British Endgame Study News
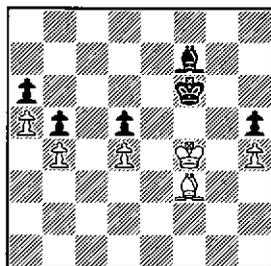
Contents of this issue

White to play; can he
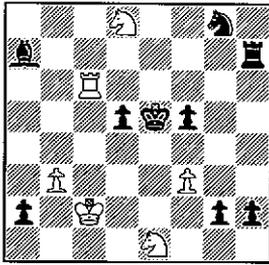force a win without first
withdrawing his king?

This issue. There is more about the ending of queen against rook, and a special number devoted to the studies of Vitaly Halberstadt. The position alongside (derived from the Robinson study in special number 38) shows a curious puzzle. Black to play loses at once; can White to play get back to this position moving just his bishop? The answer is on page 276, and it makes an interesting counterpart to page 4 of the special number.

Spotlight. There were two bad misprints in the June issue. In the Benko study on page 270, the rook should be on **h1** (David Friedgood was the first to point out that g1 allows the defence 1...Rg7 2 Bf7 Rg1 etc), and Emil Vlasák's excellent web site is at http://**web**.quick.cz/EVCOMP ("web" instead of the more usual "www"). Very sorry.
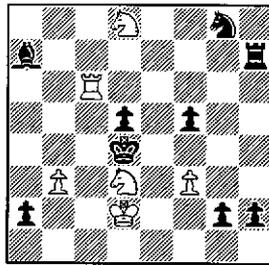
CQL (see June, pp 266-7). An e-mail from Emil Vlasák (evcomp@quick.cz) reports that version 3 is now available, together with associated programs from Emil himself. I had this information from Emil three days after the new version appeared, and I am sure he will be willing to add other interested names to his circulation list.

La récolte de dix années. I concluded my ten years as endgame study columnist of *diagrammes* by contributing a special number containing some of the good things which had appeared in *BESN* but had not hitherto been quoted in *diagrammes*, and they ran off some extra copies for me. I can supply it at £3 including UK postage, with the usual 10%/20% extra for postage abroad. By definition, everything in it has already appeared in *BESN*, but it provides a lot of attractive material within a small compass (60+ studies, 32 pages, text in French) and may perhaps be of interest. The Elkies zugzwang puzzle (see June) is misattributed, but it was as a result of its quotation in "La récolte" that its true authorship came to my notice.

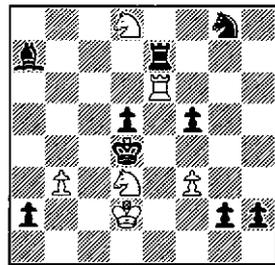**Mining definitive result databases.** I have written an article for *EG* 153 on the mining of definitive result databases (Thompson, Nalimov, etc) for endgame studies. I think everything in it has already appeared in *BESN* at one time or another, but it brings various threads together and if any reader who does not see *EG* is interested I shall be very happy to send a copy. There will be no charge.

Recently published British originals

| 1 - win | 1a - 1...Nb6, after 6 Kg7 | 1b - main line, 3...Nd6 |

Paul Michelet works in well-explored fields and always runs a risk of anticipation, but every now and then he finds something new and charming. I published **1** in the July *BCM*. **1 h4** is strong, because if 1...a5 2-4 h7 a2 then 5 h1Q and Black's promotion square is commanded. Nor does 1...Nb6 seem good, because after 2 h5 Nd5/Nc4 3 h6 Nf4/Ne5 4 Ke7 Ng6+ 5 Kf7 Nh8+ 6 Kg7 we have **1a**, and White is still going to win: 6...a5 7 Kxh8 a4 8 Kg8 a3 9 h7 a2 10 h8Q. Can this be all?

