

DURHAM
AT **WAR**



**MY EXPERIENCES & IMPRESSIONS SINCE THE
DECLARATION OF WAR (volume 1)
by Hubert Horatio Shirley Morant**

The Story of the 10th Battalion Durham Light Infantry
in the First World War
by its commanding officer, Lieutenant-Colonel Morant

PART 9: Pages 132-144

August 1916

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OC x 529

The following report, was received from you today: -

"Ref your wire B.M. 6 it is intended to dig a trench in front of the front edge of DELVILLE WOOD on the right of COCOA LANE to join up with the present line on the front edge of the WOOD on the right."

This message is absolutely unintelligible ^{+ valueless} - it was written + signed (for OC x 529) by your Adj+.

Will you kindly issue orders that ^{positions of} trenches, localities, &c &c are to be described by their approximate Co-ordinates + not by the use of the words "right of", "front of", as above -

27/8/16

J Wood B.S.
Commanding 4th Bn. The Buffs

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OC 6 KOYLI

OC X DLI ✓

Bgg!

Following orders have been received from XIV Division:—

A

- ① 7th Division on our right have occupied German Trenches from T13a 5.9 to T13a 8½.4
- ② The 43rd Brigade will get into touch with 7th Division at T13a 8½.4 during night 27/28 and also make every endeavour to extend occupation of line of BEER TRENCH from T13a 5.9 to S12 d central.

B

- ① OC X S/I will endeavour to extend occupation of ALE ALLEY to T13a 5.9 and thence along the line of BEER TRENCH to point S12 d 7.5
- ② OC 6 KOYLI will extend his line to the East along BEER TRENCH to meet X DLI at S12 D 7.5

C Working Parties. 1 Coy Somerset

now in support of DLI will be available for use by DLI as a working party to assist in Consolidation

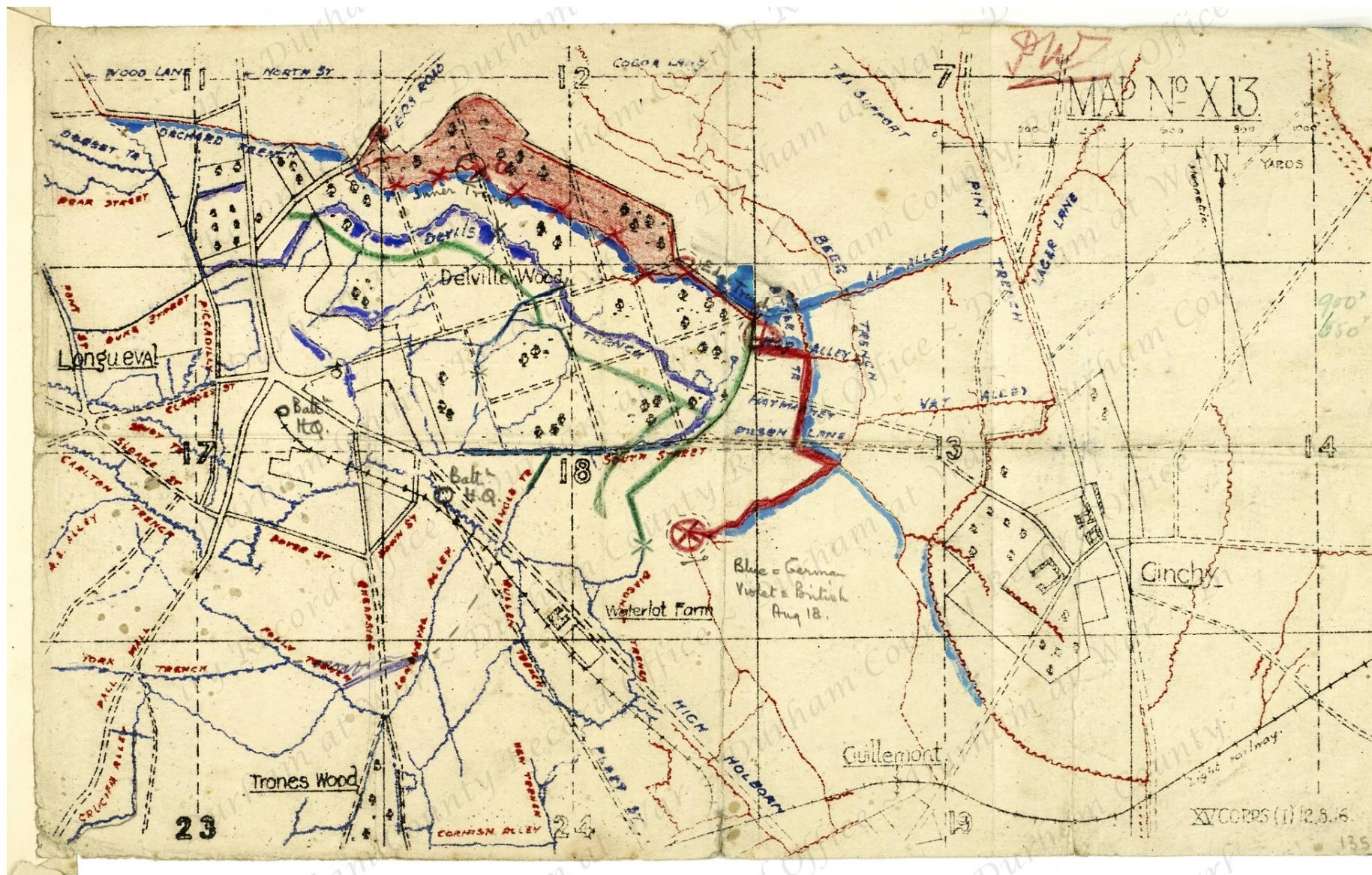
D. Intelligence Reports indicate that 26th German division hitherto opposite us has been relieved by 56th Division + that therefore we must be prepared for more hostile activity on our front. (The capture of prisoners of 118th Regt by us this afternoon confirms this statement)

