

DAVID BENNETT ARCHITECTS

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21st Old Court, 10 Victoria Lane



PROPOSED CONVERSION OF REDUNDANT SPACE AT FIRST FLOOR LEVEL TO CREATE SCREEN 3, PICTUREDROME CINEMA, 51 CANADA GROVE, BOGNOR REGIS

DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT AND HERITAGE STATEMENT

BACKGROUND

The Picturedrome Cinema is a Grade 2 listed building. The original Advisers Report dated 24 July 2009 and subsequent detailed listing are included in this report as historical and heritage background.

EXTENT OF WORKS

The proposal involves internal works only to the large octagonal room at first floor, most recently used as part of a residential use. The historical records do not indicate the original intended use of the space, but the room retains many of the original building's features dating from its construction in 1885. The works which are proposed do not affect these features and involve only the introduction of a raised tiered floor and seating, and works to the three large windows on the east elevation to provide blackout for the cinema and sound insulation from the noise of traffic passing below.

The only direct intervention in the fabric will be the use of solar reflective film to the inside face of the glazing to the three windows.

ACCESS

Access for cinema goers to the new Screen 3 will be via the existing staircase from the ground floor lobby. This route already provides access to Screen 2 located on the north side of the building and is sufficient to cater for increased traffic.

Wheelchair access is not provided to the first floor of the building since there is no lift, or space in which a lift could be incorporated. However, the management of the cinema are conscious of the needs of the less mobile and seek to provide a balanced programme of film in the main cinema, Screen 1, which is wheelchair accessible.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Refer to the attached Advisers Report dated 24 July 2009.

20 September 2013
DB/11248

Picturedrome, CANADA GROVE, BOGNOR REGIS

Parish BOGNOR REGIS
District ARUN
County WEST SUSSEX

Case UID: 166521

Date First Listed: 15-JUL-2009

Formerly Listed As:

RECOMMENDATION

Adviser: Mr J Heath

Outcome: Yes, list

Recommended Grade: II

30-JAN-2009

Advice Text: After examining all the papers on this file and other relevant information and having carefully considered the architectural and historic interest of this case, the criteria for listing are fulfilled.

CONTEXT

The Picturedrome has been proposed for listing as the applicant considers it to have special architectural and historic interest. There was no threat to the building at the time of the application, but in January 2009 we were informed that there has been a dramatic raise in rent on the building which would cause the owners to go out of business and the site to be redeveloped.

HISTORY

The Picturedrome was opened in May 1886 as the New Assembly Rooms, designed by Arthur Smith, a local architect. At that time it was used for a variety of community activities including shows, dancing, roller-skating, and was also hired out to travelling film showmen. The main features of the early building were a principal ground floor hall and a smaller one on the first floor. Perhaps the most notable feature of the building was an octagonal lantern tower which housed a revolving light, operated by a bicycle-type mechanism. In 1911 the owners, WH Lorden and Sons, lowered the ceiling to improve the acoustics and built a customised projection room on the outside of the building. The Assembly Rooms was re-named the Queens Hall and had a capacity of 700.

During the First World War it was used as a drill hall. The building was converted into a permanent cinema in 1919 and re-named the Picturedrome. In the conversion to cinema use a glass canopy, supported on columns, was added to the entrance, the position of the screen was reversed and a new side entrance and paybox was established in the corner of the auditorium. In addition, the floor was raised as a slope, new seats and improved ventilation were installed, four boxes were built at the rear of the auditorium to the side of the old proscenium arch, a new projection box was built inside the original proscenium and a tea room created on the ground floor.

The Picturedrome competed with the Pier Theatre, but this situation was resolved in 1922 by both establishments becoming united under the ownership of MW Shanly and A Carter as the Bognor Pier Company. By 1930 both the Picturedrome and the Pier Cinema had been equipped with Western Electric Sound. Just after the Second World War control of the Picturedrome passed to the Manchester-based Buxton Theatre Circuit, and was later leased out. In April 1954 the interior of the Picturedrome was damaged by fire and, as this was the era of wide screen, it was decided to almost double the width of the proscenium arch to take a Cinemascope screen. The auditorium was redecorated and refurbished, and it is probable that the present ceiling braces date to this period.

