British Endgame Study News
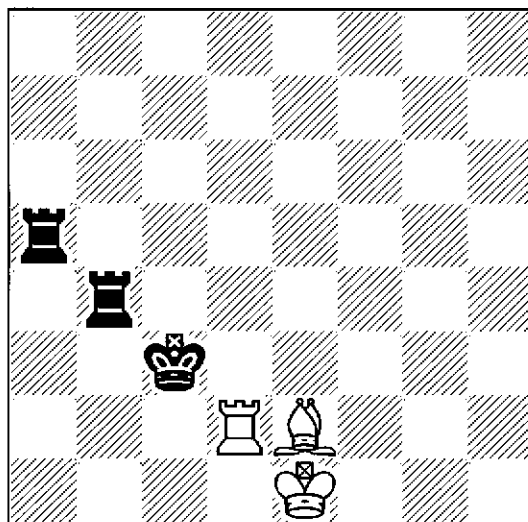
Some British Studies

from 1987-89

Black is about to check; how should White parry, and why?

Some British studies from 1987-89

Heinrich Fraenkel ("Assiac"), who wrote the chess column of the *New Statesman* from 1949 to 1976, died in 1986, and the magazine organized a memorial tourney in his honour. The leading studies appeared from December 1988 onwards, and the award was finalized in September 1989. As is usual with such tourneys, it attracted some fine work; as is not quite so usual, British composers featured prominently in the award. In particular, Timothy Whitworth's 1 shared first and second prizes.
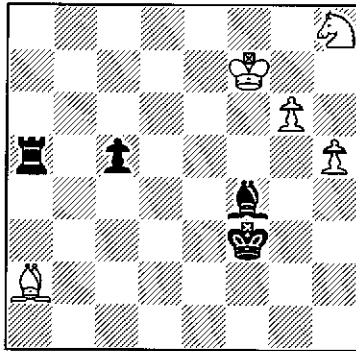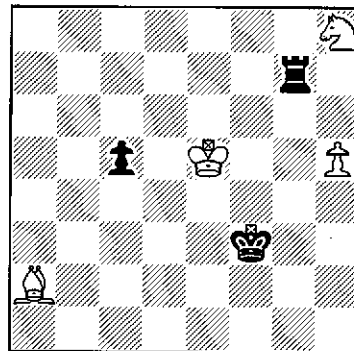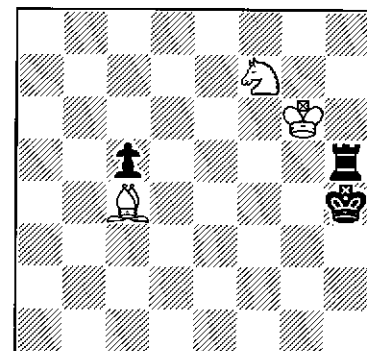
|		
1 - win	**1a - after 3...Rxg7**	**1b - after 8 Bc4**

Play starts **1 g7 Ra7+**, and 2 Kg6 will allow 2...Rxa2 (3 g8Q Rg1+ etc). **2 Kf6**, therefore, and Black must play **2...Be5+** and sacrifice bishop for pawn before worse befalls (if 2...Ra8 then 3 g8Q Rxg8 4 Bxg8 and the second wP will cost Black's bishop). There follows **3 Kxe5 Rxg7**, and we have **1a**.

The natural move at this point is perhaps 4 h6, but it fails: 4...Rh7 5 Nf7 Kg4 6 Bb3 (ready to play Bd1+ driving bK away from wPh6) Kh5 7 Bd1+ Kg6! (but it won't be driven) 8 Bc2+ Kxf7 9 Bxh7 c4 and Black will draw. Also insufficient is 4 Bb3 hoping to defend wPh5 indirectly; it does indeed do so, 4...Rg5+ 5 Kd6 Rxh5 6 Bd1+ Ke3 7 Bxh5, but 7...c4 is good enough to draw. Correct is the mousetrap move **4 Nf7!** but it seems a very feeble mousetrap; what is to stop bR escaping along the column? The answer is the unfortunate position of bKf3 relative to wPh5; if say 4...Rg4 then 5 h6 Rh4 6 h7 Rxh7 7 Ng5+.

