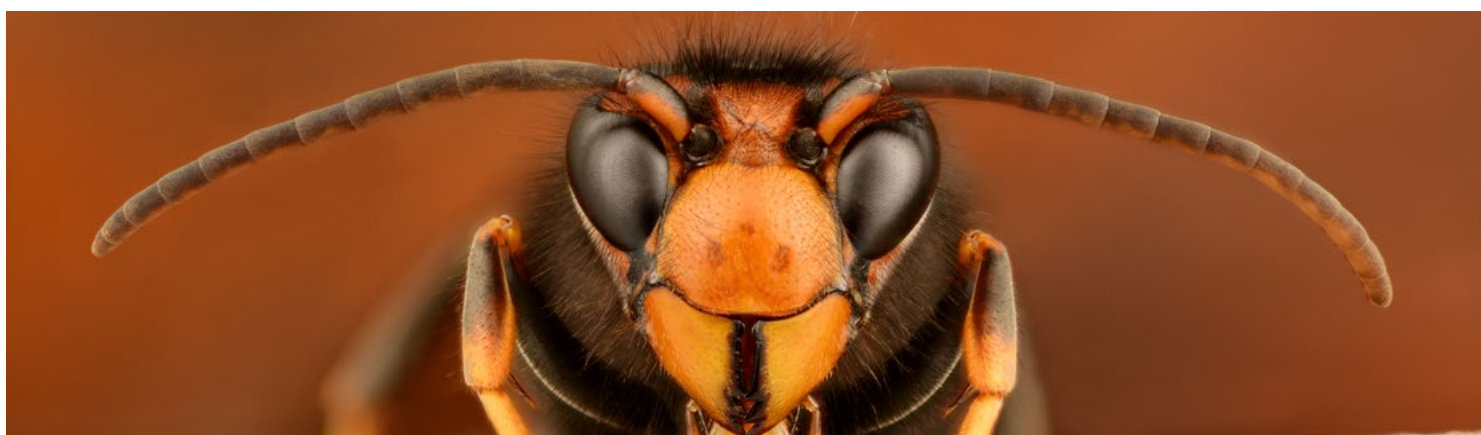




BEE TALK

Warwick and Leamington Branch of Warwickshire Beekeepers

THE ASIAN HORNETS ARE COMING



Asian hornets, otherwise known as Yellow-legged Hornets have been threatening to invade the UK for several years. This year over 68 nests (and counting!) have been destroyed. There are fears that they may now have become so numerous they cannot be stopped. Already one colony has been destroyed near Oxford – just 4.1 miles from Kings Hill Nurseries. If they get a foothold, beekeeping will change forever. Asian hornets can take out a hive in a matter of hours.

IDENTIFICATION

Asian hornets are smaller than European hornets, and are mainly black, with gold only at the base of their abdomen, on their face and on the lower part of their legs. By contrast, European hornets are striped and brightly coloured. We should be trying to retain European hornets as they are beneficial insects.

ALL OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES WILL BE AFFECTED

Everyone involved in outdoor activities will be affected as these hornets build their early nests in recesses, in hedges, in sheds and their main nests in trees etc. Gardeners, cricketers and

football players retrieving balls from hedges, walkers and cyclists – they will all be at risk.

BIODIVERSITY IMPACTED

Importantly, Asian hornets do not only take honeybees – they take all sorts of insects. In France they have found that where specific pollinators are required by some rare plants, those plants are dying out. Crops, biodiversity, honeybees, and the general public – all will be affected. This is a crisis.

WHAT CAN BEEKEEPERS DO:

- Install the Asian Hornet Watch app on your mobile by visiting your smartphone's App Store to identify, photograph, locate and send the evidence to those charged with checking for, and destroying, the nests. Get your outdoor friends to install it too.
- The National Bee Unit has put together lots of materials: **PLEASE** read this [document](#) and also [these resources](#) from the BBKA.
- Make a non-killing trap NOW – these are easy because they allow you to release all other species, including the European Hornet. This allows specialists to track the Asian hornet and locate its nest.

