

British Endgame Study News

Special number 38

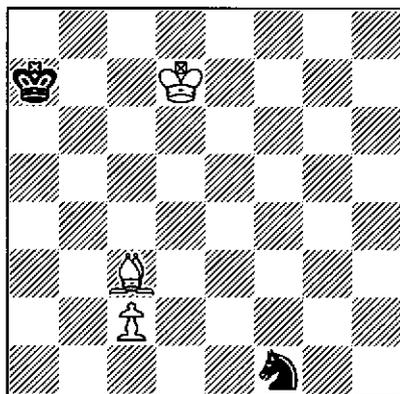
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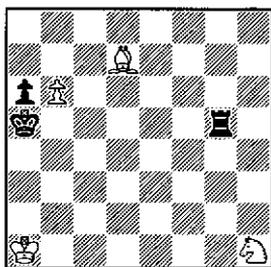
Some British studies from 1937-49



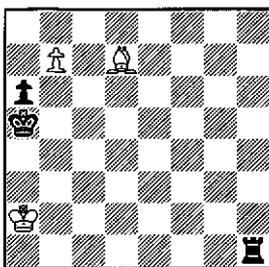
A full-length advance under hostile fire

Some British studies from 1937-49

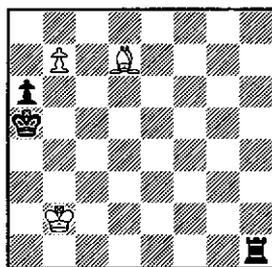
The *Chess Amateur* having ceased publication some years earlier, the main British outlet for original endgame studies during this period was the *BCM*, and I have started this selection at 1937 so as to coincide with the advent of T. R. Dawson as the *BCM* endgame study columnist. Editors differ widely in their practice, some printing almost anything on the grounds that anyone whose work even remotely suggests talent should be encouraged, others being very much more demanding. Both approaches are defensible. Dawson went perhaps further than anyone in the former direction, and his eleven years as the *BCM* endgame study columnist saw the appearance of originals by nearly forty different British composers. True, some were represented only by one or two works which were pallid settings of ideas that had already been better presented elsewhere, but if you don't encourage people to start they will never mature into masters. I have also seen the suggestion - I don't know how true it is - that Dawson would occasionally slip in one of his own weaker compositions under an assumed and unknown name, on the grounds that beginners would be more likely to try their hand if they thought they were competing with others just as inexperienced, but even if a few of the forty names were bogus I suspect that the great majority were genuine.



1 - win



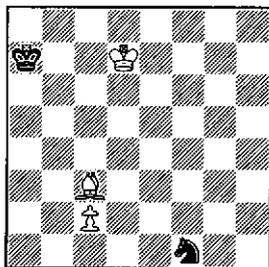
1a - 2 Ka2, after 2...Rhx1



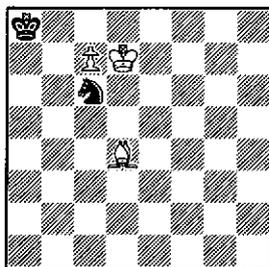
1b - main line, 2...Rhx1

This said, my selection will largely feature composers who were or became established figures, and first in alphabetical order is Hugh Blandford. His 1 appeared in 1943. **1 b7** is obvious, and if 1...Rg8 then 2 Bc8 and White will have no trouble. But **1...Rg1+** sets unexpected problems. Try 2 Ka2; Black replies 2...Rhx1, giving **1a**, and if 3 b8Q then 3...Ra1+ 4 Kb2 Rb1+ and stalemate. All right, try 3 Bc8; no, 3...Rh2+ 4 Ka3 (if 4 Kb1/Kb3 then 4...Rh6 5 b8Q Rb6+, and if 4 Ka1 then 4...Rh1+ etc) Rh6 (aiming for b6) 5 b8Q Rh3+ 6 Ka2 (6 Bxh3 stalemate, 6 Kb2 Rb3+ and again stalemate) Ra3+ with 7...Rb3+ and stalemate to follow.