But Black can play **4...Kg4** to attack wP, since if 5 h6 then 5...Rh7 and we are back in the line 4 h6. However, this move closes the file, and now bR really is trapped: **5 Kf6**. Black has nothing better than **5...Rh7**, and play unfolds **6 Kg6 Rxh5 7 Be6+ Kh4 8 Bc4!** (see **1b**). Black is now in zugzwang (it is in fact reciprocal zugzwang, though this is irrelevant since there is no try leading to the same position with White to move), and his rook will fall.

The study originally had wKc3, bBe3, bRa7, bPc7, play 1 g7 Bd4+ 2 Kxd4 c5+ 3 Ke5 etc, and was honoured thus, but John Nunn pointed out a surprising alternative win by 3 Kc3 (see *EG* 99, p 706) and the tournament director allowed the present version to stand in its place. If there were no demolition, it is an interesting question which would be the better. The original moved the blocking bP into position during the play, always a good thing, but the new has a more interesting journey by bR.
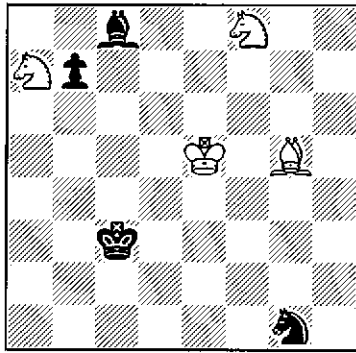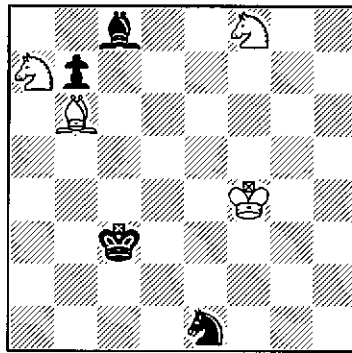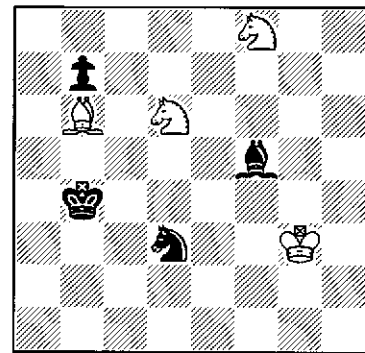
2 - win   **2a - after 3 Bb6**   **2b - after 6 Nd6**

Mike Bent's **2** gained 1st honourable mention. The crude 1 Nxc8 is soon refuted; Black plays 1...Nf3+ 2 Kf- Nxg5 3 Kxg5 b5 with a draw (two knights win against a b-pawn only if the pawn can be blockaded by a knight on its second or third rank). But three minor pieces win against one (even bishop and two knights against bishop), so White can try **1 Be3** to remove the fork while maintaining the pressure. The natural reply is **1...Nf3+** (if 1...b5, White simply plays 2 Nxb5+ followed by 3 Nd6, and a Black piece soon goes), leading to **2 Kf4** (if 2 Ke4 then 2...Bg4 draws) and **2...Ne1**. Now **3 Bb6** keeps up the attack by threatening a skewer (see **2a**). So Black must check again, **3...Nd3+**, and we have the delightful move **4 Kg3**, barring h3 to bB and leaving him only **4...Bf5**. The rest is easy: **5 Nb5+ Kb4** (or any other move) **6 Nd6** (see **2b**) and bB is lost. Black spent three moves rescuing his knight, only to find that it is now blocking his bishop.
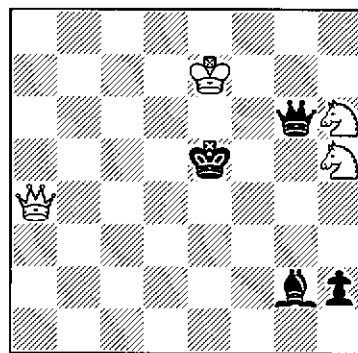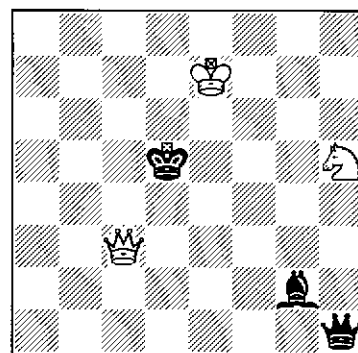

