

British Endgame Study News

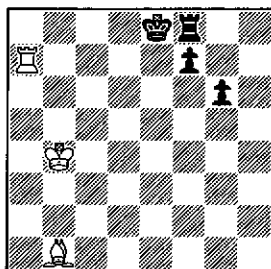
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by Jaroslav Hašek
(version by Timothy
Whitworth)
White to play and win

This issue. My thoughts on the "main line" in March prompted some comments from readers which I am sure will interest others. The accompanying special number contains some British studies from 1984-86, including a fascinating glimpse into the mind of Mike Bent.

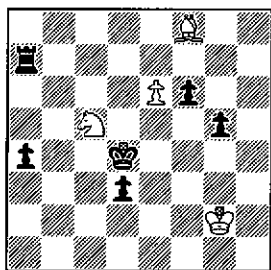
Events in Kosovo. T. R. Dawson reacted to the outbreak of World War II by reprinting four German compositions in *Fairy Chess Review* with the following commentary (his emphasis): "I refuse, at present, to believe that these men ... are Nazi "aryans," that is murderers, liars, treaty-breakers, and Jew-baiters. We have long known these men by their works for shapers of beautiful, imaginative, finely conceived things of spirit. We have thought of them as men like ourselves, our friends and colleagues, in the magnificent struggle to evolve our infinite Fairy Chess to even higher perfections."

As then, as now. To me, a Serb is not a ruthless genocidal killer but a man like Marjan Kovačević or Milan Velimirović, charming, urbane, civilized, and differing from the rest of us only in the depth of his talent. I have drunk deep into the night with both, and I hope I shall have occasion to do so again.

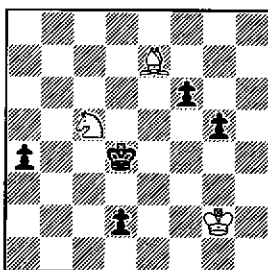
Spotlight (see also page 107). Timothy Whitworth reminds me of a "very fine second solution" to Hašek's study 11 in special number 14. The position is as above but with wB on d3, and I quote from Timothy's column in the *BCM* for October 1988. "The try 1 Bb5+ Kd8 2 Kc5 f5 Kd5! Rf6 (or 3...f4 4 Ke6 Rf5 5 Bd7 and 6 Kd6 wins) 4 Bd7! Rb6 (or 4...Ke7 5 Be6+ and 6 Ke5 wins; or 4...f4 5 Be6 and 6 Kd6 wins) 5 c6! Rb2 6 Kd6 Rd2+ 7 Bd5 Rc2 8 Rg7, and White can pick up the black pawns while still maintaining a winning position with R + B v R."

Fortunately the cure is easy. Timothy moves wB to b1, and now only the intended solution works: 1 Bf5! gxf5 2 Kc5 f6 3 Kd6 Rg8 4 Ke6 Kf8 5 Kxg6 and wins.

