



The Herald  
Castlehill Parish Church  
Spring 2026

## Editorial

Welcome to another edition of The Herald, each edition seems to come around much quicker than the previous!

The front cover is a collage of photographs from the Bunny Hunt, which was on Saturday 21st March. As you will see, everyone appears to have had a brilliant time. There is more information within the magazine about the event.

The magazine show how successful all the groups in the church are, as many begin to wind down for their Summer break. There are also many activities planned for the 70th Anniversary of the church—hopefully there is something in which you can participate.

**Rachel Queen, Editor**

### **Castlehill Parish Church, 1, Old Hillfoot Road, Ayr KA7 3LW**

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<b>Church Website:</b>	<b><a href="http://www.castlehillchurch.org">www.castlehillchurch.org</a></b>
<b>Charity Number</b>	<b>SC001792</b>

## Have your say

If you have any comments to make on the Magazine, please feel free to do so by letter or email to [herald@castlehillchurch.org](mailto:herald@castlehillchurch.org). We are always pleased to consider any articles for the magazine from members of the congregation. These can also be sent to the same email address.

## From The Manse



Dear Friends,

I started talking about Easter quite early this year, telling the Easter story to Infant classes in February. One of the constant reactions to the story of Good Friday was a horror at the violence Jesus met that day with his whipping by the Roman soldiers, his challenging journey up the hill of Golgotha carrying his cross to his impaling on that cross and his hours of suffering before he died. We are not used to that brutal violence and cruelty and if we don't react to it, perhaps we should read the stories of the crucifixion again.

Or maybe we don't need to...for since that time, we have been regularly subjected to unwarranted violence by the Americans, the Israelis and the Iranians in the Middle East, which has sent many residents there into exile and has totally disrupted the flight system across the world. It has also killed and injured thousands of people. And I believe it is right that we react with abhorrence to that ongoing slaughter and that the UK and Europe have refrained from participation in anything other than defensive action. We cannot claim to have had a "good" day since that war started. Nothing can justify that violence.

And it is in that respect that today's killing differs markedly from the killing that very first Easter. No-one at present has any idea when the modern murder will draw to a close. That first Easter, although an innocent man was made to suffer and die what was considered to be one of the cruellest deaths the Romans could deliver, that was not the end of the story: neither the Jewish hierarchy nor the Roman Empire had the last word. Although his friends had not understood Jesus' promise that after crucifixion came resurrection, the last word lay with God. We have celebrated Easter for some two thousand years believing that is still the case.

And that is my Easter message for everyone this year: it is not any President, Prime Minister or Secretary for war who will have the final say in this present conflict which is affecting people everywhere. It is God. This Easter again, Jesus will repeat his Easter Greeting: "Peace be with you". That might not be heard in the Middle East immediately, but we trust these will be the last words to be heard when the drones and missiles fall silent in 2026. Meantime, may we all know peace in our individual lives despite all the worries and fears war brings.

Please support our Easter Services this year especially – Sunday to Thursday will be held in Castlehill, Good Friday in St Leonard's. Maundy Thursday and Good Friday are shared services.

As at all our services, everyone is welcome.

May God bless you and yours this Easter time.

Paul

## HOLY WEEK SERVICES

**PALM SUNDAY            11.00AM AND 6PM**

**MONDAY                    7PM**

**TUESDAY                 7PM**

**WEDNESDAY            7PM – SHARED BY PAMELA TURNER AND PAUL**

**THURSDAY               7PM – SHARED BY BRIAN HENDRIE AND PAUL. HOLY COMMUNION**

**THE ABOVE ARE ALL AT CASTLEHILL CHURCH**

**FRIDAY                    7PM – SHARED BY BRIAN HENDRIE AND PAUL. HELD AT ST. LEONARD'S CHURCH.**

**EASTER SUNDAY        09.30AM ONWARDS EASTER BREAKFAST  
11.00AM EASTER SUNDAY SERVICE**

## 70th Anniversary

As one of the features of our 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebrations, we shall be welcoming Mrs Gillian Lynn, Moderator of the Presbytery of the South West to conduct our service on Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> May. Gillian is a long-term friend of Castlehill and there will be lunch after the service.



