British Endgame Study News

Contents of this issue

Board 6x6
White to play and win

This issue. There is some curious anlysis with R v B (solving the position above took me a fortnight), a review of a significant new book, and a special number containing some foreign studies which first appeared in *EG*. There is also a composite index to date.

Accounts for 2008. UK readers are being charged £8 for the year (£9 to the rest of Europe, £11 elsewhere). There is a reminder letter with this issue if your subscription has run out; if there isn't, please assume that you remain in credit until told otherwise.

Spotlight (see also back page). David Friedgood feels that my comment to **12** in special number 56 didn't quite do it justice. I wrote that 1 h7 Kxh7 helped White by "preparing the ground for stalemate", which indeed it does, but it does so in two ways: by jettisoning the pawn, and by forcing Black to block h7 (if this square is left vacant then 4...Bh7 lifts the stalemate). The fact that White has to jettison the pawn anyway obscures this second neat point. David wonders whether composers can produce something similar where there is a try which fails *only* because h7 is left open. "It would be well worth it, as the idea, where Black is helpless against the stalemate threat by a hopelessly outgunned White, is most attractive."

Noam Elkies points out that in **3** on page 407, the answer to 2...Kb7 should read "3 Na5+ and 4 Nb3 or 4 Bg5", the latter being needed after 3...Kc8, and that in **4** on the same page, 1 Kf1 allows not just perpetual check but mate in three.

Timothy Whitworth tells me that Lazard's **11** in special number 56, far from gaining seventh prize in the 1912 tourney of *La Stratégie*, doesn't even appear to have been entered for the tourney (he has sent me a photocopy of the definitive award). Its true source is unknown to us. He mentions that it develops an idea that had been shown by Lauritzen in *Nationaltidende* in 1906 (White Ka4, Bf3, Nc7, Pa2, Black Kd4, Pb2/c6, draw by 1 Be4 Kxe4 2 Nb5 etc). The source of **13** in the same number should have been given as *Shakhmatny vestnik*.

And Paul Valois tells me that A. Herberg's **6** in special number 54 was not an ordinary *New Statesman* column piece, but a correction of a tourney prizewinner which had been found to be unsound.
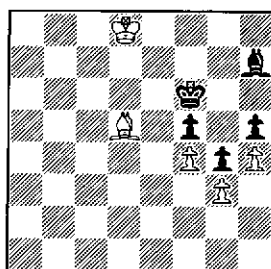
Recently published British originals
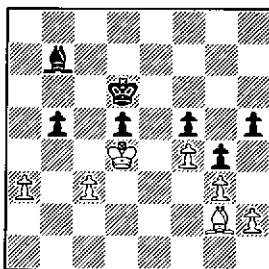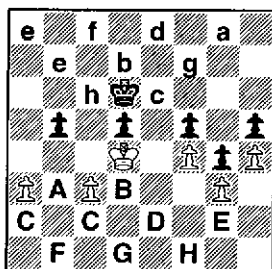
1 - win (see text)　　　1a - where bB must go　　　1b - see text

There is only **1**, which is not a true original but a version of the Baxter prizewinner which we looked at in June. I set it in the November *BCM* with two questions: how does White win after 1 Bf1 Bc6 2 h4, and why does an immediate 1 h4 not work?

Take the latter first. As we saw in June, Black can meet 1 h4 by the corresponding-square defence shown in **1a**, and he must start with 1...Ba8! since he is already on b7. If White plays to b3/c2/d1 and advances the a-pawn, Black, now on g8/e6/f7, can exchange and meet White's Bxa4 with ...Bf7 or ...Bg6. This keeps the White bishop from e8, and White will get nowhere. Even in **1b**, where White has opened the a2-g8 diagonal by exchanging off Black's d-pawn and seems to have made some progress, White cannot do any damage; 1 Bc6 Bg6 2 Be8 Bxe8 3 Kxe8 Kc6 is hopeless, and if 1 Ke8 Bg6+ 2 Kf8 then 2...Bf7! stops him dead because 3 Bxf7 is stalemate.

