

# CYNON VALLEY HISTORY SOCIETY

## CYMDEITHAS HANES CWM CYNON

PRESIDENT: THE LORD ABERDARE

VICE-PRESIDENTS: MRS TYDFIL THOMAS O.B.E., J.P., M.A., AND KEN COLLINS B.A.

[www.cynonvalleyhistorysociety.org](http://www.cynonvalleyhistorysociety.org)



# HANES

NEWSLETTER OF THE CYNON VALLEY HISTORY SOCIETY  
CYLCHLYTHYR CYMDEITHAS HANES CWM CYNON

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*How those curiosities would be quite forgot, did not such idle fellows as I am put them down.*  
(John Aubrey, antiquary, 1626-1697)

## THOMAS JAMES EVANS



Members of the Cynon Valley History Society will have heard with deep sadness and regret of the death, on 29 November 2011, of our Vice President, Tom Evans. They will recall him as a gentle, scholarly man with a commanding presence and a great sense of humour. He was 94 years of age.

Thomas James Evans was a native of Aberdare and although a Geography teacher by profession had a great interest

in and knowledge of the history of Aberdare, particularly its industrial past.

Tom was educated at University College of Wales, Aberystwyth (B.Sc.) and taught for most of his life at the Aberdare Boys' Grammar School where he was head of Geography.

He served as a captain in The South Wales Borders from 1941, and saw active service in the Normandy (D-Day) landings, and in engagements in France, Belgium and Holland. He was very proud of the SWB and is seen wearing the regimental tie in this photograph.

Tom was one of the founder members of the Society in 1971; he delivered the first lecture to it on April 17 1971 (*The Industrial History of Aberdare*) and led a number of the Society's summer field trips. He was Chairman on two occasions, 1974-1975 and 1985-1986, and served on its Committee almost continuously from its inception. In 2008 he was appointed Vice President of CVHS.

One of Tom's great delights in the social life of the Society were the periodic visits once made by the committee to the Red Lion at Penderyn!

Tom compiled large parts of both volumes of *Pictures From the Past*, and his valuable contributions to the written history of the Cynon Valley include a Biography and Bibliography of the Rev. R. I. Parry in *Old Aberdare*, Vol. 3 (1984), two essays in Environmental Studies in the Cynon Valley, 1984 (*The Aberdare Canal and Associated Tramroads*, and the fine *Abernant: The Growth of Industry and Settlement, 1800-1939*), and chapters in *Cynon Coal: History of a Mining*

*Valley* (2001). In June 2009 he unveiled the Blue Plaque marking the site of the Gadlys Iron Works.

Tom was active right up to the time of his death; in September he was feted at a reunion dinner of past students of his old school, the former Aberdare Boys' Grammar School, and attended the Society's fortieth anniversary celebration dinner at Aberdare College. On November the 3rd, he attended our monthly committee meeting.

He will be sorely missed by the Society, his many friends, former pupils, and admirers in all the activities with which he was associated. It may be many years before we see his like again.

The photo reproduced above shows our present Chairperson, Mrs. Celia Thomas and Tom Evans. It was taken by Colin Rees in June 2010 at the unveiling of the plaque at the site of Cwmbach colliery.

A further obituary appears on the Society's website, [www.cynonvalleyhistorysociety.org](http://www.cynonvalleyhistorysociety.org)

## **THE ANGRY GADLYS ELEPHANT.**

An extraordinary fatality was on Thursday reported to the Coroner for Aberdare. For the past two days *Bostock and Wombwell's* Menagerie has exhibited in that town. On Tuesday night the Elephant Madam Jumbo, only four inches less than the renowned Jumbo\* himself, was stabled in an enclosure at the back of the *White Lion Inn*. Some boys managed to get into this place, and proceeded to feed the elephant with biscuits etc. Others, more mischievous, gave the animal a supply of stones. This so angered it that it attempted to wreak vengeance on its tormentors. The boys however managed to escape over a wall. The elephant then turned upon an old man named David Watkins, sixty-five years old, who had been an amused spectator of the proceedings. He, unfortunately, was unable to make his escape, and the elephant seized him with its trunk, dashed him violently to the ground, and then battered him with its powerful tusks.