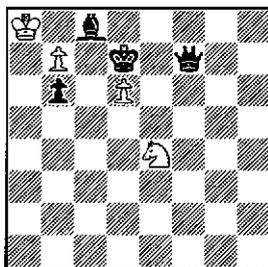
So it's not 2 Ka2; it's **2 Kb2**, and Black naturally continues **2...Rhx1** as before (see **1b**). Now 3 b8Q is again met by 3...Rb1+ and stalemate, and 3 Bh3 Rxh3 4 b8Q Rb3+ is no better. Try 3 Bc8: no, 3...Rh6 and 4...Rb6+ as before. So it's a king move. A move to the third rank allows 3...Rb1; 3 Ka2 can be refuted in several ways of which probably the simplest is 3...Rg1 followed by play similar to that after 2 Ka2 Rxh1; all that is left is **3 Kc2!**



2 - win



2a - after 5...Nc6

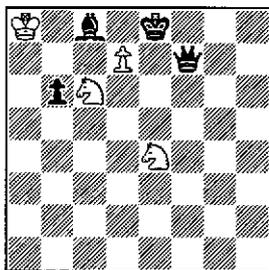


3 - draw

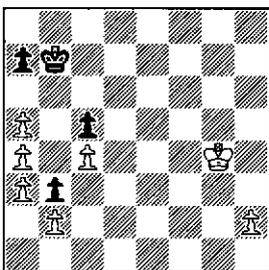
Blandford's most famous composition is of course 2 (1 Pr *Springaren* theme tourney 1949), which is everything an endgame study should be. Surely the pawn cannot go all the way against a hostile knight? But after 1 Bd4+ the square e3 is covered, as are b6/c5/e5/f6, so even a future tempo-gaining check on the White king is impossible and in truth the pawn is out of reach. Black must try something else: 1...Ka8! 2 c4 Nd2 3 c5 Nb3 4 c6 Na5 5 c7 Nc6! (see 2a). Now 6 Kxc6 is stalemate, as is 6 c8Q+ Nb8+ 7 K--; drawn game? No, 6 c8R!!

The tourney was for five-man underpromotion studies, and I am sure I have seen the original though it isn't in the BCPS Library. I remember a most modest affair, duplicated from typed stencils with simple lettered diagrams, but content matters more than glossiness of production. The finale had been shown by Kubbel (*Shakhmatny listok* 1928, wKd5, Be5, Pc5, bKa7, Ne2, Pd7, 1 Kd6 Nc1 2 Bd4 Ka8 3 Kxd7 Nb3 4 c6 etc), but it is Blandford's second-rank start that makes the study a classic.

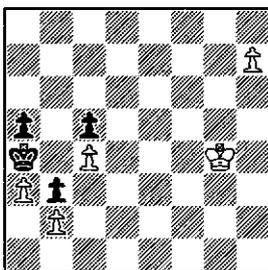
We covered the work of A. W. Daniel in special number 17, so let us move on to Dawson himself. Dawson was vastly prolific, and inevitably much of his work was rather superficial; he had an idea, set it, and moved on. This technique is better suited to problem composition than to endgames and few of his studies are memorable, but one or two stand out above the rest. 3 (*BCM* 1943) unfolds 1 b8N+ Kd8 2 Nc6+ Ke8 3 d7+, giving 3a, and each of Black's three captures allows a fork. "Pawn fork, then two knight forks" is a routine recipe; three knight forks are not quite so common.



