



*Vale and Downland Museum – Local History Series*

## ***Robert Loyd-Lindsay Lord Wantage of Lockinge***

**by The Staff of the Dept. of Leisure & Arts, Oxfordshire County Council and John Lange (former Curator of the Vale and Downland Museum)**



**Lord Wantage**

### **Introduction**

This page contains the text of a booklet prepared by staff in the Department of Leisure and Arts, of Oxfordshire County Council, at the suggestion of Councilor John Jones whilst Chairman of Oxfordshire County Council, and by John Lange, former Curator of The Vale and Downland Museum, Wantage. The research and printing was jointly funded by Oxfordshire County Council and The Vale and Downland Museum Trust.

### **Lord Wantage: Key dates in his life**

<b>1832</b>	16th April: born Robert James Lindsay at Balcarres, Scotland, the youngest child of General James and Anne (nee Trotter) Lindsay.
<b>1838</b>	The family spent several years in France and Italy before "Bob" Lindsay entered Eton.
<b>1850</b>	After early thoughts of entering the East India Company's Civil Service, Robert Lindsay at 18 took up the offer of a commission in the Scots Fusilier Guards.
<b>1851-2</b>	Winter spent with his family in Rome and Naples, where they befriended Lord and Lady Overstone and their daughter, Harriet (then 14), his future wife.
<b>1854</b>	1 March: departed with the Scots Guards for the Crimea, as part of the Anglo-French expedition.
<b>1854</b>	15 June: at Varna, seriously ill with dysentery but recuperated by the sea. 14 September: landed in the Crimea and three days later the battle of Alma was

	fought. Robert Lindsay saved a potential defeat with another colour-bearer, Thistlethwayte, and succeeded in rallying the Scots Guards to ensure victory. October: Battle of Balaclava and the Charge of the Light Brigade. November: fought in the Battle of Inkerman.
<b>1855</b>	March: Aide-de-camp to General Simpson. August: Adjutant of Scots Fusilier Guards. September: fall of Sebastopol. December: General James Lindsay died at Genoa.
<b>1856</b>	January: Robert joined his mother at Florence. 14 March: Armistice signed with Russians. 30 March: Treaty of Paris signed ending the war. 11 June: Robert left the Crimea.
<b>1857</b>	14 February: citation in London Gazette for the newly formed order, the Victoria Cross. Conferred on him for two separate acts of valour, at Alma and Inkerman. 27 June: received the VC from Queen Victoria.
1858-9	Selected by the Prince Consort to be Equerry to the Prince of Wales in his newly formed household.
1858	17 November: married to Harriet, daughter of Lord and Lady Overstone. Assumed the name Loyd-Lindsay by royal licence, and took the arms of the Loyd family.
1859	Left the army at the age of 27 with the rank of Lieutenant-Colonel. Settled at Lockinge. Pioneer in the Volunteer Movement, originating in the fear of a French invasion of England. Colonel Commanding of the Berkshire regiment.
1860	The model village at East Lockinge built.
1865	Elected as one of three Conservative MPs for Berkshire, at the head of the poll with 2,227 votes.
1866	Colonel of the Honourable Artillery Company at the request of the Prince of Wales.
1867	Sir Joseph Boehm, R.A., a prolific sculptor in Victorian society who had settled in England, in 1862, from Vienna, was commissioned to sculpt a bust of Colonel Loyd-Lindsay.
1868	Re-elected to Parliament in the General Election.
1869	Bust of Colonel Loyd-Lindsay completed.
1870	August: the British Red Cross Society formed. Prompted by the Franco-Prussian war, Colonel Loyd-Lindsay elected Chairman. October: visited Versailles and Paris under siege, distributing aid.
1871	Active in House of Commons in debates for army reform. Founded the Berkshire Friendly (Provident) Society, and encouraged his workers to join.
1874	Returned again as MP in the General Election - initially Disraeli thought to appoint him Under Secretary of State for War, but other appointments then made.
1875	Chairman of the Wantage Tramway Company.
1876	August - October: Turko-Serbian war: Colonel Loyd-Lindsay agreed to visit the war theatre for the Red Cross. Present at the battle of Alexinatz, and then

