British Endgame Study News
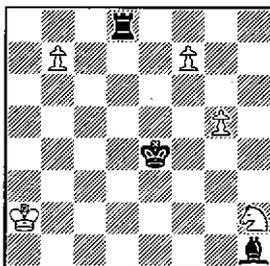
Contents of this issue

by Paul Michelet
White to play and win

Another British solving success. This year's World Solving Championship was won by Piotr Murdzia of Poland, but Jonathan Mestel and John Nunn came second and third and scored sufficiently well to gain Great Britain the team title. Well done, gentlemen.

This issue. Paul Michelet recently sent me a couple of studies for the *BCM* in which he seemed to have added something worthwhile to a known scheme. I think both are best presented as "try this before looking inside", so one appears above and the second will follow next time. The special number looks at the studies in a famous collection, and there is a complete index to date to mark the end of our tenth year.

Spotlight (see also page 320). Harrie Grondijs takes gentle issue with my dismissal of Daniel Harrwitz's role in the Saavedra saga (September, page 308). He points out that Harrwitz was the first to set up a position allowing the stalemate defence, even though he did not spot it (see page 300 of *No Rook Unturned*).

Alain Villeneuve was the first to point out that the main line in T. King Parks's **13** in special number 44 is fine, since my 5 Nf1+ is merely a trip down a blind alley. 5...Kf4 (instead of 5...Ke4) forces 6 Nd2, and 6...Ke3 then repeats the position.

Alain also makes some interesting points regarding Behting's **9** in special number 43. If in the line 1 h5 Nf8 2 Ke7 Kg7 White plays 3 h6+ instead of 3 Ke8, the sequel 3...Kh8 4 Bh7 gives **9a** but with the White king on e7 instead of e8. Now 4...Ng6 still draws and 4...Nxh7 still loses, but in the latter case White has to triangulate to force the win (5 Kc8 Nf6+ 6 Kd8! Nh7 7 Ke7). This study is exercise 586 in Alain's two-volume textbook *Les finales* (Grasset, Paris, 1998). He agrees that 5...Nh8 is the main line for the study-lover because it has no dual, but writing for the player he had to give precedence to 5...Ne7 (and he likes the line 6 Ke5 Nxg8 7 h7!).

Accounts for 2005. As I expected, I am having to charge UK readers £7 for the current year (£8 to the rest of Europe, £10 elsewhere). There is a reminder letter with this issue if your subscription has run out; otherwise, please assume that you remain in credit until I tell you otherwise.
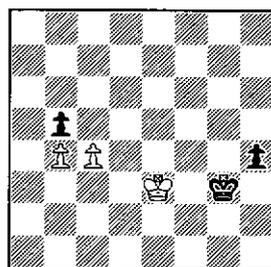
Recently published British originals
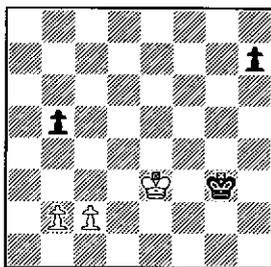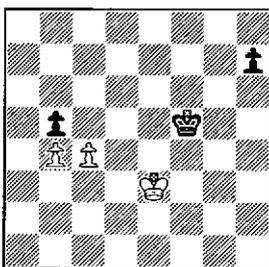
**1 - win**   **1a - 1...Kg4, after 2...Kf5**   **1b - 1...h5, after 2...h4**

Correspondence Chess has resumed and Ian Watson's problem and study column with it, and Martin Gawne's **1** recently appeared therein. It's neat rather than difficult, but many composers have made a less tidy beginning. White starts **1 b4**, and there are two lines. If **1...Kg4** then **2 c4 Kf5** gives **1a**, and **3 c5** is the way to win; 3...cxb5 only draws. If instead **1...h5** then **2 c4 h4** and it's the other way round (see **1b**): 3 c5 only draws and **3 cxb5** is the winning move (we need the check on b8). This appears to have been the first study that Martin submitted for publication, though it was not the first to appear in print.
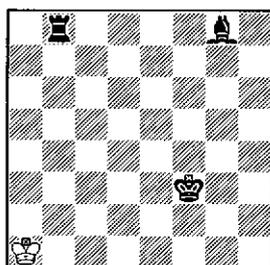
Ian tells me he now has enough confidence to have restarted asking composers for originals (ian@irwatson.demon.co.uk), and I am delighted to hear it.
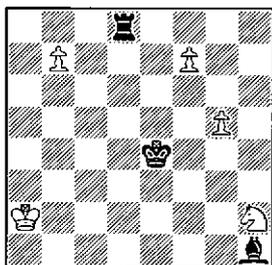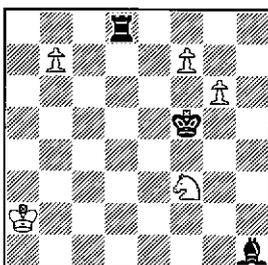
2 - draw   **2a - after 2 Nf3**   **2b - stalemate**