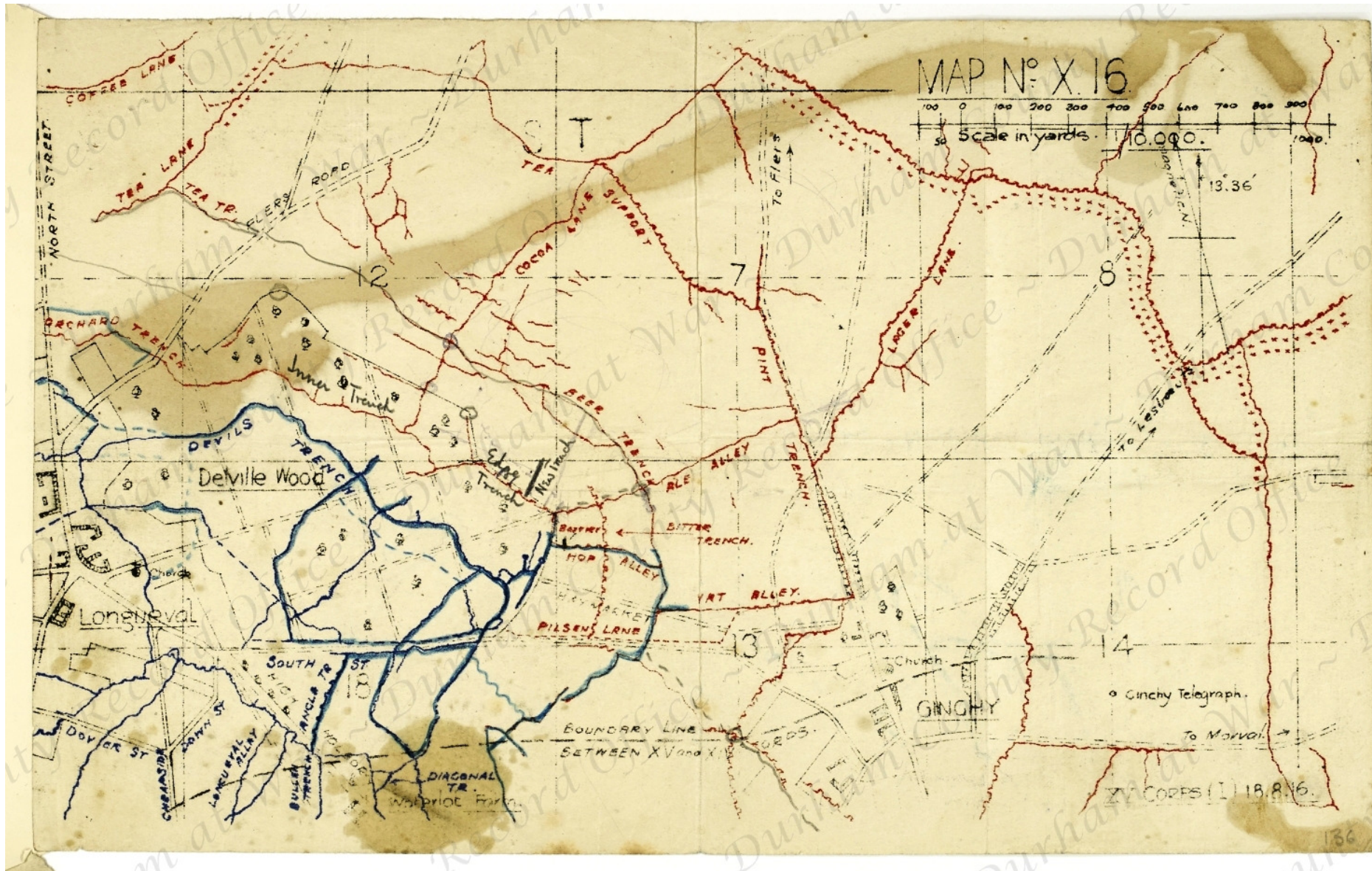
27/8/16

Flood RG
Commander 43rd Bde

The trench ordered to be dug in by BM 5 of today need not be dug as far as it concerns SPUR. It is of utmost importance to the occupying BEER trench ~~with~~ + establish posts.

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Delville Wood

The Wood towards Trinchy - the latter inside the wood against Edge Trench. The S.L.I took shield in objectives bar Ale Alley and the latter failed to take Edge Trench after heavy casualties. We were in Reserve - and sent up Bombers under Todd one Company - C under Kirkley that night. The Bde was relieved the next night & went back to Camp at Tricourt.

On the 25th 42nd Bde attacked in Delville Wood - The attack failed again against Edge Trench (previously attacked by S.L.I.) but the Boches were cleared out of remainder of wood. The 9th R. B. whom we relieved on night of 25th were supposed to have cleared the enemy out of the remainder of wood by a Bombing Attack during the afternoon & was supposed to have my right flank at S.E. corner of wood on relief. On going up next morning however I found the Boches were still holding some 150' - 200' of Edge Trench. Latence reported this & was ordered to clear this Trench as well as 'New Trench' before night. Forepart of these operations etc see page. This Trench some 60 Prisoners ^{were} ~~was~~ captured on the night of the 27th/28th. On the 28th/29th we resumed

17.3.4 3rd 10 am

Second attack in conjunction
with R. Welsh Fusers

In view of the Orders received about 11 pm
on the 27th inst that the 10/D.L.I were to
clear the whole of ALE ALLEY up to
Beer Trench - I issued orders to resume
the attack on the 28th - later I was
informed the VIIth Divⁿ wished to cooperate
so I altered my plans and conferred
with the Bomb Officer Royal Welsh Fusers
with whom Lieut. Toff again arranged the details.
It was agreed that provided we could
sap through the gap between the Saps
at West End of Hop Alley and the portion
of Ale Alley which we were holding by 5
P.M. that a joint attack would be made
at that hour - at which time an Artillery
Barrage was to be put up.
Owing to the difficulties of communication
the message that the Sap would not be
through by 5 P.M. did not reach me until
some time later - consequently the Barrage
had been commenced as arranged.
The Barrage was eventually stopped and

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The attack was considered personally it was desirable