3a - after 3 d7+

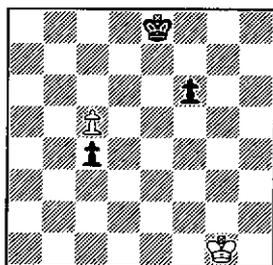


4 - win

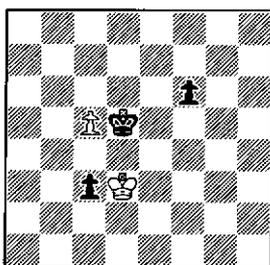


4a - 1 h4, after 4...a5

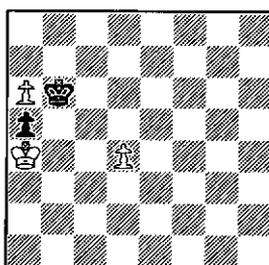
In 4 (*BCM* 1944), 1 h4 allows 1...Ka6 2 h5 Kxa5 3 h6 Kxa4 4 h7 a5 and stalemate (see 4a). Instead, 1 a6+! Kxa6 2 a5! Kxa5 3 a4! freeing b4, and only now h2-h4.



5 - draw



5a - after 4...Kd5

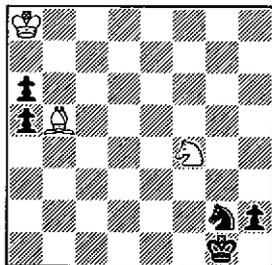


6 - win

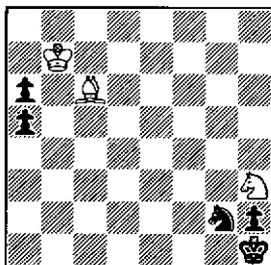
Two other British sources of the period were B. H. Wood's well-known *Chess* and R. McClure's elusive magazine *The Chess Problem* (1942-48). The latter was a very small-circulation affair which until recently wasn't even in the British Library, but the BCPS came into possession of a largely complete duplicate set and I forwarded it with photocopies of the rest. It had a thriving study column conducted by M. W. Paris and I had shortlisted a very fine R+N v R study by the Scottish chess and bridge composer Robert Gray, but alas there had been an equivalent Russian setting a few years earlier.

So we are back to the *BCM*, where Richard Guy took over at the start of 1948. Guy was the period's most prolific British study composer, and 5 (*BCM* 1942) is both amusing and instructive. 1 Kf2 Kd7 2 Ke3 Kc6 3 Kd4 is routine, and if 3...Kb5 then 4 c6 Kxc6 5 Kxc4 with a draw. Hence 3...c3, and the fun starts: 4 Kxc3? Kxc5 and Black has the opposition. All right, 4 Kd3! and if 4...Kxc5 then 5 Kxc3 and White has it. Fair enough, 4...Kd5! (see 5a), and again 5 Kxc3? Kxc5. No, Claude, after you: 5 Kc2! Neither king can capture, no pawn can advance; draw game.

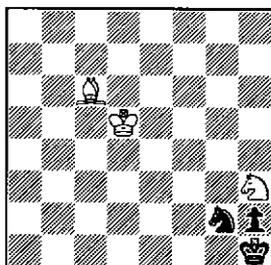
6 (*Schweizerische Schachzeitung* 1948) puts the boot on the other foot. 1 a7 Kb7! 2 Kb5! (2 a8Q+ Kxa8 3 Kxa5 Ka7) Ka8 and a draw? No, 3 Kb6! and mate in four.



