

British Endgame Study News

Special number 53

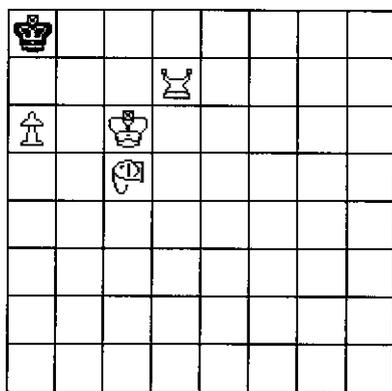
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Some British studies from before 1850

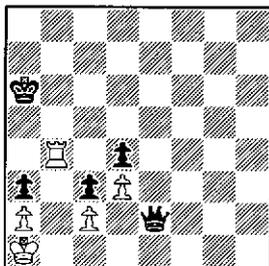


Fers d7, alfil c5; how does White force mate?

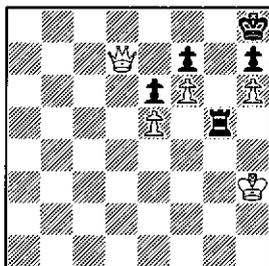
Some British studies from before 1850

There were some British studies in our selection from Alexandre's 1846 *Collection* in special number 45, and we looked at Zytogorski's 1843 analysis of K + R + B v K + R in special number 50. There were however other British contributions to the field, and they provide more than enough for a final special number in this series.

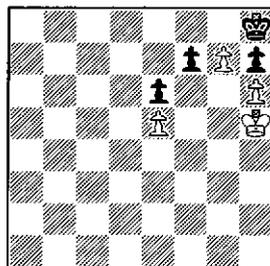
The earliest of them come from a British Library manuscript of the 13th and 14th century, and relate to the days when the ancient "fers" or "firzan" and "fil" or "alfil" had not yet been replaced by the modern queen and bishop. The firzan moved one square diagonally, the fil or alfil, which is apparently the Arabic form of a Persian word "pil" meaning elephant, two squares diagonally leaping the intervening square (which would seem to be a most unelephantine method of progression, though perhaps no more illogical than our use of the terms "queen" and "bishop"). In our front page study, Fd7 guards c8 and Ac5 guards a7, so the Black king is confined to the two squares a8 and b8. Now see if you can work out how to mate him (answer on page 8).



1 - "draw"



1a - win



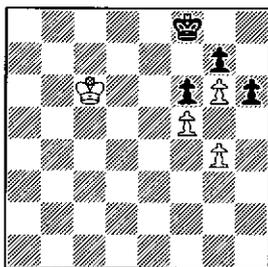
1b - after 10 fxg5+

The first significant British endgame study in the modern form of chess appears to date from as late as 1817, and it was a bust rather than a composition (but so was the Saavedra study). In that year there appeared an anonymous book *Stratagems of Chess* which was based on a French book *Stratagèmes des Echecs*, also anonymous but normally attributed to Montigny, which had been published in "an x" of the French Republic (1801-2 in our money). It included 1, apparently due to Ercole del Rio, whose solution was given in the following terms: "In this situation the game will be unavoidably a drawn one, whoever has the move; for the white by keeping his castle on the knight's line will prevent the black king from passing, and if the black take the bishop's pawn with his queen, the white castle will give perpetual check, and the black king cannot take the castle without giving stale-mate to the white."

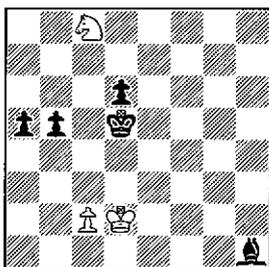
Not so, said an alert solver (sadly, we don't know who). He spotted that Black could force an exchange of queen for rook on b2, and in the second and later editions the position was replaced by 1a with solution 1 Qe7 Rg8 2 Qc5 Rd8 (2...Rg6 3 Qf8+ Qg8 4 Qg7+) 3 Qg1 Rd3+ 4 Kg4 Rc3 5 Qb6 Rc8 6 Kh5 Rg8 7 Qc5 Rd8 8 Qg1 Rg8 9 Qg7+ Rxc7 10 fxg7+ (see 1a) Kg8 11 Kg5 f5 12 exf6 Kf7 13 Kf4 Kg8 14 Ke5 Kf7 15 Kd6 e5 (15...Kg8 16 Kc7 e5 17 f7 mate) 16 g8Q+ and so on. This can be