The cries of the man brought the keeper to the spot, but he was in turn compelled to seek safety in flight and obtain assistance. When Watkins was eventually rescued, he was found to be terribly injured, and died the same day. \*\*

*ILLUSTRATED POLICE NEWS, APRIL 17 1886.*

\* The renowned Jumbo was the legendary elephant once owned by the great showman P.T. Barnum. It was 11 feet high and gave its name to all that is large.

\*\* Mr. Watkins resided at 27 Oxford Street. The Inquest was held at the White Lion Inn, the coroner was Thomas Williams. The inquest evidence stated that the deceased was pressed against a wall by the elephant. A verdict of accidental death was recorded. A number of camels were also housed in the White Lion Yard. Ed.



## **TESCO COMMUNITY FAIR.**

On 21 August the Society had a stall at the Tesco Community Fair held on the car park fronting its Gadlys store. Tesco organized the event in order to promote the various charities and cultural organizations functioning within the Cynon Valley. The Society's stall (pictured here) attracted a large number of visitors and proved to be a useful shop-window and sales-point for CVHS. The stall was manned by John Davey, D.L.Davies, Geoff Evans and Haydn Williams. If the event is repeated in 2012 it is hoped to improve the presentation and display some sort of exhibition.

\* \* \* \* \*

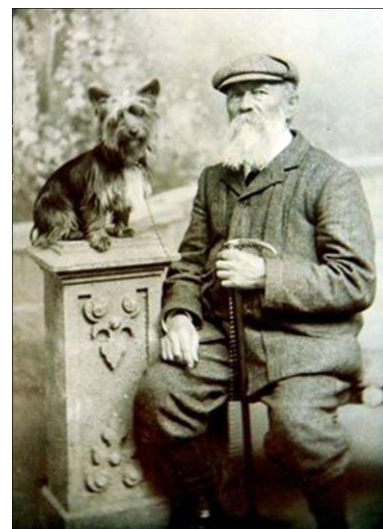
There is a persistent Buckingham dealer trying to sell a copy of *Pictures from the Past* Vol. 2 on eBay. He is asking £146. 56 for it. How does he arrive at that figure? Does anyone wish to buy

my copy? All bids, in excess of the above amount, to the editor please. All those that already have one are advised to insure their copy.

## **Some Members of the Lendon Berry Family**

The passing of Brian Lendon Berry in July last year prompted me to reflect upon other members of his family who have had an impact on the life of Aberdare and its citizens. There were two in particular who were well known in the community during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

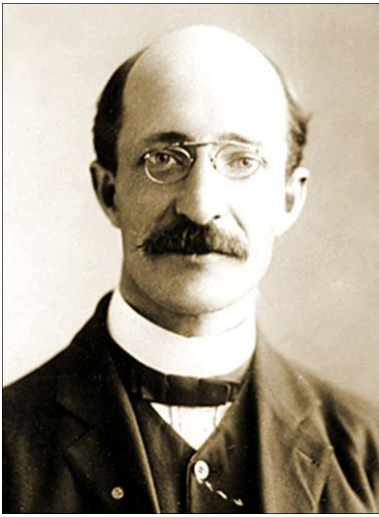
Joseph Lendon Berry (1833-1916) was born in Bideford in Devon; he was married there and spent the early years of his life working in the family business of basket-making. He came to south Wales with his wife, Harriett (née Chapple) and their two daughters in the early 1860s and lodged briefly at Trevethin near Pontypool working as a basket-maker. However, by 1870 he had moved to Aberdare and had established his business of Artistic Photographer, indeed he became almost certainly the best known of the early Aberdare photographers. Whilst carrying out his original trade of basketry, he had taught himself the art of photography and eventually became well known in the district as both a portrait and landscape photographer. He had his premises at 1 Market St up to the mid-1880s, then at 43 Cardiff St to the early 1890s, and finally at 47 Commercial St from 1895. This address, also known as The Globe Studios, remained a photographic studio, latterly known as Watson's, until around 1950. Berry also advertised a studio at 55 Oxford Street in Mountain Ash.