Of course not. **1...a5** offers Black more hope than we had thought, because after **2 h5 a4 3 h6** he can interject **3...Nd6!** (see **1b**). White must take this (4 h7 Nf7+ 5 Ke7 Nh8 is drawn in all lines), but **4 Nxd6** guards b7, and after **4...a3 5 h7 a2** the promotion 6 h8Q leads to stalemate. White of course avoids this by playing **6 a8B**, an underpromotion now very familiar, but it is naturally and amusingly brought about.

| 2 - draw | 2a - after 2...Nf3+ | 2b - 4...Bxd8 stalemate |

Paul's **2** appeared in the October-December issue of *diagrammes*. Black threatens 1...h2 etc, lines like 1 Rf6 Bd8 and 1 Rf4 h2 2 Rh4 Bd8+ are hopeless, and even the correct advance **1 d7** appears mere spite; Black can still play **1...h2 2 Rxh2 Nf3+** and take the rook (see **2a**), and the bishop will look after the pawn. But **3 Kh5!** saves White, because **3...Nxh2 4 d8Q Bxd8** is stalemate (see **2b**). Pure bishop-and-knight stalemates are not uncommon, but it was neatly done, and after examining the Akobia collection and Harold van der Heijden's "Endgame study database 2000" I decided that I could properly publish it. The reaction of my solvers suggested that I was right.

**3** - draw   **3a** - after 2 Kd2   **3b** - after 3 Re6

3 appeared in the October-December *diagrammes* under the names of Mike Bent and myself, but the idea was wholly Mike's and I merely contributed to the detail. Play starts **1 Nd3+ Kd4 2 Kd2** tying up the Black king and threatening mate on e6 (see **3a**), and 2...Rh6 3 Rxh6 is clearly hopeless. **2...Re7**, therefore, but now White has **3 Re6**, blocking Black's threatened ...Re2+ and transferring his own mate threat to c6 (see **3b**). Black has nothing better than **3...Rc7** (the defence ...Ne7 which was present in the diagram has now been obstructed by the Black rook), and a typical Bent dance ensues: **4 Rc6** (blocking Black's ...Rc2+ and returning his own threat to e6) **Re7 5 Re6** and a draw by repetition.
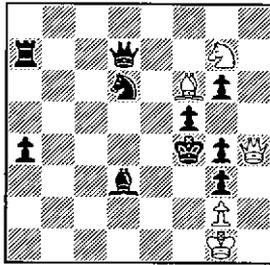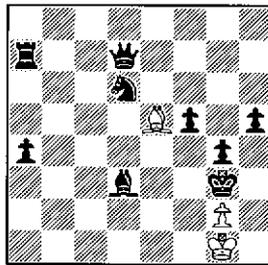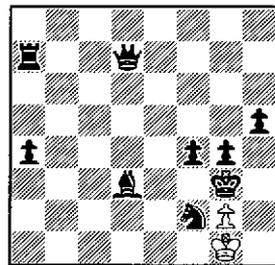
**4** - draw   **4a** - after 3 Be5+   **4b** - 5...Nxf2 stalemate

4, from the same issue of *diagrammes*, is a Bent draw on the grand scale. White is far behind on material and appears to have little hope of an attack because the Black king can escape to the west, but the startling sacrifice **1 Qxg3+!** forces **1...Kxg3** (e3 is now guarded and 1...Ke4 is met by mate), and 2 Be5+ Kh4 3 Bf6+ will give a draw by repetition ... no, it won't, Black can interpose a pawn. But a second sacrifice **2 Nh5+! gxh5** diverts the g-pawn, and now **3 Be5+** does look promising (see **3a**). 3...Kh4 4 Bf6+ Kg3 5 Be5+ gives an immediate repetition, so Black must play **3...f4**, and **4 Bd4** threatens mate (as does 4 Bc3, but 4...Qe6 is a killing response). If Black tries 4...f3 to make room for his king then 5 Be5+ reintroduces the previous repetition, hence **4...Ne4** to guard the mating square, but this merely lets White clinch the draw another way: **5 Bf2+! Nxf2** and it's stalemate (see **4b**).

