

A Romsey Alphabet N-T

N **Nettles** They grow six feet high along the canal. I met Dr Livingstone there once.

Night It fell on Toot Hill on Eclipse Day. Adults, children and dogs shared a grassy bed and no one snored.

Nooks The abbey is full of them. Peace, prayer and shadows

O **Opal** The one in the window that I've coveted for nine years. It looks back at me with a dozen fiery eyes and a big price ticket.

Organ The mighty music maker that holds us spellbound in the abbey.

Outbreak 'Flu. We've all had it. Romsey is a friendly town.

P **Palmerston** Lord. I daren't leave him out. He's too big.

Pavements Either too narrow, too slippery or V shaped. They'll get you in the end.

Poetry On the pavements. A nice idea but hard to read upside down with a bunch of shoppers hard on your heels.

Q **Quarrelling** My favourite duck on the river. She's always hard at it.

Quilters Sewing our dreams.

Quorn On the shop shelves. Does anyone really eat it?

R **RAODS** All Raods lead to Roads ????

Renaissance The elegant seat in the Cornmarket brings a touch.



Q... sewing our dreams?

comedy, music, dancing and circus skills. If you would like to be involved in any way in this pageant to be performed in Romsey Abbey 24-27 May, come along to the public meeting in the Abbey Hotel, Sunday 26 September, at 3 pm

Rivalry Seen in all its raw savagery in car parks where we wait, eyes glinting, accelerators at the ready.

S **Salmon** Where do they leap now? Not here anymore.

Siege It descends on Bank Holidays when shoppers are convinced that all food will disappear for ever unless they buy it first.

Swans The ones that stitch up the sky in perfect seams with soft wingbeats.

T **Taverns** Clustered around the churches. Is it 'drink and be good' or vice-versa?

Time It touches Romsey with light fingers. Things happen but they take a long time.

Trout Masters of camouflage, they lie lazy but watchful in the TEST. Menus on the hoof (or is it fin)?

Angela Sewell

Angela has written THE CIRCUS OF TIME an ambitious entertainment in 21 scenes covering significant events of the past two thousand years. The show will include drama,

or contact Peter Minns on 1794 524390. All profits will go to the Romsey Hospital Appeal.

Millennium Mosaic

The next issue of this news sheet is due before Christmas. We would like to include in it a page or two in which as many members as possible describe their hopes, fears, resolutions, predictions, prayers etc. for the next millennium.

We therefore invite all members to write very briefly e.g. maximum fifty words in prose or verse or in any other way to comment on the future; you might like, for instance, to send a drawing, cartoon or photograph. You need not limit yourself in any way (my own contribution will probably be about world peace and the price of whisky) and your ideas need not have anything to do with Romsey or RDS. Contributions will appear above the initials of the writers so please use the form in the colour section to send your thoughts to the editor before 1st November.

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Annual Programme September 1999-July 2000

All members should receive a diary card with this issue of the news sheet. It lists officers and committee chairs with their telephone numbers, members of the E.C., and gives basic details of our very full social programme.

In the last few years nearly all our events have been very well supported but with more than eight hundred members we naturally worry that we are not reaching everybody.

We earnestly invite all members to feel that they are part of the society and to be assured that they will be given a warm welcome at any of the events described. Those who do attend really enjoy the conviviality and the quality of the programmes. I always worry when I say that we will welcome you; in practice, most of us are shyer than we might seem and I am sure that there are people who have attended our events and felt isolated. But we do our best and, with your help, will continue to develop our social skills!

Talks at King Johns House

Our programme of talks begins on 27 September when Max Buckmaster, last year's mayor, supported by his mayoress, Ruth, will tell us about his entertaining and controversial year in office.

This is the first of ten talks, all on Mondays at 8 pm, and mostly in King Johns House.

Other topics range from Broadlands to Japan and include architecture, landscape, science, obituaries, the Bloomsbury Group, local shops, and King Arthur. There should be something for everyone in this selection.

The Annual Lecture has become something of a local milestone. This year it is on Wednesday 26 April in the Council Chamber when Sir George Young will talk on Planning.

