

## **Amendments to Walk 10**

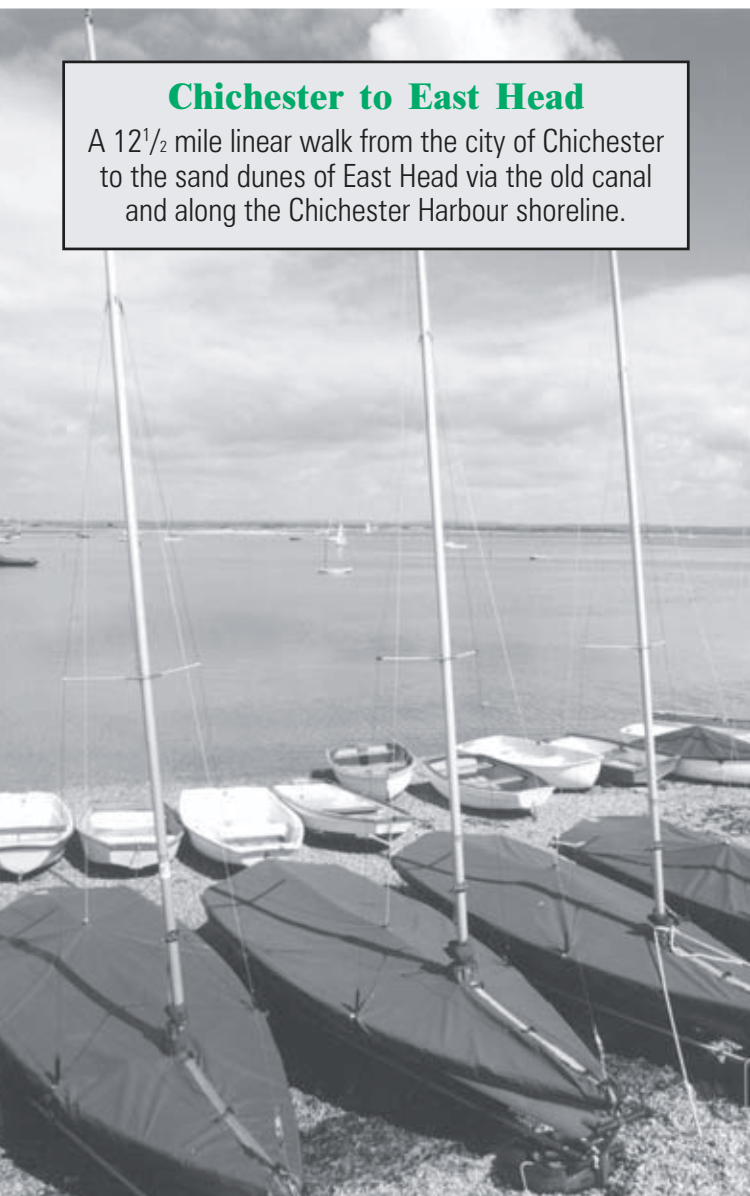
Buses: Services 52/53 link Chichester and The Witterings. See [www.stagecoachbus.com/south/](http://www.stagecoachbus.com/south/) or call **Traveline** on **0870 608 2 608** for latest timetable information.

Please note that The Richmond Arms is now called The Waterside.

**WALK No. 10  
FROM THE CITY TO  
THE SEA**

**Chichester to East Head**

A 12½ mile linear walk from the city of Chichester to the sand dunes of East Head via the old canal and along the Chichester Harbour shoreline.



## FROM THE CITY TO THE SEA

This walk takes you along the old canal from Chichester, reaching Chichester Harbour at Birdham and then along the shoreline, through Itchenor (also known as West Itchenor), Rookwood and Ellanore, to the sand dunes of East Head at the harbour's entrance, finishing in the village of West Wittering.

This is a LINEAR walk of 12½ miles, with the option of catching a bus back to the start. The starting point is at the bus and railway stations in Chichester (map ref. SU 848044).

We advise you to use these notes alongside the Ordnance Survey Explorer Map 120 (Chichester).

## PRE-WALK INFORMATION

**By road** - Plenty of car parking (pay and display) is available in the railway station car park and in the multi-storey just round the corner in Avenue de Chartres (footpath directly through to railway station).