3 - win   **3a - after 4 Qc3**

The second honourable mention, **3**, was also by Mike. Like most of Mike's work, this is a solver's study: not particularly difficult and certainly not deep, but short, sweet, and piquant. **1 Ng4+** wins bQ (if Black runs by 1...Kd5, we have 2 Ngf6+ Kc5/Ke5 3 Nd7+ Kd4 4 Nf4 mate), but after **1...Qxg4 2 Qxg4 h1Q** Black has a replacement. However, **3 Qg7+** proves unexpectedly constraining, since two of Black's three legal moves lose the new queen to a fork on g3, and after **3...Kd5** we have **4 Qc3** threatening mate and leaving Black with no good move (4...Qxh5 5 Qa5+, 4...Qh4+ 5 Nf6+).
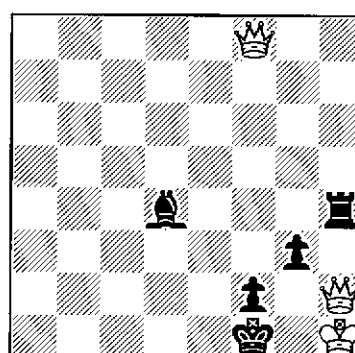
This is a trick of which Mike has become increasingly fond. In the middle of a sequence of checks there is a quiet move, and the opponent is suddenly helpless.
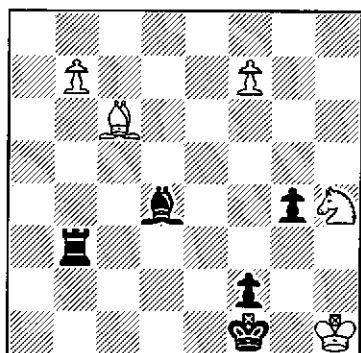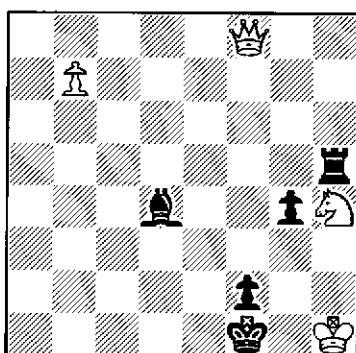
4 - draw   **4a - after 2...Rh5**   **4b - 3 b8Q, after 4...g3**

Mike had another study in the Assiac award, but we shall be meeting more of his work later (he published about twice as much during this period as all other British composers put together) and I will omit it and pass on to **4**. This is by Colin Crouch, then at Durham, and I remember how we felt when his then unpublished studies started being shown on his behalf at *EG* readers' meetings. This study, which took 4th honourable mention, seems to have been the first of them to appear in print, though some analysis of rook against three pawns appeared in *EG* 90 late in 1987.

White's first task is to avoid being mated, and none of the simple moves Bg2+, Bf3, and Nf3 is good enough (there is analysis in *EG* 99). Correct is the decoy sacrifice **1 Bb5+**, and after **1...Rb5** White has time for **2 f8Q**. But Black continues the attack by **2...Rh5** (see **4a**), and if White defends wN Black will advance the g-pawn. The natural alternative is 3 b8Q ready to cover on h2, but it still fails: 3...Rxh4+ 4 Qh2 g3 (see **4b**) 5 Qxh4 (what else?) g2+ 6 Kh2 g1Q+ 7 Kh3 Qg2 mate. White needs a bishop, of course: **3 b8B Rxh4+ 4 Bh2 g3 5 Qxf2+ K(B,g)xf2** stalemate.
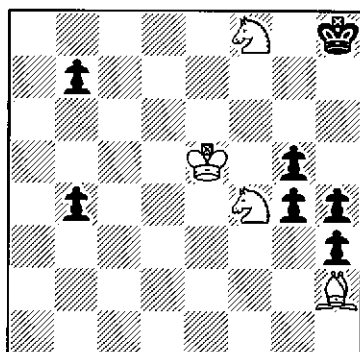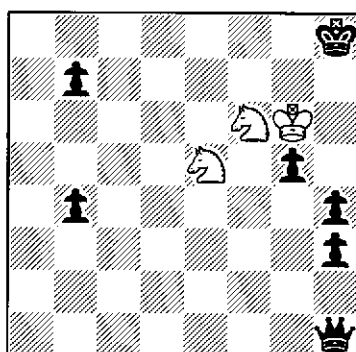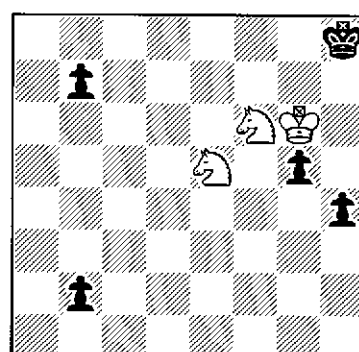

