an evening event. It was great to showcase our facility and I would like to convey our thanks to Rotary and also Richard Booth.

Our bus and school groups have all finished for the year and we have already taken some bookings for 2018. Debbie and Louisa are working on a mail out promotion over the holiday period which is hoped will attract further bookings.

Over the break we plan to do a bit of 'spring cleaning' of the buildings, also a tidy up in the gardens, so if you have time to spare and are keen and willing, let us know so we can give you a call when we schedule a time.



The Centre will be closed from 24th December and reopen on Australia Day, however I would encourage anyone planning or wanting a visit to give me a call and we will arrange a suitable time to open.

Thank you to all of our wonderful volunteers for your outstanding efforts throughout the year. Have a very Merry Christmas. ■

ROBYN COLLIER has been painting for more than 40 years. She is amazed by Yerranderie and had two sell out exhibitions in the 80s after rangers escorted her in to Burratorang Valley to paint. MSW&DB bought 20 of her paintings and she started the Springwood Bushwalkers 25 years ago. Robyn met Jim Smith at Kedumba. Robyn explained the difficulties with rangers, the weather etc. when



trying to gain entry to the valley to paint. After 2½ years of stalling Jim Smith wrote to the Minister and eventually she got her requested boat trip in April 2016. At the junction of the rivers, they saw a aboriginal cave, Apple Tree Flat crossing, the brumbies, a dry stone wall and learned about the dispossessed of Burratorang. *Photo— Phil Scarlett with*



Acquisitions Corner

Allen Seymour

It's been busy again this month with quite a few items coming in. One unique item is a beer can from the last voyage of the ocean liner *Oriana*. This is relevant to us because the *Oriana* was one of the ships that carried the Barnardo boys, and a visitor saw it mentioned in our display and brought the can in for us. The Camden Historical Society has given us a couple of items, one of which is a school chair that is reported to have come from a school in Burratorang. The other item is a mannequin, complete with a Suffragette costume. We thank the donors for these items.

On the mining side there are also a few items, and these include:

- Some Oakdale Workers Club badges, and a Miner's Federation Badge
- A special commemorative port bottle in the shape of a miner's lamp, from 1995
- A port bottle from 1992 commemorating Nattai Colliery
- A photo of miners at Nattai Bulli in 1992
- Some photos of Clinton's Nattai Colliery

- Some mining stickers (amazing how many of these there were!!)
- A facts sheet from an open day at Nattai Bulli in 1980
- An underground inspection certificate from Nattai Bulli in 1992
- A collection of newspaper articles on the mines from the 80's and 90's
- A multimeter and a mega tester that were used down the mine
- A history of the Joadja mines

To add to our Estonian collection are:

- Papers relating to the Juske land at Thirlmere
- A couple of Estonian scarves
- A John Bull No.8 printing outfit box
- An Ideal ink blotter

From the dim dark recesses of our own storeroom, a couple of items that had never been processed are a Bausch & Loms Magic Lantern from the early 1900's and a 1985 Geological and Mining Museum Calendar. ■



Family History & Local Archive Research Corner

Sue Davis



Solving the Mystery of Family History during the Festive Season

What a perfect time to build on your family history research over the festive season.

This is often a time when we travel and catch up with family or they visit us. We share conversation about family gone before us. This is the time to ask questions and get new leads on family stories. Here are some points that might help your thinking at this time:

Where to find clues, in addition to talking with extended family members:

- Begin with yourself and work back one generation at a time.
- Look for certificates of birth, death or marriage; family bible; old photographs; medals; birthday books, address

books; letters. Online searches. Remember to check TROVE.

- Don't throw out unopened boxes. You never know what treasures may be inside.
- Visit the local studies section of your local library. Visit your local museum.

Things to be aware of:

- Online family trees may not be accurate so confirm with formally records. Good researchers always list their source.
- If you are not convinced of family information given then thank the relative politely and check later with births, deaths and marriages records of your state. We don't need to upset people!