Poetry

There will be five poetry evenings this year, always on Fridays at 8pm in KJH. These have been very well attended lately. They are very accessible evenings with a good interval to meet friends.

Walks

Walks are usually organised for Sunday mornings. We try to advertise full details about a week before in the Romsey Advertiser but there is a contact number for each one. The misnamed Annual Walk involves a coach trip and is always in May.

Cycle Rides

It is worth overhauling that old bicycle to join one of Bill Gidley's summer cycling outings. Two Sundays in May and June have so far been set aside for these, but Bill is easily persuaded to add more during the year. Incidentally, Bill is always looking for new members for his committee; see phone number on back of diary card.

Coach Trips

Our summer coach trips are always much enjoyed. This year we have four: to Marwell House and Grounds (possibly by car!); to Hungerford for a canal trip; to Charles Darwin's House; and to Charleston, the home of Vanessa Bell and Duncan Grant, a trip planned as a follow-up to the talk on the Bloomsbury Group.

This does not include our most ambitious trip of the year, a long weekend in Chartres. This was trailed in our last issue and filled up very quickly as a result so Brian has asked us to omit it from the diary card as too many disappointed people have been ringing!

Evenings of Good Cheer

Make a point of joining us for our Millennium Party in the Council Chamber on the night of December 31st; our wine tasting evening in February; our Annual Dinner in May (Thai food this year) and our Garden Party in July (date not yet fixed as it is hoped to coincide with the completion of the Medwell Court at King Johns House).

Celebrations

Two one-off events this year are the unveiling of a plaque in the Cornmarket to commemorate an unusual cycling record more than a century ago (see page 13), and our involvement in Test Valley's Millennium Relay on Saturday 6 May. This event will certainly attract a lot of publicity locally so look out for details or consider offering to take part.

Annual General Meetings

Don't forget the two hardy annuals! The Building Preservation Trust AGM is at the Plaza in November and will be addressed by Frank Green on a heritage topic. In February the RDS AGM gives all members a chance to hear reports on progress in Planning, Environment, Townscape and all the other concerns of our Society. Come along and make your views known.

Jumble

Finally, don't forget our Jumble Sale in March, a good date to provide a use for the stuff you clear out during the spring.

Something for Everyone?

If nothing appeals to you in our programme, please let us know. We often add to the programme during the year and we are always on the lookout for ideas and, especially, for offers from members to give talks, run coach trips etc. Whatever our faults, this really is a society run by and for its members.

What's in a Name?

Several members have suggested that the name of this 'magazine' is no longer very suitable. We have reached our 70th issue and over that time we have changed from a single sheet to a sixteen-page format. It begins perhaps to sound ridiculous to talk of *our news sheet*, and even more so to refer to our *newsheet* (a word my dictionary does not recognise). Perhaps the new millennium would be a good time to adopt a new title.

What do you think? Have you any suggestions for a name for this publication? Or are you fond of the present one?

While we're about it, have you any thoughts about the contents of the magazine? What would you like to see in it? What doesn't interest you? What changes would you make?

All ideas gratefully received. Please use the section of the coloured insert to pass on your thoughts.

Incidentally, the editor's set of back issues is nearly complete. Thanks to Betty Burnett and John Lewis again, I now need only numbers 1, 2 and 13 to have a complete set and I am on my way to a second set; so if you have any back numbers you were thinking of clearing out, I should be pleased to hear from you.

Tony Benson



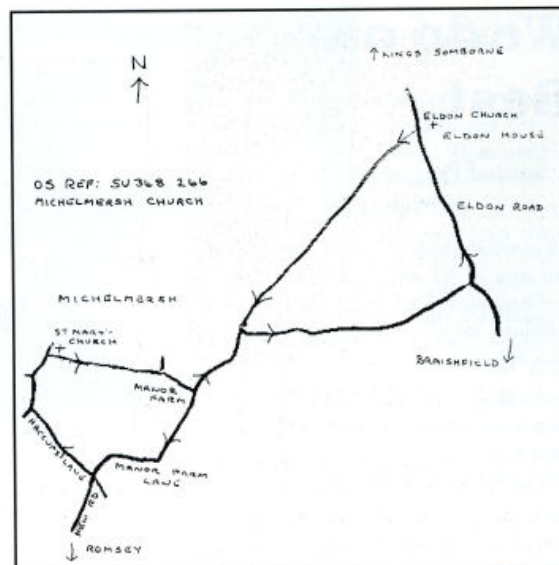
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We have now opened 'Annie's', the place to meet for morning coffee, light lunches and afternoon teas.
Please ring for opening times.