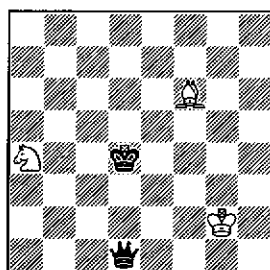
Recently published British originals



1 - draw

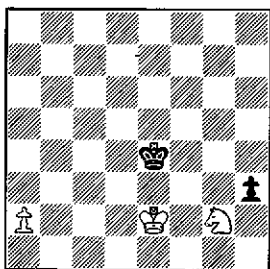


1a - after 2...d2

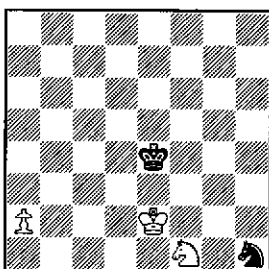


1b - after 6 Bf6+

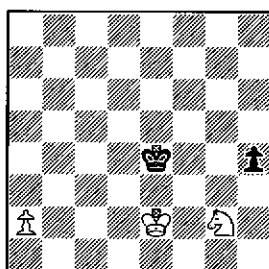
Paul Byway's **1** appeared in the July-September issue of *diagrammes*. The natural move would seem to be 1 Kf2 to try and stop bPd3, since to advance wP will allow Black to swap it for bR and then promote his own pawn, but Black wins after 1...d2 2 Ke2 Kc3 and either 3 Ne4+ Kc2 4 Nxd2 Ra6 or 3 Kd1 a3 4 Ne4+ Kd3 5 Nf2+ Kd4 6 e7 a2. So 1 e7 it has to be, and the main line reply is indeed 1...Rxe7 (if 1...Ra8 then 2 Ne6+ and 3 Nd8). Play continues 2 Bxe7 d2 (if 2...a3 then 3 Nxd3 drawing easily), and we have **1a**. Now bPd2 will promote and Q normally wins against B + N, but White has 3 Nxa4 followed by an elegant pursuit of bK by wB: after 3...d1Q **4 Bxf6+ Ke3 5 Bxg5+ Kd4 6 Bf6+** (see **1b**) Black can escape the perpetual check only by allowing a fork.



2 - win



2a - after 2...h1N



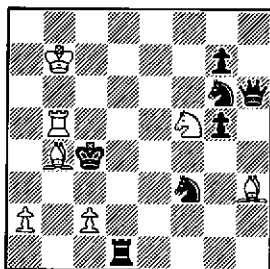
2b - Black to play

In my own **2**, from the same issue of *diagrammes*, White cannot prevent Black's promotion, but at least he can set up a fork ready to capture the new bQ. All right, so Black makes a knight, and N + P v N will normally be drawn with bK centralized and wP so backward; how can White create an exception? Only by trapping the new bN on h1. Play starts **1 Ne3** (1 Ne1 h2 2 Nd3 h1N is only a draw since bN will escape via g3) **h2** (1...Kd4 2 Nc2+ Kc3 3 Kf3 is a win for White, as is 1...Kf4 2 Nf1 Ke4 3 Kf2 and 4-5 Nb1) **2 Nf1** (2 Nd1/Ng4 h1N is again drawn, g3 being available to bN) **h1N** (2...h1Q is met by 3 Ng3+ Kd4 4 Nxb1 Kc3 5 Kd1 Kb4 and 6-7 Kb1) and we have **2a**.

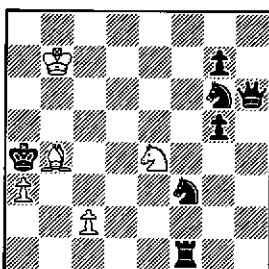
The next step is to decoy bK away and win bN, but 3 a4 is met by 3...Kd4 4 Kf3

Kc4 with the loss of wP, and 3 Nd2+ leads to 3...Kf4 (threat 4...Ng3) 4 Nf1 Ke4 repeating the position. The only move is **3 a3!** Now 3...Kd4 4 Kf3 Kc3 5 Ne3 (or 5 Nd2) Kb3 6 Nc2 is safely won for White, and if Black tries 3...Kf4 White replies **4 a4** and bK is a crucial square further away: 4...Ke4 5 a5 Kd5 6 Kf3 Kc5 7-8 Nb3/Nc4 and White wins. The position after 3 a3 is in fact reciprocal zugzwang (it is number 970 in the list of reciprocal zugzwangs with N + P v N published with *EG* 122), but this isn't a true "reciprocal zugzwang" study because there is no natural line of attack which fails because it leads to the same position with White to move. By playing a2-a4 in two moves instead of one, White doesn't lose a tempo, he gains one.

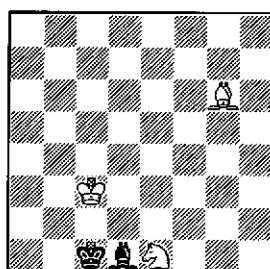
Readers interested in the technique of composition may wonder why I didn't try to extend the study backwards. The short answer is that I did, since it is easy to preface 2 by a Black move (in **2b**, anything other than ...h3 is soon seen to be hopeless). However, wN is badly placed in **2b**, and it can be shown that White will move to this position only if he has to make a capture. Rightly or wrongly, I decided not to add the extra material that this would have entailed, and to leave the study as it was.



3 - draw



3a - after 4 Ne4



4 - win

Mike Bent's **3** appeared in the October-December *diagrammes*. 1 Nxh6 offers nothing (Black replies 1...Kxb5 and another White piece will fall next move), and play starts with the decoy sacrifice **1 Bf1+**. The reply **1...Rxf1** leaves Black without a check, and White has time for the quiet **2 a3!** threatening mate. Black naturally replies **2...Kxb5**, but White continues **3 Nd6+ Ka4 4 Ne4!** again threatening mate (see **3a**) and we have a draw by alternating check and mate threat: **4...Kb5 5 Nd6+** etc.