Her late husband, Rev Robert Lynn, was a former minister of St Leonard's. Gillian herself grew up in our parish and was educated at Belmont Academy.

We shall also welcome Mr Graeme Stewart back to Castlehill to conduct a celebratory service.

### Retro Dress Sunday

The first event of our 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary year was on the first Sunday of the year, 4<sup>th</sup> January. It was decided to celebrate the dress code of church goers of the 50's and 60's to have a Sunday where the ladies would wear hats and gloves. The congregation embraced the first event of the 70<sup>th</sup> year with many of our members enjoying the throw-back by digging out their hats and gloves. Thanks to all who took part.



## Merchandise

As part of the 70<sup>th</sup> year celebration the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary committee decided to invest in some branded merchandise. Having considered a variety of products the committee settled on very practical products. We have, for sale, printed jute carrier bags and pens carrying the 70<sup>th</sup> logo of the church.



The carrier bags are £5 and the pens, which are very high quality, are £4. If you would like to buy either of these please speak to Margaret Graham.



## Were you married in Castlehill Church?

We would love for you to let us know as a special service may be held later in the year as part of the 70th Anniversary celebrations.

Email: [herald@castlehillchurch.org](mailto:herald@castlehillchurch.org)

## Meet the Teams

Do you ever turn up to church on a Sunday and know the faces of the people greeting you but not their names? Below we are introducing Team 3, if you've learnt a new name go up and introduce yourself to them—chances are they don't know your name either!

Team 3:



Jackie Christie



Sandra Moore



Stephen Moore



Brian Christie

## Finance

The church financial year ended on 31 December 2025. Members of the Congregational Board and Kirk Session are Trustees of our congregation.

The Annual Report and Financial Accounts, which had seventeen pages, was emailed to Trustees who could then give approval by email. Four copies of the report were signed by Ian Queen and myself and then they were passed to the Examiner for approval. A copy was sent to the Presbytery of South West Scotland for the Accounts Review Team and following approval by them a copy will go to the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR). A copy was sent to Church of Scotland headquarters in Edinburgh.

From the previous year the amount given by Standing Orders and Free Will Offering envelopes increased and the amount given by Open Plate decreased.

We were able to claim Gift Aid refunds of £14,540 and a VAT refund of £964 under the Listed Places of Worship Scheme. Our Ministries and Mission payment to the national church was £62,372 and Presbytery of South West dues was £2,046

Fabric expenditure during the year was £11,370 for general repairs and maintenance and included the cost of replacement radiators and refurbishing the floor in the main hall. Costs for heating, electricity, manse council tax, insurance and cleaning the church and halls were £38,305.

On 31 December 2025 the General Account showed a deficit of £6,650 because our income was £123,761 and our expenditure was £130,411. The income we receive from the congregation via various sources does not cover our costs.

If you are a tax payer and use a standing order or FWO envelopes or the Wee Kirks to give money to the church, we could claim 25% of the amount given back from HMRC if you sign a Gift Aid Declaration form. Contact Margaret Devlin Tel. 01292 445118 for a form or it can be downloaded from the church website [www.castlehillchurch.org](http://www.castlehillchurch.org) under the publications section. Completed forms should be returned to Margaret.

**Margaret Devlin, Treasurer**

## Social Report

We will be having our usual Beetle Drive on the 15th of April in the North Hall tickets are available now.

We had a lovely afternoon of music and dance in February and have now arranged another afternoon on April 18th 2pm-4pm in the main hall. We hope you can come and enjoy the music, and have a cuppa. Tickets are available or you can pay at the door.

**The Social Committee**

# GIRLGUIDING REPORT



The units finished last year with their Christmas activities, which included a trip to the Farm Park, a visit to Dunaskin Santa train with afternoon tea and a games night.

Units made crafts for the Christmas fayre which sold well.

We have entered into the new year with unit and badge activities along with arts and crafts.

We had our Thinking Day Service in February which celebrated 100 years of Thinking Day and also included the history of the Castlehill Units for the Church's 70<sup>th</sup> year.

The Tuesday Rainbows took part in the Girlguiding lantern March in the town for the District Thinking Day celebration.

We are looking forward to the clearer nights and days when we can take part in outdoor activities fingers crossed for good weather to do so.