You'll find us off the A3057 Romsey/Stockbridge Road, 3½ miles north of Romsey, turning opposite 'Bear & Rugged Staff' Pub. Conveniently close to Mottisfont Rose Garden.

Walk from Michelmersh Church to Eldon Church



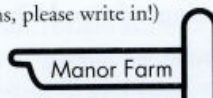
Distance: 4 miles approx.
Time 1³/₄ - 2 hours

Going: Cross country - walking boots & compass advised

Starting from Michelmersh Church (where there is room to park your car) head east through the churchyard. Go through the double gates in the fence which is there to contain the sheep who regularly graze among the headstones. Some of the newer graves are individually fenced to prevent the animals from eating the flowers. Walk straight through to leave the churchyard by the kissing gate in the eastern fence.

Continue across the field towards the stile in the left hand corner ahead of you. On your left is Michelmersh Court, a Grade II* Listed Building and the former rectory, built in the 18th century.

Crossing the stile into a copse, notice the large chunk of stone which forms a firm base for your feet. How did it get there in this landscape of chalk and flint? (The stile bears a marker "SES Endurance". If you know what this means, please write in!)

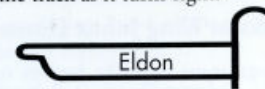


Very soon another stile leads you into a large field and the path takes a straight line across to the left of the bungalow at Michelmersh Manor Farm. The fingerpost in the middle of the field is the only clue that remains of the old hedge removed for the greater efficiency of the sheep and dairy farm.


From the stile a narrow path leads you to a stoney track: keep straight on past the farm buildings (there are usually beautiful young calves to be seen or, in the early spring, ewes with their lambs) then turn left at the junction with a wide, rough track between hedges. A

fingerpost is labelled *Monarch's Way*.

Continue to follow the track, ignoring a stile on your right where a fingerpost points to a footpath across the fields. In a short distance, you will see ahead of you a field gate and a stile with another signpost which marks the beginning of a footpath across the field. Stay with the track as it turns right.



This ancient track is known as Parnell Lane and after little more than a mile it joins a country lane called Eldon Road (leading from Braishfield to Kings Somborne). At this point, turn left and follow this lane for about half a mile to Eldon House, in the grounds of which is the ancient Eldon Church, in the care of the Churches Conservation Trust but still a consecrated building.



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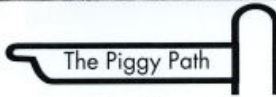
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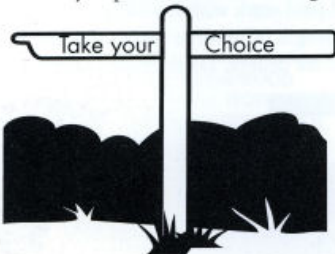


On the opposite side of the road from Eldon Church follow the fingerpost pointing across the field. This is known to my family as "the Piggy Path" because the fields on either side were once full of the pigs which produced Eldon Blue pork until government regulations made it uneconomic.

The line of this path forms a direct connection between Winchester and Michelmersh Manor Farm, once a monastery. If it is hard to see the way ahead, keep in mind that it takes an almost dead straight line on a bearing of 225 (i.e. due SW) Look for a gap in the trees against the sky: below this is the gas pipeline and the gate into the wood is about 50 yards to the left of the gap.

Enter Stubbs Copse, following the path to the next stile, where you emerge onto a narrow field which you cross to enter a short peninsula of woodland.

Leaving the wood, the path across the field can sometimes be difficult to tread, depending upon the time of year and which crop is being grown. Head for the tip of a group of trees jutting out into the field. Once there, aim for the corner of the woods ahead on the right, and then look for the gateway at the junction with Parnell Lane which you passed about an hour ago.