Photography when J. Lendon Berry was in business would have required a great deal of cumbersome apparatus. His camera would have had the dimensions of at least a 12-inch cube plus a large lens; his 'film' would have most likely been 10x8-inch glass plates that he would have sensitised himself with silver emulsion in absolute darkness. Indoor portraits would have required magnesium powder 'flash guns', and all exposures would have required the camera to be perfectly still and supported by a large wooden tripod. For his outdoor landscapes, all of this equipment would need to have been carried laboriously around the district. And in one case, to the balustrade half way up the tower of St Elvan's Church.

J.L. Berry retired in about 1896 when the business was transferred into the hands of Richard Lewis Berry one of the elder Berry's five sons, (there were also seven daughters). There is a large collection of around 400 Berry photographs in the Rhondda Cynon Tâf Online Photographic Archive. Although most are credited to J.L. Berry, it is most likely that many of the later photographs should be credited to R.L. Berry.

J. Lendon Berry died in May 1916 just one month short of his 83rd birthday, and of celebrating his diamond wedding. At the time of his death, he and his wife were living at 12 Elm Grove, the home of his son-in-law, Mr Matt Lewis. (Readers who have seen the photographs of the Lendon Berry wedding anniversary celebrations in Penderyn displayed in the RCT photographic archive should understand that they are those of the couple's golden wedding celebrations). Whilst in Aberdare he was a member of the Aberdare Naturalist Society, a special constable, and a member of the Court Foresters' Society. Apart from the business, which was left to his son, he left a sum of £1107, equivalent nowadays to about £50,000, suggesting that his business career in Aberdare had been quite successful.



**Cllr. Richard Lewis Berry**

Richard Lewis Berry (1872-1941) was not the oldest of the J L B's sons, but it was he who inherited most of his father's wealth, and indeed prospered in Aberdare and made a significant contribution to both its business and public life. He had many strings to his bow. Apart from running the Globe Studios in Commercial Street, he also sold fire protection equipment to the general public and other businesses. In 1902, he unsuccessfully attempted to gain a seat on the AUDC under the flag of the Trades and Labour Council. However, within a year or two, fighting as an Independent, he was returned as a member for the Town Ward. From that time until shortly before his death, with one or two short breaks, he sat on the Council occupying the chair, in his turn, both of the Education Committee and the Council itself. In 1903, he pioneered the Fire Brigade movement, and with two other delegates was sent to London to purchase one of the town's first motorised fire engines from Merryweather & Sons. He became Captain of the Brigade, a position that he held for many years. He was a member of Highland Place Unitarian Church, conducted its choir, played in its orchestra and occasionally occupied the pulpit there. Indeed two converted fire hose nozzles that he presented to the Church still serve as flower vases to this day. When he died in 1941, there was a large memorial service at Highland Place, conducted by Rev. E.R. Dennis, with the then young Carl Whitcombe as organist, and Capt Hugh Hughes [1], of Aberdare Fire Brigade in attendance.



**The Aberdare Fire Engine in the Park**

R.L. Berry married twice, initially to Elizabeth McEwen (1895) the daughter of J.W. McEwen, mineral water manufacturer of Clifton St, and secondly, in 1904 to Jane Elizabeth Lowe. There were three children from the first marriage and one from the second.

R.L. Berry had many siblings: one was James Berry, who for many years was a hairdresser at 13 Mill St, in Trecynon. RLB's sister, Fanny Berry (1857-1946), after marriage to W.H. Rees, a Trecynon tin worker, became the mother of Florence Rose Rees, who in turn after her marriage to Edward Davies became the well-known Glamorgan Alderman, Florence Rose Davies, CBE, JP. She was the first woman to chair the old Glamorgan County Council. Her life story is a long and distinguished one that cannot be told here, [2].