After **1 Bf1 Bc6 2 h4**, the capture 2...gxh3 opens extra lines of attack for White, Black's bishop cannot play to c6 because it is already there, and if he tries 2...Bd7 White replies 3 Bd3 and wins at once (a motif that will recur). This leaves **2...Be8**, and play unfolds **3 Be2 Bc6** (3...Bd7 4 Bd3) **4 Bd1! Bd7** (4...Ba8 5 Bc2, 4...Bb7 5 Bb3 Bc6 6 Bc2 Bd7 7 Bd3, 4...Be8 5 Bc2 Bd7/Bg6 6 Bd3) **5 Bb3 Be6** (5...Bc6 6 Bc2 Bd7 7 Bd3) **6 Bc2 Bc8** (6...Bd7 7 Bd3) **7 a4 bxa4 8 Bxa4**. When we tried this before, the Black bishop was on e6/f7/g8, and he could play ...Bf7 or ...Bg6. With his bishop on c8, he cannot stop White penetrating to e8, and the rest will be easy.

If, after 1 Bf1 Bc6, White plays 2 h3 instead of 2 h4, 2...Be8 holds the draw. White can continue 3 hxg4 hxg4 4 Be2 and then play as before to get his bishop through to e8, but with no target on h5 there is nothing to be gained, and if instead 3 h4 then 3...Bc6 gives Black the draw already seen. Similarly, if White plays 1 h3 in the initial position, 1...Bc6 draws. And if Black meets 1 Bf1 with 1...Ba6 instead of 1...Bc6, the answer is not 2 a4 "exploiting" the pin (when 2...bxa4 wins for Black) but 2 Bd3 etc.
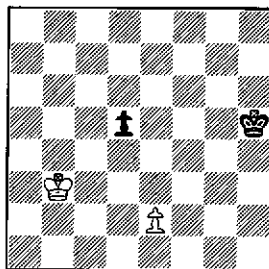
The difference from the position we saw in June is that the White pawn has been moved from e3 to c3, which takes out the line that was giving trouble (and which as far as I know is still unresolved). Now, if the White king leaves d4, Black can play his bishop to d7/h7/g6 and then his king to c5, and the draw is not difficult to show.

Compared with Baxter's original, **1** takes out the obscurity and adds the refutation line 1 h4 Ba8, and though only "Baxter, version by JDB" I think it is worth having.

Studies for the *Braille Chess Magazine*

My second selection for the *Braille Chess Magazine*.

1 was published by Josef Moravec in 1940. The natural way to attack the Black pawn is by 1 Kc3 Kg5 2 Kd4, but Black replies 2...Kf4 and White finds himself helpless: 3 Kxd5 Ke3 etc, or 3 e3+ Kf3. The correct way is **1 Kb4! Kg5 2 Kc5 Kf4 3 Kd4**, taking three moves to reach d4 instead of two. Now we have the same position but with Black to play, and his king will have to retreat and lose touch with e3: **3...Kf5** (say) **4 Kxd5** with a routine win.

My distribution of Emil Vlasák's booklet *Moravec under the microscope* with *BESN* a few years ago has caused Moravec to be underrepresented in *BESN* itself, but his attractive and instructive studies are likely to

1 - win

feature frequently in my *Braille Chess Magazine* selections. I still have a few copies of the booklet left, and they are excellent value at £4 including UK postage (add the usual 10% or 20% for postage abroad).

Moravec published **2** in 1941. **1 Ke4 h5 2 d4 Kf2** (2...h4 3 Kf4 is straight-forward) **3 Kf4 Kg2**, and now White must be careful: 4 Kg5? Kg3! (threat 5...h4 drawing) 5 Kxh5 Kf4 and White's pawn will be caught. Correct is **4 d5** allowing Black to promote, because after **4...h4 5 d6 h3 6 d7 h2 7 d8Q h1Q** White can continue **8 Qd2+** with the "Polerio" Q v Q mate known since the 1590s (8...Kg1 9 Kg3 etc, or 8...Kh3 9 Qe3+ Kg2 10 Qe2+ Kh3 11 Qg4+ etc, or 8...Kf1 9 Qd1+ Kg2 10 Qe2+). This mate often turns up in studies, either at the end of the main line or in the analysis of sidelines, and it is by no means unknown in practical play.
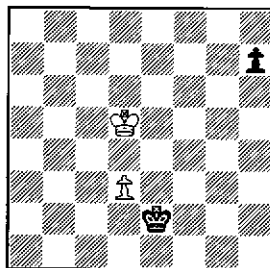
2 - win