5 - win   **5a - after 6 Ne5**   **5b - after 18 Ne5**

Colin's **5** took 5th honourable mention. **1 Kf6** threatens 2 Kf7 etc, so **1...Kg8**, and now **2 Nd5** (*EG* refutes the alternatives). 2...Kxf8 is met by 3 Bd6+ Ke8 4 Ke6 Kd8 5 Bc7+ Ke8 (5...Kc8 allows mate) 6 Nf6+ and 7 Nxg4, hence **2...g3**, and after **3 Nd7 gxh2** we have a six-move repeated manoeuvre: **4 Kg6 h1Q 5 N5f6+ Kh8 6 Ne5** (see **5a**) **Qb1+ 7 Kh6 Qh7+ 8 Nxh7 Kg8 9 Kg6 h2 10 Nd7 h1Q 11 Nhf6+ Kh8 12 Ne5** (5a without bPh3) **Qb1+ 13 Kh6 Qh7+ 14 Nxh7 Kg8 15 Kg6 b3 16 Nd7 b2 17 Nhf6+ Kh8 18 Ne5** (see **5b**) **b1Q+ 19 Kh6 Qh7+ 20 Nxh7 Kg8 21 Kg6 h3 22 Nd7 h2 23 Nhf6+ Kh8 24 Ne5 h1Q 25 Nf7** mate. There is a full analysis in *EG*.
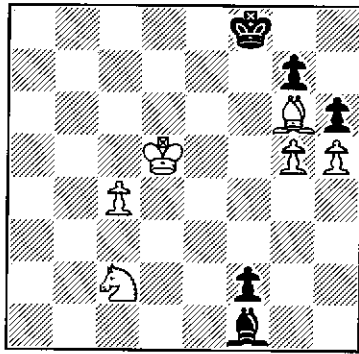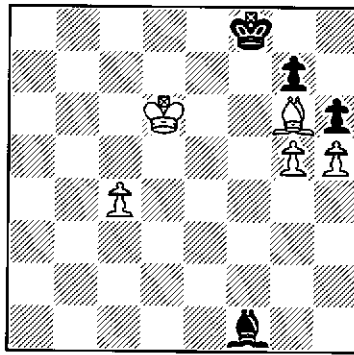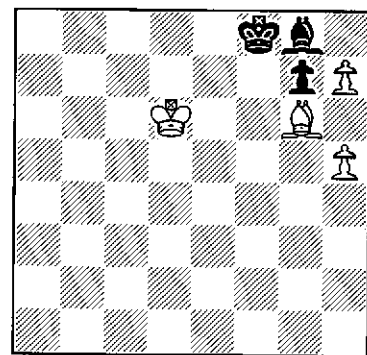
6 - win   **6a** - after 3...Bxf1   **6b** - after 5...Bg8

Another 1988 memorial tourney was that organized by *EG* in honour of Richard Harman. This attracted a strong entry and all the prizes went abroad, but Mike Bent's 4th HM is in *Endgame magic* and Colin Crouch's **6** gained a commendation.