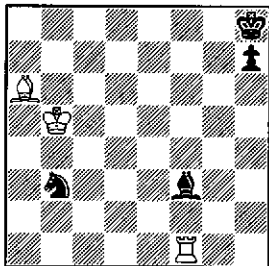
Anticipations. The latest issue of *EG* reports an anticipation of the final position of the 1995 *Tidskrift för Schack* Whitworth/Bent study which I quoted in March: the short but elegant **4** by C. H. Hathaway, *American Chess Bulletin* 1912, with play **1 Be4 Bh5 2 Nd3+ Kd1 3 Bc6**. However, for all its charm, this is little more than a sketch, and I am inclined to repeat a point I have made before: even if a composer is utilizing a known finale, he is still entitled to the credit for what he puts in front of it. When composing **2**, I made use of a computer-generated list of positions of reciprocal zugzwang, and this effectively gave me **2a** (if a position with wPa3 is reciprocal zugzwang, there is a sporting chance that the only winning move with wP on a2 will be a2-a3). So my contribution was a mere two moves by each side, and I would not wish to claim more; but I think I am entitled to the credit for these two moves.

More thoughts on the “main line”

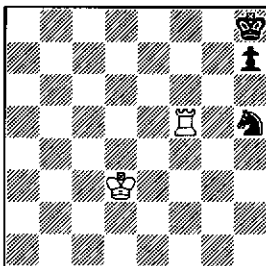
I had not intended to return to this subject quite so soon, but March’s article provoked cogent comments from Walter Veitch and Paul Byway and I think these should be reported without further ado.

It will be recalled that I was reporting an experiment in which I had presented four studies in which the composer’s “main line” ended in a mate, had stopped each at the crucial point, and had asked my audience what move they would now play in a game. The first of the studies was **1** (Tigran Gorgiev, 64 1928). Here, **1 Kb4 Nd4 2 Kc3 Be2! 3 Bxe2 Nxe2+ 4 Kd3 Ng3 5 Rf3 Nh5 6 Rf5** gives **1a**, and the composer’s move **6...Ng7** (allowing the pretty snap mate **7 Rf8**) found nobody who would have played it in a game (though John Roycroft said that he would have chosen it as a solver).

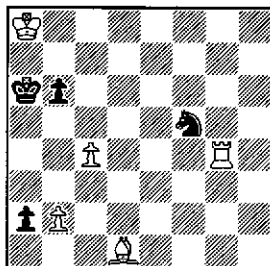
Also relevant to the discussion below is **2** (Jindřich Fritz, 1935). Here, White starts **1 Bf3** (threat **2 Rg1** and **3 Ra1**) **a1Q 2 Rg7** threatening mate by **Ra7**, and the natural recapture **2...Nxc7** allows the quiet move **3 b4!** followed by mate on **b7** (**3...b5 4 c5** etc). Black can avoid the mate but only by eschewing the recapture and making one of the queen-losing moves **2...Ka5** and **2...b5**, and seven participants out of nine would indeed have made the recapture; the other two would have resigned.



1 - win



1a - Black to play



2 - win

Walter Veitch agreed with Wallace Ellison that my test was too artificial, but he then proceeded to probe the question more deeply. “Your question: What do you play as Black?, and making ‘resign’ an option, equates looking at studies to a one-sided game situation, which it is not [Walter’s emphasis, with a triple underlining of ‘not’]. In **1a**, in a game, of course Black resigns. But he does not merely resign, he resigns because . . . , i.e. he is unwilling to allow the ‘pretty’ mate by **Rf8**, but **Rf8** nevertheless is the deciding factor. The whole solution from **1** is trying to capture **bN**. Can it escape? Yes, it can: by **6...Ng7**, so **6...Ng7** is the logical climax (triumph and disaster). The resultant snap mate may be obvious now, but it was not so at the beginning. To argue on the basis of just one move is wrong.”

This strikes me as an excellent exposition of the conventional view, clear and convincing, and I shall remember it for use in future.

Paul Byway wrote, “As a participant I read this with interest. The conclusion seems to be clear although you don’t draw it - deliberately so I guess. The solver

chooses the line that maximises his chances of defeating the stipulation - as he should. Thus in **1** even the weakest player will reject a mate in one without further analysis. In **2** we see that the *immediacy* of the threat is an important factor. We can also deduce that mate and loss of the queen are roughly equivalent."