Paul Michelet's **2** was in the November *BCM*. **1 g6 Kf5** is obvious, but if 2 g7 then 2...Bd5+ 3 K~ Bxf7 and Black will mop up. White must interpolate **2 Nf3!** (see **2a**) **Bxf3**, after which **3 g7 Bd5+ 4 Ka1! Bxf7 5 g8Q B/Rxg8 6 b8Q Rxb8** is stalemate (see **2b**). If instead 2...Kxg6 then 3 Ne5+ and 4 Nd7 forces the draw; if 2...Kf6 then 3 Ne5 is simplest (3...Kxe5 4 g7 and again stalemate), though 3 Ng5 also draws. The stalemate dates back to the Platov brothers (3 Pr *Shakhmatnoye obozreniye* 1910, **131** in Timothy Whitworth's collection), but I thought the addition of 2 Nf3 was worth having. And we may note that the move order must be exact; if 1 Nf3 Bxf3 2 g6 then 2...Bh5! (3 g7 Bxf7+ 4 Ka1 Rb8).

Yet more computer progress

Six-man endings. A message sent out by Eugene Nalimov on August 9 reported the creation of a definitive tablebase for the ending K+2P v K+2P, thus completing the three-against-three endings (four-against-two endings having already been finished). The task of distribution remains massive and when I visited Eiko Bleicher's site

http://www.k4it.de

on October 29 it was advertising only 51 of the 65 3-3 endings with pawns, though all 3-3 pawnless and 4-2 with and without pawns were available. But it can be only a matter of time before a complete look-up service for six-man endings is available.

Seven-man endings. Marc Bourzutschky has analysed further endings using the programs developed by Yakov Konoval and himself, and the results are starting to change chess theory. **1** shows the longest win with K+R+B+N v K+R+B, the play taking 226 moves to capture, and Marc has also evaluated generic positions such as **2** (this one being won in 90 moves) and has examined some positions of reciprocal zugzwang (which all seem to feature White under pressure and needing only to disentangle himself). From all this, it appears that White can expect to win with this material if he can consolidate his forces without allowing Black to regain a piece or to reduce to a simpler drawn ending (the 50-move rule being ignored, of course). The existence of specific fortress positions for the defence cannot as yet be excluded, but it would seem that if a position with this material turns up in the course of analysis or composition it should now be assumed won unless the defence can prove otherwise (Marc reports that the van der Heijden database contains a few such studies that are labelled as draws but in fact turn out to be lengthy wins).
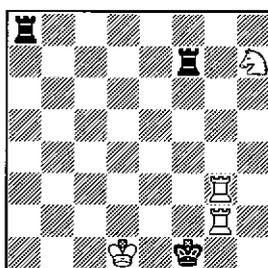
The same ending with unlike bishops appears to be more simply won, because there is less chance for the defence to force a simplifying exchange.
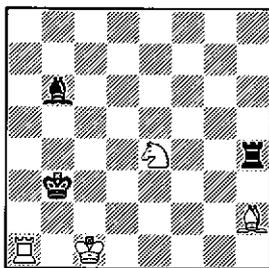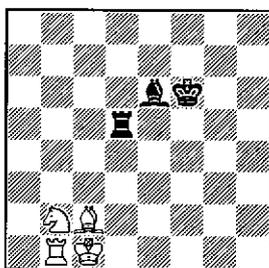
| 1 - White wins in 226 | 2 - White wins in 90 | 3 - White wins in 290! |

Other endings now analysed include K+2R+B v K+2R and K+2R+N v K+2R. These turn out to be immensely complicated and any general result that may exist is not yet apparent to me, but again the extra men help the attacker and position **3** sets a new depth record: White requires no fewer than 290 moves to mate or capture!