 under the circumstances to cancel it
 altogether. It was settled that
 it should be cancelled definitely. A
 message to this effect was despatched
 "Urgent" at 6.45 pm but did not reach
 the Officer in command until after
 that hour. Consequently the attack
 was cancelled. The Artillery had been informed that the
 attack was cancelled consequently
 there was no damage. The attack was
 made in the first instance by the R.W.F.
 later was reinforced by our own Bombs
 (Report of Mr. Whittle attached). I think
 a joint attack of this kind is undesirable
 probably leads to recrimination between
 units.

The net result of this attack was again
 about 12 yds which the casualties
 hardly warranted.

29-8-40.

J. H. Grant Sd.
 139 W.D. 2.1.

H.Q. 43rd Bde.

In view of the orders I received about ^a11 p.m. on the 27th inst that the 10th D.L.I. were to clear the whole of ALE ALLEY up to BEER Trench— I issued orders to renew the attack on the 28th - Later I was informed the viith Div. wished to co-operate so I altered my plans and conferred with the Bomb Officer Roy. Welch Fus. with whom Lt Todd again arranged the details. It was agreed that provided we could sap through the gap between the Sap & West End of the HOP ALLEY & the portion of ALE ALLEY which we were holding by 5 p.m. that a joint attack would be made at that hour - at which time an Artillery Barrage was to be put up. Owing to the difficulties of communication the ^{ca}message that the Sap would not be through by 5 p.m. did not reach me until sometime later - consequently the Barrage had been commenced as arranged. The barrage was eventually stopped & the attack arranged for 7.30 p.m. - though I considered personally it was desirable under the circumstances to cancel it altogether. Later it was settled that it should be cancelled definitely. A message to this effect was despatched "Urgent" at 6.45 p.m. but did not reach the Officer in command until after that hour. Consequently the attack was commenced at 7.30 p.m. but the Artillery had been informed that the attack was cancelled consequently there was no barrage. The attack was made in the first instance by the R.W.F. & later was reinforced by our own bombers. (Report of Lt Whittle attached). I think a joint attack of this kind is undesirable & probably leads to recriminations between Units. The net result of this attack was a gain of about 12 yds which the casualties hardly warranted.