Warwick and Leamington Beekeepers are forming a team – an **AHAT** team (Asian Hornet Action Team). The more volunteers we get, the better. ***This is a crisis...please consider joining.***

If you would like to be a team member.....and you have not already done so, take the test on the BBKA website – you can do it as often as you like until you get it right – so it is difficult to 'fail'. You will find it here:

[ASIAN HORNET TEAM TRAINING EXERCISE FOR MEMBERS](#)

Bernard Brown will be informed when you pass and you will be invited to join. In the first instance, we need to put up traps for people who provide credible evidence they have seen one. Publicity materials will be available, and talks to local groups will be given. Materials are currently being put together. The more we do now, the better the chance we have of keeping our bees – so please consider joining.

WHATEVER YOU DO, PLEASE DO NOT TRY TO DESTROY THE LARGE NESTS YOURSELF – IT REQUIRES SPECIALIST KIT AND KNOWLEDGE.

Liz Bates, Branch Asian Hornet Team Leader

WLBK CHAIR'S OCTOBER MESSAGE

reported last month about the tragedy of the European Foul Brood (EFB) infestation at our training apiary. As you know, EFB is a 'notifiable disease' and beekeepers must report suspected diseased colonies to the National Bee Unit.

EFB is a bacterial infection caused by nurse bees feeding larvae with contaminated brood food before brood cells are capped. The bacteria multiply, competing within the gut for food and causing starvation.

The result? As Dave Cushman put it some years ago: "An EFB infected larva will be distorted, without segments and will change colour. When inspecting a colony look at unsealed larvae. They should be "white, bright and curled up tight".

Thankfully, the excellent and dedicated apiary team have led the way in recommending how we move forward for the 2024 season. You'll find out more on our website and in other branch communications as we finalise details. In summary:

- We'll survey members to find out what aspects of beekeeping you'd like to learn about.
- The Introduction to Beekeeping course (ITB) will have fewer numbers to manage biosecurity.
- We will still do exam assessments at the apiary.
- We're looking at alternative, innovative ways to expand branch members' knowledge and understanding of beekeeping methods and techniques without the need to 'crowd round a hive in the apiary'.
- We'll maintain our mentor approach which is a real benefit to WLBK members.
- We'll encourage members to support each other, perhaps using small WhatsApp mobile phone groups and get together at each other's homes or cafes.

Finally, the branch has received some £1,600 compensation for the loss of hives, livestock and equipment at the apiary from BBKA insurer Bee Disease Insurance (BDI). Many thanks to Steve Poynton who led on diligently recording and photographing our kit. Let's look forward to a healthy, safe and informed beekeeping 2024 season. And if you haven't already, do sign up to Bee Base, the National Bee Unit service that helps you keep your bees well.

Suzanne Bennett, WLBK Chair

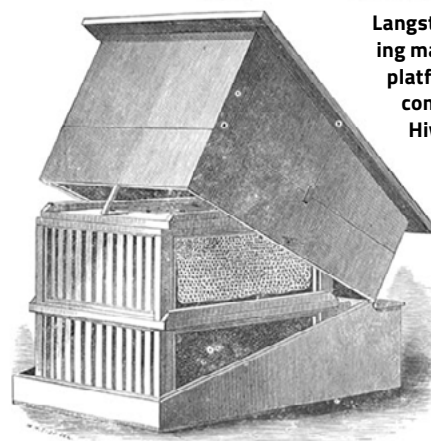


SEPTEMBER MEMBERS' MEETING

Len Dixon, who has a long history and wealth of knowledge as a beekeeper, including as Chair of Reigate BKA, Chair and President (twice) of Herefordshire BKA, and as a Regional Bee Inspector for the Severn Region of the NBU gave an illustrated talk on honey hunting and early beekeeping entitled *Messengers of the Gods*.

The ancients might not have known or understood anything about the lifecycle of the bee or the way colonies functioned but they were drawn to the sweetness of honey and prepared to go to extreme lengths to obtain it – climbing up trees or down cliff faces to get it. The Romans knew more about plumbing and heating than about bees, which they thought grew inside dead beasts. Of course, honey collectors need only to know where to find honey, not how to keep and manage colonies.