improved, and I think the crispest line is **1 Qd6 Rg8 2 Kh4 Ra8/c8/e8 3 Kh5 Rc8/e8/a8** (if 3...Rg8 then 4 Qc5 at once) **4 Qb6** (threat 5 Qg1) **Rg8 5 Qc5**, after which Black is in zugzwang and White will reach g7 in two more moves. However, this is detail, and the solver of 1817 discovered all the essentials.

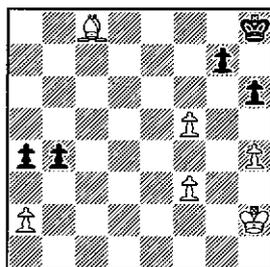
We may note in passing that *Stratagems of Chess* used the algebraic notation, but this does not seem to have affected its popularity; the book went through three editions in 1817, a fourth in 1818, and a fifth in 1826.



2 - win



3 - draw

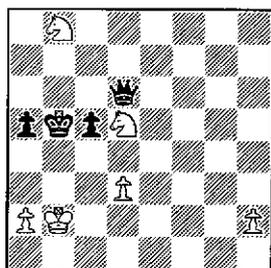


4 - see text

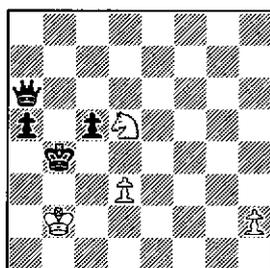
William Lewis (1787-1870) was a leading player and author of the first half of the 19th century. His *Oriental Chess* of 1817 was largely taken from Shastree's *Essays on Chess*, which had been published in Bombay in 1814, but I think **2** was one of Lewis's own contributions. (I don't have convenient access to an original copy of Shastree, and am relying on the transcription in *Meister des Problems* by Mazel and Marco, Wien 1924.) **1 Kd7** (1 Kd6 also wins but takes a couple of moves longer, and another composer might have exploited this by starting with the king on c5) **Kg8** (the win after 1...h5 2 gxh5 is straightforward) **2 Ke7 Kh8 3 Kf7 h5** (Black now has no choice, but the other side of the coin is that the capture will now give stalemate) **4 g5 fxc5** (Black gains nothing by letting White play gxf6) **5 f6** and mate in three more moves.

Lewis's *Chess Problems* of 1827 contains 100 "situations", 77 by others and 23 by Lewis himself. **2** is one of Lewis's own. On its modest scale, it's an out-and-out spectacular: **1 c4+**! Lewis now gives three lines: **1...Kxc4 2 Nxd6+ Kb4** (this gives White extra options and a more demanding attempt is 2...Kc5, when the immediate knight sacrifice is forced) **3 Nxb5 Kxb5 4 Kc2** and draws by reaching the corner, or **1...Kc5 2 cxb5 d5 3 Ne7** (an immediate 3 b6 also draws, though less incisively) **d4 4 Nf5 Be4** (nothing else is better) **5 Nxd4 Kxd4 6 b6 a4 7 b7 Bxb7 8 Kc1** and again White will reach the corner, or **1...bxc4 2 Kc3 K- 3 Nxd6 Kxd6 4 Kxc4**.

4, also from *Chess Problems*, has the curious stipulation "Black played Q. Kt. P. one square; what must White play to draw the game?" In fact he means not that Black has just played ...b4 but that **Black now plays 1...b3**, and in reply White must neither capture nor play a3 but must free f5 for his bishop by playing **2 f6**. Black in his turn must avoid 2...bxa2, 2...b2, and 2...gxf6, all of which lose, and must play **2...g6**; and White in his turn must attack this by playing **3 h5**. Lewis backs up these bare bones with a page and a half of variations, but I think we can take the detail for granted.