This was the last of the many Mike Bent studies which I had the pleasure of publishing in *diagrammes*, and it made a very appropriate note on which to finish.
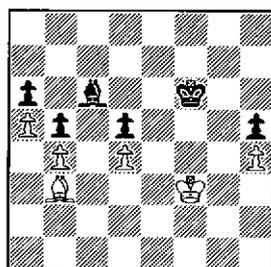
A curious set of corresponding squares

Position **1** was left for solution on our front page. Black to play loses at once, because he must either concede a pawn or allow White's king to advance. If White is to play, can he force a win without first withdrawing his king?
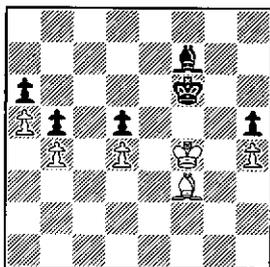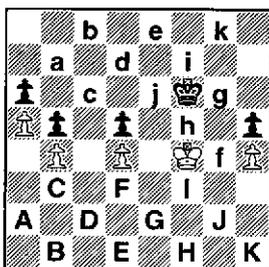
1   **1a**   **1b**

In fact he cannot, and diagram **1a** shows why not. If Black makes the slightest slip, he loses (the working out of the detail is left to the reader), but if he answers every move of the White bishop move by playing his own bishop to the square with the corresponding lower-case letter, White can never make progress.

But what a curious set of corresponding squares! Usually, with like-moving pieces, the sets of corresponding squares satisfy a simple shift-and-reflect geometrical relationship, but here we don't just have one or two exceptional pairs, we have two distinct subsets. The squares of subset Aa-Ee are an *odd* number of files and ranks apart, and the subsets can be displaced by one file and then reflected top-to-bottom into each other. The squares of subsets Gg-Jj are an *even* number of files and ranks apart, and can be displaced by four ranks and then reflected side-to-side into each other. And there are two exceptional pairs, Ff and Kk, which are an odd number of files and ranks apart but do not satisfy the shift-and-reflect relationship of Aa-Ee.

Normally, two incompatible subsets like Aa-Ee and Gg-Jj could not co-exist, because the attacker would simply move from one to the other and the defender would be unable to follow suit. But here, the only moves that Black cannot match are F-G and G-F, and he doesn't need to; if White moves from Ff to G or from Gg to F, Black doesn't lament his inability to play f-g or g-f, he simply takes the bishop.

In actual play, White can force a win without too much difficulty, for example by manoeuvring the bishops to Cc and then withdrawing his king to f3 (see **1b**). If Black now plays 1...Kf5, White has a win starting with 2 Bc2+; if Black tries 1...Kf7, he interrupts his bishop line e-g, and White can break the bishop equilibrium by playing C-E-G; and if Black moves his king anywhere else, White can take the king opposition. But some of the subsequent details are complicated, and it is only the problem "can White win *without* first withdrawing his king?" that has any degree of elegance. I don't normally feature such puzzles in *BESN*, but this particular example leads to one of the most interesting sets of corresponding squares that I have met.

More on queen against rook

In June, I reported Marc Bourzutschky's discovery that the ending of queen against rook was not generally won on a 16 x 16 board. Here are some further results.

Classes of drawn position on the 16 x 16 board

Using a powerful enquiry program supplied by Marc, I have identified various classes of drawn position with the defenders on adjacent squares (side by side or cornerwise): (a) both men within the 10 x 10 square d4-m13; (b) king on d3-m3, rook on rank 4; (c) king on f2-k2, rook on rank 3. If Black can reach such a position, he draws unless White can take the rook for nothing within three moves. Holding the draw may not be easy (all these positions are won for White on a 15 x 15 board, and if White plays a line which wins on the 15 x 15 Black will need to use one of the extra squares in order to survive), but at least this gives the defending side something to aim for.

Results on some rectangular boards

In special number 8 (December 1997), Paul Byway and I looked briefly at this ending on an 8 x 12 rectangular board, failed to find a win from the "Philidor" position, and conjectured that perhaps the ending might be drawn. In fact Marc has shown it to be won, and I give both the Philidor solution and the longest win in an article in the May issue of *Variant Chess*. I am willing to send a copy to any reader who is interested.