Tuesday night Guides took part in a Cityscapes Adventure round Glasgow on 21<sup>st</sup> March.

Monday night Guides are having their annual overnight at Dailly in June and Rainbows are planning an overnight sleepover at Nether Auchendrane.

All in all, we are still keeping very active with the numbers still healthy and have welcomed new girls into the units.

Our Rainbow unit on a Monday night has a number of spaces for girls aged 5 to 7 and if you are interested, please put an enquiry into Girlguiding UK or speak to any of the Leaders and also for anyone who would be interested in volunteering or want to register an interest in Brownies or Guides.

**Linda McClurkin**



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After our Christmas break we went straight into our Burns' Lunch. It is always an added bonus to celebrate it on the Bard's birthday. Thank you to Forum Fruits (Wallace Tower fruit stall) who supplied our needs and tatties at no charge. I would also like to thank our two performers at the lunch, Jacob Keary recited Wullie Wassell and Samuel Dingwall accompanied the company who sang "Scot's Wha Hae" and "Auld Lang Syne". We thank all who attended the lunch, we raised over £400 for company funds.



This Summer we are returning to Romania for the 7<sup>th</sup> time. We will leave Castlehill church on July 10<sup>th</sup> to travel overnight to Luton airport. From Luton we will fly with Wizz air direct to Targu Mures, the town where we will be hosted by the Rhema Foundation. We return on 18<sup>th</sup> July to Luton then bus back to Castlehill. We are fundraising for the trip, we have two main fundraising events. Ten of us are taking part in this year's Kilt Walk on 25<sup>th</sup> April. We have a 17<sup>th</sup> Ayr Just Giving page where you can donate to the cause. Our other main fundraising event is our race night on Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> May at Kincaidston Community Pavillion. Tickets are £5 which includes a supper. The doors open at 7pm, with the first race off at 7.30pm. It is a fantastic night out, if you would like a ticket please speak to anyone connected to 17<sup>th</sup> Ayr. We are looking for sponsors for each of our 8 races, the cost is £25, if you know any local business, please ask if they might want to sponsor one of our races. We are also looking for any donations for our raffle.



The Junior Section have, this session, visited the police station and the fire station. In addition, they were hosted by Ayr United on 21<sup>st</sup> March when they enjoyed a tour of the stadium followed by the Ayr United v Morton game. On 27<sup>th</sup> March the Junior Section took part in the Junior International Games. This is a remote competition where each Junior Section takes part in 6 activities then submits their results to Boys' Brigade headquarters.

The Junior Section and the Company Section enjoyed a Taekwondo session hosted by Mark Sawyer from Ayr Taekwondo club. Very exhilarating for both the boys and the officers!



On Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> February the Anchor Boys took part on the one annual event hosted by the Battalion, the Anchor Boys games afternoon. It was a great success, fifteen of our boys and six of our staff took part.

On Friday 13<sup>th</sup> March the Junior Section welcomed the six Anchor Boys who will potentially be moving up while the Company Section welcomed two of the three boys who are potentially moving from the Junior Section to the Company Section.

We are holding our annual display and awards night on Friday 8<sup>th</sup> May for all three sections in the Main Hall at 7pm. All are welcome, there will be teas and coffee after the display.

**Ian Queen, Captain**



## Winter Activities Afternoons

Studies have shown that meeting with others regularly, has many benefits. It reduces the sense of loneliness, while also promoting the enjoyment of doing something new, which helps with cognitive abilities and skills. Having a routine in the week supports a positive mind-set and helps to achieve overall wellbeing.

Our Warm Spaces group provides members with the opportunity to develop friendships and activities within a pleasant, welcoming environment. If you feel you would benefit from some company and friendship please come along to our group on a Thursday afternoon. There is nothing better than a cup of tea or coffee over a friendly chat to lift spirits.

Thanks must go to all our members, who help in any way to make our afternoons successful. Such things as setting up, making teas, doing dishes providing donations and clearing away. This is greatly appreciated.

A special thanks must go to Mr Greg Watson of Ayrshire Stoves and Chimneys for his donation to help cover the cost of our Xmas buffet. This local company is supporting their local community which is really appreciated.

Please come along the first step is always the worst but you will receive a warm welcome.

