

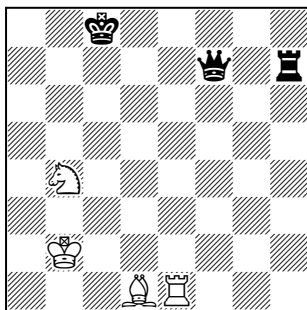
## Adam Sobey 1925 - 2015

Adam Sobey died in July 2015. Although inactive in his last years, he was for a long time a leading member of the British endgame study fraternity, and he made significant contributions in other fields as well.

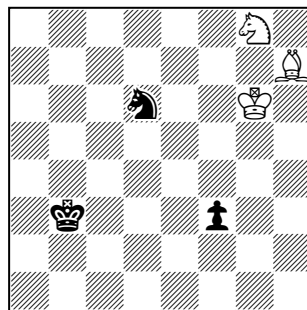
*The Problemist* started publishing original endgame studies in 1968. Adam was its first study columnist, and continued to hold the post until 2000. As such, he guided the first steps of several contemporary British study composers, myself included, and had it not been for the platform he provided for my early work I would probably not be writing this now. He himself was very proud of the way in which, from modest beginnings, his column eventually reached out to the world's best composers, and after his retirement I invited him to present selections from what he had published as special numbers 26 and 29 of *British Endgame Study News*. But perhaps even more important was his role in nurturing home talent.

By and large, an established study composer will send one of his best pieces to a problem magazine only if he has a particular regard either for the magazine or for its columnist. I remember a remark by, I think, Jack Gill - sadly, I cannot quote chapter and verse - that from early life problemists tend to take a minimalist attitude towards endgame theory and practice, and indeed one of the attractions of "White to play and mate in two" is that it *doesn't* demand any endgame knowledge. Yes, a problem magazine will attract the occasional masterpiece - the two studies by Ladislav Salai jr which I present elsewhere on this site provide examples, and as study columnist of *diagrammes* I myself had the pleasure of publishing the "Na1" study by David Blundell which immediately became recognised as a classic - but in general a composer will send his best works where the readership is more knowledgeable and appreciative. However, in providing an opportunity for those who have hitherto composed only problems to try their hands, and in offering a platform for studies which are promising but not yet of a quality to command a place in the mainstream press, a study column in a problem magazine can perform an extremely useful function. A list of British study composers whose work appeared in Adam's column over the years would be very revealing.

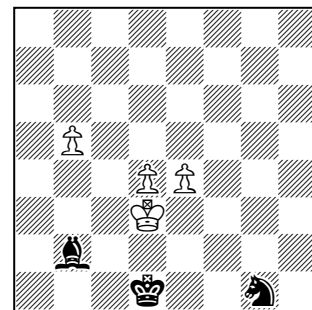
He was of course a composer himself. Harold van der Heijden's invaluable "Endgame study database IV" contains over fifty studies by him, and all but a few date from the time before computers became available to do the heavy analysis. Five were quoted in *BESN* (one each in the ordinary issues for March 1996, September 1996, and December 1997, and two in special number 28); three more appear below. They are very much of the "short and sweet" kind (those quoted in *BESN* were of heavier metal), but I think they will be found attractive.



1 - White to play and draw



2 - White to play and draw



3 - White to play and win

Solutions overleaf.

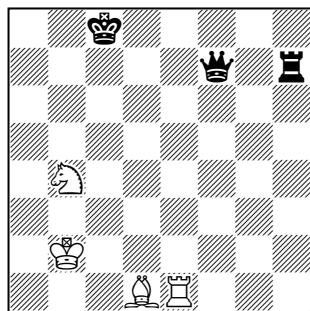
He also composed helpmate problems and I think some fairies, and he had a nice eye for novel and amusing possibilities over the board. His inventions Triplets, Three Kings Chess, Superknights, and Lambeth Conference were played at Christmas meetings of the Haslemere Chess Club, apparently to general approval, and they duly found their way into David Pritchard's *Encyclopedia*. Triplets, in particular, was subsequently played in at least one high-level postal tourney organised by AISE (Associazione Italiana Scacchi Eterodossi).

Professionally, Adam worked in some capacity which prevented him from writing directly to composers in Eastern bloc countries (he told me that G. W. Chandler used to write for him). He also composed crosswords for *The Listener*, I think as "Adam".\* The crosswords in *The Listener* were legends in the art of brain torture (I think that at least one published before the war found no successful solver at all), and I dimly remember one competition clue of his at a British Chess Problem Society weekend, which, although perfectly fair, demanded unexpected exploration at two distinct levels before the penny dropped.