Beekeeping came later, at least in Britain. Parsons such as the Rev Charles Butler wrote *The Feminine Monarchie* and at the Great Exhibition of 1851 there were a range of hive types shown. But the modern, moveable frame hive was only invented after the Rev Lorenzo Langstroth identified bee space (see image above). This progressed our craft. However, as Len pointed out, there were still cottager beekeepers in Herefordshire, who relied on skeps and

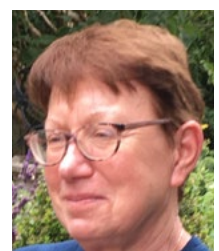


Langstroth's 1853 beekeeping manual shows a feeding platform above the honeycomb. (Langstroth on the Hive and the Honey Bee)

drumming or smoking out the bees so they could harvest the honey.

Beekeeping has certainly come a long way but how much more is there still to learn? And will we be able to continue if the Asian Hornet becomes endemic?

Judith Masson, Meetings secretary



BRANCH HONEY SHOW REPORT

The end of an era with both Helen Essex, our longstanding Honey Show Secretary and John Home, the Honey Show Judge on many occasions are standing down. Very many thanks to both of you. Despite standing down – Helen had more important responsibilities as mother of the groom – she still found time to prepare the ledger and the labels for entries but not to make mead, a class that remained empty, to John's dismay. Lottie Buckland stepped into Helen's shoes as Show Secretary, Chris Cox managed the show and Peter Ellis acted as steward.

Entries and entrants were both down after last year's bumper crop of 24 with over 110 entries – lack of a honey harvest was a major factor but as club members I am sure we could do better. There were 12 entrants and nearly 60 entries. The overall winner (Thorpe cup) was Caroline Faulkner with 19 points. Caroline also took the Novice Mazer (best honey from someone who had never won a honey class), the Jack Taylor Plaque (best honey in the cottager class – that is with 5 or fewer hives) and the Bernard Collins Trophy for Best in Show (for her light honey). Caroline is clearly the beekeeper to beat! Judith Masson took home the Nancy Wilshire rose bowl for the best honey cake – practice baking cakes



John Homes judges the honey with Peter Ellis

for evening meetings clearly paid off.

Lottie has some ideas to revitalise the show with new classes for example decorated cakes, drawings etc. If you have ideas contact her Charlotte_Buckland@yahoo.co.uk

Cash entry fees were given to Bees Abroad; fees in honey were donated to Myton Hospice.

Many thanks to everyone who helped to make the 2023 Honey Show happen and to Chris Cox and Chris Price for the photos.

Judith Masson



Lottie completes a certificate.



John Home and Caroline Faulkner with her Bernard Collins Trophy.



Chris Cox presents John Home with gift for his years of service.

2023 HONEY SHOW RESULTS

Class 1 Light Honey

1st Caroline Faulkner
2nd Chris Price
3rd Lottie Buckland

Class 2 Medium Honey

1st Chris Price
2nd Alex Wray
3rd Jane Medwell

Class 3 Dark Honey

1st Judith Masson

Class 5 Soft Set Honey

1st Alex Wray
2nd Jane Medwell

Class 6 Heather/Heather Blend

1st Bernard and Jane Brown

Class 7 Beeswax Candle

1st Karen Timothy
2nd Caroline Faulkner

Class 8 Cut Comb

1st Judith Masson

Class 9 Frame for Extraction

1st Bernard and Jane Brown

Class 10 Cake of Beeswax

2nd Caroline Faulkner
4th Judith Masson

Class 13 Novice Class

1st Caroline Faulkner
2nd Megan Bialecka

Class 14 Cottager Class

1st Caroline Faulkner
2nd Terry Dillon
3rd Megan Bialecka

Class 15 Honey Cake

1st Judith Masson
2nd Val Dillon

Class 16 Skep

1st Val Dillon

Class 17 Biscuits

1st Karen Timothy
2nd Judith Masson

Class 18 Photograph

1st Lottie Buckland

BEEKEEPING TASKS THIS MONTH

We have had an unusually warm September and the ivy flowers are covered with bees. If you have Himalayan balsam, you may have experienced a strong September flow and it could be worth extracting some of it and feeding syrup whilst it is still warm.

My hives are curiously variable at the moment. Some colonies seem to have turned a great deal of their feed into brood and are feeling populous but light. Other colonies have filled up on ivy nectar and are very heavy. It may be, of course, that the heavy ones are robbing the lighter ones- something that a cold snap will end.

October and November are all about ensuring the bees are well fed and protected.