I imagine that further information, perhaps including the detailed moves of these and other long wins, will be appearing in *EG*.

More drawing promotions to bishop and rook

Gady Costeff reacted to my quotation of G. F. Anderson's pioneer study showing a draw by successive promotions to bishop and rook (**17** in special number 44, repeated as **1** below) by sending three further examples, with a comment that the four together provide a typical artistic progression: the first shows a theme however crudely and clumsily, the second manages some improvement, the third creates a classic, and the fourth has to find something new all over again.
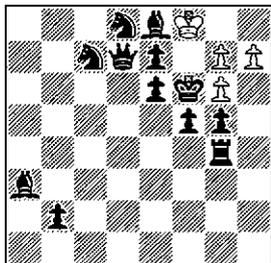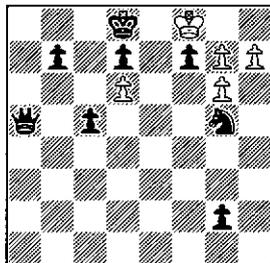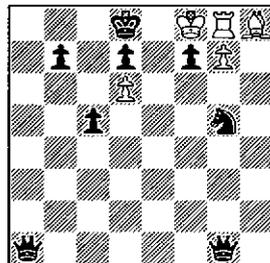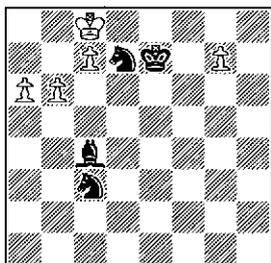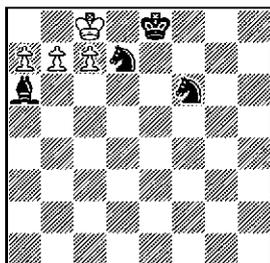

| 1 - draw | 2 - draw | 2a - after 3 g7 |

1 is Anderson's pioneer from 1917, with main line **1 h8B Ke5 2 g8R+ K-- 3 g7** and the stalemate cannot be released.
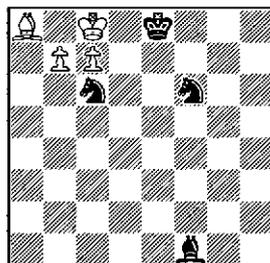
J. Koch's **2** (1 HM *Magyar Sakkélet* 1967) simplifies the setting by putting the rook promotion first. **1 g8R** (threat 2 Kg7 mate) **Qa1 2 h8B g1Q 3 g7** gives **2a**, and the stalemate can be released only at the cost of mate in a move or two.

| 3 - draw | 3a - after 4...Nexf6 | 3b - after 7...Bf1 |

Jan Rusinek's **3** (1 Pr *New Statesman* Ty 1971) achieves the task using a mere nine men, and adds a knight promotion to boot. **1 a7** (else mate in a few) **Ba6+** (Black must stop White from escaping via b7, and if 1...Bd5 then 2 g8Q appears good enough though we gave 2 g8N+ Ke8 3 Nf6+ Nxf6 4 a8Q Bxa8 5 b7 in *Endgame Magic*) **2 b7 Ne4** (threatening mate on d6 and forcing the knight promotion) **3 g8N+ Ke8 4 Nf6+ Nexf6** (see **3a**) **5 a8B** (anything else allows mate in two by ...Nd5 and ...Ne7, but now Black must spend time releasing the stalemate) **Ne5 6 Kb8 Nc6+ 7 Kc8 Bf1** (see **3b**)
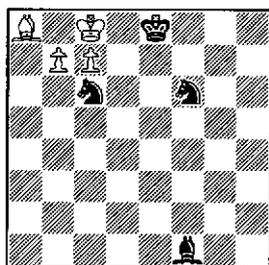
3b repeated - after 7...Bf1   **3c** - after 9 Rb7   **3d** - see text
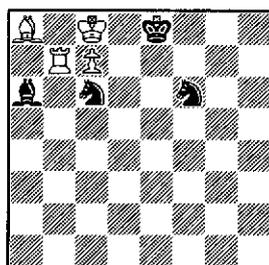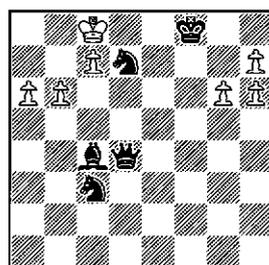
8 b8R (if 8 b8Q then 8...Ba6+ 9 B/Qb7 Ne4 and mate on d6, and if 8 b8N then 8...Ne7+ 9 Kb7 Bg2+ and Black will soon come down to a winning ending with three pieces against one) **Ba6+ 9 Rb7** restoring the stalemate (see **3c**), and again the need to release it prevents Black from mating on d6.