H.H.S. Morant Lt-Col.
10th D.L.I.

29.8.16

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The attack was cancelled consequently there was no barrage. The attack
 When we were at Hornoy the bigadier addressed Capt. Parry's
 Company thanking them for their gallant work in Delville Wood and
 Company (Report of Lt Whittle attached). I think a joint attack
 expressing his confidence and admiration of what he called "M
 this kind is undesirable probably leads to recriminations between
 "Durham" referring in eulogistic terms to the tenacious way the
 had held their trenches at Ypres.

Delville Wood - Aug 1916.

Bombing Attack in conjunction with P.W.F. on our
right - but made practically no progress. We were
shelled the same night by the 9th Bn. R. B. and
returned to Tricourt Camp and thence by rail
from Albert to rest at Hornoy. We had lost
S.M. Davidson and some 200 men during
his 3 days tour in Delville Wood. The first attack
Edge Trench planned for 7.30 pm on 26th and
then altered to 5 A.M. on 27th did not come off owing
the Trench Mortars failing to bombard the objective
ordered. Then planned an attack for 5 A.M. on
28th without any bombardment - Todd arranging the
details. This was the attack that was so successful.
However the B.G.C. before he had heard the reasons
the first attack not materializing had credited
it to M.G.C. 14th Divⁿ - attributing failure to my
"idleness" - This no doubt did me in finite harm
in regards my prospects of promotion.
Delville Wood was probably the worst place we had
ever been in and probably equal with High Wood
the worst place in the Somme front.
We arrived at Hornoy about 1st September found
the people the most friendly & hospitable we had yet
met in France. We rec^d. a draft here of some 110 men of
7th Divⁿ. 142

9th August 1938.

Dear General -

Thank you for your letters and the two stories. I well remember the 26th and 27th August 1916. I was Adjutant to Colonel Stockwell at the time. We had a bad trip up from MONTAUBAN and finally got into the line about 3 a.m. on the 27th. In the meantime Stockwell had been to see you on our left. I believe he arranged a joint attack with you. Our objective in the main attack was PINT Trench and the North of GINCHY. This was an almost impossible objective until our flank was secured by the capture of ALE ALLEY. At 5 a.m. on the 27th our "B" Coy. and some bombers under one Kesterton were to carry this out covered by an intense long range bombardment by rifle grenades - about 3,000 were used. At the same time your Bn. were to attack supported by trench mortars. We started at 5 a.m. and about 6.15 I went up and found that they were short of bombs. I got some more and eventually we established a block about 30 yds off the West end of ALE ALLEY. Later Stevens took a platoon of bombers round through DELVILLE WOOD into the line held by your Bn. and a simultaneous attack by

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your fellows and ours cleared the trench as far as the corner of the wood, where we joined hands. This gave the Bn. a fairly good jumping off place. About 60 prisoners were taken.

On the 29th we were relieved. We were hardly established in our back area when we were ordered up again on the night Aug. 31/Sep. 1st as the 91st Bde. had lost a great part of Delville Wood. So in spite of our efforts on the 27th we still had a bad take off for the big show.

That is the story as I remember it and I think you will agree that it co-incides more or less with yours.

Stockwell was one of our finest fighting soldiers and he remained so to the end of the war when he was commanding a Division.

I am returning the Nov. IIth story in the other envelope.

Yours sincerely,

H. H. Mearns - Attorne

25^k

26^k

27^k

143 (2/2)

When we came out to rest near Fricourt we played the
6/8 Son. L.I. at cricket & were beaten. During the game
shells were bursting on King George's Hill about 400-600
away. A heavy thunderstorm came on & 3 observation
balloons burst into flames - apparently struck by lightning.

Following recd. Mil. x for Del.

Wood.

Capt. Parr

Lt. Paris

Todd

Cumey

143 (1)

Lt Colonel Miorant
Comdg x DLI

The XV Corps have called for
an explanation as to the
reasons why no attack was
made by you on the German
Post in Belville Wood at
about S 18 B 9.7.

I fully expected that this
attack would have been made
at 5 am today 27th inst - according
to my very precise order to you.
You will now make all
necessary arrangements for an
attack on this German post
today (27th inst) and to drive
out the German Garrison
from their present foot hold
on the East edge of Wood at
above mentioned point.

Please inform me as soon
as possible of your plans - also
what artillery cooperation you
require & also state if you
wish cooperation in this attack
by the Brigade 7th Division now
on your immediate right -

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