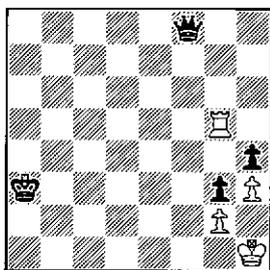
5 - draw



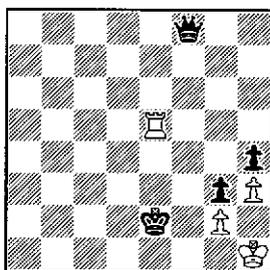
5a - after 4 Nd5+

William Bone (1819-1874) was primarily a problemist, and his studies tended to be problemistically brisk in play. We saw several in our selection from Alexandre, and **5** (*Le Palamède* 1837) provides another.

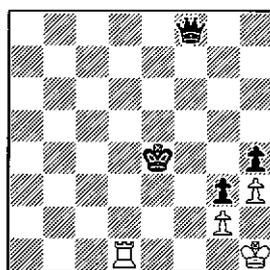
White starts **1 a4+**, and **1...Kxa4** is forced. Now comes **2 Nc3+ Kb4**, and there are two reasons why **3 Nd5+** will not lead to perpetual check: the king can escape to b5, and in any case the queen can capture on d5. The second sacrifice **3 Na6+ Qxa6** solves both difficulties. The queen is decoyed out of reach of d5, and after **4 Nd5+** we see that b5 has become poisoned (see **5a**); **4...Kb5** will allow a fork. So Black has nothing better than **4...Ka4**, and **5 Nc3+** gives the perpetual check. The pawn on h2 is presumably present to kill off the line **4...Kb5** **5 Nc7+ Kb6** **6 Nxa6 Kxa6**. The computer says that the resulting position is drawn even without this pawn, but the draw is difficult enough to distract attention from the main line, and the extra pawn converts this difficult draw into a simple win.



6 - draw

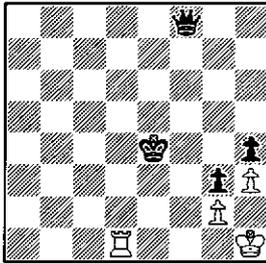


6a - after 5 Re5+

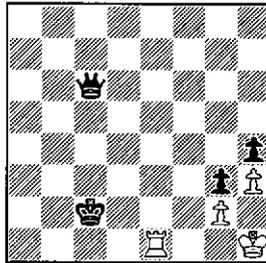


6b - after 7 Rd1

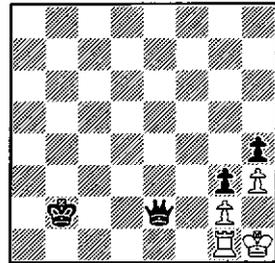
J. Brown's **6** (*Chess Player's Chronicle* 1841) is a remarkable piece of work. I have reversed the colours, and have adjusted the text within quotations. White starts checking, **1 Ra5+**, and any move other than **1...Kb2** will allow the rook down to the first rank (we will examine the effect of this in a moment). Play continues **2 Rb5+ Kc2** **3 Rc5+ Kd2** (**3...Qxc5** is stalemate) **4 Rd5+ Ke2** **5 Re5+**, giving **6a**, and a move to the f-file will allow **6 Rf5+** with stalemate or win of the queen. So Black must advance or suffer perpetual check, and given is **5...Kd3** **6 Rd5+** (thus the source, but I cannot see the objection to an immediate move to the first rank) **Ke4** **7 Rd1** (see **6b**). What happens subsequently will depend on how Black tries to get through, but the



