

Introduction to the second edition

David Pritchard died in December 2005 leaving the intended second edition of this book unfinished, and almost the first act of his widow Elaine was to ask me to complete it. It would have been the culmination of a major part of his life's work, and I was very happy to accept the commission.

Let me stress that my role has merely been to complete an existing text and prepare it for the press. I have not been a co-author, let alone an independent reviser. The choice of games to be included is almost entirely David's; he had sent me a list in June 2004 of the games he intended to add to the first edition, and apart from a few related games which I have mentioned in passing, a game not on that list is included only if there is clear subsequent evidence that he had intended to add it. The research was David's, and the text is David's except where I have indicated otherwise. However, in order to make room for the new material, David had intended to omit some 200 apparently little-played games which were in the first edition, and it seemed to me that most of these should be retained if only to demonstrate priority should they be reinvented. I have therefore reinstated them, except where they were clearly unplayable (a few of the 'variants' described in the first edition were merely conditions invented to govern or restrict play in problems) or where there was some other specific reason for their removal.

So, what did David regard as a chess variant? The chief feature which divides chess from other games is that the objective is to capture or destroy the opponent's king, as opposed to wiping out all his men, or otherwise leaving him without a move, or occupying his home territory, or beating him in a race, or scoring more points according to some scale, or whatever. However, to restrict ourselves to games with this objective would exclude Losing Chess, which is one of the most widely played chess variants of all, and David preferred to define a chess variant as any game that was related to, derived from, or inspired by chess. This resulted in the inclusion of one or two games which strike me as not being chess in even the remotest sense (I suspect that David included them because he thought they were good games which deserved the publicity), but most of the games fall into one of three classes: (a) true 'chess' games in the classic sense, where the capture of the enemy king is indeed the sole or primary objective of play, (b) other games played with ordinary chessmen, and (c) a few further games having the word 'chess' in their titles, which must be mentioned if only to point out that their claim to the term may not be justified.

And not every game which is technically a chess variant even within the strictest sense of the term can properly claim a place here. David's basic criterion in 1994, a few light-hearted entries apart, was that a game must have been published in some form, or at least have been played by a significant number of people outside the inventor's circle of family and friends. The advent of the Internet has meant that 'publication' can now be achieved by making a few strokes on a computer keyboard and posting the result on a web site, so the first condition is no longer a constraint, and for this edition David felt obliged to be rather more selective. Anyone can invent a chess variant, and vast numbers of people have done so: 'the board looks like such-and-such, the men move like so-and-so and so-and-so and so-and-so, the object is to capture the king'. The result is too often original only in its eccentricity, and adds nothing of value to what already exists. In the new edition, therefore, David added or intended to add a game only if there was evidence that significant numbers of people were playing it, or if it appeared to offer something genuinely new rather than mere complication or superficial novelty.

A particular difficulty is presented by problems. Chess has generated a substantial and highly specialized problem literature, and this has come to embody a vast number of variant ideas and conditions; the 1992 edition of Kurt Smulders's book *Sprookjesschach* listed over 1100, and an equivalent book produced today would contain many more. But not many of these have been tried as games, and most would be pointless or unplayable. David included a few of the latter in

the first edition, but in his selection for the new edition he restricted himself to variants which appeared to have a role as complete games.

Wherever possible, games have been described in such detail as will allow them to be played (making the necessary equipment is normally not difficult), but there are inevitable exceptions. Some games (particularly games conceived as sets or families) are too complicated for brief exposition, and the only option is to give an outline and cite a reference where full detail can be found. Some information, in particular that relating to proprietary games, is subject to copyright or other restriction, and David was not always given permission to reprint it in full. There are also a few games which demand inclusion for historical reasons but whose details have been largely or completely lost. But in general, if a game appears here, you can sit down with a friend, knock up a set from some conveniently available material, and play it; and I hope you will enjoy doing so.

So much for the content of the book. Let me now say a little about the editing.

The main change from the first edition is in the ordering of material. David brought together a few types of game into single combined entries (hexagonal games, spherical games, three-dimensional games, three-handed and four-handed games), but in general he listed the games in alphabetical order based on the name or names by which he knew them, with cross-references to related games at the end of each entry. In the second edition, he had intended to add a simple classification by type, but the basic alphabetical order of the first edition would have been retained. However, my first action on receiving the text was to chop up a copy and divide it into piles each containing games of a similar nature, and it soon became clear that it would be quicker to present the games so grouped and provide an alphabetical index than to spend time checking and updating lists of cross-references. For example, there turned out to be over 30 games based on the simple idea of adding knight power to one or more of queen, rook, and bishop. These now appear in chronological order as ‘Pieces with added knight movement’ within a chapter ‘Combination pieces’, and an incidental consequence is that the extent to which this simple idea has been invented and reinvented over four hundred years has become obvious. Not every case is as clear-cut as this and no doubt reviewers will be quick to say that they would have put such-and-such a game into such-and-such a section and not where I have put it myself, but I hope readers will find the grouping generally helpful. A few important entries (for example, David’s observations on variant design) fell outside this classification, and these have been placed in an appendix.