3, a 1984 study by the Georgian composer David Gurgenidze, also comes down to a Q v Q mate, but there is more to it than just this. Surely it will be 1 fxg5+ and 2 RxQ? But Black will play 1...Kh6 or 1...Kh8, and in either case 2 RxQ will give stalemate. The answer to this is first to get rid of one rook by **1 Rd7+ Kh8** (1...Kh6 2 Rxg6+ and mate next move) **2 Rh7+! Kxh7**, and only then to play **3 fxg6+**. Now Black can no longer hope for a stalemate after 3...Kh6. However, he can still try **3...Kh8**, when 4 RxQ will still give stalemate, and if 4 g7+ then 4...Qxg7+ 5 Rxg7 with yet another stalemate. Draw? No, White sacrifices his second rook by **4 Rh5+**, and

3 - win

after **4...Qxh5** he has **5 g7+ Kh7 6 g8Q+ Kh6 7 Qg7 mate;** Black's queen is on just the wrong square.
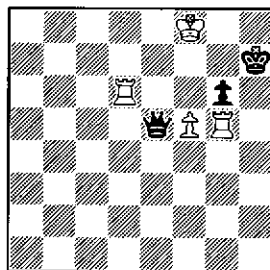
Rook against bishop on a 6x6 board

Earlier this year, Václav Kotěšovec was looking at endings of the general form R + X v B/N where X was an unorthodox piece of some kind. As a preliminary step, he looked at R v B/N on 6x6 and 7x7 boards, and noticed that R v B appeared to be a general win on a 6x6 board (it is drawn on a 7x7 board whichever set of squares the bishop runs on, and R v N is drawn both on a 6x6 and on a 7x7). This had already been reported by Marc Bourzutschky in 2004, as Noam Elkies has since reminded me, but while Marc will certainly have told me at the time it failed to register properly.
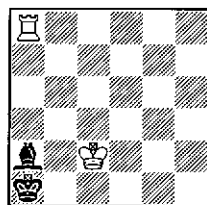
I think Marc programmed a normal backward analysis. Václav approached the problem differently; he solved specific cases as "mate in *n*" problems, using a standard problem-solving program and storing the variation tree between runs so that sets of similar problems could be processed more quickly, and drew up maps indicating the apparent general nature of the ending. Thus **1** below gives the number of moves to mate for each legal position of the Black king, and **2** gives the same for each legal position of the White (White being to move in each case). I think **1** and **2** bear out the assertion that R v B on a 6x6 is a general win and R v N a general draw.

1 - R v B, moves to mate **2** - R v N, moves to mate **3** - win

My interest being roused, I tried **3**, which is a standard draw on an 8x8, and found it surprisingly difficult. I played **1 Rb6**, and if 1...Bc4 then 2 Rb1+ Ka2 3 Rb4 and the bishop goes. Hence **1...Bd5**, and **2 Rb1+ Ka2 3 Rb5 Be4+ 4 Kc3** gives **3a**.
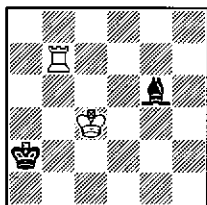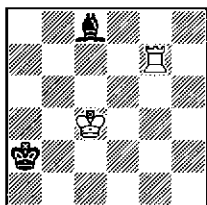
3a - after 4 Kc3 **3b** - 4...Bc6, after 5 Re5 **3c** - 4...Bf3, after 6 Re5
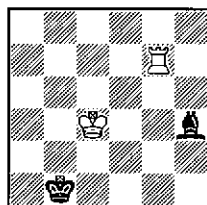
4...Bc6 5 Re5 now gives **3b**, with 5...Bf3 6 Kc2 (threatens mate and if 6...Ka3 then 7 Re3+) or 5...Ka1/Kb1 6 Kb3 and a reflection of the same. 4...Bf3 5 Ra5+ Kb1 6 Re5 gives **3c**, which is a reflection of **3b**. Hence **4...Ka1 5 Ra5+ Kb1 6 Re5** and if 6...Bc6 then 7 Kb3 and as before, but **6...Bf3** gives **3c** WTM and this isn't so easy.