In 1959 the Picturedrome was taken over by Drummer Theatres (Bognor Regis) Ltd, then in 1962 by John Robertson, a cinema owner from Welwyn Garden City, Hertfordshire. The cinema now had 533 seats and the small upstairs hall, which had been used for community activities, was used for bingo. When John Robertson died in 1975 the lease was inherited by his son. By 1980, now with a reduced 522 seats, the Picturedrome was the only full-time cinema left in Bognor Regis. In 1983 Robertson sold the cinema, now reduced to 472 seats, to the Cannon Classic circuit and it was re-named the Classic. The cinema was now modernised; a second screen was added in place of the first floor bingo hall and a new false ceiling was added here to meet the arches on the side walls. This second screen seated 96 and was opened in August 1984. Other changes were made to the main building including the restoration of the previously boarded-up tower, Dolby stereo was installed and there were plans to open the boxes to either side of the original proscenium. The old Picturedrome name was left in coloured glass on the canopy over the front entrance.

DESCRIPTION

This is a two storey, brick building with a hipped roof with an imposing octagonal lantern tower, both roofed with clay tiles. The original revolving top section of the tower is still intact, although the mechanism no longer survives. The tower has full length sash windows with arched lintels and forms the centre of a symmetrical façade flanked by four bays, the central two projecting and surmounted by a flat roof with balustraded parapet. The original coloured glass canopy in decorative iron scrollwork, emblazoned with the Picturedrome sign survives intact; the only changes to the entrance being that the original front doors have been replaced by modern, two-pane glass doors. Windows in the central projecting bays are small pane sashes; the lintels of those on the ground floor have shouldered flat arches and those on the first floor have round arches and a central keystone. In the side bays there are a mixture of window styles with some having been boarded over.

The rear elevation has a number of accretions, some of which are later additions, such as toilets, and there is an extension with catslide roof which appears to have been a dressing room. The north side elevation, the ground floor of which used to be the cinema cafe, has now been modified for Rick's Cafe, but the first floor, on which is Screen 2, has its original sash windows. At the south elevation is a plain, squat tower, which had been the 1911 external projection room.

The interior still retains much of the original fabric, and where there are alterations they are illustrative of the development of the building. The lobby is somewhat modified for the accommodation of a new pay desk and food kiosk. (These changes resulted in the removal of a wall which divided the entrance from the stairs.) The boxed-in beams and panel doors which lead to the auditorium are original. The large auditorium has a barrel-vaulted ceiling with circular moulding dating from 1911, with supporting arches which probably date to 1954; pilasters on the wall are used to form part of the blind arcade decoration. The 1911 proscenium is still present, flanked by boxes dating to 1919, with ornate broken pediments. Similar broken pediments are set above the main entrance and exit doors, with moulded decoration on the wall above. A pay box dating to 1919 still stands at the corner of the auditorium. At the north end of the building is Rick's Cafe, which was previously the cinema cafe. There is still much original fabric remaining here including stairs to the first floor function room. The stairs from the foyer to the first floor are in original condition and have ornate metalwork balusters to one side. The first floor function room has been re-modelled to provide an extra screen (Screen 2), but wall decoration in the form of pilasters, moulding and blind arcading is original. On the first floor there are toilets, and the 1919 projection room which has been modernised.

ASSESSMENT

Assembly rooms, essentially community entertainment halls, have a long history, deriving from entertainment rooms in inns and taverns. They became fashionable places to be seen in the Georgian and Regency periods, and their architecture was often suitably pretentious. In the later C19 their function tended to overlap with the music halls which started to emerge from the 1850s. The progression from the use of assembly rooms to cinema is one that was easily made. Cinema buildings vary greatly from the converted, sometimes temporary, locations used by travelling cinematographers, to the fantasist entertainment complexes of the 1920s and the 'super cinemas' of the talkies' era. Cinemas of the early- to mid-C20 tended to be entertainment centres for the local community and still retain memories for people from their childhood and youth.