Play starts **1 Ne3 Bg2+ 2 Kd6** (to deny e7 to bK) **f1Q 3 Nxf1 Bxf1**, giving **6a**, and 4 c5 hxg5 is good for Black. However, White can play **4 gxh6**, since 4...gxh6 gives him "a comfortable technical win" (*EG*, which gives some lines). Hence **4...Bxc4**, and after **5 h7 Bg8** we have the key point of the study (see **6b**): h8Q/R give stalemate (now White's guard of e7 is an embarrassment), h8B is hopeless, and h8N also fails. But **6 Ke5** destroys the stalemate, forcing **6...Bxh7** and leading to **7 Bxh7 Kf6 8 Ke4** (wK cannot allow bP to check) **Kf6 9 Bg6 Ke7 10 Kf5 Ke8 11 Bh7 g5 12 h6**. The finale was known to Walker in 1841, but 5...Bg8 makes a lovely introduction.
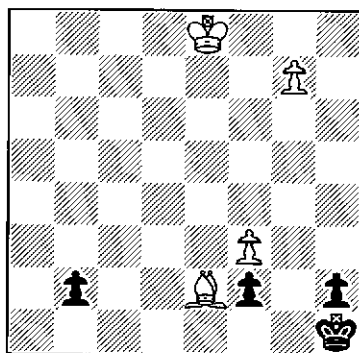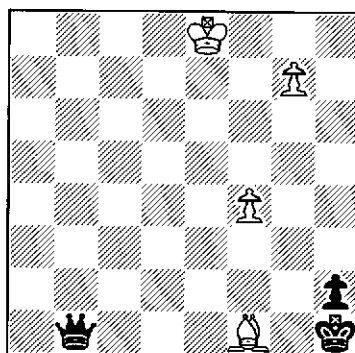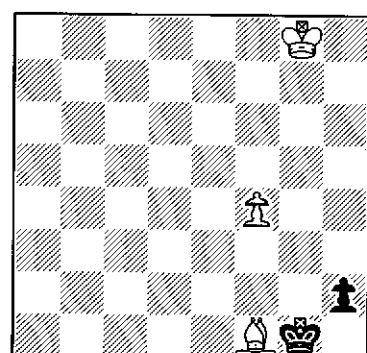


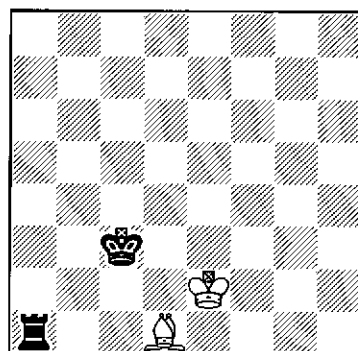**7 - draw**   **7a** - after 2...b1Q   **7b** - after 5...Kg1

7 was my own contribution. I don't normally enter tourneys, but I had a high regard for Richard and wanted to put my name on the list. Unfortunately the judgement was delayed and I wanted to include the study in my little 1989 vanity-book *Some flights of chess fancy*, so I had to withdraw it from the tourney and how it might have fared will never be known. 1 g8Q b1Q loses (Black threatens to swap queens and also 2...Qe1 pinning wB, and if 2 Qd5 then 2...Qg6+ and 3...Kg1 wins), but **1 f4** threatens perpetual check and forces **1...f1Q** diverting wB. **2 Bxf1 b1Q** gives **7a**, and if 3 Bg2+ then 3...Kxg2 4 g8Q+ Kf2. **3 g8Q**, therefore, and 3...Qxf1 is met by 4 Qg3. So Black swaps queens, **3...Qb8+ 4 Kf7 Qxg8+ 5 Kxg8 Kg1** (see **7b**), and now 6 f5 loses but **6 Bg2! Kxg2 7 f5 h1Q 8 f6** gives a draw with Pf6 v Q. The starting position is a little too artificial for comfort, but at least every man on the board moves.
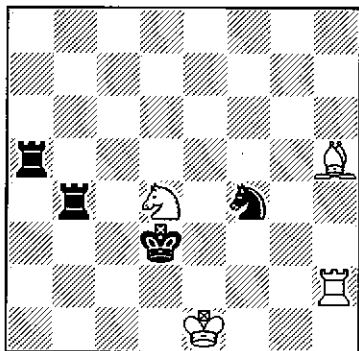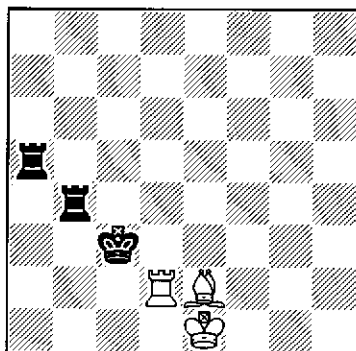
**8** - draw   **8a** - after 3 Bxe2   **8b** - reciprocal zugzwang