The composer subsequently published the extended version **3d** which has all four promotions (*64* 1978, 1 h8Q Qxh8 2 g7+ Qxg7 3 hxg7+ Ke7 and we have **3**), but the extension is crude and **3** remains the version that everybody talks about. As reported in *EG* 79, the extension was in fact composed before **3** was published, but the shorter version was preferred as being the more artistic. I imagine most readers will agree.
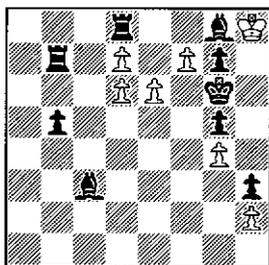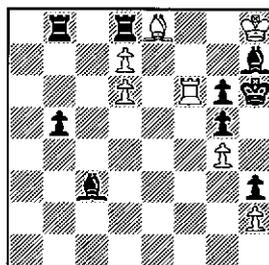

4 - draw   **4a** - 1...Rbb8, after 4...g6

But the existence of a classic need not deter composers from exploring further. Yochanan Afek's **4** appeared in *Magyar Sakkélet* in 1978. **1 e7** is automatic, and if **1...Rbb8** then **2 e8B** (so that 2...Bxf7 will be stalemate) **Bh7** (the principal threat was 3 f8Q+ Kh6 4 Qf3 Rxe8 5 dxe8Q Rxe8 6 Qxh3+ Kg6 7 Qh5+ Kf6 8 Qxe8, and now this fails because 5...Rxe8 will be check) **3 f8R+ Kh6 4 Rf6+ g6** with a double-pin stalemate where both pieces pinned have arisen by underpromotion (see **4a**). And there is more, because if **1...Kxf7** then **2 exd8N+ Kf8 3 Ne6+ Bxe6 4 d8Q+** and we have had the other two promotions. There remains 1...Bxf7+, to which the answer is 2 exd8Q Kh6 (other moves lose) 3 Qxg5+ Kxg5 4 d8Q+ and White's d-pawn and his highly mobile queen will be sufficient to nullify Black's nominal material advantage (the computer gives 4...Bf6 5 Qc8 g6+ 6 Kh7 Bd5+ 7 d7 Be4 8 Qe8 Kf4 9 Qf7 Kxg4 10 Qxf6 Rxd7+ 11 Kh6 Rd5 12 Qc3 with a comfortable draw, and no improvement for Black appears possible).

From the world at large
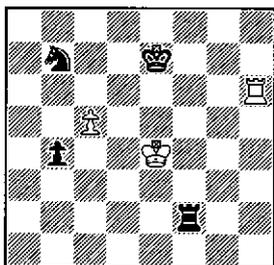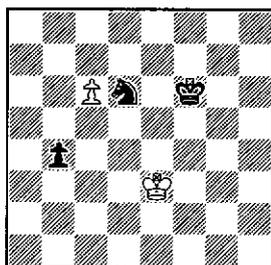
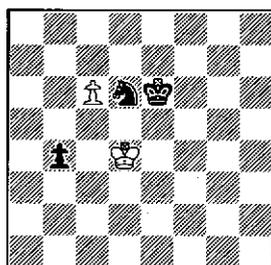1 - draw   1a - 2 Rxf6, after 3...Nd6   1b - see text

Sergei Osintsev's **1** appeared in *Šachová skladba* in 2002, and has just been awarded 1st Prize in that magazine's tourney for 2001-2. White must win pawn or knight before Black can organize his forces, so let's try some obvious lines.