Back at the farm lane, you have the choice of retracing your steps across the field to the church or taking the lane to the village, turning right into Haccups Lane and following the road to the church at the top of the hill (about half a mile).

Look out for the duck sign and the *trompe l'oeil* window at Hillside Cottage.

Mary Lees

The Chairman of The Romsey & District Society
requests the pleasure of the company of
All Members
at the Cornmarket, Romsey
on Saturday 20th November 1999 at
A Ceremony to Unveil a Plaque to Commemorate the Cycling World
Record achieved on 2nd September 1891 by Bartram Waller Attlee
The plaque will be unveiled at about 12 noon
From 11 am until 1 pm there will be a
Display of Veteran Cycles and Cycling
by members of the Solent Veteran Bicycle and Tricycle Club

On 2nd September 1891 on the Herne Hill Track, Bartram Waller Attlee rode a pennyfarthing bicycle 21 miles and 180 yards in one hour. This was a world record at the time and perhaps of all early cycling records the most competitive. It has been suggested that this record was later broken, but B.W. Attlee himself pointed out that his successful attempt was made on a machine with solid tyres which, as he wrote later, made it "seem unlikely that these figures will ever be beaten."

The President of The Romsey & District Society, Dr Peter Johnson, saw a splendid example of a pennyfarthing on exhibition at the Grampian Transport Museum near Balmoral. With the exhibit went the following explanation:

"56 inch Beeston Humber Racing Ordinary. On identical machines, except in the matter of height, the one mile and one hour 'ordinary' records were made - these are still unbroken". The notice goes on to describe B.W. Attlee's record.

Though not a native of Romsey, B.W. Attlee could be described an adopted son. He settled here to practise as a solicitor. He was an outstanding athlete whose achievements included riding a pennyfarthing from John O'Groats to Lands End.

One of his machines is on exhibition in King John's House and the world record machine is thought to be in the Coventry Museum of Transport.

Romsey & District Society with the support of Romsey Town Council and with permission from Barclays Bank has commissioned from Roderick Hoyle a plaque to commemorate B.W. Attlee's achievement. The plaque also confirms the Society's support and encouragement for safer cycling in and around Romsey.

The plaque reads:

Romsey & District Society
At Herne Hill, London, on 2nd
September 1891
BARTRAM WALLER ATTLEE
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Saved from Decay

The Michelmersh Barns owned by Old Michelmersh Farm Trust

Michelmersh is a very old village, its history as a settlement probably extending back long before the Romans came to England. One account identifies the track past the church, then becoming Staff Road, past the Bear and Ragged Staff Inn, and over Dean Hill and Pepper Box Hill, as being an ancient trackway to the west country some three thousand years ago. It is not difficult to appreciate the advantages Michelmersh has enjoyed from its situation above the Test Valley at a point where

destruction at a staggering rate. In a contemporary newspaper it was estimated that of 40,000 small farmyard complexes three quarters would disappear within a decade. This has subsequently proved true, though since that time some of the survivors have been rescued by house conversions and by government encouragement for alternative uses.

Old Michelmersh Farm comprises five buildings, four being sited on three sides of a yard, with the fifth, a granary on staddle stones, located in a field close by.

The buildings are of varying age and construction, dating back up to 200 years. The largest, known as the Long Barn, is 150 feet in length with a height in proportion, and this occupies the rear edge of the farmyard. On one side is a two storey brick ex-milking parlour, and opposite is another barn on staddles and a stable block.

Taking account of the site and the nature of the farm buildings, in particular the superb Long Barn, it was strongly felt that the scale and appearance of any domestic conversion would be both inappropriate and a wasted opportunity. The location, with access only via narrow country lanes, militated against types of activity involving a substantial increase in traffic. Conversely there was, (and remains), a valid case for providing suitable employment within village communities, to redress the losses over many years due to the contraction of farm employment and all the related supporting trades which maintained the traditional structure of village life. After many decades of decline, of the loss of the indigenous inhabitants due to housing costs and the lack of well-paid local work, of the

MICHELMERSH
BARN &
GRANARY

loss of most village facilities, shops and schools, there is now an increasing number of up-market activities for which a rural location is both suitable and attractive. Many of these are based on modern communications and the use of computers, but included are all those traditional crafts which rely on the skills of individual craftsmen.