	<p>travelled through Bulgaria to Constantinople.</p> <p>On his return, there was an enthusiastic reception in Wantage market place, with a welcome by the Revd W J Butler, Vicar and Volunteer Chaplain.</p> <p>Involved in the debate on the Eastern Question in government circles, and the risk of Russian advances to the Bosphorus. Urged British defence of Constantinople.</p> <p>Offered a statue of King Alfred to the townspeople of Wantage.</p>
1877	<p>14 July: Prince of Wales unveiled the statue of King Alfred, from the studio of Count Gleichen (purchased at the cost of 2,000 guineas by Colonel Loyd-Lindsay).</p> <p>August: appointed by the Prime Minister (Lord Beaconsfield) to Financial Secretary to the War Office. Involved in a boost of £6m in army expenditure given the perceived threat of a Russian seizure of Constantinople.</p>
1880	The Liberal Party won the General Election and on Gladstone becoming Prime Minister, Colonel Loyd-Lindsay left office.
1880-90	Supportive of local schools in area, including the Grammar schools at Wantage (King Alfred's School) and Abingdon.
1881	Active in parliamentary debates on the future nature of army service, advocating the short-service system with a large and efficient Reserve, and also the need for mounted infantry. 1881 Created Knight Commander of the Bath, as one of the recipients of honours from Queen Victoria to mark the "coming of age" of the Volunteer Movement.
1882	Served on the Army Medical Committee, seeking from the Egyptian expedition of that year to learn important lessons in the care and treatment of casualties.
1883	Recuperative trip to South Africa after illness.
1884	Planned resignation from Parliament but this withdrawn after friends (including the Prince of Wales) urged him to remain. One of the founders of the Military College at Cowley. Active in Red Cross affairs in connection with the Sudan campaign.
1885	<p>June: Gladstone defeated on a Budget amendment.</p> <p>Lord Salisbury Prime Minister.</p> <p>Sir Robert offered the War Office post of Surveyor-General, but declined on health grounds.</p> <p>23 July: created Baron Wantage of Lockinge by Queen Victoria</p> <p>28 July: took his seat in the House of Lords.</p> <p>Created by Lord Salisbury as Lord-Lieutenant of Berkshire.</p> <p>Founder member (subsequently second Chairman) of the Small Farm and Labourers Land Company, to encourage smallholdings.</p> <p>"Lockinge Revels" took place, reviving Elizabethan pageants.</p>
1886-97	Major shareholder in London Electric Supply Corporation, initially to assist his brother, subsequently in charge to prevent bankruptcy. Rescued the engineering business of Messrs Robinson and Auden in Wantage, manufacturing agricultural machinery.
1887	Participated in Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee, riding with the Prince of Wales' staff and later bringing his Berkshire Volunteer Regiment to join the parades. Chairman of the National Rifle Association.
1888	Volunteer Force reorganised, and Lord Wantage appointed Brigadier-General

	<p>of the Home Counties (Berkshire, Oxfordshire, Buckinghamshire and Bedfordshire).</p> <p>On one of his foreign tours with Lady Wantage, revisited the Crimea. Co-operative Store at Ardington set up by Lord Wantage</p>
<b>1890</b>	Successful Regular Army cavalry 'manoeuvres' (3,000 men) on the Berkshire Downs, repeated thereafter
<b>1891</b>	Appointed as Chairman of a government committee to investigate service terms and conditions to overcome low recruitment rates. Attended German army manoeuvres.
<b>1892</b>	Supported the developing University College of Reading, and was elected first President.
<b>1893</b>	Offered by the Government the Chairmanship of the proposed Royal Commission on Agricultural Depression (but declined), given his reputation in estate management.
<b>1895</b>	Retired from his Volunteer Force post.
<b>1896-7</b>	Lord and Lady Wantage visited Egypt and voyaged up the Nile.
<b>1897</b>	Participated in Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee. In spite of failing health, active as President of the Charing Cross Hospital, and in Red Cross business providing help to victims of the Turko-Greek war.
<b>1898</b>	Visit to Portugal. In the summer received Prince and Princess of Wales on their second visit to Lockinge, the Prince opening new buildings at Reading College. Installed as Masonic Grand Master of Berkshire on the nomination of the Prince of Wales. Attended at Windsor Castle the presentation of new Colours to the Scots Guards by Queen Victoria.
<b>1899</b>	Appointed Chairman of the Board of Visitors to the Royal Military Colleges of Woolwich and Sandhurst.
<b>1899-1900</b>	Active in Red Cross work in connection with the South African war.
<b>1900</b>	Lord Wantage purchased the Desanges portraits of Victoria Cross recipients, formerly shown in a gallery at the Crystal Palace, and presented them on 15 November to Wantage. They were hung in a gallery in the former Corn Exchange in the town.
<b>1901</b>	Attended the funeral of Queen Victoria at Windsor. 2 June: attended Consecration Service of the neighbouring church at Grove. 10 June: passed away, and was buried in Ardington churchyard