1 Rb6 allows 1...Nxc5+, and Black will consolidate his material plus (I'll skip the detailed analysis given).

1 Rh7+ Rf7 2 Rxf7+ Kxf7 3 c6 can be met by 3...Nc5+ followed up most simply by 4...Ke7, giving up the knight and relying on the pawn.

1 Rh5 and 1 Rh7+ Rf7 2 Rh5 hold White's pawn but do nothing to help his attack, and after ...b3 it is Black who has made progress and not White.

1 c6 Nd6+ 2 Kd5 looks superficially promising, but Black can play 2...Rd2+ 3 Kc5 b3 and again he will eventually consolidate.

The answer given to 1 Kd3 is 1...Na5 with play to Black's move 8, but my computer thinks 1...b3 wins more simply. However, 1 Kd5 threatens 2 Rh7+ etc, and now 1...b3 doesn't work and 1...Na5 does seem to be best. It also defeats 1 Kd4.

This leaves very little but **1 Ke3!** apparently going in the wrong direction, but it takes the king out of range of the Black knight and gains a tempo by attacking the rook. If now 1...Rb2 then 2 Rh7+ and 3 Rxb7; if 1...Rf7 then 2 Rb6, and the previous answer ...Nxc5 no longer works because it isn't check. But Black has **1...Rf6** blocking the White rook's path to b6, and now both White men are under attack.

The natural continuation is 2 Rxf6 Kxf6 3 c6, since 3...Nc5 can now be met by 4 c7. However, Black also has 3...Nd6, giving **1a**. He threatens 4...Ke5 followed by 5-6...Kc5, so White must try 4 Kd4, but 4...Ke6 gives **1b** and White must retreat.

So 2 Rxf6 fails, but White can play **2 Rf7+ Rf7 3 Rxf7 Kxf7** exchanging on f7 instead. Now **4 c6 Nd6** gives **1a** but with the Black king on f7, and Black no longer threatens ...Ke5. So White has time for **5 Kd3** threatening 6 Kc2 etc, and Black's only counter is **5...Ke6** ready to meet 6 Kc2 with 6...Kd5. But White plays **6 Kd4** giving **1b** with Black to play, and it is Black's turn to retreat: **6...Ke7**. White plays **7 Kd3** renewing the threat of Kc2, and **7...Ke6 8 Kd4** gives a draw by repetition.

A fine study indeed, but compositions like this fully justify the decision of magazines such as *The Problemist* to print original studies with solutions alongside. It appears to have found a single successful solver, and I am surprised it had even one.

Our September issue went to press before I heard of the death of Alexander Hildebrand (1921-2005). He was born in Estonia but had lived in Sweden since the end of World War 2, and his genial nature and linguistic fluency did a great deal to lubricate meetings of study and problem composers.

A typical Hildebrand study was not particularly deep, but he had a welcome gift for piquancy. Play in **2** (2HM *Suomen Shakki* 1948) has to start **1 Rxa2**, but then things get interesting. **1...Rc7+** gains time with a check and appears to let the other rook through to capture on e8, but **2 Bc6** transfers the capture to c6, and after **2...Rxc6+ 3 Kd5** both Black rooks are under attack. All right, **3...Ree6** rescues one and defends the other, but now **4 d4+!** sets up a totally unexpected stalemate (see **2a**), and all White has to do is to keep checking with his rook until Black captures it.
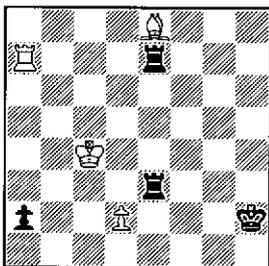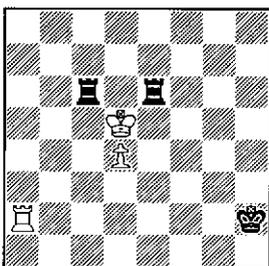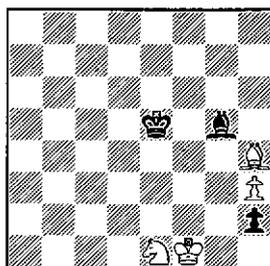