**Liz Hardie, Lead**

## Church of Scotland Stamp Appeal

The stamp appeal came to an end in February 2026 after 56 years.

It had been a pivotal part of World Mission Council collecting much needed money for projects from Partner Churches around the world simply by collecting used stamps.

From 1995 to 2024 an amazing total of £96,459.67 had been raised for projects such as the HIV programme and Mount Olivet Boys' home in Jamaica & Cayman Islands.

I took our latest contribution of used stamps to the office of Glasgow Presbytery and handed them in before the deadline. Thank you to all members of the congregation and other people who gave their used stamps to us over many years.

Keith Scott who organised the appeal and sold the stamps to dealers to raise funds is happy to continue to do that. He has arranged to give money raised from now on to Alzheimer Scotland. Please continue to put used stamps in the basket in the vestibule and I will take them to Glasgow Presbytery and Keith will continue to collect them there.

**Margaret Devlin**

# BELL RINGING

For the life of Castlehill church, up until Covid, the church bell ringing was a call to worship and a welcome as worshipers arrived to the church. Over the years there have been a number of bell ringers. Going back as far as the 70's some of those we can remember were Gordon Wilson, Hugh Hamilton, Andrew Graham, Tommy Chalmers and David Kerr. Apologies to those whom we missed. Since Covid there has been no regular bell ringer.



At a recent Session Meeting it was decided to try to get the church bell back to being rung every Sunday. After an appeal from the “pulpit” we had seven members come forward who were willing to join a rota to make sure the bell is never silent on a Sunday morning. Many thanks to Ross, Colin, Christine, Samuel, Liz, Lois and RJ for committing to keeping the bell ringing. The rota is open for anyone else to join, if you would like to be part of the bell ringers please speak to Margaret Graham.

# BUNNY HUNT

We counted them all out and we counted them all back

I can confirm no bunnies were abandoned in Castlehill Woods.

The Bunny Hunt on Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> March was as good as always because of the enthusiasm of the participants and the volunteers. The excitement of the children going out to find the bunnies and then coming back so animated made it all worthwhile for those who worked on the day.

An event like this couldn't happen without the hard work of those who helped. We had a lot of willing volunteers helping with registration, craft table, kitchen, serving teas and eats let's not forget the guys outside supervising the car park and woods.

I would also like to thank those members of the congregation who donated to help fund the Bunny Hunt. Thanks also to Spar, Hillfoot Road and Booker Cash & Carry for their very generous donations to the event.

**Margaret Graham, Organiser**



# The Guild



“Whose we are and Whom we Serve”

It’s hard to believe that we are coming to the end of another successful session.

We have had various talks on beekeeping, seaside entertainers, Africa, Bulgaria, Laurel and Hardy and the Alloway Railway Tunnel, just to mention a few.

For our Scottish night in January, we were entertained by Loudoun Friends who brought us many songs and a night of laughter.

We had a coffee evening in support of our local charity “Headway Ayrshire” and raised £200. Their services are free to everyone with a brain or head injury.

Our closing social is on Wednesday, 25<sup>th</sup> March with entertainment from “The Dotted Crotchets”, a newly formed group who have been working hard rehearsing. If anyone would like to join us, feel free to come along to the North Hall at 7.30 pm at a cost of £5.



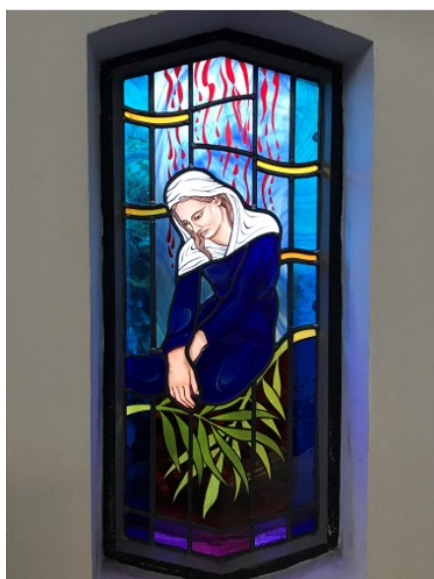
Dorothy Jack, Secretary



Christian Aid Week 2026 will take place from May 10 to 16, focusing on poverty relief and community support worldwide.