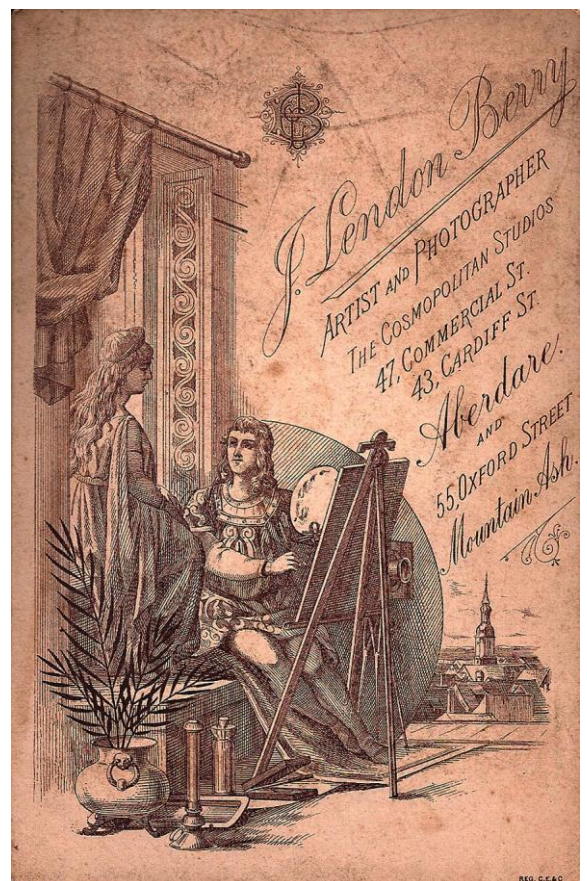
**H.L. Berry with father's fire hose**

Herbert Lendon Berry (1898-1989) was a son of R.L. Berry and Elizabeth McEwen. Known in the area as Bert, he was a colliery engineer. He worked at Cwmaman and, for a period, in the mines of South Africa. After retirement, he set up home in Surrey, where like his father before him, he remarried having lost his first wife.



**Herbert Lendon Berry**

The author was acquainted with Brian Lendon Berry (1928-2011), thought to be the last to carry the Lendon Berry names. He was one of the three sons of H.L. Berry and Glynellen (Lyn), née Protheroe. All three boys, Tony, Brian and David were educated at Park School and the 'County School' [3] in Trecynon. The family lived in Tudor Terrace. On his demobilisation from National Service Brian followed his Aunt, Rhona Protheroe, into the profession of Chiropody [4]. He spent his student days, in college in London, living with his aunt Elsie Berry in Surrey, with whom he had previously lived for a period as a small boy. Towards the end of his final year at college, Brian was able to purchase a small nucleus of a private practice in Surbiton, also in Surrey, where he stayed for almost twenty years. Also in his younger days, from 1952 until 1966, Brian served in the Territorial Army, in the 21st SAS Regiment (Artists Rifles), making nearly a hundred parachute descents. Like his grandfather, and father before him, Brian suffered the loss of his wife, and in 1973 Brian became a single parent of a young daughter. To cope with his new situation, he joined the lecturing staff at one of the two colleges teaching chiropody in London; he stayed on the lecturing team for fifteen years. In 1988, Brian took on the full-time post of Editor of the journal and Publicity Officer for the Society of Chiropodists and Podiatrists. In this latter role, he was interviewed regularly on TV and radio, and by numerous newspapers and journals, usually on his specialist topics of children's feet and footwear. In 1993 Brian was elected Honorary Vice-President of the Society in recognition of his service on Council, and a couple of years later he was presented with the Society's Meritorious Award in recognition of his service to the profession as a whole.



**Berry's Photographic Business Addresses**

Brian remarried in 1987, and has two daughters, one from each of his two marriages. His funeral service took place at the North East Surrey Crematorium on July 22nd, 2011.



**Brian Lendon Berry**

1. Capt Hugh Hughes was the father-in-law of the late Mr Tom Evans, Vice President, CVHS.
2. For those who want to know more, see Ursula Masson's biographical notes on Florence Rose Davies in the *Dictionary of Labour Biography* Vol XI, Keith Gildart, David Howell, Neville Kirk (eds), Palgrave Macmillan (2003), pp 39-47. ISBN: 0333968727.
3. The 'County School' was the name that Aberdarians often used for the selective secondary boys school that stood opposite the lower gates of Aberdare Park. After 1944, also known as the Boys' Grammar School.
4. Rhona Powell practised chiropody in a room overlooking the cenotaph in Victoria Square. The name *Lendon* derives from the maiden name of Joseph Lendon Berry's mother, who was Naomi Lendon (1803-1863) who was born and who died in Bideford.