**By bus** - The start of the walk (Map ref. SU 848044) is from the railway station in Chichester. The bus station is next to it. The walk finishes in West Wittering village (map ref. SZ 779985) where bus services No.53 (straight into Chichester) and No.52 (via villages of East Wittering and Bracklesham) can be taken back into Chichester. For bus information telephone: 01903 237661.

**By train** - regular services to Chichester. For train information telephone: 0845 748 4950.

**Toilets** - available at the railway station, also on the route in Spinnakers Cafe at Chichester Marina, public toilets in Itchenor, in the West Wittering beach car park, and in West Wittering village.

**Cafés** - there are cafés at the railway and the Canal Basin (run by volunteers), also at Chichester Marina (Spinnakers), West Wittering beach car park and in West Wittering village (Beach House café).

**Pubs** - The Ship Inn at Itchenor and The Old House at Home at West Wittering village.

**Tide times** - must be consulted for the end of the walk (south from Ellanore and around East Head) as the pathway may be flooded at high tide. Please phone Harbour Office (01243 512301) for tide information or see the Conservancy's website [www.conservancy.co.uk](http://www.conservancy.co.uk).

**Walk instructions** - the green text is the detailed walk route, black text gives you some background information on the area in which you are walking.

START the walk from the railway station, standing near the railway gates looking across the railway line with the platforms to your right. The city centre will now be behind you. When free, cross the railway line and along the road for about 100 metres. You will see a pub on the left, called the The Richmond Arms. Cross the road and into the Canal Basin Road by the side of the pub. You will see the canal basin ahead.

On reaching the canal basin, turn right and pass the Canal Basin Society building, (the cafe may be open) then left along the side of the basin. On leaving the basin, the path turns right with the route of the canal. You will be walking with the canal to your left for about 1¼ miles, passing under the A27 at one point. Eventually, the path turns left onto a bridge over the canal. This is the edge of the village of Hunston. Once over the bridge turn right and alongside the road for a few yards. At the footpath sign, turn right and back to the canal, from now you will be walking with the canal to your right.

See separate section on the canal for information.

After about half a mile, the path reaches a road, cross with care straight over to carry on alongside the canal. At the second time the path reaches a road, take GREAT CARE crossing over - this is the busy and fast A286 from Chichester to the Witterings and it can be difficult for drivers to see walkers emerging from this path. Once you've crossed the road, bear slightly right and up onto a grassy bank, with the canal now on your left. Soon you will meet the entrance road to Chichester Marina (which is actually on the edge of the village of Birdham). Follow the road into the Marina. When you reach the big noticeboard for the Marina, you will see that the road splits - do not take the one turning right but follow the one straight on with the canal on its left hand side. Just after, where the cars park, look for the start of a path alongside the Marina basin.

This path will take you through the Marina 'village' where you will find the popular Spinnakers cafe, open to the public.

Carry on the Marina basin-side path until you are near the boatyard (the path runs out here). At this point you will need to bear left and cross the parking area to reach the road once more (with the canal alongside) and then right along the road. Shortly the road will turn right but you will need to continue ahead at this point and walk towards the building straight ahead, the Chichester Yacht Club. The footpath runs between the canal and the Club. This is the point the canal reaches the shoreline of Chichester Harbour. Turn left and over the wooden bridge crossing the canal lock. The path leaves the Marina at this point. After a short distance it turns right and across the entrance road to some newish houses you will see on your right. The path passes between houses on either side and reaches a quiet road. Go straight over and you will shortly arrive in Birdham Pool.

The path follows the road, with the marina called Birdham Pool to your right and a brackish lagoon (an important habitat for nature



## CHICHESTER CANAL

The canal is 4½ miles long, running from the Chichester Basin to Chichester Harbour. Although no longer in use commercially, it is used for a variety of leisure activities, such as fishing, row-boating and walking. Today the canal is maintained by the Chichester Canal Society whose main aims are the preservation and restoration of the canal, development and improvement of it as a

recreational and leisure amenity for the general public and the restoration of 'through-navigation' between Chichester and the Harbour.

Work started on the canal in 1818 and by 1823 the way was complete for barges to travel from Portsmouth through Langstone and Chichester Harbours to Birdham and then onto Chichester or Arundel and eventually via other routes to London. Within two years of the canal's opening, proposals were published for a south coast railway line. In 1846 the line was opened and trade through the canal soon dwindled. Houseboats now lie behind the Birdham lockgates on what is the only surviving section of the Portsmouth and Arun canal.