Paul then looked at the matter another way. "Some comments showed a tendency to 'collaborate' with the composer: this is significant. A sophisticated appreciation is combined with a brainless 'material only' evaluation function in the orthodox view. This is death to the study, and solutions which depend on it will be rejected with exasperation, incomprehension, or contempt by the average player. And players, not sophisticated enthusiasts, must be the target audience."

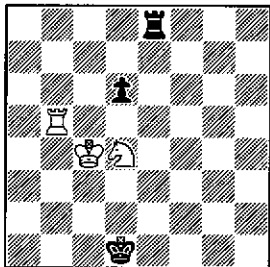
The matter has of course been aired many times, usually without a clear conclusion. John Roycroft gave the following definition in *Test tube chess* (page 294): "The main line of the solution to a study consists of that series of moves resulting when Black chooses moves in accordance with endgame theory. That is, Black is presumed to be more knowledgeable than imaginative." Walter Veitch took issue with this in *EG* 41 (page 225), remarking, "Composers like pretty finishes and so frequently pick them as main lines, and why not? But endgame theory has nothing to say to this, and I certainly know of none according to which one suffers mate when it can be avoided." John attempted to clarify his standpoint in *EG* 42 (pages 249-50), suggesting that Black will avoid known theoretical losses or draws, "leaving the main line as either an exception to, or a modification of, theory." However, this begs the very question which prompted my March article: at what point does a "known theoretical loss or draw" become so obscure and difficult to realize that any sensible Black would choose it as the least bad practical option?

Paul Byway suggested that my failure to draw a conclusion last time was deliberate, and perhaps this is true. However, I think I should now attempt one, and it seems to me that the heart of the matter is as follows. A study exists to embody an idea. The realization of this idea constitutes the "main line", and *the composer's task is to present this as clearly and convincingly as possible*. If Black has other moves, as usually he will, the audience should not have to waste time on them; they should lead not just to a known theoretical result as demanded of White, but to an *obvious* and *easily realized* result as demanded. The result after an off-main-line Black move should in fact be so obvious and so easily realized that Paul's "average player" will happily accept it and agree "Yes, win" or "Yes, draw" after a move or two at most. I am aware that the terms "idea", "obvious", "easily realized", and "average player" are subjective, and may not be ideal as academic discriminants to decide (for example) whether a study should gain points for its author by being included in a FIDE Album. However, I am not interested in album points and master titles, I just want to show some positions to my friends and put a smile on their faces; and I suggest that studies which satisfy these criteria offer the best and perhaps the only chance of doing this.

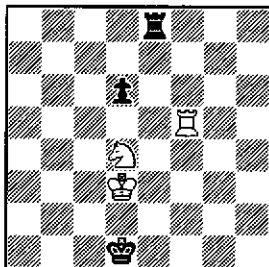
If you disagree, these columns are still open, and I shall be very happy to report further views; but it will not happen until December, because the middle pages of the September issue have already been earmarked for something else.

From the world at large

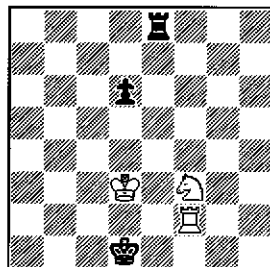
The February issue of *Československý šach* contained Emil Vlasák's study award for 1997-98, and although this isn't quite a record for judicial promptness it is much better than what normally happens. First prize went to Jan Lerch's subtle **1**. It has been known since the time of Centurini that positions of this kind without bP cannot be won (readers who have John Nunn's *Secrets of pawnless endings* will find a discussion on pages 158-161), but here bP will shield wK and this tips the balance.