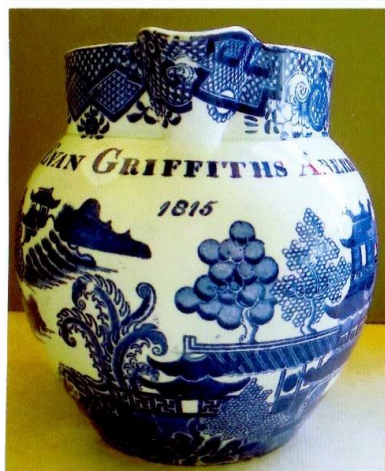
Joseph Lendon Berry (1833-1916); Richard Lewis Berry (1872-1941); Herbert Lendon Berry (1898-1989); Brian Lendon Berry (1928-2011).

*Acknowledgements: Picture of R.L.Berry by kind permission of Rhondda Cynon Tâf Libraries; J.L.Berry with dog from G.O.Evans, all others from Brian Lendon Berry.*

**Colin Rees, Winchester.**

## **"CHINOISERIE FERN" DEDICATED JUG. EVAN GRIFFITHS, 1815, ABERDARE.**

Evan Griffiths' jug is printed with the familiar 'Chinoiserie Fern' pattern and was produced by the Cambrian Pottery, Swansea. The jug is 6½ inches in height and 7½ inches in diameter from spout to handle edge. We illustrate this pattern on a variety of different pieces in our two books.



Evan Griffiths was a prominent member of the Aberdare community. He lived in Ty Mawr (The Big House) where he ran what must have been a large grocery business judging by the size of the house in later photographs. The biggest house in Aberdare, it was built by the Richards family of Blaengawr. Evan was also a draper and ironmonger who also owned a number of boats on the Glamorgan canal and acted as carrier of goods to and from Cardiff. With regard to his role as a carrier he first had to obtain wharfage on the Glamorgan canal. In 1813 on 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> of February a Lease and Release was granted from William Pitt, Lord Amhurst, Charles Viscount Whitworth by direction of Other Archer, Earl of Plymouth to Evan Griffith, Esquire *a message of 35*

*acres of land and portion of the Glamorgan canal bank.*

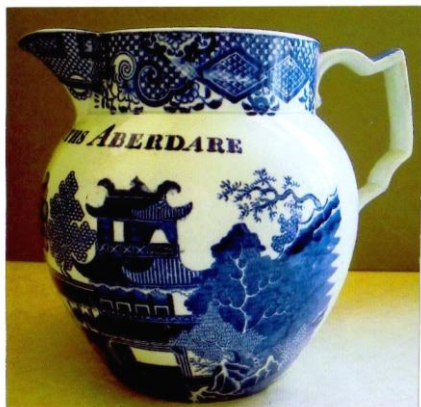
In March of 1823 Evan Griffiths re-leased the land to Richard Griffiths who then in his will dated 1824 appointed his nephews Thomas and George Thomas as his trustees (Richard died in 1826). The four main carriers including, of course, Evan Griffiths were thus given wharf space at Canal Head, Ty Draw where four 80-foot wharves were constructed. Wharf space was also granted to the four at the Pound at Cardiff Sea Lock. Unfortunately because of the economic downturn the Glamorgan Canal remained unused from 1813 to 1815.

Evan was an important member of the Calvinistic Methodist faith. Under his instigation the congregation at Pentwyn Bach chapel moved to Carmel Welsh Calvinistic Methodist chapel on the old Hirwaun Road. The chapel was built in 1829/30 especially to hold them. The eldest of Evan's sons, also named Evan, trained as an architect/surveyor and planned and built Trinity Calvinistic Methodist chapel in Weatheral/Canon Street, Aberdare in 1867. The chapel is now Grade 2 listed.

Evan Griffiths was involved also in the development of the British School in Aberdare. After a meeting at Siloa chapel on February 23<sup>rd</sup> 1848, the nonconformist community in Aberdare elected a committee to formulate plans for a British School. The Chair of the committee was Alaw Goch [David Williams], John Jones (druggist) was his deputy, and the secretary was Dr. Thomas Price of Penpound. Also involved were the Rev. William Edwards of Ebenezer Welsh Congregational Church, Trecynon, David Price of Siloa Chapel, Joshua Thomas of Saron, Aberaman, and the Calvinistic Methodist leader Evan Griffiths of Ty Mawr.