3c repeated   3d - after 9 Rb4   3e - after 11 Rf5

All right, so we try and lose a move. **7 Rb5+**, and if 7...Ka2/Ka1 then 8 Ra5+ Kb1 9 Re5 and we are back at **3c** but with Black to move. Hence **7...Kc1**, and after **8 Kd3 Bd1** (8...Bc6 9 Rc5+) we have **9 Rb4!** guarding a4 (see **3d**).
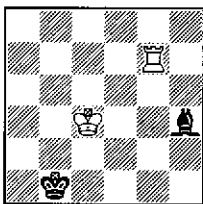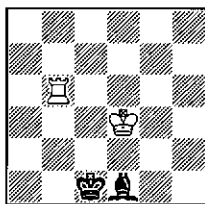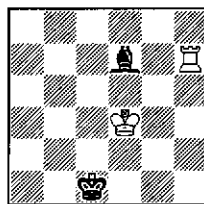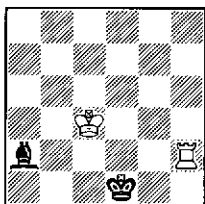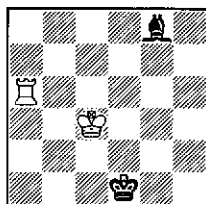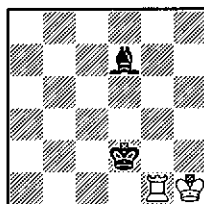
If now 9...Bc2+ then 10 Kc3 and the bishop soon goes (for example, 10...Kd1 11 Rd4+ Kc1 12 Rd2 etc). Hence **9...Bf3 10 Rf4 Bd5 11 Rf5** and we have **3e**. 11...Bb3 loses at once to 12 Kc3, and if 11...Ba2 then 12 Kc3 Kd1 13 Rf2 with a nice finish (see **3f** below): 13...Be6 14 Rf6 Ba2 15 Ra6 and the bishop will be pinned next move.

3f - 11...Ba2, after 13 Rf2   3g - 11...Be6, after 15 Ra4   4 - mate in 45

So the move from **3e** is **11...Be6**, and after **12 Re5 Ba2 13 Kc3 Kd1** White cannot play to **3f** because his rook is on the wrong file. Never mind: **14 Ra5 Be6 15 Ra4!** (see **3g**) **Bf5 16 Rf4 Be6 17 Rf6** and we have rejoined the line after **3f**.

This was very satisfying to work out, but it took me a fortnight, and had I not been told that the win was there I would probably have given up. However, it would seem from **1** that there had to be something shorter, and Václav subsequently asked his computer. This analysed along completely different lines, and solved **3** as a mate in 16 with main line **1 Kc3 Kb1 2 Rb6+ Ka1 3 Rb5 Be6 4 Kd3 Ba2 5 Kc2 Be6 6 Re5 Bc4 7 Re4 Bd5 8 Re1+ Ka2 9 Re5 Bb3+ 10 Kc3 Bd1 11 Rf5 Kb1 12 Rf1** etc.

R v B forms merely an introduction to Václav's recent results, which can be found on his web site <http://web.telecom.cz/vaclav.kotesovec> (article dated 14.5.2008). I have not looked into it further, but here is the main line of the computer's solution to **4**: **1 Kf2 Bc4 2 Re3 Bd5 3 Re5 Bc4 4 Ra5 Kd3 5 Ra3+ Ke4 6 Ke1 Kd4 7 Kd2 Bb5 8 Ra5 Kc4 9 Ra1 Kd4 10 Ra3 Kc4 11 Rf3 Kb4 12 Kc2 Bc4 13 Rf6 Bb3+ 14 Kd3 Ba2 15 Rb6+ Kc5 16 Rb2 Be6 17 Ke4 Kc4 18 Rc2+ Kb3 19 Rc6 Bc4 20 Kd4 Be2 21 Rc3+ Kb2 22 Re3 Bb5 23 Re5 Bc6 24 Re2+ Kb3 25 Kc5 Ba4 26 Re4 Ka3 27 Kc4 Kb2 28 Re2+ Ka3 29 Rf2 Bc6 30 Rf6 Be4 31 Kd4 Bb1 32 Kc3 Ka4 33 Rf2 Ka5 34 Kc4 Be4 35 Kc5 Ka4 36 Rf4 Kb3 37 RxB** and mate on move 45.