## Military Career

Robert Lindsay was the youngest of four children and came from a family with a long military tradition. His father General James Lindsay had served in the Peninsular War and the eldest brother had a Commission in the Grenadier Guards. Among the friends who frequented the family home at Balcarres in Fifehire were many distinguished brother officers of General Lindsay including General Moore, Sir Hope Grant, and General Simpson, who succeeded Lord Raglan as Commander-in-Chief in the Crimea. Although destined for a Civil Service career in the East India Company he was unexpectedly offered and accepted a Commission in

the Scots Fusilier Guards at the age of 18. The offer came about not through the auspices of his father but through an admirer of his sister "May" Lindsay. Colonel the Hon Alexander Gordon, son of Lord Aberdeen, was Aide-de-Camp to Prince Albert, through whom he obtained the disposal of a commission in the Scots Fusilier Guards. Robert Lindsay did not have to wait long before receiving the summons to join his regiment for active service in the east. After the failure of the Russians to comply with the joint Anglo-French ultimatum for troops to be withdrawn from the Danubian Principalities, war was declared on 27 March 1854.

The Scots Fusiliers were sent as part of an expeditionary force first to Constantinople and then to Varna (Bulgaria) to support the Turks on the Danube. It was here that Robert Lindsay narrowly escaped the cholera epidemic but was struck down with dysentery. Writing home on 15 August Lindsay described the appalling conditions. "Those who had the misfortune to get into the hospital at Varna never came out, attended on by rascally old pensioners who got drunk on the brandy and wine provided for the sick. Nothing is worse managed than our nursing staff. Ambulance cooks entirely wanting, officers scarcely able to leave their bed, starting to try and ride into Varna, fifteen miles away, rather than remain in the scorching heat of a tent". Although he recovered, the experience left a lasting impression on him, so much so that he was later to become a founder and first chairman of the British Red Cross Society.

After the Turks forced the Russian evacuation of the Principalities without assistance, the new strategic aim for the Anglo-French Forces became the destruction of the Sebastopol naval base, on the south-west tip of the Crimean Peninsula. The Allies landed unopposed at Calamita Bay 30 miles from Sebastopol and advanced south overcoming a Russian attempt to halt them on the River Alma. The Battle of Alma was the first of two engagements for which Robert Lindsay received the Victoria Cross for 'conspicuous bravery'. He wrote to his father shortly after on 1 September, "The 23rd turned and came running through our line, throwing us in great confusion; we, however, continued to advance on the entrenchment though little better than a mob - when within 12 yards of their position their fire was tremendous and not more than a company were up with the Colours, when a volley from the Russians cut down the three colour-segments and shattered the Queen's Colours in my hand". Later in February 1857 Robert Lindsay's name appeared in a special edition of the London Gazette among the first recipients of the newly formed order, the Victoria Cross. The Gazette described his action at the Battle of Alma in restoring order to the line by rallying a party of NCO's and men round the Colours and holding their ground against an overwhelming force. In addition "At Inkerman (5 November), at a most trying moment he, with a few men, charged a party of Russians, driving them back and running one through the body himself".

He thus enjoyed the unique distinction of having the Cross conferred on him for two separate acts of valour in the same campaign. Prior to the institution of the Victoria Cross by Queen Victoria no recognised gallantry medal existed for heroic deeds. The Crimean War made such an award necessary. In addition to Robert Lindsay, 110 men received the medal as a result of their actions during this war.