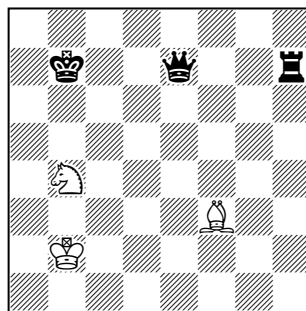
Thank you, Adam. Your successors will do well to equal you.

---

\* Roger Phillips, co-editor of *The Listener* crossword, confirms: "one of our more prolific setters, producing 54 Listeners [*Listener* crosswords] between 1955 and 2010."

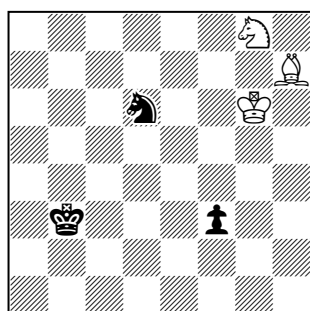


1 - White to play and hold the draw

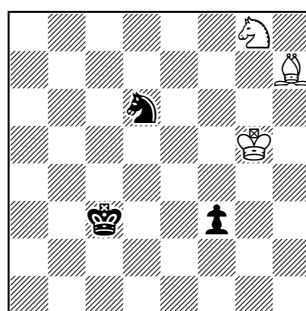


1a - after 3 Bf3+

Play in 1 (*The Guardian* 1963) starts **1 Bg4+**, and where is the Black king to go? **1...Kd8** allows **2 Nc6+ Kc7 3 Re7+**, **1...Kb8 2 Nc6+ Ka8 3 Ra1+ Kb7 4 Nd8+** is even worse, and **1...Kc7** succumbs neatly to **2 Re7+ Qxe7 3 Nd5+**. This leaves **1...Kb7**, after which **2 Re7+ Qxe7** seems a mere waste of a rook, but what happens after **3 Bf3+** (see 1a)? Every dark square allows a fork, so only **3...Kc8** offers hope, but **4 Bg4+** drives him back again, **4...Kb7**, and **5 Bf3+** repeats. Perpetual checks with a bishop date back at least to the 1840s, but few have been set with this degree of lightness and elegance.



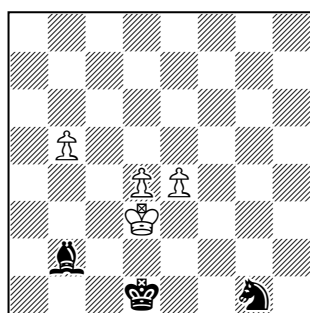
2 - White to play and hold the draw



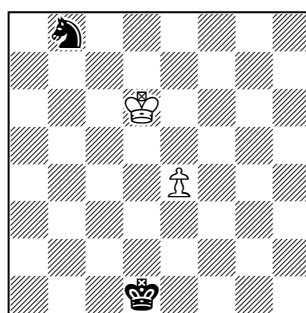
2a - after 1...Kc3

In 2 (*New Statesman* 1966), **1 Kg5** threatens **2 Bd3** stopping the pawn, so Black must play **...Kc4** or **...Kc3**, and we soon see that **1...Kc4** will leave the king exposed to a check from e3 (**2 Nf6/Nh6 f2 3 Ng4 f1Q 4 Ne3+**). So **1...Kc3** giving 2a, and now what?

The surprising answer is **2 Bf5**. This threatens **3 Bh3** again stopping the pawn, but after **2...Nxf5** has it not merely thrown the bishop away? **3 Kxf5 f2** is clearly hopeless. However, the capture on f5 has lured the Black knight away from its defence of e4, and **3 Nf6 f2 4 Ne4+** duly takes advantage; the square c3 also has allowed a fork.



3 - White to play and win



3a - after 6 Kd6

Play in 3 (*New Statesman* 1976) starts **1 b6**, and will not the pawn simply walk home? Indeed it will, but after **1...Nf3 2 b7 Bxd4 3 b8Q** Black will have **3...Ne5+ 4 Kxd4** (no other legal move) **Nc6+ 5 Kc5/Kd5 Nxb8** and the new queen has gone. No matter; **6 Kd6** keeps the knight at bay (see 3a), and now the e-pawn will walk home as well, which will make up for its blocking of the White king at move 4.