6b repeated

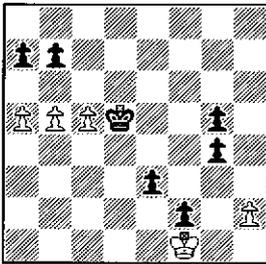


6c - after 11...Qc6

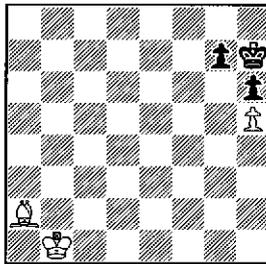


6d - after 16 Rg1

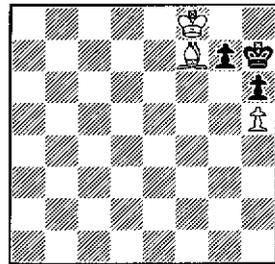
given line is 7...Ke3 8 Re1+ Kd2 9 Ra1 Qf6 10 Rb1 Kc2 11 Re1 Qc6 (see 6c). "Must not play ...Qf2, as White would get perpetual check or a stalemate." 12 Rf1 Qd6 13 Ra1 Kb2 14 Re1 ("the only move to save the game") Qd2 15 Rf1 ("if to g1, he would lose") Qe2 16 Rg1 (see 6d). "If White had the move, he would lose; but Black cannot throw the move on him in this position, nor hinder him from taking it up. Black can neither play ...Qe3, nor ...Qf2, without letting White have a perpetual check or a stalemate. The game is therefore drawn." If instead 14 Rg1 then 14...Qe2, and we *do* have 6d with White to move.



7 - draw



8 - win

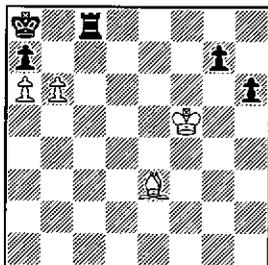


8a - after 9 Kf8

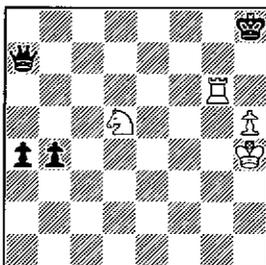
George Walker's *New Treatise on Chess* went through at least four editions, and his studies formed part of it. 7 is from the third edition of 1841. Since the pawns will be lost anyway, the opening move 1 c6 is not really surprising, particularly when it is seen that the capture 1...bxc6 will allow 2 b6 axb6 3 a6 winning. So Black must defend, 1...Kd6, and 2 cxb7 Kc7 3 a6 leaves each king reduced to guard duty.

8 is from the 1846 edition. Walker composed several studies with pawns in this configuration and a wrong bishop, and when people talk about "the Walker position" it is probably one of these that they have in mind. The Black king being already in the corner, White's only chance is to force an advance of the g-pawn, but if it is allowed to come forward too soon its capture will cost White his own pawn. 1 Bf7 is therefore automatic, and if Black now tries 1...g5/g6 the check 2 hxg6+ will gain time for the White king to come across. Hence 1...Kh8. Now White plays his king to f8, carefully taking eight moves to do it (the details don't matter), and after 2-9 Kf8 we have 8a. There follows 9...Kh8 10 Bg8 (mission accomplished) and mate in two more moves.

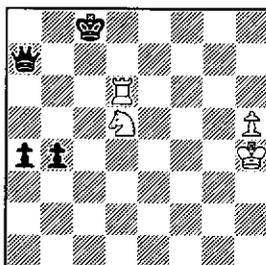
I had intended to devote part of this page to some analyses by C. Forth of the ending K + R + N v K + R which appeared in *The Chess Player's Chronicle* in 1843, but an examination of the original source dissuaded me; it was all very pedestrian, and the elegant short cuts that had attracted me in the solutions in Harold van der Heijden's database were normally absent and had presumably come from later reanalysis. Instead, let me give two positions which appeared in the *Chronicle* in 1841.