In December 1854 he was promoted to Lieutenant and became Aide-de Camp when General Simpson was appointed Chief of Staff. This enabled Robert Lindsay to gain a much broader picture of the conduct of the campaign. During this time much of the operations were confined to trench duty due to the bad weather conditions exacerbated by maladministration. Many of Robert Lindsay's letters home during the winter of 1854-5 refer to scarcities of food, clothing, fuel and adequate shelter and the marked contrast in living conditions between officers and men. However, many of the letters were passed to the Duke of Cambridge, then Minister for War, and must have contributed to the groundswell of public opinion against the way the war was being conducted that led eventually to improvements in living conditions.

In May 1855 he took up the vacant Adjutancy of the Fusilier Guards and gave up his staff appointment to be with his regiment in the final Siege of Sebastopol. Immediately on hearing the news of his father's death at Genoa he obtained a month's leave from the Crimea and on his return the armistice had been signed. On 11 June 1856 Robert Lindsay finally left the Crimea to return to Britain a national hero and was decorated by the Queen who held the first investiture of VCs in Hyde Park in June 1857.

During the years that followed the Crimea campaign Robert Lindsay was quartered partly in the barracks of Portsmouth and partly in London, where he became a conspicuous figure in society. In the spring of 1858 he was selected by the Prince Consort for the post of Equerry in the newly formed household of the young Prince of Wales until Robert's marriage on 17 November, 1858. Within a year he had left the army at the age of 27 with the rank of Lieutenant-Colonel.

Hardly had this phase of his military life closed when another began, when as a Conservative MP for Berkshire, he became associated with a powerful group of Army Reformers. He was involved in a variety of committees of inquiry over the following years investigating army service matters. He retired from public office in 1880 on the loss of the General Election by the Conservatives.

### **The Victoria Cross Gallery**

After the Crimean War a Victorian artist, Louis William Desanges, painted a series of paintings depicting the gallant deeds for which the first recipients of the Victoria Cross had gained the honour, and a further series of the heroes of the Indian Mutiny. For many years these were exhibited at Crystal Palace, but were eventually put up for sale. Lord Wantage and his wife were unwilling that the pictures be dispersed and decided to purchase the collection at a cost of approximately £1,000.

The collection included the portrait of Lord Wantage at the Battle of the Alma, Crimea in 1854. Portraits of two other Berkshire men, Sir Charles Russell of the Grenadier Guards and Colonel Gerald Goodlake of the Coldstream Guards were also included. Lord Wantage presented to the town of Wantage the Victoria Cross pictures with the provision that they be placed in the care of the Wantage Urban District Council for the benefit of the town. The Corn Exchange was adapted to exhibit the pictures and was renamed the Victoria Cross Gallery. It was opened to the public for viewing in 1900.

The paintings remained on display in Wantage until 1941 when the Gallery was requisitioned and converted into a Cooking Depot for war time emergencies. The paintings were removed and stored at the Wantage Engineering Company and the Town Hall, where they stayed for the duration of the war. The most important portrait for Wantage, that of Lord Wantage is now on public display in Wantage Civic Hall, Portway, Wantage.

### **Lord Wantage:**

#### **Public offices and achievements nationally and locally**

Robert Lindsay married the Hon Harriet Sarah Jones-Loyd, the only child of Lord and Lady Overstone, in 1858 and adopted the name Loyd-Lindsay. Lord Overstone settled his Berkshire estates upon the couple and they moved into Lockinge House; in 1859, Loyd-Lindsay retired from the Army as Lieutenant-Colonel to concentrate upon improving his estates.

## **Volunteer Movement**

He immediately found an appropriate outlet for his talents in the Volunteer movement which was formed in 1859 as a response to the perceived threat of invasion from a revived Napoleonic regime in France. Loyd-Lindsay was very keen on the idea of a young citizen army and, with his military experience and his status as a major landowner, he was a natural choice as Colonel of the Berkshire Regiment when it was formed in 1860. He was created a Knight Commander of the Bath in 1881 for his services to the Volunteer movement and, when the force was reorganised into brigades in 1888, he was appointed Brigadier-General for the Home Counties which included Berkshire and Oxfordshire.

## **Member of Parliament**

A man from a Conservative background married to a Liberal, Loyd-Lindsay was courted by both parties when he arrived at Lockinge, and he seems to have been able to placate his wife and father-in-law before declaring that "his principles were those of reasonably moderate Conservative policy." He was adopted as one of the three Conservative candidates for Berkshire and topped the poll in 1865, sitting as one of the county's MPs for 20 years.