Marc has also examined some other rectangular boards, with these results:

Generally won	6 x 12	7 x 13	8 x 14	10 x 16
Not generally won	6 x 13	7 x 14	8 x 16	

Reciprocal zugzwangs on the 4 x 4 board


1 (1)   2 (2)   3 (3)   4 (5)   5 (8)

6 (9)   7 (11)   8 (14)   9 (15)
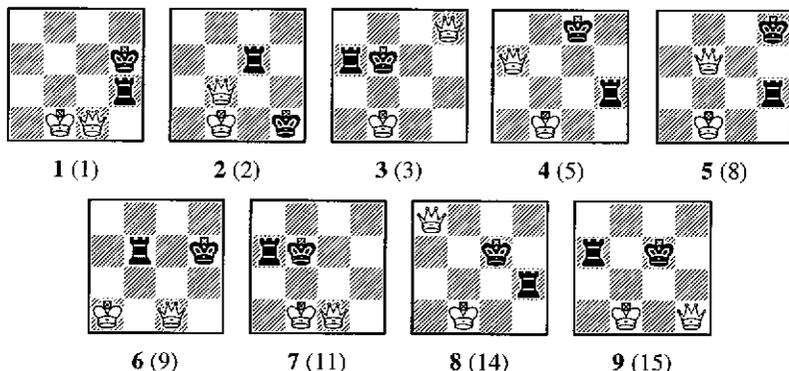
By way of light relief, I give the nine positions of reciprocal zugzwang found by Marc on the 4 x 4 board (there are none on boards from 5 x 5 to 15 x 15 inclusive). The brackets give depth to capture with Black to move. Answers on the back page.

From the world at large

The award in the 7th World Chess Composition Tournament was published at the end of June. To eliminate the possibility of own-country bias in the judging, each section was judged by five different countries; a composition was given the average of these five separate marks, or of the marks of the four foreign judges if the fifth was from his own country, and they were then ranked accordingly. One small difficulty remained, in that one judge in the study section took a noticeably harsh view of most of the entries (which in itself was fair enough, and I would probably have done the same), and because the other judges were more generous this meant that his own country's entries had a small competitive advantage. It is of course easy enough to anticipate such a possibility and to incorporate a balancing adjustment into the averaging, but apparently this was not done. But with this small reservation, the administration of the tournament was a resounding success. It had been widely if silently speculated that the new arrangements, however desirable in theory, would prove unworkable. In the event, the award was in print and being distributed within sixteen months of the closing date for entries, and all involved will rightly feel proud of this.
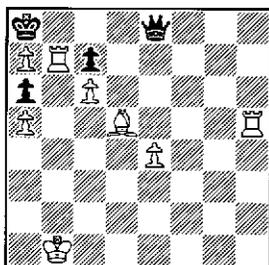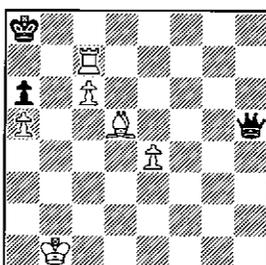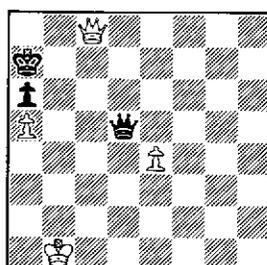

| 1 - win | 1a - after 3...Qxh5 | 1b - after 7...Qxd5 |

It is also pleasant to record that for once I found myself warming to the study which was placed first. The theme called for a plan which failed because of the presence of a White man, causing White to play so as to return to the same position without this man, and in **1** we see this happen no fewer than three times. Try 1 Rxc7 preparing to release the pawn on c6: no, 1...Qxe4+, with perpetual check or stalemate. All right, **1 Rb8+ Kxa7 2 Rb7+ Ka8** bringing us back to **1** without wPa7, and now we can play **3 Rxc7** and the stalemate has vanished. This time, Black has nothing better than **1...Qxh5**, and we have **1a**.

Now 4 c7+ would be a good move if only it were legal, hence **4 Rc8+ Ka7 5 Ra8+ Kxa8** and now it is. **6 c7+**, therefore, and after **6...Ka7 7 c8Q** White is a bishop and a pawn ahead ... no, he isn't, Black has **7...Qxd5** (see **1b**) and 8 exd5 will be stalemate. So we get rid of the queen as well: not by 8 Qb8+, which brings the Black king too close (8...Kxb8 9 exd5 Kc7 etc), nor by 8 Qxa6+ (8...Kxa6 9 exd5 Kxa5), but by **8 Qc7+ Ka8 9 Qa7+ Kxa7**, and now **10 exd5** does win. The sacrifice of a rook to free a pawn on c6 for a discovered check had been done by Krosny in 1972, but his