I have attached a blank family tree proforma to get you started. There are many different styles available on the internet. Enjoy your family history journey over the Festive season. ■



Schoolies Report

Bev Batros

The Schoolies Program for the year finished on 16th November. This year we had 21 weeks filled. In addition we had three days with The Oaks Preschool Kindergarten, a first for us, so that would take it to 24 sessions. By comparison in 2016 we had 30 weeks filled and in 2015 we had 17 weeks.

The Preschool Program went very well with each group being taken through the centre by a volunteer, spending about an hour under-taking activities at their level. This year we also had 2 home school groups, one of which sent us a thank you letter noting it was *'one of the best excursions we have ever been on'*.



Harrington Park Public School took 4 weeks in Term 4 and Thirlmere finished off the last two weeks.

The activities from the School Program were also used as a basis for our Grandparents' Day. Approximately 120 people attended and seemed to enjoy finding out what life was like in the 'good old days'. We were delighted to see children who have been to the centre with their school bring their families to see what it was all about. Shirley Carlon was particularly delighted to hear



one child explaining to her family all the things she had learnt in the kitchen. Many of the children did the activities twice or three times.

Thank you to the fabulous group of volunteers who gave up their time to supervise activities and make the day enjoyable. A special mention to Debbie Seymour who worked tirelessly in the organisation of the food.

On a volunteers note thank you to everyone who has worked this year on the Schools' Program but a special mention to Eileen O'Brien who turned 88 recently and has been a volunteer with the program for over 25 years, having worked in every part of the program. Congratulations Eileen on an incredible period of volunteering.

Photos are of Grandparents Day and (right) Eileen and Jan last Christmas. ■





Display Officer's Report

Doreen Lyon

The Nattai-Bulli banner display will be completed by Christmas – I think! I will be installing the time line and storyboards before then and some new objects. Colin Parrat has been generous in donating some objects, (including a ceramic replica of a miner's lamp) and documents from his own collection. The documents, plus others we discovered in a box of undocumented papers, have been useful in piecing together the final part of the closure of Nattai-Bulli mine. It was interesting to note from one document which traced the economic history of Clutha that their peak year was in 1976 when Clutha declared a net profit of \$31.3 million but their combined Federal tax and coal export levy amounted to \$35 million! We have also been given copies of two films. Ron Faber donated a copy of Clutha Ltd video July 1989-a short history of the Company with footage from their mines as well as the fleet of trucks. Colin supplied a video of the ceremony at the Burragorang Lookout when the memorial to the mines was erected. Both are important historical films and we will be able to show them to visitors – not sure how just yet; thinking about creating a special small theatre in the mine area. This photo was donated by Colin and shows the 35 men who remained after the closures and retrenchments in 1982. I am attempting to correctly identify the men in this photo. Col Parrat is the one circled in the photo and it was taken outside the Egan's Road mine shaft in 1983. Colin said, "The Company wanted around 850 tonnes and reckoned we couldn't do it; but we stuck together determined to keep it going. Miners, drivers and mechanics all helped each other out".



Outside Display

We took a small display to the Artisan's markets in Picton Shire Hall on Saturday 25th November. To make the stall look more seasonal and crafty I took all of Aileen's pokerwork and Pam McVey's knitted toys and a tine [spiky] Christmas tree. It looked quite festive and attracted lots of attention – and even a couple of sales! We sold a few books too. One ex-resident of the area now living in Sydney was thrilled to find Ian Welsh's coal books and bought both of them, plus the DVD and *Of Mines & Men* for his father, an ex-miner, for

Christmas! And a lady was delighted with Pacita's lovely little book about the letters between her Aunt Ellen and Mrs Ralph Bold-erwood to give to her mother! Nice to make people happy!!