Norman Macleod's remarkable **8** (Special HM, *Szachy* 1987) is in *Endgame magic*, but it demands inclusion here as well. A simple introduction **1 Rd2+ Kc3 2 Ne2+ Nxe2 3 Bxe2** gives **8a**, and what follows depends on the fact that **8b** is reciprocal zugzwang: White to play loses, Black to play cannot maintain the bind. So if Black plays **3...Ra1+**, White interposes the bishop, **4 Bd1**, and after **4...Re4+ 5 Re2 Rxe2+ 6 Ke2** all is in order; if he plays 4 Rd1, Black plays 4...Rxd1+ 5 Bxd1 Rb1 6 Ke2 Ra1 and wins. Conversely, if Black plays **3...Rb1+**, White interposes the rook, **4 Rd1**, and draws after **4...Rxd1+ 5 Bxd1 Ra1 6 Ke2**; if he plays 4 Bd1, he loses after 4...Re5+ 5 Re2 Rxe2+ 6 Ke2 Ra1. Rarely have two complementary variations been so neatly presented.
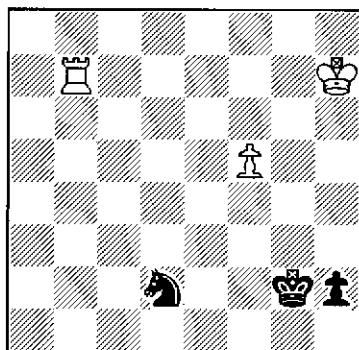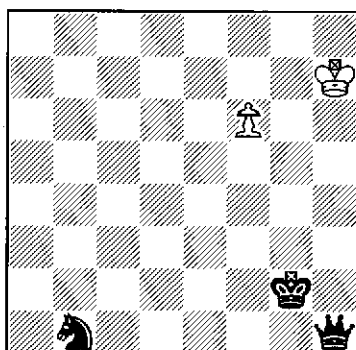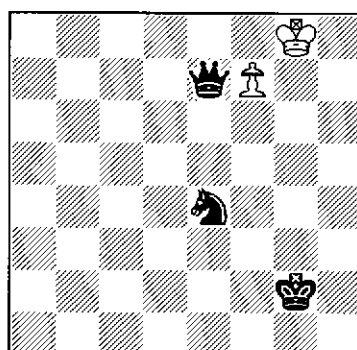

**9** - draw   **9a** - after 2...h1Q+   **9b** - 3 Kg7 etc: Black wins

8 was one of the studies chosed to represent British study composition in an article written by John Roycroft for the May 1989 issue of *Shakhmaty v SSSR*, and another of his choices was Paul Lamford's **9** (*Pergamon Chess* 1988). Like **7**, this depends on an exceptional drawing position with Pf6 v Q, but there is a twist. 1 f6 fails (John gives no analysis, but if bN gets into the action it can afford to sacrifice itself for wP) and the necessary first move is **1 Rb1+** to divert bN. Now **1...Nxb1 2 f6 h1Q+** gives **9a**, and if there were no bN the move 3 Kg8 would be automatic (3 Kg7 would allow the pin 3...Qa1). In fact **3 Kg8** is still the right move (bN is too far away, and **4 f7** will draw), but the refutation of 3 Kg7 is more difficult: 3...Nd2 4 f7 Qa1+, after which bQ will work its way up to e7 and ...Ne4 will win (see **9b**).
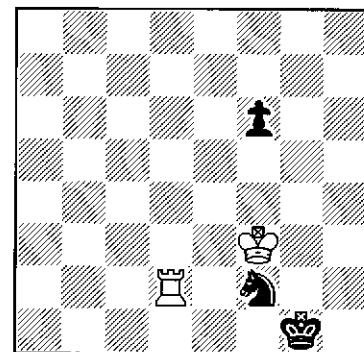
Paul Lamford, like Mike Bent, Timothy Whitworth, and John Roycroft himself, was one of my predecessors as study columnist of the *BCM*.
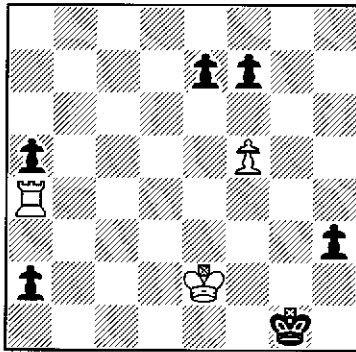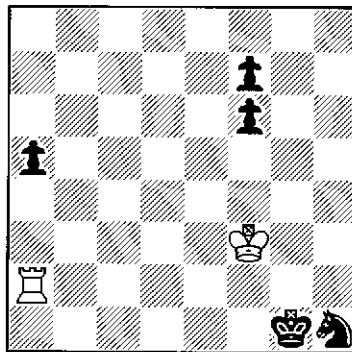
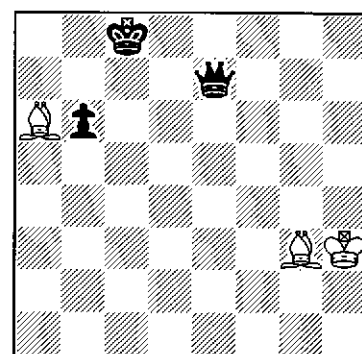**10** - win   **10a** - after 3...h1N   **10b** - after 12 Kf3