position was much cruder and his follow-up play was banal; the judges were right to discount it. Was it worth adding the capture of an unmoved rook on h5 in order to get back from **1a** to **1**, thus incorporating a third thematic sacrifice? Yes, if you want to obtain first place in a WCCT.
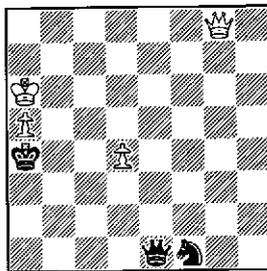
The composer was Pál Bennó of Hungary, and since the name appears three times in the booklet I presume there is no question of a misprint for "Benkö".
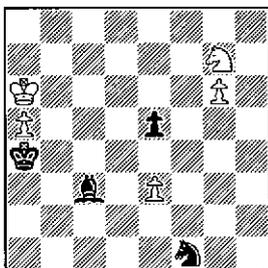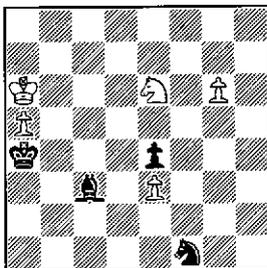
| 2 - win | 2a - after 1...e4 | 2b - 2 Nd4, after 5...e1Q |

Second place went to an 18-man heavyweight which was not to my taste, and third place to a 17-man position in which White started with RNBQK in their game array positions and eventually castled. I am sure this will be widely quoted elsewhere, but I am going to give precedence here to the fourth-placed **2** by Mirko Miljanić. Play starts **1 Ne6** (we'll look at alternatives in a moment), and after **1...e4** to stop 2 g7 we have **2a**. The natural continuation is 2 Nd4 Bxd4 3 exd4 followed by 4-5 g8Q, but Black will promote as well and White isn't going to get anywhere (see **2b**). If only a5 were vacant... **2 Kb6** (threat 3 a6 etc) **Bxa5+** (if 2...Nxe3 then 3 a6 Nd5+ 4 Kc5 Ka5 5 Kxd5 Kxa6 6 Nd4 e3 7-8 g8Q e1Q 9 Qa8+ and mate in a few) **3 Ka6** (3 Kc5 Bc3 4 Nd4 Nxe3 5 g7 Bxd4+ 6 Kxd4 Nf5+) **Bc3** (**2a** without wPa5) **4 Nd4 Bxd4 5 exd4 e3 6-7 g8Q e1Q** (**2b** without wPa5) **8 Qa2+ Kb4 9 Qa5+**. If White plays the apparently equivalent 1 Nf5 e4 2 Kb6, Black's move 2...Nxe3 gains time by an attack on the White knight (3 Nxe3 Bxa5+ 4 Kc5 Bc3 etc, 3 a6 Nxf5); if he plays 1 e4 to block out the bishop, Black has 1...Ng3 and the knight will stop the pawn instead.

These were not the only good things in the award, but my enthusiasm soon began to fade. Too many of the positions were so cluttered and characterless that my interest was killed from the start (even without counting the men necessarily present in order to be sacrificed, the median number of bits on the board was 12); and when the positions were lighter, the play was usually too simple to have any real novelty. Was the tournament worth while? The effort of mounting it was immense and some will say that the willingness of people to do the work automatically says "Yes", but unpaid volunteers tend to value their contributions by the cost to themselves in time, effort, and inconvenience, and not by stepping back and taking a hard and critical look at what they are actually achieving. Yes, it prompted some fine compositions, but too many of the studies in the award booklet are mediocre and some are frankly feeble. If those who administered it had put the same effort into creating their own compositions for normal publication, would not the results have been far more beneficial?

News and notices

Leonid Kubbel. Timothy Whitworth has produced a **new edition** of his book on the endgame studies of Leonid Kubbel, and readers wishing to order a copy will find a leaflet with this issue of *BESN*. It is something I am very happy to endorse.

Out-of-print books. When writing this month's special number on the studies of Vitaly Halberstadt, I used the BCPS library copy of *Curiosités tactiques des finales*. Thanks to Stéphane Kronis in Paris, I now have my own copy. His stalls are at concession 15 on the Quai des Grands Augustins, opposite the end of rue Gît-le-Coeur (Métro to St. Michel, then turn left along the river), and readers who have occasion to visit Paris will find him an excellent source for out-of-print chess books of all kinds (StephaneKronis@aol.com, English spoken).