**2** - draw   **2a** - after 4 d4+   **3** - win

Several composers have worked on the theme of **3** (*Tidskrift för Schack* 1949), but this first setting remains as neat as any. **1 Bg3+ Bf4** is obvious, but if 2 Bxf4+ Kxf4 3 Kg2 then 3...h1Q+ 4 Kxh1 Kg3 and the pawn goes. Hence **2 Bxh2 Bxh2 3 Nf3+ Kf4**, but again the immediate capture fails (4 Nxh2 Kg3), and the obvious second choice 4 Kg2 is no better (4...Bg3 and White has no good move, see **3a**). Correct is **4 Kf2! Bg3+** and only now **5 Kg2**, and this time we have **3a** with Black to move.
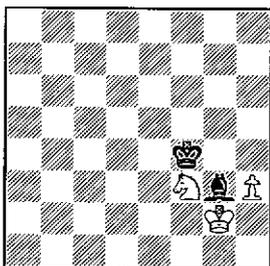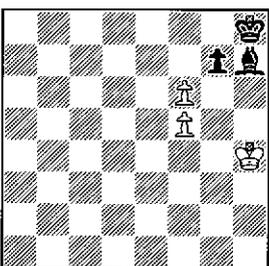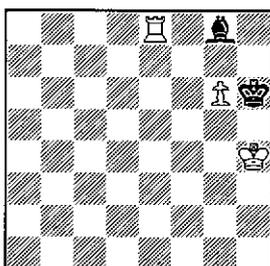
3a - see text   **4** - win   **4a** - after 4...Kh6

4 (*Tidningen Uppsala* 1954) starts **1 f7 g5+ 2 fxg6 Bg8**, and **3 f8R** avoids giving stalemate. But Black continues **3...Kg7**, and after **4 Re8 Kh6** we have **4a** and 5 Rxg8 will give another stalemate. Never mind: **5 Kg4 Bb3** say (White's rook stops 5...Be6+) **6 Kf5** and White wins (if 6...Bc2+ 7 Kf6 Bxg6 then 8 Rh8+ Bh7 9 Kf7).

News and notices

EG. Readers who subscribe to *EG* by paying sterling to myself should note that the subscription for 2006 will be **£17** as for this year. My sterling price of **£40** for **Harold van der Heijden's "Endgame study database III"** will also be valid until the end of next year. Please make all cheques payable to "J D Beasley".

Auguste d'Orville. It isn't a study matter, but I have produced a second edition of my 1990 book *Some problems by Auguste d'Orville*, and it is being sent without charge to all who hold a copy of the first edition. If you should have received a copy and haven't, please tell me. It will also be distributed without charge with the next issue of Vlastimil Fiala's *Quarterly for Chess History*, and is otherwise available from me at £5.00 including UK postage (£5.50 to the rest of Europe, £6.00 elsewhere).

Meetings. The next *EG* readers' meeting will be at 17 New Way Road, London NW9 6PL, on **Friday January 13** 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!

Endings on the web. Several chess web sites regularly include endings and endgame studies among their material, and Brian Gosling's site

www.chessending.com

does so more than most. It is well worth a visit.

Spotlight continued. Alas, Harrie Grondijs reports that the elegant switchback by Ronald Turnbull which graced our front page in September 1996 had indeed been done, even though Richard Harman had it not: J. W. Keemink, *Het Eindspel* 1928.

Harold van der Heijden tells me that John Crum's **1** in special number 44 appeared in *Deutsche Schachzeitung* in June 1907, which makes this its primary source. He also tells me that Crum's **2** appeared in *Deutsche Schachzeitung* in January 1913, which may or may not have predated its appearance in the *Glasgow Weekly Citizen*.

Timothy Whitworth tells me that the 1917 tourney of *L'Eco degli Scacchi* (special number 44, pages 5/8) was not for stalemates; it was for sets of studies, the magazine inviting composers to send "de 2 a 5 compositions inedites qui présentent des positions réduites de combinaison élegante loin de l'étude theorique". The three prizes went to sets by Rinck, Kubbel, and Villeneuve-Esclapon, and three honourable mentions were awarded to single studies by Drewitt (**8** in our special number), Anderson (**17**), and Mouterde. There is a follow-up to the Anderson in our middle pages. And Colin Russ tells me that Anderson was Alekhine's opponent in the latter's last recorded game (in a Lisbon simul on 9 March 1946, game 2535 in the Skinner/Verhoeven collection, Alekhine won). Alekhine died two weeks later.

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.