The Committee acquired a site from the Marquis of Bute who was Lord of the Manor of Misken where the common was situated. Subscriptions were given by Henry Austin Bruce (later Lord Aberdare), Richard Fothergill, Thomas Wayne of the Gadlys ironworks, Dr. J Lewis Roberts of Gadlys Uchaf. Alaw Goch's will benefited the fund by £100, and £120 was collected from the ironworkers, miners and colliers. Evan Griffiths's son Evan Jnr. drew up the plans for the school, and within seven months at a total cost of £530.00, the first Aberdare British School was ready.

What else do we know about Evan Griffiths? The 1841 census tells us that he was born in 1786 and that his wife Ann was born in 1791. The two sons still living at home were William, born in 1821 and Lewis who was born in 1826. The 1851 census gives a little more information, Evan was a greengrocer and was born in Llanwonno; Ann was born in Gelligaer. The eldest son then at home was Thomas who was a millwright. Also at home was Lewis who was a grocer. Both were born in Aberdare. In the 1861 census we find Evan Griffiths Jnr. He was 36 and an architect and surveyor. His wife Mary was aged 34 and their two children were Anne aged 8 and Sarah aged 6. According to *Slater's Commercial Directory* of 1858-1859, Lewis Griffiths was a grocer in High Street, Aberdare; William Griffiths was an ironmonger also in High Street, Aberdare.



Detailed research has not uncovered any reason for the presentation of the jug to Evan Griffiths in the year 1815.

After the Griffiths' time at Ty Mawr, it became a surgery for the practice of *Banks, Banks and Ogilvie*. It was prophetic then that when Ty Mawr was demolished in the 1970s the site was used for the construction of Aberdare Health Centre.

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[www.rhondda-cynon-taff.gov.uk](http://www.rhondda-cynon-taff.gov.uk)

[www.cynonvalleyhistorysociety.org](http://www.cynonvalleyhistorysociety.org)

**Arleen and Grahame Tanner, Ipswich.**

Editor's Notes.

Ty Mawr was built around 1775 by Richard Richards, the son of Theophilus Richards 'Eminent Drover' of Blaengwawr Farm, Aberdare.

The house was also the residence/surgery of another surgeon, Evan Thomas. Its last owner was Douglas Fowler, a chiropodist.

Evan Griffiths Jnr. also designed the Temperance Hall (Palladium). Trinity chapel closed in 2010.

The Anne Griffiths referred to above in 1861 was to marry The Rev. Rees Jenkin Jones of Hen Dŷ Cwrdd (See *The Land Your Fathers Possessed*, Cynon Valley History Society, 2011)



### **Meet the new Committee.**

The Committee members elected to run the Society during its 2011-2012 season are:

Mrs. Celia Thomas (Chair), Alan Abraham, Elfed Bowen, Ken Collins, David Leslie Davies, John Davey (Treasurer), Geoff Evans, Alan Vernon Jones, Mrs Elaine Lewis, Jeremy Morgan, Hywel Vaughan and Haydn Williams.

It is a pleasure to welcome Mrs Celia Thomas as our current

Chairperson. She is only the second lady to take the chair in forty years, the other being Mrs. Anne Jones (1983-4). We are also delighted to see two new faces on the committee, those of Mrs. Elaine Lewis and Mr. Jeremy Morgan. Jeremy lives in Mountain Ash and it is appropriate that the lower part of the valley is now represented on the Committee.

### **FOR WHOM THE BELL TOLLS.**

WANTED, a good clear-sounding second-hand Bell for a School Turret - Applications stating price, diameter at mouth of bell & ct. To be made to the Secretary, National School, Cwmbach, Aberdare. Advertisement: *Western Mail*. August 26 1874.

### **OLD PUBS.**

LAMB INN, 10 Dare Court. *A notorious house*. Licensees: 1844 Margaret Evans, 1861 Charles Wakefield; 1862, Sarah Wakefield summoned for harbouring prostitutes (case dismissed). 1864 Sarah Wakefield's licence renewed. Closed September 23 1865 for illegal hours, later became a Salvation Army barracks. Demolished 1958. (With thanks to E.J.K.R.)

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[www.cynonvalleyhistorysociety.org](http://www.cynonvalleyhistorysociety.org)

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