Community meeting places such as assembly halls were sometimes used as temporary venues for picture show performances by travelling showmen; it is into this category which the Picturedrome in Bognor Regis falls. In 1909 a Cinematograph Act was passed in response to a number of fires at this type of venue, and the Act controlled the licensing of films, Sunday opening and the design of cinemas. It principally required a separate fire-resistant projection box, as can be seen on the south wall of the Picturedrome dating to 1911. After the 1909 Act, a great many cinemas were constructed and the design was quickly standardised. By 1914 approximately 4000 cinemas were constructed, and another approximately 4000 were built from c1920 to c1940.

Whether considered for listing in terms of its original function as assembly rooms or its subsequent use as a cinema, broadly similar criteria are relevant: architectural quality, decoration, functional planning, intactness and date. Given the numbers of cinemas which survive, selection is required to establish those examples of listable quality, and for a cinema of relatively early, pre-1914 date, intactness is especially important. A surviving original exterior with a good quality canopy may in some cases be sufficient for listing, although in post-1914 examples the survival of original internal fabric, particularly in the case of the foyer, stairs and auditorium is important, even if earlier features are hidden behind later alterations. The survival of subsidiary features of early cinema use, notably the c1919 pay box, is significant as such features would normally be expected to have been removed during later alteration.

The Picturedrome still has the ambiance of a late C19 hall, despite full conversion to cinema use by 1919 (and partial conversion in 1911 when the acoustics were improved and the external projection room built). Architecturally, the most notable feature is the central tower topped with the once revolving cupola, and the deep hipped roof behind. In this respect it may be compared with the ABC Cinema, formerly with ballroom and restaurant, in Whiteladies Road, Bristol (listed Grade II) dating to 1920-21, also featuring a tower topped by an octagonal section.

While the dominance of the tower gives architectural presence to the building, the special interest also lies in its surviving decoration. This includes the inscribed coloured glass canopy. The front elevation of the building is substantially unchanged since photographed in the 1920s. The necessary changes which have been made to modernise the building can be clearly read on the rear elevation.

Internally the foyer has been altered to some extent to provide a new pay box, although the original staircase survives to the right of the entrance. Doors to the auditorium are original and both the original 1911 proscenium arch, as well the later one installed in 1954, when the screen was widened, remain intact. The boxes which were built either side of the original proscenium arch survive, as does an early pay box in the corner of the auditorium. There are changes to the ceiling and the inevitable changes to the first floor by the construction of the second screen, but despite these changes the essential parts of the original building remain. The stairs and the auditorium

itself are also of interest.

The Picturedrome is unusual as a building, originating as assembly rooms in 1886 and retaining its original character through successive changes in entertainment function. These changes, which enabled it to have a long life as a cinema, have not substantially compromised the original appearance and character of the building. The Picturedrome is, in addition, a landmark building in Bognor Regis having group value with the Grade II Railway Station diagonally opposite. It is also notable as exemplifying an entertainment building in a traditional seaside townscape.

SOURCES

Picture Palaces, New Life for Old Cinemas - English Heritage 2000

Conclusion: The Picturedrome meets the criteria and should be listed at Grade II.

Reasons For Designation Decision:

The Picturedrome is recommended for designation at Grade II, for the following principal reasons:

- * It is an unusual example of an early cinema, derived from an assembly hall of 1886, which has retained its original architectural character.
- * The bold massing and facade details largely survive, including the stylish Victorian canopy.
- * The interior has good survival of the principal areas, including auditorium and staircase.
- * There are special features such as the coloured glass Picturedrome sign, the external projection room, the boxes flanking the 1911 proscenium and the unusual survival of an early pay desk both dating to 1919.
- * It is also notable as exemplifying an entertainment building in a traditional seaside townscape.

VISITS

19-DEC-2008 Full inspection

The interior of Rick's Cafe was not inspected at the time of the visit. Information about the survival of original interior fabric in the cafe is from the cinema manager. The cinema was visited with the manager who was believed to have been the manager for the owner, but subsequently was found to have leased the building. It was also thought that he had notified the owner about the inspection, but this may not have been the case, so Heritage Protection subsequently notified the owners.