Meetings. The next *EG* readers' meeting will be at 17 New Way Road, London NW9 6PL, on **Friday October 8** at 6.00 pm; non-subscribers welcome, but please bring £5 towards the buffet (except on a first visit). Bring the latest *EG* with you!

Q v R zugzwang solutions (see page 277). Black to play, **1**, trivial; **2**, 1...Rc4 2 Qb3+ etc; **3**, 1...Ra4 2 Qb2+ Kc4 3 Kc2 etc; **4**, 1...Rd3 2 Qa4+ Kc3 3 Kc1 and we have 3; **5**, 1...Rc2 2 Qa4+ Rc4 3 Qd1+ (A) Kc3 4 Kc1 (B) Rb4 5 Qc2+ Kd4 6 Kd1 Rb3 7 Kd2 and 2; **6**, 1...Kd4 2 Ka2 Rc3 3 Qd1+ Rd3 4 Qa4+ and A; **7**, 1...Kb4 2 Kb2 Rb3+ 3 Ka2 Rc3 4 Qd2 Kc4 5 Qd1 Rd3 6 Qa4+ Kc3 7 Ka3 and B; **8**, 1...Rb2+ 2 Kc1 (C) Rb3 3 Qa1+ Kd3 4 Kd1 Rc3 5 Qb1+ Kc4 6 Kd2 Ra3 7 Qc1+ Kb4 8 Qb2+ Ka4 9 Qd4+ and A; **9**, 1...Rb3+ 2 Kc1 Rb2 3 Qa4 and C. White to play (my analysis, selected lines only), **1**, 1 Qa3+ Kc4 and 4, or 1 Ka1 Rc2 2 Qd1+ (2 Qa3+ Kc4 and 6, 2 Qb1 Kc3 (Y) 3 Qd1 Rb2/Rd2 and White will get nowhere) Kc3 3 Qb1 (3 Kb1 Rb2+ 4 Kc1 Ra2) Rd2 4 Qc1+ Rc2 and so on; **2**, 1 Qb4 Rc1+ 2 Ka2 (2 Kb2 Rb1+) Rc2+ 3 Ka3 Rc3+ 4 Ka4 Kc2 and Y, or 1 Ka1 Rc1+ etc; **3**, 1 Qd3+ Kb4 (Z) 2 Qd2+ (2 Qc2 Rb3+ 3 Ka2 Ra3+ 4 Kb2 Ra2+, 2 Qd1 Rb3+ etc) Kc4 and 4; **4**, 1 Qa4+ Kc3 and 8, or 1 Qc1+ Kd3 and 1, or 1 Kc1 Rc4 and Z, or 1 Ka1 Rc2 and 6; **5**, 1 Qa4+ Kc3 and 8, or 1 Qb4+ Kd3 2 Qa3+ (2 Kc1 Rc2+ 3 Kb1/Kd1 Rc1+ etc, 2 Ka1 Rd1+ with 3 Ka2 Rc1 and 4 or 3 Kb2 Rb1+) Kc4 and 4, or 1 Qa3 Kc4 and 4, or 1 Kc1 Rc2+ 2 Kd1 Rd2+, or 1 Ka1 Rc2 2 Qa4+ (2 Qb4+ Kd3, 2 Qb1 Kc3 and Y) Kc3 3 Kb1 Rd2 and 8; **6**, 1 Qd1+ Kc3 2 Ka2 Rb4 and 8, or 1 Ka2 Rb4 and 4; **7**, 1 Qd1+ Kc3 and 9, or 1 Qd2 Kc4 and 4; **8**, 1 Qa3+ Kc4 and 4, or 1 Qa1+ Kb3 2 Kc1 Rc2+ etc, or 1 Kc1 Rd3 and 3, or 1 Ka1 Rb2 and as after Y; **9**, 1 Qc2+ Kb4 etc, or 1 Qc1+ Kb3 and 7. Transpositions may involve rotation or reflection. **2** remains reciprocal zugzwang on a 3 x 3 board, but not **1** because Black to play can sacrifice for stalemate.

Anybody wishing to give notice in BESN 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.