Walking along the canal is a great place to observe nature. Common Reed, Water Cress and Yellow Water Lily all live on the canal bed. These are the cause of silting and the slowing down of the water flow. Many varieties of trees including willow, sycamore, wild cherry and blackthorn grow along the banks. You are sure to see some birdlife, including the swans and cygnets who live on the canal. Occasionally you may be able to sight heron, kingfisher, little grebe or a kestrel.

Fishing is a popular activity along the canal and is managed by the Canal Society. Common carp, tench, mirror carp, bream and pike are just some of the fish regularly caught. The section from Birdham Bridge to the sea is leased to Chichester Marina and is not available for angling.

conservation) to your left. Follow the road away from the marina which then bears left. Just past this bend, take the small road to your right, signposted also as a footpath. Follow this road for about 100 yards and then into and along the field edge straight ahead. At the other end of the field the path continues between a wall and a hedge. Follow the path and you will come out at a point with splendid views of the harbour. This is Westlands, part of Birdham, and the view is of the channel called Itchenor Reach. The path continues with examples of fine harbourside houses to your left. Follow the path as it turns left and away from the shoreline. Shortly it will turn right and then join the roadway of a housing estate. Continue along the road (don't turn left at this point), which after a 100 yards then turns left. Shortly after this you will reach a quiet T junction. Turn right and follow the road onto the farm (Westlands Farm).

The route at this point follows the concrete farm road. Near the farm house, the path turns left to skirt around the farm house and garden. Just beyond the house you will enter another field. Immediately there will be two signposted paths. Do not take the one to the left along the field edge, but take the one straight ahead, diagonally across the field.

Half way across do stop and look at the view of the harbour here and the spire of Chichester Cathedral in the distance.

At the other end of the field the path leaves the field, but keeps it to the left and now has a small wood to the right. After 100 yards or so the path will emerge onto a quiet road.

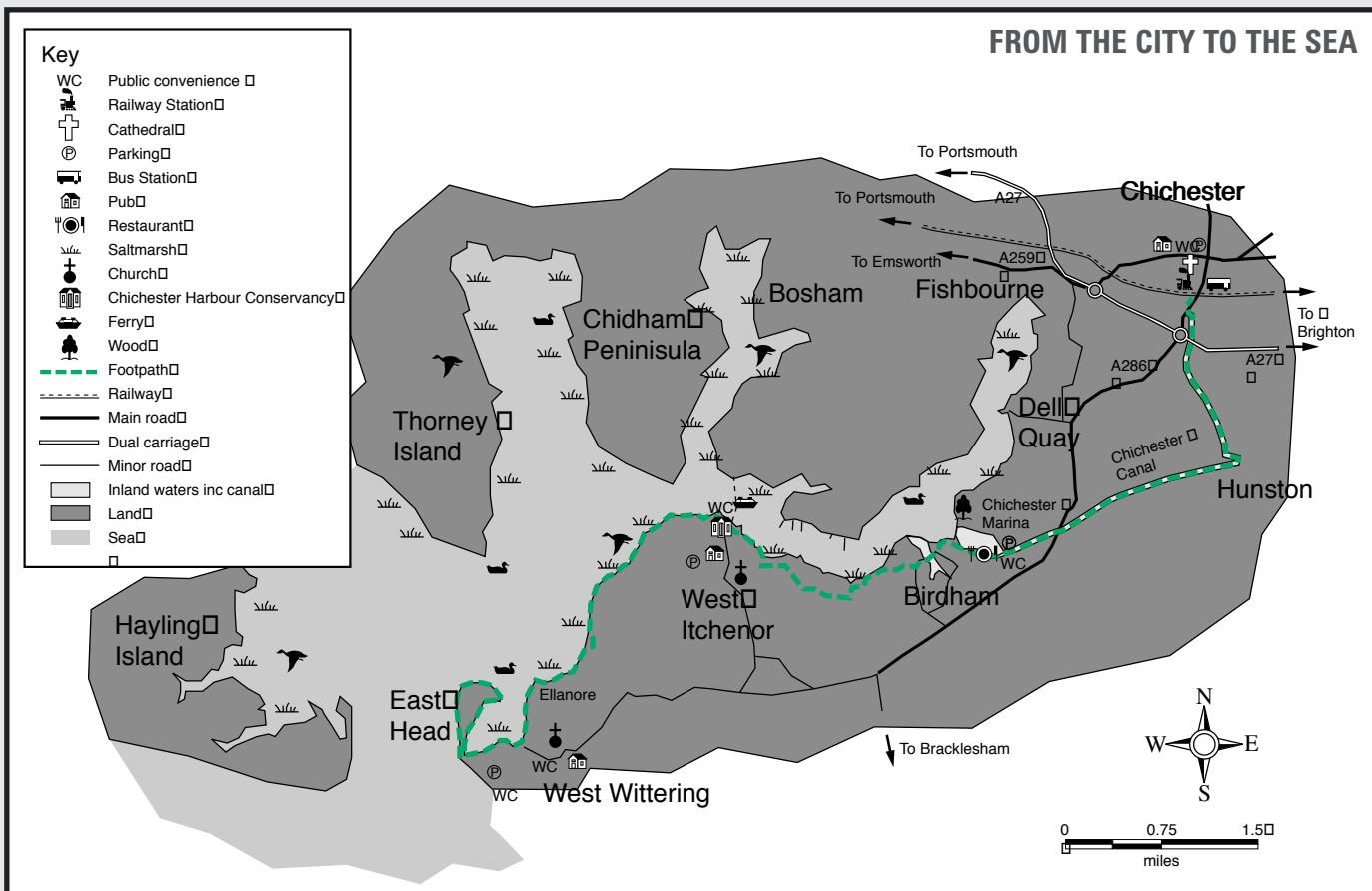
This is Spinney Lane, part of the village of Itchenor, with many beautiful harbourside houses.