7 - win

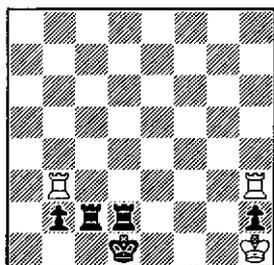


7a - after 4 Kb7

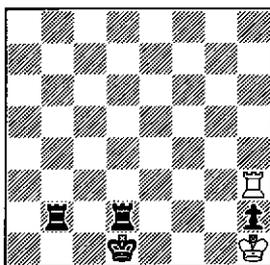


7b - after 11 Kd5

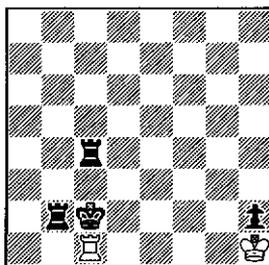
7, which appeared in *Le Problème* in 1939 and also in *Chess*, is a problematic exercise in stalemate avoidance. 1 Nh3+ Kh1 2 Ba4 (else 2...a4 will disturb things) N-- 3 Bc6+ Ng2 4 Kb8/Ka7/Kb7 (see 7a) a4 5 Bxa4 N-- (5...a5 merely transposes, 6 Kc7/Kb6 N-- 7 Bc6+ Ng2 8 Kd6/Kc5) 6 Bc6+ Ng2 7 Kc7/Kb6 a5 8 Kd6/Kc5 a4 9 Bxa4 N-- 10 Bc6+ Ng2 11 Kd5 (see 7b), and the White king will staircase in. The king duals are inevitable in such a light setting.



10 - draw



10a - after 1...Rxb2

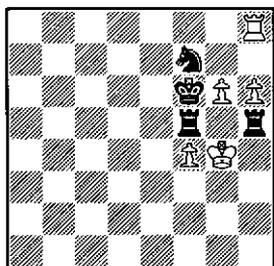


10b - after 6 Rc1+

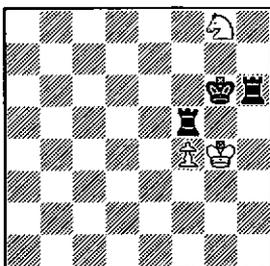
H. F. W. Lane was well known as a problemist (we have his cuttings book in the BCPS Library); what I didn't realise until now was that he was blind. **10** is difficult even for a sighted man with a computer. It is in the cuttings book under the title "Here we go round the Mulberry Bush", and it was published in the *BCM* in 1941.

Black threatens 1...Rc1 and 1...Rg2, and the sacrifice **1 Rxb2 Rxb2** seems mere spite. However, it leaves the White king stalemated (see **10a**), and this raises hopes of a sacrificial pursuit. But the threat of 2...Rb1 must be met first. Try 2 Ra3, to meet 2...Rb1 with 3 Ra1; no, 3...Rdb2 wins. Try 2 Rc3 intending 2...Rb1 3 Rc1+, which is drawn; no, 2...Rd4 3 Rc1+ (3 Rd3+ Rd2 4 Ra3./Rh3 R2d3) Ke2 4 Re1+ Kf3 5 Re3+ (5 Rf1+ Rf2 6 Ra1 Kg3 7 Ra3+ Rf3) Kf2 6 Rf3+ Ke2 7 Re3+ Kd2 and Black has escaped. Try say 2 Re3 intending 2...Rb1 3 Re1+; no, 2...Rd4 again (3 Re1+ Kc2 4 Rc1+ Kb3 5 Rc3+ Ka4 6 Ra3+ Kb5! 7 Ra5+ Kc4 8 Rc5+ Kd3 9 Rc3+ Kd2).

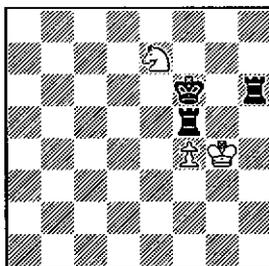
The move is **2 Rb3!** Black has nothing better than **2...Kc1**, and this time everything works: **3 Rc3+ Rdc2** (3...Rbc2 4 Rxc2+) **4 Rd3** (4 Rc3 Rc4 5 Re1+ Kd2 6 Rd1+ Kc3 7 Rd3+ Kb4) **Rc4 5 Rd1+ Kc2 6 Rc1+** (see **10b**) **Kb3** (6...Kd3 7 Rc3+) **7 Rc3+ Ka2 8 Ra3+ Kb1 9 Ra1+ Kc2 10 Rc1+** and we are back at **10b**.