Over the past twenty one years the aim of the Old Michelmersh Farm Trust has thus included the preservation of its buildings, their use for village functions, and the provision of some suitable and profitable activities as a means to support the enterprise. So far it has been successful to the extent that each year the Long Barn is used for social functions of various types. The number is limited to minimise disturbance to the neighbours, but has included many barn dances and parties, several wedding receptions, annual harvest suppers and carol concerts, talks and village meetings, and in 1985 it was the centre for six weeks of our Millennium celebrations, based on the anniversary of our 985 AD Charter from King Ethelred. As in other cases Michelmersh often leads the way.

Three business activities at present help to support the finances of the Trust: an electronic laboratory, a printing shop and a traditional violin maker. Each of these goes some way to meeting the Trust's objectives of providing well paid work within a village, of reducing the length of travel to work. The location is also, we believe, rather more inspiring than

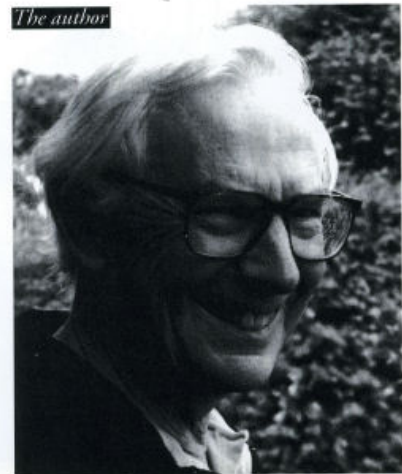


A view through the barns

the resources of chalk, sand, clay and gravel, timber and a plentiful water supply, co-exist. Its Norman church, St. Mary's, occupying the highest ground, and Old Michelmersh Farm close by, have most probably kept company over many centuries.

As happened to so many of our farms during the late 1960s and 70s, the farm buildings here were becoming sadly neglected, as their relevance to modern farming practice reduced. In 1978, following a change of ownership, the opportunity arose for saving these barns from further decay by the establishment of a non-profit Trust, with the objectives of preserving the buildings and making them available for the benefit of the local community. At that time both 'stately homes' and farm buildings were suffering

The author



ROMSEY & DISTRICT SOCIETY NEWS



Preparing for the annual picnic

the average industrial estate. The Trust was established as a 'Company Limited by Guarantee' and can engage in any of the activities of a limited company with the one restriction that the directors cannot receive any remuneration, other than expenses. It is not registered as a charity partly because of the associated restrictions including the limitation that the creation and facilitation of jobs is not regarded as a charitable activity.

The Trust possesses significant assets in its buildings together with two acres of land and these assets cannot be disposed of with any pecuniary advantage to its governors. In the event of a sale the proceeds after deduction of outstanding liabilities would pass to some similar Trust elsewhere in the country. Its Articles of Association define its purpose as the promotion of the interests of the residents of Michelmersh and Timsbury. The long term survival of the Trust will thus depend on the availability of persons willing to manage it in the future.

Tony Roberts

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ROMSEY & DISTRICT SOCIETY NEWS

Parish Appraisal

Two years ago, Michelmersh Parish Council embarked on an Appraisal to discover facts and opinions about the parish as perceived by its inhabitants.

Village Appraisal software from Gloucestershire Rural Community Council was used and a number of the questions available in the program were selected and adapted to local issues where needed. The resulting questionnaire, with 55 multiple choice questions, was a daunting document but 192 of a possible 223 households completed and returned the survey forms. This was achieved by a personal approach from all the parish councillors, who distributed and collected them

Each form provided columns for every member of the household to record their answers and thus resulted in responses from a wide age group.

Funding from Rural Action for the Environment covered the costs of the survey but much voluntary effort went into the design of the questionnaire and into the processing of the data. The completed survey was published in May 1998 and now provides valuable statistics upon which the Council can base its discussions and decisions. Every household received a copy of the results and many have expressed interest in the findings. Furthermore, many copies were requested by other parishes.