From the world at large
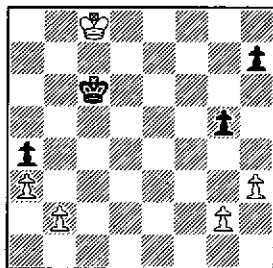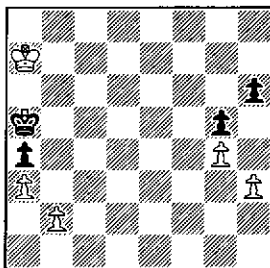
| 1 - win | 1a - after 4...Ka5 | 1b - after 11 Kh8 |

At the final meeting at New Way Road, John Roycroft showed the leading studies in the 2004 award of *Shakhmatnoye obozreniye*, and one that took my particular fancy was A. Botokanov's second prizewinner **1**. Strategically, White can expect to win if he can get at Black's a-pawn and h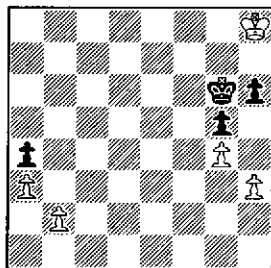e also has the option of going for the g and h pawns, but if he is less than precise in his attack on the latter Black can draw by going for b2 and a3. For once, it may be easiest to play the correct line first. **1 g4** (temporarily claiming the opposition) **Kc5** (we shall meet the position resulting from 1...h6 after move 6 in the main line) **2 Kc7 h6** (claiming the opposition back, and White can regain it only by playing to h8) **3 Kb7!** (but if he plays to the eighth rank at once, Black will play ...Kc4 and win) **Kb5** (else White will win the a-pawn) **4 Ka7! Ka5** (see **1a**) **5 Kb8!** (safe now that ...Kc4 is impossible) **Kb6** (if 5...Kb5 again going for c4, 6 Kb7 will regain the opposition, and if 6...Kc4 then 7 Kb6) **6 Kc8 Kc6 7-10 Kg8 Kg6 11 Kh8** (see **1b**) and now it's easy. Given as a specimen wrong line is 1 Kd8 Kd6 2 g4 Ke5 3 Ke7 Ke4 4 Ke6 h6 5 Kf6 Kd3 6 Kg6 Kc2 7 Kxh6 Kxb2 8 Kxg5 Kxa3 9 Kh5 Kb4 10-12 g7 a1Q with a drawn queen ending.
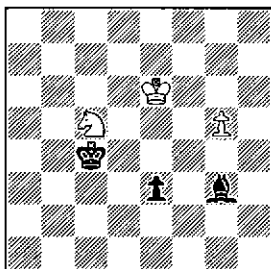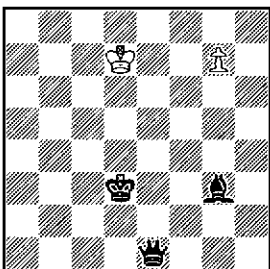
| 2 - draw | 2a - 1 g6, after 4 Kd7 | 2b - main line, after 6 Kf7 |
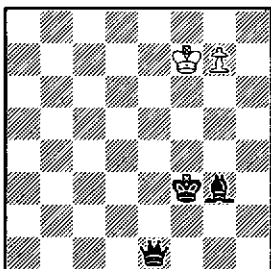
Aleksei Sochniev's **2** took 3rd Prize. Try 1 g6 intending 1...e2 2 Nd3 Kxd3 3 g7 e1Q+ 4 Kd7 (see **2a**): no, 4...Bd6! 5 g8Q Qe7+ 6 Kc6 Qc7+ 7 Kb5 Qb7+ and mate in seven more moves. Correct is **1 Ne4 e2 2 Nd2+ Kd3/Kd4 3 Nf3(+) Ke3/Ke4 4 g6 Kxf3 5 g7 e1Q+ 6 Kf7** giving **2b**, and this time White does draw.

3 - win   3a - after 3 Kh6

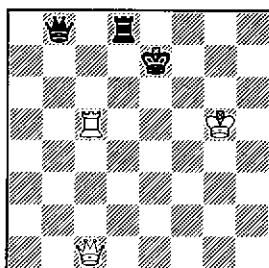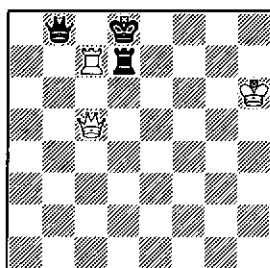The Troitzky study with Q + R v Q + R which I quoted in special number 56 reminded Noam Elkies of Henri Rinck's lovely little **3** (*Basler Nachtrichten* 1926): **1 Rc7+ Rd7 2 Qc5+ Kd8 3 Kh6!!** and either the queen or the king goes (see **3a**).