The artwork used for the first edition could not be found. To have redrawn everything would have prevented me from achieving anything near to David’s intended publication date, and scanning a copy of the first edition would not have produced new masters of adequate quality. I therefore reconsidered all the illustrations, excluded those that seemed merely decorative or related to games of relatively little interest, and prepared the rest in a simple and straightforward style (an incidental benefit has been to give the ancient ‘firzan’ and ‘fil’ their own symbols, instead of the modern queen and bishop symbols which are so often substituted.) The decision to do this was made easier by the realisation that what would have been the most complicated diagrams to recreate tended to belong to the least satisfactory games; complexity and playability do not usually go hand in hand.

I also reconsidered the examples of play. I made the assumption that most purchasers of this new edition would already possess the first and would not want to receive the same examples again, so an example from the first edition has been retained only if it appeared unusually piquant or instructive. In choosing new and replacement examples, I decided normally to restrict myself to one simple example per variant (a few particularly popular variants have more), and I tried to pick something which would illustrate its nature as pointedly as possible. The exploitation of a plausible blunder in the opening may be both instructive and entertaining, whereas a full-length master game in an unfamiliar variant, even where one exists, is all too likely to result only in glazed incomprehension.

Most of David's entries had references to his sources within the text and where they didn't I have added one, so the authority on which every entry relies is now clear. I assume that even general readers will find this of interest - specialists wanting to carry on from where David left off certainly will - and if a particular source should be found unreliable the integrity of the rest of the book will not be compromised. I should perhaps stress that I have merely taken these references from the notes in David's files, and have not necessarily examined the source material myself. Books are normally identified by author and title, periodicals by title only, but authors whose work is referred to frequently are cited only by name (Cazaux, Faidutti, Falkener, Forbes, Gizycki, Gollon, Murray, Stone, van der Linde, Verney) and the titles of the relevant books will be found in the section 'Notes on principal sources'. An author cited more frequently than any other is Joseph Boyer, but he wrote two books and a pamphlet (*Les Jeux d'Échecs Non-orthodoxes*, *Nouveaux Jeux d'Échecs Non-orthodoxes*, *Nouveaux Jeux d'Échecs Intéressants*) and these are normally cited individually by title.

My last editorial change caused me the greatest heart-searching. David was a deeply courteous man to whom acknowledgement of title and qualification was instinctive and automatic, and he carefully put 'Dr' or 'Professor' before every name where he knew the entitlement to exist. But not every player and inventor of variant chess games wishes to advertise the fact that he is a professor of higher mathematics in his spare time, and it is invidious when Professor X is given his title every time his name appears and Professor Y is never given it at all. I have retained David's style in his acknowledgements, but in the body of the book I have taken it on myself to apply the style of the scientific research literature, where names appear without academic prefixes however honorific and well-deserved these might be. Logically, I should have done the same with non-academic titles, but a few are so much a part of the name - Dunsany and Rutland are examples - that to have done so would have created confusion. So the non-academic titles have been kept, though with regret; the man who really deserves a title never needs to use it, because his name carries sufficient lustre on its own.

All this routine editing has been done silently. The changes of substance are a different matter. Normally, when a friend or admirer finishes an author's work he tries to do so in such a way that the change of hand is imperceptible, but David's knowledge of the field was far wider than mine will ever be, and I think it important that the reader can see at a glance which parts of the book rest on his authority and which rest merely on mine. I have therefore adopted the convention that anything in square brackets [...] is mine, and where I have written an entry or made a significant change to its content there is a note saying so. David left some 25-30 entries unwritten and perhaps twice as many again were only in embryonic form and needed to be filled out, and there were a handful of cases where I knew something about a game from personal experience that apparently had not come to his notice. I also found a few places where he had apparently been misled by errors in his sources, and I have identified these and have made such comment and alteration as seemed appropriate. But these alterations have been openly declared, and if future generations should decide that the error in fact lay with myself then so be it.

David stood head and shoulders above anyone else in this field, and the second edition of this encyclopedia has been eagerly awaited. I hope I have done it justice.