Turn left and along the road, with the houses to your left and right. After about 200 yards you will see a footpath signposted to the right between a wall and a hedge. Take this path and shortly you will emerge onto the shoreline once more.

The mud, uncovered between tides, is a very rich source of food. In winter, birds called waders, such as Curlew, Oystercatchers, Godwits, Redshanks and the tiny Dunlin, probe with their specially adapted beaks deep in the mud for small marine animals and worms, shellfish and crabs. Other waders such as Grey Plover pick their food from the mud surface, and Turnstones find theirs under seaweed and pebbles. The harbour's biggest ducks, the Shelduck, sift the surface of the wet mud for tiny snails (Hydrobia). Other birds feed on plants growing on the mud; Brent Geese and Wigeon eat green algae and Eel grass; Coot and Mute Swans are also vegetarians. Other birds are fish-eaters; they may dive from a height (see terns in the summer) or from the water surface (Great Crested Grebe and Little Grebe, Cormorants and sea ducks like Red-breasted Merganser and Goldeneye) or stand and fish in the shallows (Heron).

When the high tide covers the mud flats all these birds need somewhere quiet to rest and preen. Waders fly to nearby fields,

## FROM THE CITY TO THE SEA



## COASTGUARDS AND LIFEBOATS

The Coastguard service was established in 1831, a station at Snow Hill, West Wittering was one of the first to be built. Coastguards watched for vessels in danger and also for smugglers. However, until the inception of the RNLI there was no organised rescue service.

Two RNLI stations were set up locally, one on Hayling Island and one at West Wittering on a gravel spit west of the East Head hinge. The Hayling Station was established in 1865 following the stranding of a small schooner whilst attempting to enter Langstone Harbour. A rescue boat crewed by local fishermen was organised and two of the schooner's crew were saved. Following this incident a local lifeboat was demanded and £550 was donated by a London firm Leaf and Co for a lifeboat at Hayling. The first lifeboat here was called *Olive Leaf*.

By 1924 the Hayling boat was withdrawn and the spit on which the West Wittering boathouse stood had been washed away. In 1974 an Inshore Lifeboat Station was established in Chichester Harbour for the benefit of yachtspeople and local fishermen. The lifeboat station can be seen on the shore opposite East Head. Currently it houses a B Class, Atlantic 75 Lifeboat and a D Class Lifeboat which both have to be launched by special tractors due to the amount of shingle on the beach and the weight of the vessels.



saltmarsh or high shingle (high tide roosts) while ducks or geese rest on the water surface or ashore.