1 - win

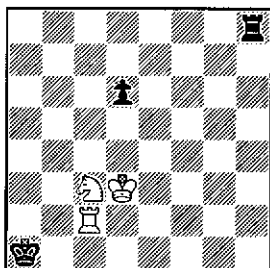


1a - 1...Ke1, after 2...Kd1

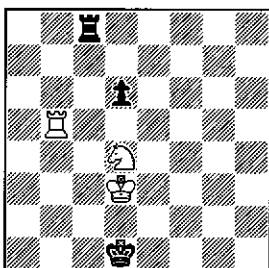


1b - after 5 Nf3

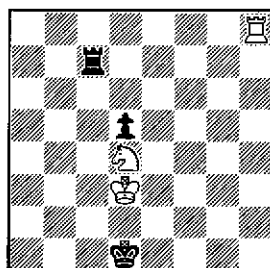
Play starts **1 Kd3** threatening mate, and Black has two defences. Let's try **1...Ke1** first. White plays **2 Rf5** threatening 3 Nc2+ Kd1 4 Rf1+, and Black must go back: **2...Kd1** (see **1a**). Now we have **3 Rf1+ Re1 4 Rf2** threatening 5 Rd1+ Kc1 6 Ne2+ Kb1 7 Nc3+ and mate next move, and 4...Rh1 5 Rd2+ Ke1 does not help Black (6 Nc2+ Kf1 7 Ne3+ and the same mates follow). Better is **4...Re8** getting bR right out of the way, but this allows the quiet **5 Nf3** threatening mate in two (see **1b**). Black must try **5...Kc1**, but there follows **6 Rc2+ Kb1** (6...Kd1 7 Rd2+ Kc1 8 Nd4 Kb1 9 Nb5 leads to much the same thing) **7 Nd2+ Ka1 8 Ne4 Rh8 9 Nc3** and Black can avoid mate only by giving up bR (see **1c**).



1c - 1...Ke1, after 9 Nc3



1d - 1...Rc8

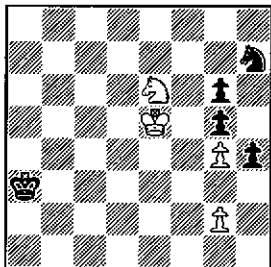


1e - after 5 Rh8

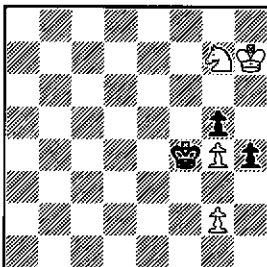
But Black also has **1...Rc8** (see **1d**). Superficially, we now have **1a** reflected about the d-file, but if we try **2 Rb1+ Rc1 3 Rb2** as before we find that bK has one extra square. This time the winning line is **2 Rb7** (waiting) **d5** (if 2...Rc5 then 3 Rf7 Rf5

4 Rf1+ and we are back on familiar territory) **3 Rb6** (again waiting - White wants Black to put bR on c7 where wN can attack it) **Rc4** (Black resists as long as possible) **4 Rb8 Rc7** (no choice now - 4...Rc5 5 Rf8 Kc1 6 Nb3+) **5 Rh8/Rg8** (see **1e**) **Kc1** (5...Re7 6 Nf5 Re6 7 Rh1+ Re1 8 Ne3+) **6 Rh1+ Kb2 7 Rh2+ Kc1** (7...Ka3 8 Nb5+) **8 Rd2** (threat 9 Ne2+ Kb1 10 Nc3+) **Kb1 9 Nb5** with Nc3+ to follow, because the attack on bR gives Black no time to play 9...d4.

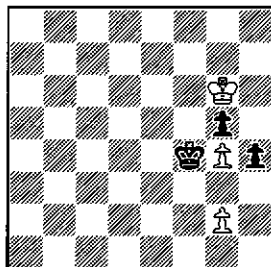
And a final touch: if we try this from **1a**, playing 3 Rf7 d5 4 Rf6 Re4 5 Rf8 Re7 6 Ra8 Kc1 7 Ra1+ Kf2 8 Ra2+, Black has 8...Kg1 and again bK has an extra square. Two very similar positions, two quite different lines of attack.



2 - win



2a - 1 Ng7, after 5...Kf4



2b - main line, after 7...Kf4

John Coward has taken up my challenge to explain Hašek's study **9** from special number 14 (repeated as **2** above: **1 Nf8! Nxf8 2 Kd6 Kb3 3 Ke7 Nh7 4 Kf7 Kc4 5 Kg7 Kd4 6 Kxh7 Ke5 7 Kxg6 Kf4 8 Kh5** etc). I quote (editing slightly):

"The counting of moves, in relation to the approach of both Kings, is the key.

"Firstly the wNe6 is a self-block; it prevents Ke6, and if W attempts to attack by 1 Kd6, the bN escapes at f6.