Red collection envelopes will be available on the table in the vestibule at Castlehill Church during this time.

Allan Jack  
Christian Aid Representative



You will never be asked for any monies to watch the stream of any service at Castlehill Church.

**If you are asked it will be a SCAM.**

# CASTLEHILL BOWLING CLUB



The season is almost over, and we will be having our AGM at the end of March, when the office bearers will be appointed for next year. It has been an enjoyable and successful year with membership slightly increased from the last session.

We will be hoping to have our annual visit to Girvan in the summer and details of that will be forthcoming.

The prize winners for the 2025/2026 session were as follows:

Gents Singles winner: John McDermott    Runner up: George Neil

Gents Pairs: Winners: Eddie Campbell and Wellwood Grierson

Runners up: Brian Baillie and Harry Lorimer

Ladies singles winner: Rita Macey-Lilley    Runner up: Dorothy Jack

Ladies Pairs: Winners Liz Hardie and Annette Reddicks

Runners up: Dorothy Jack and Christine Telfer

Mixed Pairs Winners: George Neil and Dorothy Jack

Runners up: John McDermott and Moira Alexander

Champion of Champions Trophy Winner: Rita Macey Lilley

Runner Up: John McDermott

Points Trophy; The winner has yet to be announced.

**Wellwood Grierson, Secretary**

## Fabric Report

January we got Archie in to trim trees and bushes and the ivy. He did this in the church grounds and manse at a cost of £340.

In February we did an inspection and found a few areas needing attention, mostly outside so we will need to wait for better weather.

We had a roof repair carried out on the main roof of the building costing £120.

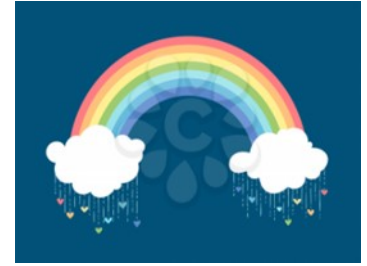
We will need a clean up morning to keep the weeds down around the church grounds which will be arranged for sometime in May.

**The Fabric Committee**

## COMMUNION

In 2026 we have returned to the celebration of communion using small glasses and bread on a silver plate. To continue our care for all sharing in communion, you are asked to sit only on the centre pews at each side, leaving one pew vacant between each row with people on it. Servers will pass along the empty pews and you alone will touch the glass and bread. After the years of Covid Communion, this may be a hard change to make but we ask for your patience in adjusting to this means of serving the elements which we hope will bring us closer together. If anyone has strong feelings about this, please speak to Paul before the March communion.

# The Rainbow People



In the beginning the world was very still and quiet. The ground seemed to be covered with dull-coloured rocks and stones. But, if you took a closer look, you could see that they were not stones but were tiny little people who were not moving at all.

One day a wind blew over the land. It warmed the people and filled them with life and with love. They began to move; to look at each other to touch each other; to speak to each other; to care about each other.

As they explored their world, they found coloured ribbons lying on the ground. They were excited and ran about collecting them up. Some chose blue, some red, some green, some yellow. They enjoyed tying the ribbons round each other and laughing at the bright colours.

Suddenly another wind blew. This time it made them shiver with cold. They looked at each other, realised they were different ... and stopped trusting each other.

The reds gathered in one corner; The blues gathered in another corner; The greens gathered in yet another corner; While the yellows gathered and ran into another corner.

They forgot that they had been friends and had cared for each other. The other colours just seemed different and strange. They built walls to separate themselves and kept the others out. But they found that:

The reds had water but no food. The blues had food but no water. The greens had twigs to make fire but no shelter. The yellows had shelter but nothing to keep them warm.

Suddenly a stranger appeared and stood in the centre of the land. He looked at the people and the walls separating them in amazement and said loudly 'Come out everybody. What are you afraid of? Let's talk to each other.'

The people peeped out at him and slowly some came out of their corners into the centre. The stranger said, 'Now, just tell one another what you have got to give and what you need to be given.'

The blues said, 'We have plenty of food to give but no water.' The reds said, 'We have plenty of water to give but we have no food.' The greens said, 'We have plenty of wood for a fire, but we need shelter.' The yellows said, 'We have plenty of shelter but we need warmth.'