## **Chairman of newly founded Red Cross Society**

He maintained a lively interest in military matters and, at the outbreak of the Franco-Prussian war in 1870, he took urgent steps to found the National Society for Aid to the Sick and Wounded in War which later became the British Red Cross Society. The war was extensively reported and the sufferings of wounded soldiers attracted tremendous public sympathy and the eventual donation of £250,000.

The new society voted to divide the first £40,000 equally between the two warring nations and, as Chairman, Loyd-Lindsay delivered it personally. He travelled first to the Prussian headquarters in the Palace of Versailles where the King "seemed a little huffy about the proposed division of the money between the French and Germans, remarking 'You certainly are very impartial, indeed!'" He was then escorted through the lines into besieged Paris to deliver the French share and, while staying there, was lucky to escape with his life when he was seized by the mob as a suspected Prussian spy. In 1876, he travelled again on Red Cross business to deliver money for the relief of the sick and wounded in the war between Serbia and Turkey, sending back useful information about Russian involvement and the progress of the war.

## **Government Minister 1877-80**

The Conservative Prime Minister, Benjamin Disraeli, appointed him Financial Secretary to the War Office in 1877 and he held the post until the election of a Liberal government in 1880. The Conservatives returned to power in 1885 and Lord Salisbury offered him the post of Surveyor-General in the War Office, but Loyd-Lindsay declined on health grounds and was raised to the peerage as Lord Wantage of Lockinge. In the same year, he was appointed Lord Lieutenant of Berkshire.

## **Activities in the Wantage area**

A deep sense of public duty continued to permeate Lord Wantage's activities in his later years. His interest in army reform was expressed in 1891 when he chaired a Committee to enquire into the terms and conditions of service in the Army. He was an active supporter and first President of the new University College at Reading, an institution which fulfilled his long-

term wish to combine practical instruction in agriculture with scientific knowledge. Having promoted the building of the Wantage Tramway Company, he was chairman of the company from its opening in 1875; in the 1880s, he took an active interest in the building of the Didcot, Newbury and Southampton Railway, seeing it as a way of improving local communications and linking farms with their market towns. His many estate improvements were not of course entirely altruistic, out they served to beautify the Lockinge area and much of the work was undertaken in the winter in order to provide employment for men who would otherwise have been idle and in dire need. His concern for local employment even extended to purchasing and reviving the Wantage Engineering Works because the town's inhabitants "were largely dependent on the weekly wages paid to about a hundred men." He supported schools on his estate and the grammar school in Wantage, and he commissioned and in 1877 presented to the town the well-known statue of King Alfred which was sculpted by Count Gleichen.

Lord Wantage remained active to the very end, only being restrained with some difficulty from going to South Africa on Red Cross business during the Boer War in 1899. He also continued to fulfil his local duties and, just eight days before his death on June 10th 1901, he attended the service of consecration at Grove church. The engaging character of this remarkable man is perhaps best expressed by the post-boxes which he placed around his fields to collect information about their cultivation from his foremen. When asked about these boxes by a friend, he explained what they were for and added, with a smile "I can thus see exactly how much I lose on every acre I possess."

#### **Lord Wantage and the Lockinge Estate:**

##### **A 19th century experiment in social welfare**

The Lockinge Estate and Lockinge House (demolished in 1947) were acquired by Robert Loyd-Lindsay through his wife's family on their marriage in 1858. By 1873 the estate comprised some 20,000 acres and was the largest in Berkshire and one of the largest in England. Over the next few decades under the management of Lord Wantage, as he became in 1885, it was remodelled in line with an unorthodox social philosophy that attracted a great deal of attention from prominent contemporaries.



Despite his many other commitments, Lord Wantage devoted a great deal of his time and energy to bringing modern methods to his farms and to improving the living conditions of his workers, and both he and Lady Wantage were fully involved in the detail of the many improvements. When he took over the estate most of the farms were tenanted, but as leases expired or were surrendered, Lord Wantage amalgamated the extra land into the home farm centred on the villages of Ardington and Lockinge, and he was soon directly farming some 13,000 acres.

Here he used outside capital to introduce the very latest agricultural techniques and equipment.