9 - "mate in 12"



10 - draw



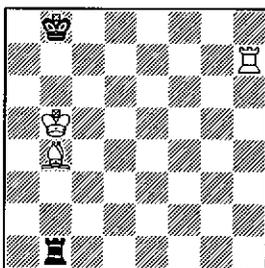
10a - after 5...Kc8

9, by Horatio Bolton, carried the stipulation "White, playing first, checkmates in twelve moves", but it is also valid as an endgame study to win and in some ways it is more suited to presentation in this form. Lines such as 1 b7+ Kb8 2 bxc8Q+ Kxc8 3 Bxa7 are soon seen not to work, and the correct start is 1 b7+ Kb8 2 Bf4+ Rc7 immobilizing the rook. But how can we take advantage? 3 Kg6! h5 4 Be5 (or Bd6) h4 5 Kh7, and the king will walk along the back rank to d8 and support a mating capture on c7. Everything of interest has now happened, though Black can hold out until move 12 by throwing his h-pawn.

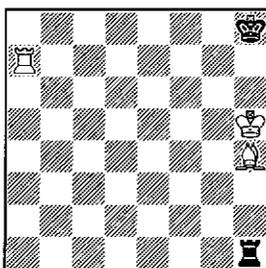
10 is captioned "From Mr. Lewis's Unpublished Collection", but elsewhere this is described as "the valuable collection of Chess MSS. in the possession of Mr. Lewis" and I assume that the study is not his own work. So perhaps it isn't actually British, but let us assume so until proved otherwise. It is flawed, but not without interest. The tempting 1 Nf6 leads to lines such as 1...Qd4+ 2 Kg5 Qc5+ 3 Kg4 Qf8 with a win for Black's pawns, and the drawing line is 1 Rh6+ Kg7 2 Rg6+ Kf7 3 Rf6+ Ke8 4 Re6+ Kd8 5 Rd6+ Kc8 (see 10a). Given is now 6 Nb6+ Kb8 7 Rd8+ Kc7 8 Rd7+ with play right through to a Q v Q draw, but it would seem that 6 Rc6+ Kb8 7 Rb6+ Ka8 8 Ra6 also works and in a sense this might seem more appropriate. If we could cut out one line (which doesn't seem easy), which would we keep?

But of course the high point of 19th century British endgame analysis was the exploration of K + R + B v K + R. We looked at Zytogorski's work in special number 50, but others were looking at this ending, and Staunton's *Chess Player's Handbook* contains an extended analysis attributed to Kling. This made use of analyses dating back to Philidor and Lolli, of Zytogorski's work, and of newly analysed positions published by Kling and Kuiper in *Le Palamède* in 1846.

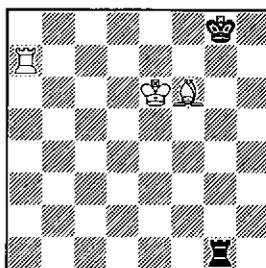
Kling established various "classes" of positions, and within each class he considered each possible placement of the position within the board and gave the



11 - general draw



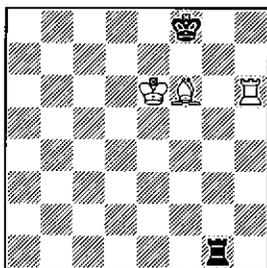
12 - exceptional win



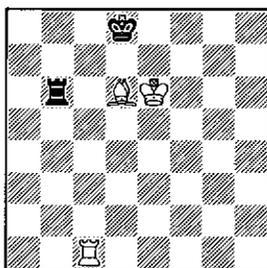
13 - exceptional win

result with White to play. Thus his First Class had bK on the eighth rank, wR on the seventh rank holding him in, wK facing him on the fifth rank, wB on the fourth rank below wK, bR pinning wB from the bottom rank (see 11 for a typical position). Verdict: drawn unless bK is on a rook's file (12). Kling always put the bishop on a dark square.

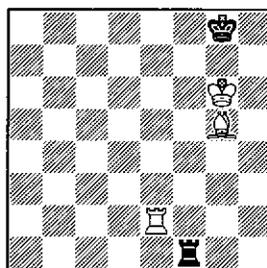
Second class: bK on eighth rank, wK two squares away diagonally, wR on seventh rank, wB next to wK and a knight's move from bK, bR below bK on first rank. Verdict: drawn unless bK is on a knight's file (13). (Kling presumably ignored the rook's file case as trivial.)