The stranger said, 'Why don't you put together what you have and share it? Then you can all have enough to eat, drink, keep warm and have shelter.'

They talked and the feeling of love returned. They remembered that they had been friends. They knocked down the walls and welcomed each other as old friends. then they realised that the colours had divided them, they wanted to throw them away. But they knew they would miss the richness of the bright colours. So, instead, they mixed the colours to make a beautiful ribbon. They called themselves the Rainbow People.

**The rainbow ribbon became their symbol of peace.**

# A Poem Written for World Cancer Day 4th February

Today is for those living with cancer each day,  
learning new language they never asked to say.  
For those in waiting rooms, quietly brave,  
trying to stay afloat through tumultuous waves.  
For those in treatment, day after day,  
showing a courage that words can't convey.  
For those in remission - relief edged with fear,  
who smile for the world while wiping quiet tears.  
For the carers who stand when the ground feels thin,  
who steady the chaos and keep things moving.  
For those who have lost someone deeply adored,  
and live with a love that still aches for more.  
For the survivors - changed, though often unseen,  
with bodies that teach what survival can mean.  
Cancer gives lessons, taught the hard way,  
about fragility, courage, and choosing life every day.  
Healing isn't linear, tidy or neat,  
it circles, it pauses, it misses a beat.  
But it asks us for kindness, for patience, for care,  
for space to be human, afraid, but still there.  
So today is for all - whatever your place,  
in fighting, in grieving, in learning to pace.  
No ranking of stories, no right way to cope,  
just shared humanity, compassion, and hope.  
If cancer has touched you or someone you love,  
if you're still reaching for strength from somewhere above,  
you are not alone. You are seen. You belong.  
Sending love, always, to everyone strong.

**Dr K Putnam**, now in recovery after breast cancer surgery.  
Used with permission.



# Funerals

## December

Agnes Borland      Dundonald House, Dundonald  
Douglas Owens      Bathurst Drive, Ayr



## February

Fay Henderson      Woodlands Crescent, Ayr

Our thanks goes to the following people for donating flowers to the church between January and April:

Angela Smith, Morvan Pettigrew, Elspeth Rae, Pamela MacDougall, Frances Russell, Isobel Mullan, Liz Reid, Liz Hardie, Christine Prout, Liz Hunter, Elsie Henderson, Cathy Carmichael, Tommy & Sandra Chalmers, May Ferris, Marilyn Kerr, Catherine Holland and Margaret MacCormack.

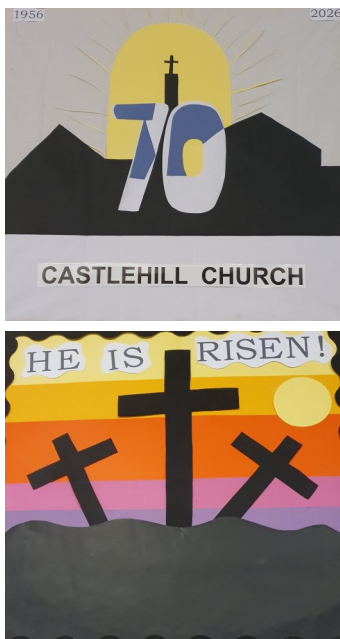


Thanks also to the flower arranging team and delivery team:

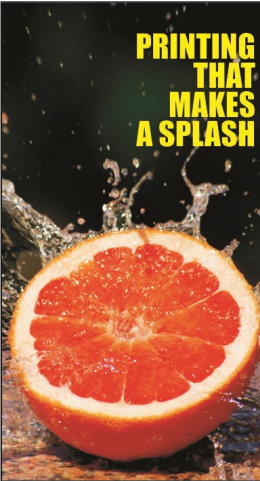
Frances Russell, Stella Nixon, Catherine Holland, Allison Smith, Margaret Gerrard, Lyn McDermott, May Harris, Margaret Grierson, Margaret Devlin, Liz Hunter, Moira Alexander and Liz Reid.

There are still a few spaces available for anyone looking to donate flowers. Please contact Stella Nixon for further information.

Christine Prout has created the below display for the 70th Anniversary and Lesley Anderson has created the “He is risen” display. Both can be found in the chancel area of the Main Hall.



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