COUNTERSIGNING

First Countersigning Adviser: Ms P Trevor

Comments: Agreed. An unusual cinema, using an adapted assembly hall. 2 June 2009

Second Countersigning Adviser: Ms E Gee

Comments: Agreed, also. This landmark building has considerable presence as an entertainment hall in this seaside town, and has claims to interest for both its assembly hall and early cinema functions, all for which it merits listing at Grade II. 5 June 2009

HP Director:

Comments:

Proposed List Entry

BOGNOR REGIS

CANADA GROVE
Picturedrome

15-JUL-2009

II

Case UID: 166521

Proposed LBS UID: 505528

Cinema, originally built as community assembly rooms in 1886, and used for various local functions and entertainment; converted to full cinema use in 1919. Two storey brick building with gabled tile roof and prominent octagonal tower on the facade. It was designed by a local architect Arthur Smith.

MATERIALS: Red brick laid in Flemish Bond; rough cement rendering to first floor side bays, middle section of octagonal tower and to external projection room at the south end of the building. Iron columns and decorative braces support the front glass canopy. Tiled roofs.

PLAN: The plan of the building is based around the auditorium. An entrance at the east side of the building opens to a foyer with a pay desk and refreshment kiosk. To the south side of the foyer are offices and to the north, stairs. The first floor was previously accessed by a separate door to the side of the main entrance, and the stairs were separated from the foyer by a wall making a completely separate access to the first floor. The entrance from the foyer is in the east wall of the auditorium, which is aligned north-south with the proscenium of 1911 at the north end. On the west wall is a room with a

fireplace which appears to have been an earlier dressing room, and in the south east corner of the auditorium is an exit which leads to the exterior via the 1919 pay box. The first floor has a smaller auditorium and the 1919 projection room.

EXTERIOR: The facade is dominated by its octagonal lantern tower with tiled roof, in which the original revolving top section is still intact, although the mechanism no longer survives. The tower has three full length, arched sash windows and forms the centre of a symmetrical facade, flanked by a two-storey brick range with balustraded parapet. The original coloured glass canopy in decorative iron scrollwork, emblazoned with the Picturedrome sign occupies the centre of the facade. Windows in the central projecting bays are small pane sashes; the lintels of those on the ground floor have shouldered flat arches and those on the first floor have round arches and a central keystone. In the side bays there are a mixture of window styles with some having been boarded over. The rear elevation has a number of accretions, some of which are later service additions, and there is an extension with catslide roof which was a dressing room. The north side elevation, the ground floor of which used to be the cinema cafe, has now been modified during use as 'Rick's Cafe'; but the first floor, which is Screen 2, has its original sash windows. At the south elevation is a plain squat tower, which was the 1911 external projection room.

INTERIOR: The interior still retains much of the original fabric; and where there are alterations they are illustrative of the development of the building. The lobby has been somewhat altered for the accommodation of a new pay desk and food kiosk, requiring the removal of a wall which divided the entrance from the stairs. The timbers of the ceiling including the boxed-in spine beams may be original, but the panel doors which lead to the auditorium and most of the other internal doors are original. The auditorium has a barrel vaulted ceiling with circular moulding dating from 1911, with supporting arches which probably date to 1954; pilasters on the wall are used to form part of the blind arcade decoration. The proscenium of 1911 survives, flanked by boxes dating to 1919 with ornate broken pediments. Similar broken pediments are set above the main entrance and exit doors, with moulded decoration on the wall above. A pay box dating to 1919 still stands at the corner of the auditorium. At the north end of the building is 'Rick's Cafe', previously the cinema cafe. There is still much original fabric here, including stairs to the first floor function room. The stairs from the foyer to the first floor are in original condition and have ornate metalwork balusters to one side. The first floor function room has been remodelled to provide an extra screen (Screen 2), but wall decoration in the form of pilasters, moulding and blind arcading is original. On the first floor there are toilets and the 1919 projection room although both updated for modern use.