11 - draw

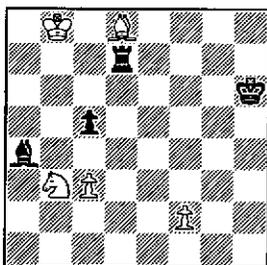


11a - after 3...Kg6

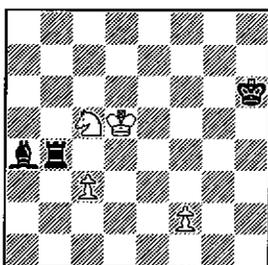


11b - after 4...Kf6

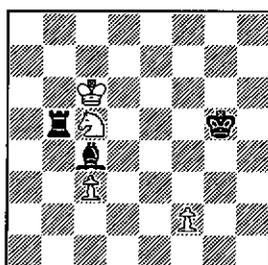
Harold Lommer's **11** appeared in the *BCM* in 1946. **1 g7 Nxh6+ 2 Rxb6+ Rxb6 3 g8N+ Kg6** is straightforward, and we have **11a**. Now **4 Nxh6** appears natural and obvious, since **4...Kxh6** will concede the other rook, but Black can play **4...Rf8** and pick up the knight next move. All right, let's fork again: **4 Ne7+**. But **4...Kf6** gives **11b**, and again White cannot safely capture. He must play **5 Ng8+** repeating the position: a perpetual knight fork, but no capture.



12 - draw

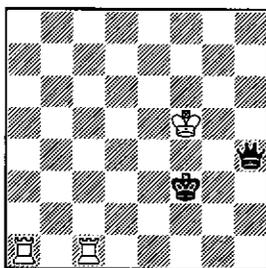


12a - 1 Nxc5, after 6 Kb5

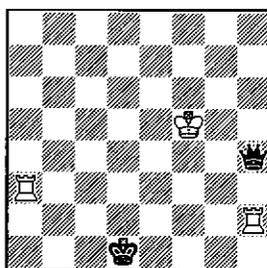


12b - main line, 10...Bc4

Harold Lommer sent Dawson many piquant things during this period, and 12 is a version of another study that appeared in 1946. It takes quite a time to find out why 1 Nxc5 doesn't work: 1...Rxd8+ 2 Kc7 Ra8 3 Kb7 Ra5 4 Kb6 Rb5+ 5 Kc6 Rb4+ 6 Kd5 (see 12a), and the rook can escape to g4 or h4. We must play 1 Bg5 Kxg5 first. Now 2 Nxc5 Rxd8+ 3 Kc7 Ra8 4 Kb7 Ra5 5 Kb6 Rb5+ 6 Kc6 Rb4+ 7 Kd5 gives 12a with the king on g5, and 7...Rg4/Rh4 can be met by 8 f4+; Black can try 7...Bb3+, but 8 Kd6 Rb8 9 Kc7 Rb5 10 Kc6 Bc4 (see 12b) 11 Ne4+ Kf4 12 Nd6 kills his hopes. The original setting had the Black king on f4, when the failure of 1 Nxc5 Rxd8+ 2 Kc7 lies even further in the future (it's the absence of Ne4+ in 12b that is now crucial) but 2 Kb7 cooks (White threatens a fork on e6, hence 2...Bd7, and now 3 Nd3+ and 4 Kc7 draw in all lines). I don't know who suggested the alteration. It loses quite a lot, but what remains still seems to me to be well worth having.