- Even if you fed in late August, check your colonies have around 20kg of stores. Plenty of stores in the brood box is ten times as good as fondant later in the year and prevents isolation starvation.
- Ensure the bees have enough feed before the temperature drops. As I write it is a balmy 21 degrees so it is fine to feed syrup. However, syrup when the temperature is much lower will cause dysentery and late fondant makes work for water carriers that they can't do in the cold.
- Fit mouse guards. A mouse can easily get through a standard entrance. A mouse in the combs causes a lot of damage. Of course, simply nailing frame pins into the entrance gap at 4mm intervals will make a splendid mouse guard- you don't need anything special.
- Check your hives have decent ventilation. Bees set up very efficient "air con" and can manage the circulation of air to prevent frames going mouldy. These days an open mesh floor is plenty. But if you are using solid floors, remember to check the vents and put matchsticks under the corners of cover boards.
- Fit woodpecker protection now- before the frost drives the woodpeckers to you. They will go for poly hives AND NUCS- remember to put the wire over the unprotected top of polynucs.
- Remember, the colony is producing brood in this warmth (you can check by looking at what falls out of the bottom) so do not use oxalic acid yet.
- Prepare for the "big clean"- or maybe put it off for a while- again..

▪ This is an ideal time to look for Asian Hornets. If we can spot them now we can do something. Report any sightings on your smartphone app, which can be downloaded quickly and easily from your App Store. Additionally, you may want to consider making an Asian Hornet bait station. Whilst we still have warmish flying weather, this is a good initial method of 'testing the waters' for what is in our area. Bait stations in a tupperware type box baited ideally with Suterra/Trappit (commercially available) are best. Sugar sweetened fruit juice or rotting fruit can be good but are less effective. Monitoring bait stations for 10 - 20 minutes daily can be very effective. Any Asian Hornet sightings should be reported, ideally with a photo, via the 'Asian Hornet Watch' app. Ideally, a photo and note of which direction the hornets are flying off to really helps the NBU teams. More details of the different options can be found [here](#).

Jane Medwell



NEXT MEMBERS' MEETING

Members' Meeting **19th October**

Four Seasons Function room, Kings Hill Nursery, 7.15- 9.15 pm

Michael Badger, MBE, past president of the BBKA will give a talk, Sustainable Beekeeping.

As usual, the library will be open and there will be cake. Join us to meet you friends, make new ones, talk about bees and learn something more about beekeeping.

FOR SALE

Poly Nuc

New unused Paynes 6 frame poly nuc with feeder super, crownboard, and queen excluder.

Costs £100 from Paynes.

Selling for £60

Contact: Bernard Brown

bernardnbrown@outlook.com



SEPTEMBER TASTER DAY



Saturday the 10th September brought the WLBK late summer taster day at BBKA Headquarters in Stoneleigh.

The day started with a minor panic. About 20 minutes into the drive to the BBKA from Redditch, I searched through my pockets and realised the memory stick with the days presentation on was not there. PANIC, a quick turn around, back home and a search through a different pair of trousers and success. Armed with the memory stick we got back onto the road. By the time we reached BBKA headquarters, presenters and display boards were waiting at the entrance doors, anxious to get in.

The morning consisted of talks introducing our craft to the eager ears of those in attendance. From the feedback, these were all well received with Bernard and Jane giving us a different take on the Hive. Needless to say, Bernard and Jane rose to the occasion in style.

After a morning of presentations, including the delicious honey cake, honey and chestnut cake and honey flapjacks (There goes any thoughts of reducing my waistline – well I had to check they were all OK for the delegates didn't I!), the 20 delegates donned bee suits and were treated to a live "bee experience" in the BBKA apiary. It was more convenient for the delegates to use the BBKA apiary rather than our own training apiary, particularly given the EFB in our apiary earlier in the year. As a side element, using the BBKA apiary introduced them to the barrier infection control that is sometimes needed to protect the bees. The one thing we had not envisaged when we wrote our risk assessment was that people might have to experience how uncomfortable being in a bee suit on a very hot afternoon can be. Who would have guessed how hot it was going to be on the day!

The feedback forms received back from the delegates showed

their enjoyment of the day. In response to the question "did we achieve the course objectives?"; 16 said Yes, one "Oh yes!", one "Yes and very enjoyable" and one didn't answer. The majority rated the day as excellent overall and the comments were very encouraging.