Follow this shoreline path (known locally as 'The Bank', due to its embankment appearance). Eventually you will reach Itchenor Sailing Club. The footpath right of way does not cross the sailing club jetty. You will need to turn left and follow the path away from the shoreline and along the shingle road. You will emerge in the centre of Itchenor village with the pub, the Ship Inn opposite you. Turn right and follow the road down to the water.

At this point you will find a fine viewing platform with benches and public toilets nearby in the corner of the white building of the Chichester Harbour Conservancy. In the summer there may be an ice cream van to tempt you! This is a good spot for a break.

The village has notable historical connections.

In the reign of Charles II the Royal Yacht 'Tubbs' was based at Itchenor and there are also records of many notable vessels being built in the village such as the experimental 6-mast- 'Transit' built by Richard Hall Gower in 1800. This was way before the boom in recreational boating in the 1960s. Now the main channel is filled with moorings but the boats seen here are but a few of the 10,000 vessels that regularly use the sheltered waters of the harbour.

The Chichester Harbour Conservancy was formed by Act of Parliament in 1971 to manage the harbour area for recreational activity and to protect its natural beauty. It now has over 10,000 vessels on record based in the harbour, of which 5,000 are kept in the marinas or on swinging moorings found in various parts of the harbour channels.

Also in Itchenor you will find the harbour water tours service, offering a 1½ hour boat trip, and the ferry service which runs a short distance straight across the channel to the Bosham peninsula. Both services run daily in the summer.

When you are ready to carry on your walk, locate yourself facing inland to the side of the Harbour Office, with the viewing platform behind you. Look to the right and you will see the footpath disappear between the small boatyard (Haines) and a house (Jetty House). Take this path. After a few minutes you will emerge in a large boatyard.

This is Northshore Yacht Yard, which builds yachts, for home and abroad.

Taking care, cross straight over this yard and onto the footpath alongside the shoreline.

This saltmarsh environment is one of the world's most productive habitats, receiving nutrients from both the sea and the surrounding land. The plants have special features which enable them to grow in salty water and withstand periods of submersion and exposure with the ebb and flow of the tide. For some distance beyond the high tide mark some of these special plants persist, withstanding the salt carried by onshore winds. Coastal habitats are believed by many to be the nearest to a natural habitat we have left in the British Isles. This is largely because human activities, which have

for centuries modified habitats further inland through agriculture and forestry, have not had a similar impact on the coastal areas. Some grazing of saltmarsh by stock does take place but has limited effect on the habitat - the forces of nature, especially the tidal influxes, tend to have the greater control.

After two hundred yards or so the path will split, you may carry straight on, but it is worth taking a few minutes out to take the path to the right, stopping on the shoreline. There are two benches.

The view is towards the Bosham Channel. In the distance you can see the South Downs. The land to the left of the Bosham Channel is the Chidham peninsula, with Cobnor Point nearest you. The land to the right is the Bosham peninsula. You may be able to see the short spire of Bosham church in the distance.

The green navigation marker in the middle of the channel is Fairway and encourages sailors coming up the channel into the fairway in the middle of the channel to avoid sailing through the moorings of Itchenor Reach. Notice the two smaller 'satellite' green markers as extra navigation aids.

Turn left and along the shoreline. If the tide is high you may not be able to get through here, so re-trace your steps to where the path splits and turn right. The footpath follows the shoreline with saltmarsh on your right and rough pasture to your left, both important habitats. After ½ mile or so the path runs through the edge of a small woodland and then alongside a field. At the end of this field, do not take the path to the left but carry on the path following the shoreline, and alongside another field. The path then bears right and out to a pond.

This pond is known locally as The Horse Pond.

Bear right around the pond. You will see a low concrete wall which provides a good place for a rest and time to take in the views.

You will see the entrance to the harbour to your left. Straight across will be Thorney Island. You may be able to see the village of Bosham in the distance to your right.

Once past the pond, follow the path. It passes through some trees planted by the Conservancy several years ago.

The Harbour Conservancy aims to plant about 5,000 trees and shrubs every year as part of its ongoing plans for protecting the harbour's natural beauty.

You will reach some houses and the path turns left away from the shoreline and follows round the back of a few houses and then right, back towards the shoreline once again.