Adam Sobey's column in *The Problemist* has long been a good friend to British study composition, and Nicolas Worthing's **10** appeared in it during 1987. Simple mating tries such as 1 Kf3 h2 2 Rxa2 h1Q+ 3 Kg3 fail because Black can play 3...Qh8 and cover a1, hence **1 f6!** to block the long diagonal. **1...exf6** is effectively forced, and now **2 Kf3 h2 3 Rxa2** compels **3...h1N** (see **10a**). This would be a simple win for White against bN alone, but here the pawns must be captured as well. The first goes immediately, **4 Rxa5**, and now given is **4...f5**, presumably to tempt White into playing 5 Rxf5 ("giving declarer a chance to go wrong," as bridge players say). If instead Black stonewalls with 4...Kh2, White plays 5 Ra2+ etc as below. In fact it is wK which must capture the remaining pawns; after 4...f5 we have **5 Ra1+ Kh2 6 Ra2+ Kg1** (if 6...Kh3 then 7 Kf4 f6 8 Rb2 Ng3 9 Rb3) **7 Rd2!** (we shall see why) **f6 8 Rg2+ Kf1 9 Rh2 Kg1 10 Rd2 f4 11 Kxf4 Nf2 12 Kf3** (see **10b**) **Nh1** (ah, wRd2 denies the d-file to bN) **13 Ra2 f5 14 Rd2! f4 15 Kxf4** and so on.
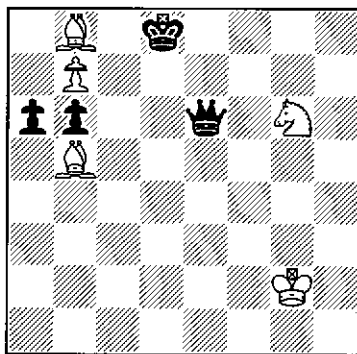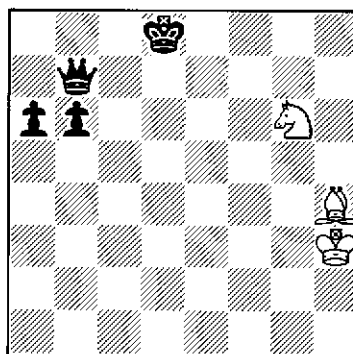

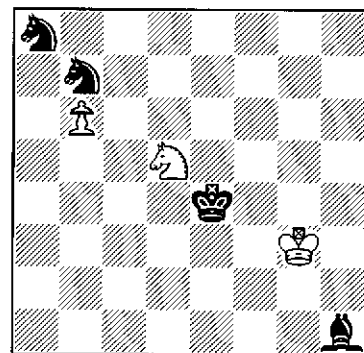**11** - draw   **11a** - after 3 Bh4+   **11b** - after 6 Bxa6+