The purpose of a Taster Day is to provide an unbiased, objective view of beekeeping – a task which, given the enthusiasm of our presenters, is very difficult to achieve. The inclusion of the presentation entitled "Beekeeping; The Downside", highlighting the cost, time commitment, challenges of factors outside beekeeper's control, disappointing honey yields, stings, neighbours etc. etc. was an essential component of the day to give a balanced view. As with previous Taster Days, the inclusion of a beekeeper still at the beginning of the learning curve was a big plus. 16 of the delegates said they would be interested in hearing about next year's ITB.

It was an enjoyable day for all and well worth the effort put in. It is, however, a team effort and our thanks go to everyone who helped make the day such a success (Nicki Maritz, Bernard and Jane Brown, Kirsty Bax, Jane Medwell and Alex Wray). Thanks also to the BBKA for allowing us to borrow their apiary for the afternoon. As happened last year, various members volunteered to wash a few bee suits, which was much appreciated and it's great to get members to help.

If anyone is interested in helping out at future Taster Days, you don't have to be an experienced beekeeper to help out. In fact, having someone who is new to beekeeping is an advantage as the delegates always appreciate learning from a new beekeeper's experiences.

Paul Day



THE BEES ARE BACK

Early this summer a request was made by the Green Space Officer of Warwick District Council responsible for Jephson Gardens that the bees installed at East Lodge be removed to allow urgent drainage works. As a result, they went on holiday to Kenilworth to stay with Clive Joyce for what was initially planned as a very short stay.

The drainage works took longer than planned and then a decision was taken to leave the bees in Kenilworth due to the high prevalence of European Foul Brood in the area. The opportunity of their absence was taken to purchase a new WBC hive, paint it and install it at East Lodge with its anti-vandal measures (secured to a heavy slab base with internal hive straps attached to sailing dingy foot cleats provided by Mike Townsend) awaiting their return. The anti-vandal measures were as a response to the two WBC hives installed at that time being attacked. The existing WBC was beginning to look quite shabby and the Green Space Team suggested we needed to smarten up its appearance. At the same time they installed new signage to alert visitors to the presence of the bees.

Over the summer months the empty hive has stood proudly in the garden awaiting the bees return. In



Clive Joyce and Steve Williams and the New WBC with Bees.



a previous issue of BeeTalk an appeal was made to members of the Branch to take on the oversight of this hive. As luck would have it, Steve Williams, not one of our members, noticed this appeal on a notice board at Canal Side and enquired if he could help. The answer was yes, but only if he became a member which he immediately did. Steve has patiently waited to be called into action and he met up with both Clive Joyce and Alan Roderick when the bees were returned to East Lodge late in the evening on Sunday 24th September.

The bees are now in Steve's care and as he has many years' experience they should not prove to be a challenge. The hive itself is managed with the objective of keeping the number of good tempered bees quite low (5 seams) throughout the year as its primary function is one of public education with explanation boards and QR codes for further information displayed in the area.

Chris Cox
Branch secretary

CONFESSIONS OF A FIRST TIME HEATHER GOER



Another year at the heather is complete
(Image Credit: James Grant Photography)

This year was finally the first year of making it to the heather for myself and Stuart. Getting the bees there was fairly straightforward a part from a small cloud escaping from a teeny hole whilst on the M1 and having to negotiate manhandling the bee suits back on whilst desperately looking for signs for the next services.

We met Francis who very kindly helped us across the field and marsh to a lovely spot with the heather just on the other side of the wall. All set up, we released the bees and I updated the weather app on my phone to alert me to all weather events that they were to be subject to.

Over the next few weeks with people coming and going to the sight, quick scans were made and supers added if needed. A plastic bag of brace comb and honey changed hands a few times. thankfully not eaten by any sheep as feared. The very first taste of some of the wonderful heather honey from my own bees was brilliant. A very proud moment for any beekeeper! The news coming back and from weather updates, was that this was a good year. Supers were filling and all looking well. Next, we needed a plan to bring them home with all that wonderful honey as the heather was soon to go over.