I have kept this selection short to leave space for a brief review of **Scacchia Ludus,** a handsomely produced 617-page book containing a selection of papers on the history of chess edited by Hans Holländer and Ulrich Schädler. Nine of the book's thirteen papers are in German, but the two of greatest interest to us here, Yuri Averbakh's papers on the histories of endings and of shatranj, are in English.

Averbakh's paper "On the History of Endings" extends over 23 pages and gives 46 examples, some more familiar than others: one 9th-century, one 13th-century, two from a Spanish manuscript of 1500 which was unknown to Murray, one from Damiano, four from Polerio, four from Salvio, three from Carrera, two from Greco, two Stamma, three Ercole del Rio, three Lolli, three Cozio, two Ponziani, four Philidor, one La Bourdonnais, one Kieseritzky, and nine from actual play between 1749 and 1851. I have to say that the paper gives a slight air of superficiality, perhaps inevitably given its modest size, and I have already spotted a couple of typos. However, its examples are both attractive and historically important, and it includes extensive references. It provides an excellent introduction to the subject.

Averbakh's paper "The History of Shatranj" extends over 58 pages with 142 examples, 37 of which are not given by Murray, and is of heavier metal. Averbakh has done work himself in this field, both in solving the famous ending of as-Suli (he credits some computer work by myself, but while this did indeed dot the final "i" Averbakh had already rediscovered everything that mattered) and also in studying the manuscript of Abu'l-Fath. This was not known to Murray and I was surprised to see some of the examples from it accompanied by Murray page numbers, but these were positions which had been repeated in other manuscripts. Many of the examples are endings, and some are classics.

The book is published by Editions feenschach-phénix in Aachen (bernd ellinghoven, Königstraße 3, D-52064 Aachen, be.fee@t-online.de, English spoken), and is seen as Book 1 of a series on chess history. The price is 64 euros, or 164 euros for a limited "de luxe" edition bound in morocco and signed by the editors. Payment is possible via Paypal to the e-mail address above, and British Chess Problem Society members can pay through Tony Lewis.

News and notices

John and Betty Roycroft, whose hospitality we have enjoyed for so long, have finally decided to call a halt to the meetings at New Way Road, but John has arranged for replacement meetings to be held at **Pushkin House, 5A Bloomsbury Square, London**, on **Friday January 9 2009** and on April 3, July 3, and October 2. The room has been booked from 6.00 pm until 9.15. Holborn tube, Bloomsbury Way, south-west corner of the square. John hopes that these meetings will feature talks other than by himself, and will be glad to receive offers (roycroft@btinternet.com).

Readers wishing to subscribe to *EG* for 2009 may do so by paying me **£20** (cheques payable to J D Beasley, please). Blame the change in the £-euro exchange rate for the increase.

Spotlight continued. I recently had occasion to look again at **19** in special number 53, and noticed to my embarrassment that the opening loss of time by 1 Kd5 was quite unnecessary; White can play 1 Fc8 Kb8 2 Kd7 Ka8 3 Fb7+, and get there two moves sooner. It's still a neat little piece, but it isn't quite as sophisticated as I had thought.

"Troitzky" or "Troitsky"? I always used to write "Troitzky", but it occurred to me a little while ago that we normally transliterate the relevant Cyrillic letter as "ts" and so I switched. Recently, I noticed that John Roycroft was still using "tz" in *EG*, so I raised the question with him.

John replied by outlining his system for handling the spelling of names in Cyrillic, Georgian, and other alphabets: (1) keep the pronunciation of the letters used as close as possible to the native source based on how a southern Englishman (such as himself) would set about it; (2) if there is a known preference of the name's owner, follow it; (3) if the source pronunciation is uncertain or unknown, make an intelligent guess, and don't be afraid to change your mind later; (4) do NOT be guided by how Dutch or German or French or Spanish sources do it; (5) do NOT adopt the Library of Congress system or any IPA/OED symbols, because so few readers will be familiar with them; (6) be consistent over as many consonants as possible, 'kh' for the sound in 'loch' being the best example.

As he says, the above doesn't cover everything, and it leaves some thorny questions. However, it strikes me as eminently practical and sensible. In the specific case of Troitzky, he points out that the "360" book has the -tzky spelling, and he has a photocopy of a letter from him with the same spelling.

I am switching back.

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.