"So in order to capture the bN, W must commence by moving his own N. And the capture of the bN is paramount.

"Now compare (i) the position at **9a** [repeated as **2a** - it arises after the apparently natural 1 Ng7 Kb3 2-4 Kxg6 Ke3 5 Kxh7 Kf4] and (ii) the same position without the wN but with the wK at g6 [as occurs in the solution - see **2b**]. (i) is a draw, whereas in (ii) W wins by Kh5. This is the critical tempo; and in fact the wN is entirely expendable, since its preservation at the expense of the wPs would be pointless.

"But while (i) 1 Ng7 costs W a move without harming B in any way, (ii) 1 Nf8, while also costing W a move, threatens 2 Nxh7, and so costs B two moves - the forced ...Nxf8 and ...Nh7. W loses another move by having to approach via d6 instead of e6, but this still leaves him with the *net* gain, compared to (i), of one (all-important!) move. In effect, W exchanges his N for a winning tempo."

Thank you, John: admirably clear. John adds a supplementary note: "You would actually have a sound (but sterile and pointless) study if you simply omitted the wNe6; W would simply play Ke6 - f7 - g7 - xh7 - xg6 - h5. Instead, W has to lose one move by 1 Nf8 and another by 2 Kd6 (instead of Ke6), but forces B to play his N twice, losing two moves. Same result." He remarks that wN is actually a White elephant and also a Red herring; one for fairy chess enthusiasts!

News and notices

The Editor at home. This year my "at home" will be on **Saturday July 10** from 1100 onwards. I hope there will be some originals to show, so do come and introduce yourselves. Harpenden is 25 miles north of London (M1, A1, Thameslink railway) and a map will be sent on request (01582-715858). Stay for a modest buffet lunch (please tell me if you are coming, it isn't essential but it helps if we know roughly how many to expect) and meet the problem fraternity afterwards if you feel like it. I double as Librarian of the British Chess Problem Society, and the society's "Library Day" will take place in the afternoon.

Other meetings. The next *EG* readers' meeting will be at 17 New Way Road, London NW9 6PL, on **Friday July 2** at 6.00 pm. Non-subscribers are welcome, but please bring £5 towards the cost of the buffet (except on a first visit). Bring the latest *EG* with you!

Tourneys. The latest issue of Frank Fiedler's excellent *Infoblatt* (Neue Straße 16, D - 04769 Mügeln, Germany) includes an announcement of a tourney to honour the 90th anniversary of the birth of Vladimir Bron (1909-85). Send two copies of your study (any theme) to Rossiya (Russia), 620100 g. Ekaterinburg, ul. Tkačej 8 kv. 10, Vladimir I. Želtonožko, to arrive by 1 December, and put "Bron - 90" on the envelope. Judge: V. Kalyagin. The tourney is being organized jointly by "Smena", "Uralski problemist", and the "Sverdlovsker Gebetssportkomitee" (the Sverdlovsk region sports committee). I have noticed elsewhere that while the city of Sverdlovsk has reverted to its pre-revolutionary name of Ekaterinburg, the surrounding region appears to have retained the name of Sverdlovsk.

Books. Negotiations with the Dutch endgame study organization ARVES have resulted in some alterations and additions to my March book list. Harold van der Heijden's *Pawn promotion to bishop and rook in the endgame study* is now available from me at £5 (book only), and Jan van Reek and Henk van Donk's *Endgame study composition in the Netherlands and Flanders* is now priced at £10. New to my list are Harrie Grondijs's *Charged moves and progressions* (217 pages, 80 studies by Nico Cortlever with a detailed academic analysis) at £15 and Jan van Reek's *Chessmen in the endgame study 1-3* (112 pages, 60 studies with knights, 65 with bishops, 55 with rooks) at £9. I understand that only two copies of *Chessmen in the endgame study 1-3* now remain, and I am holding one of them.

All these prices include packing and UK postage. Purchasers abroad please add the usual 10% extra for postage to Europe and 20% elsewhere.

Anybody wishing to give notice here of any event, product, or service should contact the Editor. There is no charge and no account is taken of whether the activity is being pursued for commercial profit, but notices are printed only if they seem likely to be of particular interest to study enthusiasts. Readers are asked to note that the Editor relies wholly on the representations of the notice giver (except where he makes a personal endorsement) and that no personal liability is accepted either by him or by any other person involved in the production and distribution of this magazine.