HISTORY: The Picturedrome was opened in May 1886 as the New Assembly Rooms. At that time it was used for a variety of community activities including shows, dancing, roller-skating, and was also hired out to travelling film showmen. The main features of the early building were a principal ground floor hall and a smaller one on the first floor. Perhaps the most notable feature of the building is the octagonal lantern tower, which housed a revolving light which was operated by a bicycle-type mechanism (this no longer survives). In 1911 the owners, WH Lorden and Sons, lowered the ceiling to improve the acoustics and built a customised projection room on the outside of the building. The Assembly Rooms was re-named the Queens Hall and had a capacity of 700.

During the First World War it was used as a drill hall. The building was converted into a permanent cinema in 1919 by a new owner, Peter D Stoneham, who was an Eastbourne architect and business man; the cinema was then re-named the Picturedrome. Stoneham already owned another successful Picturedrome in Worthing which he had built in 1913. In conversion to a cinema a glass canopy supported on columns was installed at the entrance, the position of the screen was reversed and a new side entrance and a paybox was established in the corner of the auditorium. In addition, the floor was raised as a slope, new seats and improved ventilation were installed, four boxes were built at the rear of

the auditorium to the side of the old proscenium arch, a new projection box was built inside the original proscenium and a tea room created on the ground floor.

The Picturedrome competed with the Pier Theatre, but this situation was resolved in 1922 by both establishments becoming united, under the ownership of MW Shanly and A Carter, as the Bognor Pier Company. By 1930 both the Picturedrome and the Pier Cinema had been equipped with Western Electric Sound. Just after the Second World War control of the Picturedrome passed to the Manchester-based Buxton Theatre Circuit, and was later leased out. In April 1954 the interior of the Picturedrome was damaged by fire and, as this was the era of wide screen, it was decided to almost double the width of the proscenium arch to take a Cinemascope screen. The auditorium was redecorated and refurbished, and it is probable that the present ceiling braces date to this period.

In 1959 the Picturedrome was taken over by Drummer Theatres (Bognor Regis) Ltd, then in 1962 to John Robertson, a cinema owner from Welwyn Garden City, Hertfordshire. The cinema now had 533 seats and the small upstairs hall, which had been used for whist drives and dances, was used for bingo. When John Robertson died in 1975 the lease was inherited by his son; by 1980, now with a reduced 522 seats, the Picturedrome was the only full-time cinema left in Bognor Regis. In 1983 Robertson sold the cinema, now reduced to 472 seats, to the Cannon Classic circuit and it was soon re-named the Classic. The cinema was now modernised; a second screen was added in place of the first floor bingo hall and a new false ceiling was added here to meet the arches on the side walls. This second screen seated 96 and was opened in August 1984. Other changes were made to the main building including the restoration of the previously boarded-up tower, Dolby stereo was installed and there were plans to open the boxes to either side of the original proscenium. The old Picturedrome name was left in coloured glass on the canopy over the front entrance. In 1996 Virgin, who had taken over the Canon/MGM circuit, sold it to ABC, but in November of the same year it was acquired by Picturedrome Theatres Ltd., and reverted to its original name. Finally in 2003 it was bought by Reeltime Cinemas Ltd.

SOURCES

Picture Palaces, New Life for Old Cinemas - English Heritage 2000.

REASONS FOR DESIGNATION

The Picturedrome is designated at Grade II for the following principal reasons:

- * It is an unusual example of an early cinema, derived from an assembly hall of 1886, which has retained its original architectural character.
- * The bold massing and facade details largely survive, including a stylish Victorian canopy.
- * The interior has good survival of the principal areas, including auditorium and staircase.
- * There are special features such as the coloured glass Picturedrome sign, the external projection room, the boxes flanking the 1911 proscenium, and the unusual survival of an early pay desk both dating to 1919.
- * It is also notable as exemplifying an entertainment building in a traditional seaside townscape.