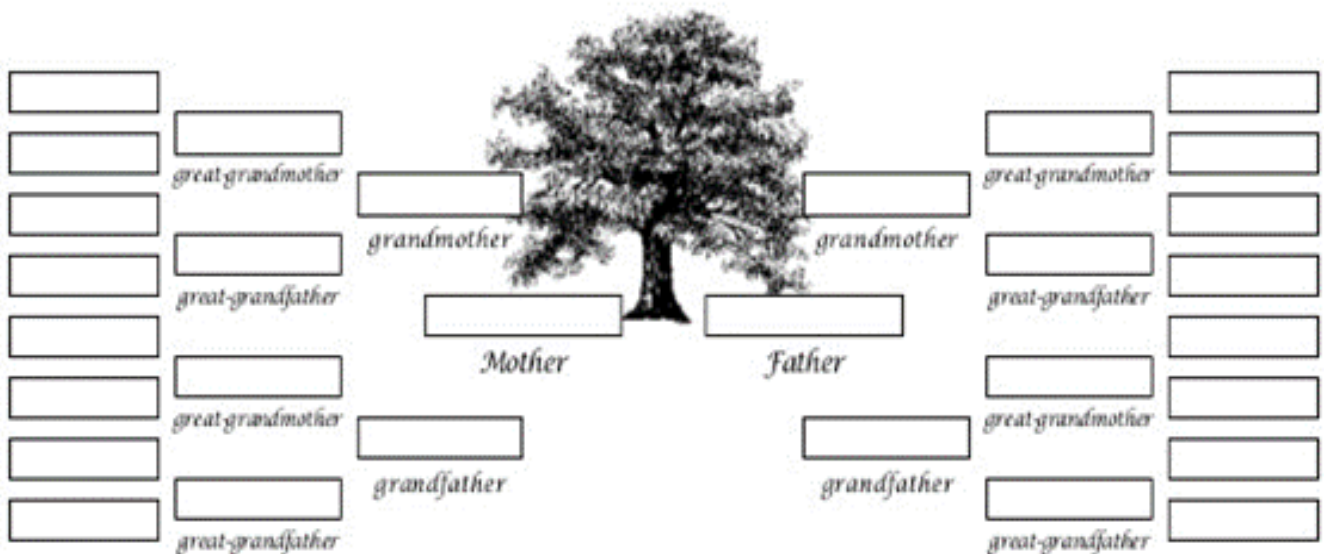
We took almost \$200. Ben and I attended the meeting, TRAX TO THE FUTURE organised by Wollondilly Shire Council at

NSW Rail Museum (Trainworks) to discuss the potential of the area's growth to attract more rail connections between Sydney and Wollondilly and Wollondilly and Wollongong. Tim Fisher gave a passionate history of rail and of fast rail in other countries and the positive effects on tourism and the economy and other speakers shared their enthusiasms and plans. It would be great if it all comes about, but I fear we will have to agree to more development and the subsequent loss of agricultural land and native bushland.

PS - NSW Rail Museum, formerly Trainworks has an excellent exhibition about the 1917 strike of railway workers! ■

We can supply a full size hard copy or email upon request.

Family Tree



A VALLEY STORY

by Kath Haynes, nee Donohoe

Phillip Reilly kept the store at Nattai and later his son Edward had the Nattai Post Office there.

In return for groceries, farmers mainly from the Cox's River end of the valley, brought their butter, eggs etc. to the store. Phil went to Camden once a fortnight for supplies and on going through Oakdale one day he was hailed by an old chap who wanted Phil to take a cat away and turn it loose somewhere well away—it was a rogue cat that would get on the table or into anything edible, and there is no cure for a thieving cat!

Well Phil was fond of a joke and at Nattai they had a cat which was a terrible rogue too, so on the next trip Phil made to Camden he let both cats out near this old man's place.

When Phil got near the place on his next trip the old man was out waiting for him. *"You know that cat I gave you to take away, well it has come back and brought a worse blooming rogue than itself!"*

In those early days there weren't any houses at Spring Corner or at Nattai and not until you came to where Brian Carlon had his home known as "East View" and then on to where the other early settlers had their homes. The Carlon sons, Patrick, William, Joseph, Bernard, Michael and John Bede, and Phillip (Reilly) had their farms side by side along the Valley, all having river frontages and land on the other side of the river, as well.