He experimented with new crops and animal breeds, he created a huge ranch on the Downs for the raising of horses and cattle, and he brought in new mowing and reaping machines, and steam-ploughs. His farms were visited regularly by leading agriculturists who were impressed not only by his farming practices but also by the Estate Yard in Ardington which employed over 100 carpenters, blacksmiths and workmen and was equipped with steam-powered machinery.

The farm workers were initially alarmed by the introduction of mechanisation, but they soon saw their living conditions being improved through Lord Wantage's philanthropy. In the 1860's, he took a personal hand in completely replanning Lockinge village, which previously, like the villages on surrounding estates, consisted mainly of partially dilapidated one bedrooned cottages with low ceilings and poor amenities, and was described by Lady Wantage as being little more than 'farm sheds, muck yards and hovels'. The village street was removed entirely and rebuilt further south, and the new brick cottages were given a picturesque Tudor appearance by the use of steeply pitched roofs, tall chimneys, leaded windows and pointed porches and dormers. For their residents they brought undreamed of space and comfort, having 3 bedrooms, a living room and a kitchen, with a shed behind to house an earth closet, a coal store and a laundry room equipped with a copper. A similar traditional and picturesque style was adopted for rebuilding in Ardington and for the restoration of cottages elsewhere on the estate, and a standard colour scheme was applied, half-timbering being painted chocolate brown and the panels in-between yellow.

But Lord Wantage's concern for the welfare of his workers was not limited to their conditions of housing; it permeated every aspect of their lives. In part this was a response to the appalling misery that swept through rural life following the collapse of agricultural prices from the 1870's, when cheap meat and corn from America began to be imported in large quantities. Many farms went bankrupt making thousands of agricultural labourers redundant, and those in work had their wages cut. Lord Wantage did not hesitate to cut the wages of his labourers too, from 12 shillings a week to 10, but he also introduced a radical 'bonus scheme' to distribute any farm profits to his employees on the basis of their status. He sought to safeguard their nutrition and reduce food prices by the establishment of a profit-sharing Co-operative Society to sell local produce and cut out the middle-man. A number of shops were built, including Farm workers on the Lockinge Estate 19th century the half-timbered Tudor-style shops in the centre of Ardington which date from 1885 and were designed to look like cottages so as not to destroy the appearance of the village. Also in Ardington was the new bakery which allowed the Society to bake its own bread using the most modern equipment. To encourage hard work and thrift he let smallholdings to his tenants enabling them to raise their own produce, and he founded a savings bank to help them provide for their old age. He disapproved of public houses and all except one were closed - and the malignant influence of the sole survivor was minimised by the appointment of a manager on a fixed salary who had no financial incentive to increase the sale of alcohol. Employees were encouraged to spend their leisure hours in the new reading rooms instead, or in the Loyd-Lindsay Room in Ardington where a men's club, entertainments and meetings were organised. Estate craftsmen worked on the restoration of local churches and in Lockinge a school was built, with the schoolroom and the master's accommodation under the same roof. As a result of these welfare schemes the workers on the Lockinge Estate had all their material, leisure and spiritual needs provided for, and they had no need to turn to the Assisted Passage Scheme to emigrate like many of those on neighbouring estates. Lord Wantage's concern for the happiness and welfare of his fellow men and women might have been thought by some contemporaries to have been paternalistic, but his transformation of the Lockinge Estate both in farming practice and in social welfare was a real achievement at a time when poverty and misery were the lot of most agricultural workers. He was not afraid to apply bold and unorthodox solutions to new problems, and his 'model' farms and villages were highly influential at the time.

**"V.C."**

**(Dedicated to Lord Wantage, V.C.)**

There's the Order of the Garter, and the brilliant Indian Star,  
And many a shining medal, great or small,  
And the K.C.B.'s and earldoms, and all the spoils of war,  
But the little cross of iron is most glorious of them all-  
Yes, the little cross of iron beats them all.

For he that owns it earned it at the peril of his life,  
Nor if for his country he should fall,  
He bore our England's colours through the fire and strife;  
So the little cross of iron is the gallantest of all-  
Yes, the little cross of iron's worth it all.

And mercy goes with valour, and the hero stays to save,  
Self-forgetting, at a wounded comrade's call;  
Thus, among the glittering baubles that are guerdons to the brave,  
Still the little cross of iron is the noblest prize of all-  
Yes, the little cross of iron beats them all!

**LADY LINDSAY**

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