The survey revealed that 21% of the population were 16 and under; over 63% of the population have lived in the parish for less than 15 years. Surprisingly in this commuter age, 37% of all men aged 21 to 65 years work within the parish.

Opinions on a controversial industrial site in the village will be helpful to the Council when considering proposed new development at the former Redlands Tileworks..

A number of new ventures such as a Walking Group and a monthly Lunch Club have resulted from the Appraisal to add to the existing organisations in the parish. Existing organisations also received a boost from the

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public meeting which followed the publication of the survey.

The concept of the village appraisal was first recognised about 15 years ago and a large number of parishes have produced one. Taking stock of your village and its population is an interesting exercise in itself and proves a helpful tool for the parish council and other organisations when considering social, planning and employment issues for the future.

More information on Village Appraisals can be obtained from Mrs Anne Vie, Clerk to Michelmersh Parish Council (01794 368300)

Mary Lees

Local Place Names

Sadler's Mill

There are no definite clues to the name; over the centuries it has been called Sparshott, Spurshott, Spurshot, Sadlers and Burts.

In the Hearth Tax Returns of 1665, two properties are recorded for the parish of Spursholt. One of these was in the possession of Richard Sadler. Perhaps he was the miller at that time, giving his name to the mill as the Burt family did in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

The other time the name Sadler is mentioned in connection with Romsey mills is in 1573 when the owner of the mill has trouble with his milling neighbours. He petitioned the Rt Hon. Sir Raphe Sadler, Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, claiming interference with the water supply to his mill.

The name does not appear in legal documents until the eighteenth century.

Pat Genge

Does anyone have any further information?
(Ed.)

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Planning Interests

Do you have an interest in planning? Is there a planning decision about which you have a view?

Our Planning Committee is there for you. Get in touch with any member to put your ideas across. Members are:

Neill Beasley	John Burgess
Paul Gardner	Diane Hargreaves
Don Hargreaves (convenor)	
Geoff Morris	Mike Richardson
Gill Roberts	Tony Roberts
Romano Roverato	

Meetings are normally held on the second Thursday of the month at Norfolk House, The Crescent. Don can be contacted on: 01794 512315



Sutton Place

Catharine and Val (2nd & 3rd from left) with Masie, Sylvia & Mary in Sutton Place Garden

The Society's visit to Sutton Place was a dream of a day out. Don Hargreaves who, with Diane, so ably organised the outing, gave an introduction, followed by Head Gardener, John Humphries, who told us about the history of the estate. After this welcome, which had included coffee, we split into two smaller groups to tour house and gardens.

We gathered outside on the site where once had stood a turreted gatehouse. We surveyed the frontage of this symmetrical, Tudor style mansion. Our helpful guide pointed out the elaborate use of Renaissance style terracotta work incorporated both in the ornate brickwork and in the embellished tiles. But how, after all these centuries, had the Tudor style front been so well preserved? The estate had been granted to Richard Weston by Henry VIII and was to remain the Weston family home until 1857. Diminishing wealth and political prestige of the family provided the answer; little money was available for updating and improving the house. Also, a fire in 1560 gutted much of the interior.

Since 1857 it has been occupied by a succession of wealthy lessees or owners, such as J Paul Getty.

Little of the original interior remains but major restoration work has been sympathetic. The great variety and opulent appearance - corridors, galleries and a Great Hall - demonstrate differing materials, styles and techniques to display paintings and various works of art. The house is now used as an art gallery to display the collection of the American owners, the Sutton Place Foundation.

On our meanderings around the grounds we gloried in the number and variety of displays comprising 15 inter-connecting gardens. Clipped yew hedges and topiary being a recurring theme integrating the Tudor garden with the modern. Climbing to the Gloriette containing wall paintings by a modern artist emphasised to us this harmonisation. We admired the urns acquired from the Mentmore sale which are now part of the Surreal garden and the many giant trees, notably plane and cedar. Eventually, after passing the lily moat we entered the original Tudor walled garden containing an ancient mulberry tree.

Throughout we were overwhelmed by the subtle use of colour and form to make for a very memorable visit.

After refreshing tea, back by Buddens coach on the scenic route for the end of a marvellous day.

Catharine Wall

Val Selby

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