Timothy Whitworth's **11** also appeared in *The Problemist* during 1987, and gained a commendation in the two-year tourney. **1 Bg3** partially shields wK and threatens 2 b8Q+, hence **1...Qd5/Qe4+**, and the correct move is **2 Kh3** (White will need guards on h4 and g4 later in the play). Play continues **2...Qxb7 3 Bh4+**, giving **11a**, and now 3...Kc8 allows 4 Ne7+ with either 4...Kb8 5 Bc6 Qa7 6 Bg3+ winning bQ or 4...Kc7 5 Bg3+ Kd8 6 Nc6+ Kc8 7 Ne7+ as in the main line. Better seems **3...Kc7** decoying wB from h4, because after **4 Bg3+ Kc8** the square e7 is undefended. However, White can play **5 Ne7+!** anyway, since the sequel is **6 Bxa6+** (see **11b**) **Kd7** (6...Kd8 7 Bh4 pinning bQ) **7 Bb5+ Ke6 8 Bc4+ Kf5 9 Bd3+** etc; a familiar finale, but neatly done.
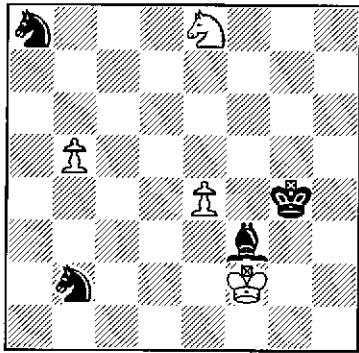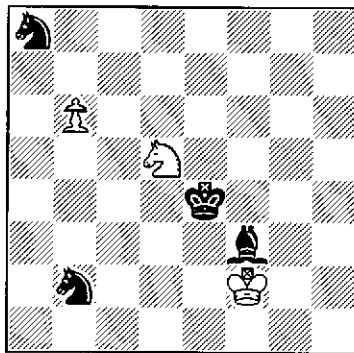
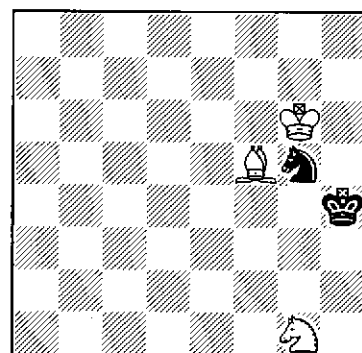**12 - draw**   **12a** - after 3 b6   **12b** - after 6...Bh1

Let's finish with two more studies by Mike Bent. **12** (*Chess Life* 1987) was ignored by the tourney judge, but Timothy Whitworth believes Mike regards it as one of his best works. White can harry bK, but after **1 Nf6+ Kf4 2 Nd5+ Kxe4** the removal of wP prevents more checks on d5 (3 Nf6+ Kf4 and White has shot his bolt). Instead we have **3 b6** (see **12a**), and this is curiously drawn. 3...Nxb6 4 Nxb6 Bg4 fails because wK can go for bNb2, and otherwise wK patrols g3/f2 and Black can do nothing: **3 Nd3+ 4 Kg3 Nc5 5 Kf2 Nb7 6 Kg3 Bh1** (an attempted decoy, see **12b**) **7 Kh2 Bf3 8 Kg3** (back on station) **Nd6 9 Kf2 Bh1 10 Kg1 Bf3 11 Kf2 Nb7 12 Kg3**.
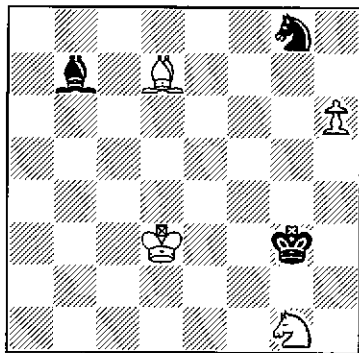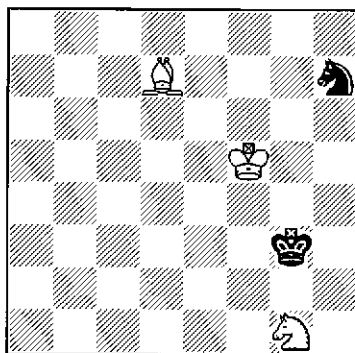
13 - win   **13a** - after 3...Nxh7   **13b** - after 6 Bf5

13 appeared in *The Problemist* in 1988. **1 h7 Be4+ 2 Kxe4 Nf6+ 3 Kf5 Nxh7** gives **13a**, and while we can now look up this sort of position in the database Mike couldn't do so in 1988. In fact Black threatens to rescue his knight by ...Kh4 and ...Ng5, and White's only way of winning is to let him do it: **4 Bc8! Kh4** (4...Kf2 5 Nh3+ K-- 6 Kg6 Nf8 7 Kg7, 4...Kg2 5 Ke2 followed by much the same) **5 Kg6 Ng5 6 Bf5!** with a beautiful domination of the Black force (see **13b**). Mike's philosophy of composition could hardly be better illustrated.

My thanks to Harold van der Heijden for sending me many of the studies featured here, and to Timothy Whitworth for helping me to choose from those by Mike Bent. Our next special number of this kind is planned for June 1999, and will cover British studies from 1984-86. As usual, please will composers and their friends draw my attention to works they would like me to include, and also to anything from 1987-95 which should have appeared in the series and has been overlooked.