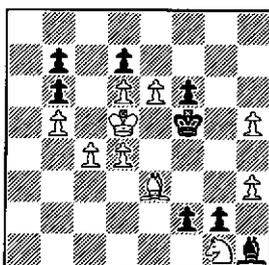


13 - win

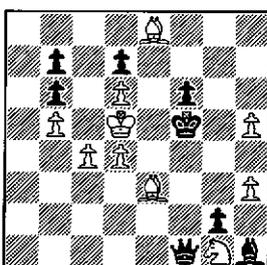


13a - after 3 Rh2

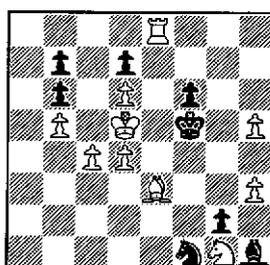
And of course there was the famous 13 (*Rochester, Chatham and Gillingham Journal* 1946). It was a toss-up as to whether this or Blandford's 2 should grace our front page. 1 Ra3+ Ke2 2 Rc2+ forces 2...Kd1 if Black is not to be mated, and now 3 Rh2! gives 13a. White threatens mate on a1, the queen's nine checking squares are all guarded, and 3...Qxh2 loses to 4 Ra1+ and a skewer. But cannot Black play 3...Qd4 guarding the mating square? Indeed he can, but it doesn't help; 4 Ra1+ Qxa1 5 Rh1+ and the king and queen are skewered from the other side. I reported in our December 1997 issue how a study which has become one of the all-time classics first saw the light of day as a contribution to the chess column of a local newspaper where Lommer's wife Valija was dancing with a theatrical touring company.



14 - win

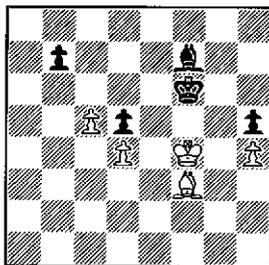


14a - after 1...f1Q 2 e8B

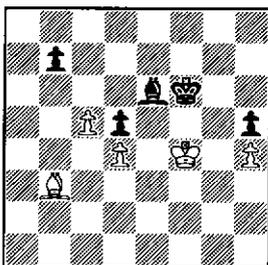


14b - after 1...f1N 2 e8R

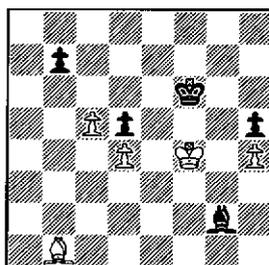
Our final studies come from two eminent scientists (see their *BCM* obituaries, July 1972 pp 245-6 and May 1975 pp 201-2). Lionel Penrose was a problem composer, and his 14 (*BCM* 1938) is a problemist's all-four-promotions task composition: 1 e7 and either 1...f1Q 2 e8B (see 14a) or 1...f1N 2 e8R (see 14b). If White makes a queen in 14a, 2...Qxc4+ forces stalemate; if in 14b, 2...Nxe3+ does.



15 - win



15a - 1...Be8, after 3...Be6



15b - main line, after 5 Bb1

In contrast, Robert Robinson's elegant and instructive 15 (*BCM* 1947) is very much a player's composition. Black to play would have to give way, when a pawn will go; how can we lose a move? Play starts 1 Bd1, and if 1...Be8 then 2 Bc2 Bd7/Bf7 (2...Bc6 3 Bb3, 2...Bb5 3 Bb3 and either 3...Bc6 4 Ba2 or 3...Bc4 4 Bd1) 3 Bb3 Be6 (nearly there, see 15a) 4 Bd1 Bf7 5 Bf3. All right, 1...Bg6, but White can still win: 2 Ba4 (threat 3 Bd7 and 4 Bc8, and if 3-4...Ba6 then 5 c6) Bf5 3 Bb3 Be4 (3...Be6 gives 15a again) 4 Ba2 Bg2 (4...Bh1 is worse) 5 Bb1 (see 15b) Bh3 (5...Bf1 6 Bc2 Be2/Bb5 7 Bb3 and again 7...Bc6 8 Ba2 or 7...Bc4 8 Bd1) 6 Bc2 (threat 7 Bd1) Bg4/Bd7 (6...Be6 7 Bd1 etc) 7 Bb3 Be6 (we have reached 15a after all) 8 Bd1 Bf7 9 Bf3. This was developed from a 1933 correspondence game Elisaskes-Brauer (195 in Fine's *Basic chess endings*), and appears to have been Robinson's only study.

My thanks to Harold van der Heijden's invaluable "Endgame study database 2000", and to the BCPS Library and Paul Valois. Our next special number of this kind is scheduled for December, and will cover the period 1920-36. As usual, please will readers draw my attention to studies that they would like to see included, and to any from 1937-95 which should have appeared but have been overlooked. - JDB