My father, Joseph Donohoe, bought the farm that was Pat Carlon's and dad farmed it very successfully until the severe drought which hit us in 1938-1942 and then the Water Board was on the way in. Thankfully dad never lived to see the farm taken over by them.

During that bad drought there was a keen vegetable grower at Oakdale who used to bring veges for sale to the valley and one day I remarked to dad that it was amazing how this chap could grow things so well with just a dam for his water and dad replied that, *"That fellow could make a living on an ant bed!"* Their ability to bring a philosophy of life into all their doings and a keen sense of humour was the main stay of many a person in the valley.

A house built across the river and called "Home Park" was lived in by Jerry O'Leary and his brother Tom. His re-married mother lived up the top end of the valley in their young days, and one time at the Bishop's visitation to the valley, their mother brought the two young boys each in a sack on either side of the horse to the confirmation ceremonies. When the good Bishop spoke to Jerry and asked who he was, Jerry replied, *"I'm Jeremiah Francis O'Leary, Mrs Kings little boy!"*

Bishops do have to learn! When Jerry was a farmer at "Home Park" he grew beaut watermelons. (We didn't pinch any!) Many years later the NRMA grounds were opposite, and was a great holiday place for the few years it ran, also a police station was set up close by.

Then on to Red Hill and the old burial grounds of the natives!

Evidence of which were there till the coming of the dam.

There was household of Dennis' next at "Glen Forest" and just along from there a hall and the convent house where the Sisters of St Joseph taught until 1909 when the convent was destroyed by fire. Next was the magnificent St Paulinus' Catholic Church, truly a masterpiece of glorious sandstone and slate roof, with very beautiful stained glass windows—it is the greatest shame that it was not re-erected somewhere else. The cemetery was beside the church and that was the resting place for old and young folk who were dearly loved.

Not such a long while after the church was built the folk used to hear the church bell ringing at the oddest times at night. Upon investigation it was discovered that an o'possum had made its nest in the bell tower and going back up after feeding he would cause the bell to ring—well it must have been the most "spooky" sound at that hour of the of night and with all the Irish blood there was in those settlers it's a wonder anyone was game enough to go and investigate!

Many a ghost yarn used to be told about times folk were riding at night in the valley.

Across the river from the hall were the Johnny Quig's at "Sunny Side", they had a son named Jim Quig and there was another Jim Quig of another family and the "Sunny Side" Jim Quig had been as far a field as the Kimberley's and never stopped talking about it when he got back, well he was known as "Kimberley Jim", and the other one as "My God Jim", as "My God" was his favourite expression.

These two Jims each had a brother Jack and one of these was known as Rocky Jack (pictured in 1938) and the other Speewar Jack! ■



Rocky Jack 1938 with his dog and horse, Kath Haynes picnicking at the NRMA picnic grounds c1950s