This is the small hamlet of Rookwood.

Follow the path as it turns left, taking care along this next stretch as this part of the shoreline is suffering a good deal of erosion. The path will meet with the end of a quiet road, and you will see the path going off to the right of this road, continuing on its shoreline route. The path here is shaded by trees on both sides. It will bear to the right and come out to a spectacular viewpoint and birdhide.

This is Ellanore Point. Straight ahead you will see the sand dunes of East Head, marking one side of the entrance to the harbour, and in the distance is Hayling Island, marking the other side. The Emsworth Channel disappears ahead into the distance. Look right round to the right and below you, you will see the gentle sweep of the shingle spit reaching out to the shoreline further back enclosing an important stretch of saltmarsh.

The birdhide was built during 2001 by the Conservancy and members of the charity Friends of Chichester Harbour.

Once you have enjoyed the views, continue on the path. The path will turn left at the end of the field and then right. It emerges onto a small 'common' with houses to the left.

This is part of West Wittering village known as Snow Hill.

Bear right and across the common. Note the small road leaving the common on the far side to the left - you will need this route on the way back from East Head. Once across the common you will see dinghies on the shoreline to your right.

These dinghies belong to members of the West Wittering Sailing Club.

Follow the path round to the right keeping to the shoreline.

You will pass a wetland area on your left which has a popular crabbing spot! You will also notice to your right several big smooth rocks - these are 'erratics' left here by travelling, melting, icebergs after the last ice age.

The footpath reaches the shoreline with shingle; at this point you can choose to take the shoreline route, or follow the path round the back of the hedge and along the field. Both routes meet up at the point where the dunes meet the 'mainland', by the gate at the edge of West Wittering Beach car park.

This car park is a popular destination for beach goers in the summer. You may detour into the car park to make use of the cafe (about 1/2 mile) and toilets (closer!). The cafe is likely to be closed in the winter months.

Turn right and decide whether to walk the dunes clockwise or anti-clockwise, the wind direction may help you with this! It is about 1 1/2 miles from this point to walk round the dunes and back again.

With severe erosion in recent years, it is possible that the route may be blocked at high tide. Please do not be tempted to climb over the fencing - which is intended to protect the fragile dunes from trampling.

The sand dunes are not a common habitat in West Sussex and because of its fragile nature, areas near the car park have been fenced off by the The National Trust, which owns East Head.

Once you are back at the gate, re-trace your steps back along the footpath to Snow Hill and on reaching the 'common', keep right and leave along the quiet road. After about 200 yards, the path leaves the road bearing left between stables and a small caravan

site. You will need to cross a stile and straight over a field to the churchyard of the village church.

This is the village church of West Wittering, called St Peter and St Paul.

The path passes through the church yard and out onto a quiet road.

You will see the village school opposite.

Turn left and walk along the road. It will meet the road from the beach car park.

The public toilets are on the right at this point.

Carry on to the T junction with the main road. This is the end of your walk. You have three options! 1. Turn left and into the village if you would like to stop at the Beach House Cafe. 2. Turn right to reach the bus stop for a bus straight back into Chichester. 3. Cross the road to reach the bus stop for a bus back to Chichester via the villages of East Wittering and Bracklesham.

## CHURCH OF ST PETER AND ST PAUL WEST WITTERING



This walk is one of a series of 10 walks around Chichester Harbour

1. East Head Circular
2. Itchenor Circular
3. Dell Quay Circular
4. Emsworth to Langstone
5. From the Cathedral to the Church
6. Chidham Circular
7. Two Villages and a Ferry
8. Thorney Island Circular
9. Six Harbour Villages
10. From the City to the Sea

This leaflet has been produced by Chichester Harbour Conservancy in association with the Countryside Agency.

Chichester Harbour is an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). It is an internationally renowned area for nature conservation. The Harbour has 11 square miles of water, 11 square miles of land and 17 miles of navigable channels. The Conservancy works to maintain and protect this important environment. Further information on its work can be found on the website.

The Countryside Agency is the statutory body working to:

- conserve and enhance the countryside
- promote social equity and economic opportunity for the people who live there
- help everyone, wherever they live, to enjoy this national asset

It aims to achieve the very best for the English countryside, its people and places.



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