14 - exceptional win



15 - one of two wins



16 - exceptional draw

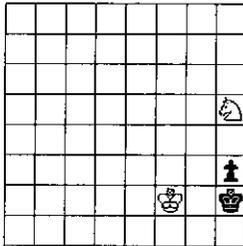
Third class: bK on eighth rank, wB on sixth rank facing him, wK on sixth rank next to wB, wR two squares from wB on the other side, bR on first rank preventing the mate. Verdict: drawn unless bR is on a knight's file (14). "It is won, because the Black Rook has not so many squares to play to as in the preceding variations."

Fourth class: as third but with bR and wR interchanged. Verdict: drawn unless bR is on a knight's file (15) or a rook's file.

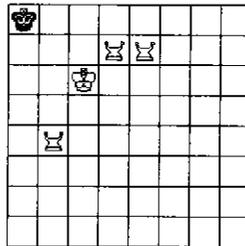
Fifth class: bK on eighth rank, wK on sixth rank facing him, wB on fifth rank behind wK, wR two files away from bK, bR on the intervening file preventing the mate. Verdict: won unless bK is on a knight's file (16). This class included the classical positions analysed by Philidor and Lolli.

All these verdicts have now been endorsed by the computer, and it would appear to have been Kling and Kuiper, building on the work of those who had gone before, who finally established the Lolli position (as 16 but with wRe6 and bRf7) to be drawn.

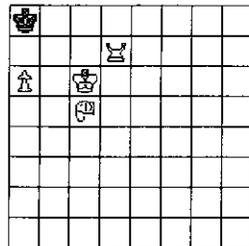
To finish the series, let us have three positions from medieval chess. These come from the British Library manuscript cited by Murray as "King's Library, MS 13, A. xviii". It was apparently one of a set of four which Murray thought to go back to a single Latin original, and was written in England in the 13th and 14th centuries. I have not seen the manuscript itself, and am relying on Murray's transcription.



17 - win



18 - win



19 - win

17 remains valid under modern rules, and it appears to have been the first study to feature the classic lone-knight mate. The given solution is **1 Nf6 Kh1 2 Ne4 Kh2 3 Nd2 Kh1 4 Nf1 h2 5 Ng3**, and of course there are minor alternatives.

18 features the fers or firzan, which moves one square diagonally. This position was already a win by "bare king" under the rules of the time, so play would not have continued, but composers have never allowed a strict adherence to the rules to get in the way of a good story (witness our modern practice of ignoring the 50-move rule except on the rare occasions when it suits us to invoke it). The solution starts **1 Fc8 2 Fb7**, after which Black is restricted to the two squares a7 and b8 and White simply brings up his other firzans to c7 and b6.

(King and two firzans cannot force mate against a bare king. King and three firzans can, provided that the firzans do not all run on the same set of squares, and this is one of the two final-stage mates (the mate in the other corner is rather easier). The earlier play is easy once it is realised that three firzans in a tight L are invulnerable. So the stronger side can use its king and its trio of firzans as separate units, gradually gaining ground and driving the opponent back. The ending is relevant to modern games such as Makruk (Thai chess), where there is no win by "bare king" but promotion is still possible only to a piece with a firzan move.)

And 19, which features the fil or alfil? The solution given by Murray is difficult to follow because his diagrams could not reproduce the identifying letters which were on the squares of the original, but I reckon it solves in 12 by **1 Kd5!** (White must lose a move) **Kb8 2 Kd6 Ka8 3 Fc6** (or Fc8) **Kb8 4 Kd7 Ka8 5 Fb7+ Kb8 6 Ae3** (say) **Ka7 7 Kc6 Kb8 8 Kd6** (White must lose another move) **Ka7 9 Kc5 Kb8 10 Kc6 Ka7 11 Ac5+ Kb8 12 a7**. Losing a move twice is hardly common even today.

As always, my thanks to Harold van der Heijden's "Endgame study database III" and to the BCPS Library. This series is now finished, but I shall be willing to devote space elsewhere in the magazine to studies I have overlooked. - JDB