THE WARRAGAMBA DAM

Beautiful Burragorang we all love
With thy precious gifts sent down from above,
Gleaming silver ore from Yerranderie
And great black diamonds from under the lee.
Those wonderful peaks, so rugged and steep,
With 'nestling valleys at their feet asleep,
Where Wollondilly like a silver band
Flows gently along through fertile land.
This huge sunken valley so deep and grand,
Is used by its owners as farming land;
Homes have been built there, though humble and plain,
Where memory's voice recalls joy and pain.
Their dear ones are sleeping under grass mounds,
Neath whispering trees in yonder church grounds,
Where feathered songsters with chatter and song,
Chant their Te Deum all the day long.
Their homes and graves with memories so dear,
Will be hidden neath waters dark and drear,
And trysting places where love's tale was told,
Will be closed to lovers (however bold).
Can you wonder then that those pioneers,
Who have lived down there for so many years
Fighting life's battles with its hopes and fears,
Should defend their homes "with eyes wet with tears."
Shall we not consider our City's need
And sacrifice self to do a good deed.
Though it may mean to us few "loss and pain,"
To millions it will bring gladness and gain.
The giver of all in His wondrous love
Sends sufficient water down from above,
And expects his subjects to use their brains
To widely conserve his bounteous rains.
A great crisis threatens our daily life,
Restrictions are made that engender strife,
For the water supply, our greatest need,
Is failing daily with alarming speed.
Our skilled engineers have studied for years,
To solve this problem and allay our fears.
They have decided that Burragorang
Of whose charms poets have written and sang,
Is above all others - the best location
To provide water for conservation.
Then let us desist from fighting the Board
And help our fellows by sheathing the sword.
This huge catchment area when confined
And filled with God's gracious gift to mankind,
Will conserve enough water for future years,
And banish restrictions and ally our fears.
Encircled by scenes of beauty and charm,
Far away from haunts of fear and alarm,
This beautiful lake will win great renown,
And entice millions from city and town.
For here away from the city's mad strife,
They will find the peace of the simple life,
And through snow-white clouds in yonder blue sky
Catch a glimpse of the promised home on high.
We are but few who own this fair land,
With its native beauty so wild and grand,
Shall we then refuse those millions in need?
Or give our consent and wish them "God Speed."

Horace Doust 8/8/1941

From the Camden News January 28th, 1943

SUPPOSING!

A whimsical piece by an anonymous author on what he perceives as the future for Burragorang

Courtesy Trove – Camden News, Thursday 28th January, 1943.

Some years later, after the battle of Warragamba had been fought and won, a former resident of Burragorang decided to visit his native valley. Reaching the top of the mountain he motored down the winding road.

No change here since he left the district. Nature had not altered – the same trees and shrubs were there, with tiny birds chattering and bidding him welcome. Yon old giant of the forest with scarred trunk and broken limbs, rendered unsightly by the blast of lightning's power, still reared his head in solemn defiance of the laws of nature.

The traveller skilfully negotiated the hairpin bends of this tree-lined road and arrived at the scene of Braithwaite's Lookout. Just the same wonderful picture of Mother Nature's grandeur and beauty. Those lofty peaks so rugged and steep with nestling valleys at their feet asleep. Where the Wollondilly like a silver band flows gently along through the fertile land. White fleecy clouds drifting across a blue sky – the tall trees whispering to each other – no change here.

He held up his field glasses and looked towards the Nattai River and viewed again the old farm houses at the base of the cliffs, but noticed other more modern cottages and some larger more imposing structures recently erected for the accommodation of tourists.

Proceeding on his way he arrived at a point where the lower reaches of the Valley met his gaze. Instead of a tiny winding sluggish river and scattered farm houses, he saw a lovely giant inland lake of water glimmering in the rays of the afternoon sun.

His heart thrilled at the scene and he hurried down to the water's edge. Here indeed was a wonderful transformation of Mistress Nature's face. Splendid gravel roads bordered the shores of this beautiful lake, and as he stood entranced by the beauty of the scene he heard the voices of tourists nearby sitting on seats and eating their lunches from tables provided by the Water Board. He looked across the broad expanse of water and then into the depths thereof, reflecting the wild rugged beauty of the encircling hills, and said to himself: '*What a beautiful and wonderful provision for supplying God's great gift to millions of people.*'

A look of regret came to his face. He had been one of the strongest opponents of this scheme. He looked down and the rippling water at his feet seemed to speak to him and say: '*Do you not regret the fierce opposition you hurled against this work which has brought me to reside in this lovely valley? Your old Wollondilly River with his stricken face wanted me to come along many years ago. He often sighed with regret when he saw the huge masses of water (which he could not contain) running to waste. He did his best but could only provide water to a few farmers, but now he is married to me. We are able to give sufficient supply to millions of folks and life to lovely shrubs, flowers and trees, which were parched and dying under previous super-vision.*'