H.M. LAND REGISTRY

TITLE NUMBER

WSX 180261

ORDNANCE SURVEY
PLAN REFERENCE

SZ 9399

SECTION B

Scale
1:1250

COUNTY WEST SUSSEX

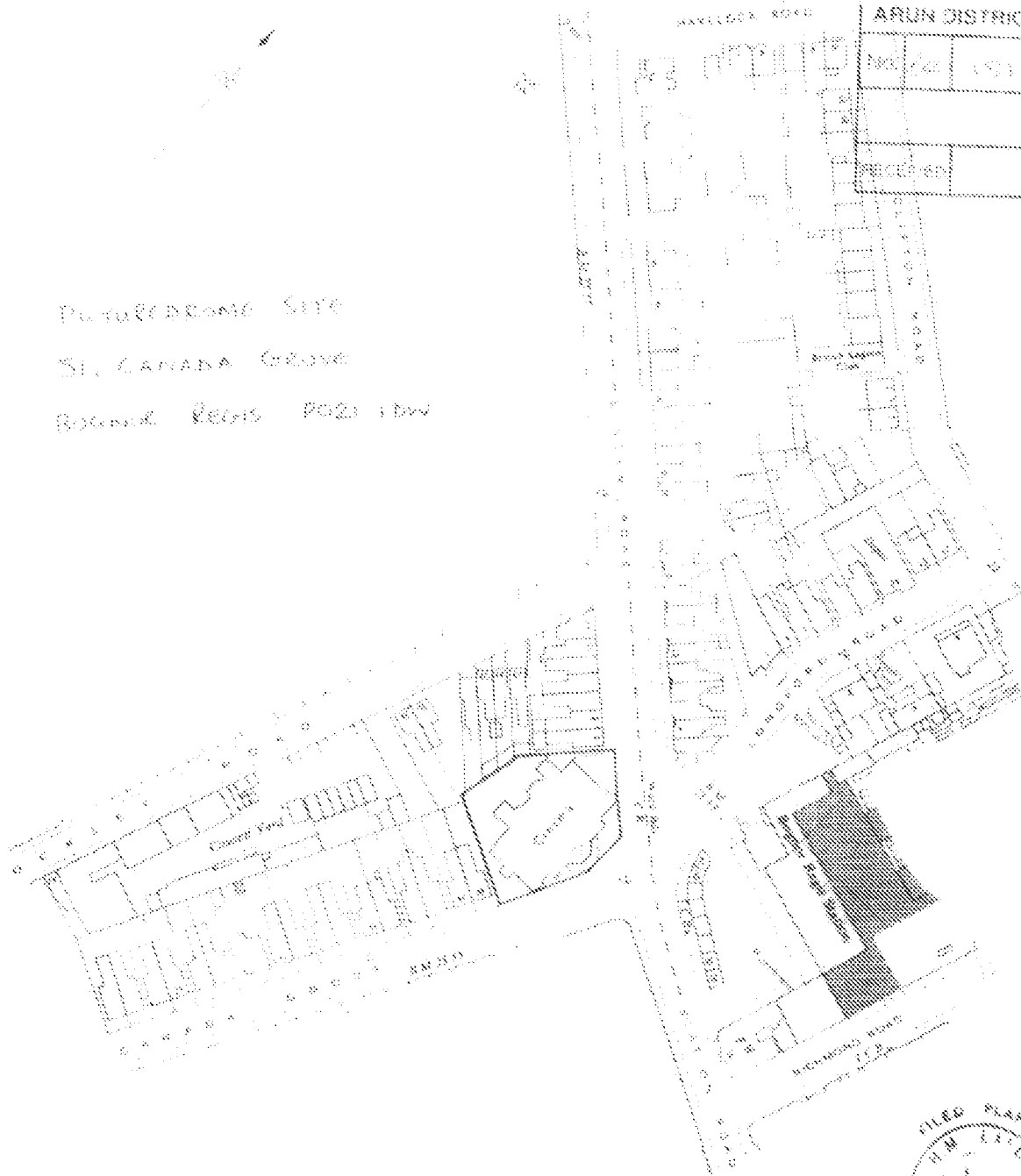
PARISH ARUN

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ARUN DISTRICT COUNCIL

NO.	22	(53)	04
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