Collection day arrived and armed with a leaf blower, we beat a path back up the M1 to Chesterford, excited about how much honey would be there. We bumped into Francis on the drive who again offered to help with getting them back across the field. Stuart assembled the hive barrow to take the empty supers across and off we went. It was at this point with horror we realised that neither of us had a lighter for the smoker and despite our efforts with a drop of petrol and the cigarette lighter in the car, nothing was forthcoming.

Time was ticking on so we decided to carry on anyway. The first colony was a little upset at being opened without smoke and the supers emptied with the leaf blower but took it in their stride... the second was a similar affair. They made it clear they were unhappy and alerted the third hive to our actions who boiled out in a white-hot fury upon popping the crown board. Unperturbed, we attempted to carry on for about 30 seconds until the bees found every single chink in the armour and stung relentlessly. They even found their way into my boots! The leaf blower was then directed at each other whilst we beat a hasty retreat. Utter carnage!

Thankfully Francis then arrived with a lighter and we made a smoke screen thick enough to mask their fury. Travel screens on and there were still a lot of bees escaping so we decided to throw in the towel and come back in the morning rather than distress them further. There was no desire to be floundering about in the dark being stung. Francis, legend of a man, made us the most welcome cup of tea I have ever drank in my life and shared stories of beekeeping misadventures past. An early start and then all bees were brought safely back home to Alcester where we are chancing our arm for a small ivy crop from the woods there.

I took the plunge and invested in a heather press and have so far filled a couple of buckets with the most beautiful dark honey. There is a considerable amount of cut comb too. It smells divine and in my opinion is very well worth the effort (and the stings).

So, the plan for next year: 1. Make a check list. 2. Read checklist. 3. Double check it!

I really hope a few more people come along next year and help with keeping this traditional migratory aspect of our wonderful craft alive.

Emma Baylis

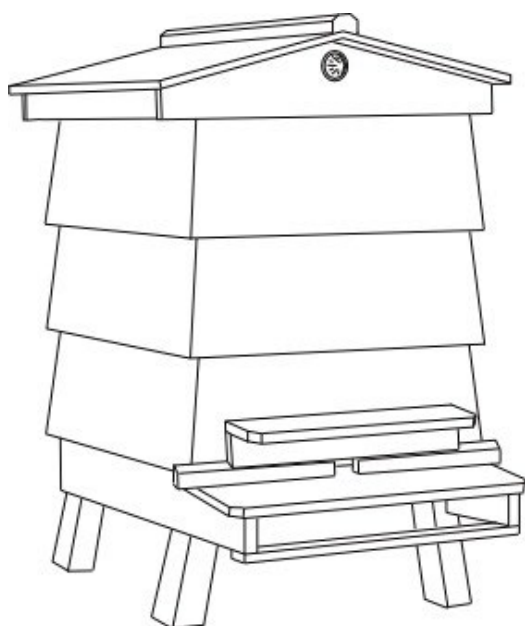
EXOTIC HIVES SERIES – WBC

The WBC hive was designed in 1890 by William Broughton Carr. It is classified as a double walled hive and is the iconic image of a hive, usually painted white.

The inner boxes are made of thinner timber than the National, making it lighter.

The WBC brood chamber takes 10 long lug frames compared to 11 in the National hive. The frames are identical. Similarly, the WBC supers take up to 10 National super frames.

HIVE DATA	NATIONAL	NATIONAL 14x12	W B C	COMMERCIAL
Brood frame	14" x 8½"	14" x 12"	14" x 8½"	16" x 10"
Super frame	14" x 5½"	14" x 5½"	14" x 5½"	16" x 6"
Frames / brood	11	11	10	12
Cells / brood box	54,000	80,000	49,000	80,000
Lug length	1½"	1½"	1½"	5/8"



The outer boxes or lifts act as protection for the inner hive. Thus there is double the amount of work moving boxes during inspections. This is offset to some extent by the extra protection afforded by the lifts.

WBC hives have the same capacity problem as Nationals so it is not surprising that a WBC brood box may be purchased to take 14 x 12 frames (note that an extra lift will be required). Or you could use double brood boxes for prolific colonies.

Other points to take into consideration:

- The pitched roof makes it difficult to turn upside down and rest hive parts on, but the lifts can be removed, stacked to one side and used instead.
- The protected inner boxes do not need paint or other wood preserver.

The drawing is a typical WBC hive with sliders to vary the entrance width.

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WARWICK AND LEAMINGTON BRANCH
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