He had no reply to give to such convincing logic, and silently motored to one of the guest houses, where he heard the inmates speak in terms of the highest praise of yon lovely inland lake – Australia's Killarney. ■

Reminders, News & Info

WEEKEND ROSTER

DECEMBER	
Saturday, 2	Louisa & Kathy
Sunday, 3	Bev & Trish
Saturday, 9	Working Bee
Sunday, 10	Sue & Paul
Saturday, 16	Bev & David
Sunday, 17	Maria & Betty
JANUARY 2018	
Friday, 26 Australia Day	Robyn & Ray
Saturday, 27	Jim & Maureen
Sunday, 28	Bob & Vivian

MONTHLY SUPPER ROSTER

December	Members to please bring a plate
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COME AS YOU ARE IN PARTY MOOD

Christmas Party

Sat, 9th December at 6pm

RSVP to Trish 0432 689893
and Debbie 4657 1738

To assist with catering please advise if you are bringing a sweet or a salad.

Come along and enjoy great company, food, music and prizes.



Please bring your cutlery, nibbles and drinks

The following information was found on the back of a Foster's beer can recently donated to the museum.



FAREWELL ORIANA

P&O's Great Lady of the Sea, Last of the Orient Line

Launched in 1959 by Princess Alexandria and took her name from that given to Queen Elizabeth I by the poets of that era.

Gross tonnage 41,915
Length 245.1 metres
Breadth 30.5 metres



730 cabins. 17 public rooms and 11 passenger decks

By her retirement *Oriana* will have steamed 3,430,902 nautical miles. Her record days run was 701 nautical miles @ 29.21 knots.

RILEY FAMILY REUNION AT YERRANDERIE

WEEKEND OF 16TH MARCH 2018

Fri. 16th— Arrive. Accommodation is available either the guesthouse or camping

Sat. 17th— Camp fire night. Official welcome to country and smoking by Uncle Greg Simms. Tours through the day. Official dinner

Sun, 18th— Departure

Related families— Karkoes, O'Brien, Shepards, Hiltons, Grimstons, Greens and many more

Bring along photos, stories etc to be copied and placed in a book and distributed to family around Christmas.

Please contact Kazan Brown for further details. kazanbrown@gmail.com



A NOT SO SERIOUS, CHRISTMAS FRUIT CAKE RECIPE

INGREDIENTS

1 cup butter, 4 large eggs, 1 cup diced fruit, 1 tablespoon nuts, 1 teaspoon baking soda, 1 cup brown sugar, 1 tablespoon lemon juice, 1 bottle whisky

METHOD

1. Sample whisky to check for quality.
2. Take large bowl. Check the whisky again to be sure it is of the highest quality. Poor one level cup and drink. Repeat.
3. Turn on electric mixer, beat one cup of butter in a large fluffy bowl, add one spoonful of sugar and beat again.
4. Make sure the whisky is still OK. Cry another cup.
5. Turn off the mixer. Break two eggs and add to the bowl and chuck in the cup of dried fruit. Mix on the turner. If the fruit gets stuck in the beaters, pry it loose with a drowscriver. Sample the whisky again to check for consistency.
6. Next, sift 2 cups salt. Or something—who cares? Check the whisky.
7. Now sift the lemon juice and strain your nuts. Add one ballspoon of brown sugar, or whatever colour you can find. Wix mel. Grease the oven. Turn the cake pan to 350 greedes.
8. Don't forget to beat off the turner. Throw the bowl out the window. Check the whisky again and go to bed. DONATED BY BETTY YEWIN

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. Upcoming meetings are 4 December 2017 & 5 February 2018. Patrons are Luke Johnson and Richard Booth. 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.



NOTICE FOR WEEKEND VOLUNTEERS

Please feel free to put the urn, tea, coffee and biscuits out on the table under the covered verandah for visitors, together with the donation box.



If undelivered, please return to:-
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