

Endgame Studies in 2020

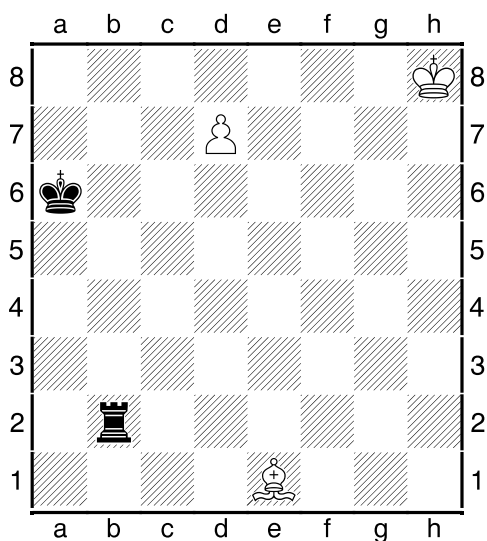
by Ian Watson

COVID has cancelled over-the-board tourneys, but it hasn't interrupted chess composing. Composing has always been a work-from-home activity, so it has blossomed during lockdowns. The publication of chess compositions has continued, too. Here are four endgame studies first published during 2020.

Before those, however, let me show you two studies from a composer who died in 2020. He was the extraordinary Richard K. Guy, who had reached 103 years old in 2019. He was a model for longevity, celebrating his hundredth birthday by trekking in the Rocky Mountains, at which age he still continued his work as a professional mathematician. Guy composed nearly 200 endgame studies, mainly in the period from his undergraduate years to his editorship of British Chess Magazine's endgame study column (which he wrote from 1947 to 1951). He also collaborated with other well-known study experts, notably with Hugh Blandford and John Roycroft in inventing the GBR code (Guy-Blandford-Roycroft), which is used to classify and index chess positions in a very few symbols.

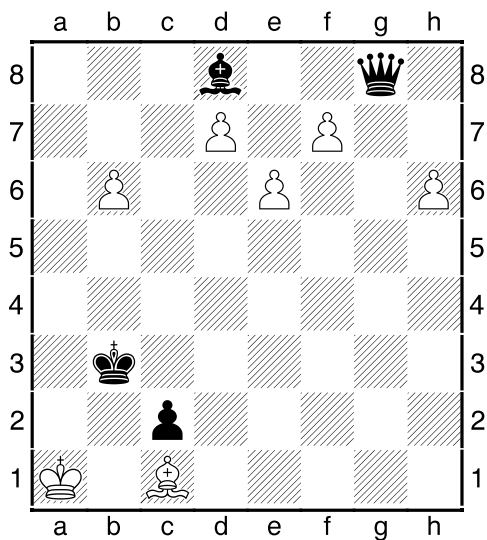
You'll find the solutions to all the studies at the end of this article, but please do try to solve them – they are solver-friendly! As usual in studies, it's White to play and White's task is given underneath the diagram.

R Guy, *Chess*, 1939



Win

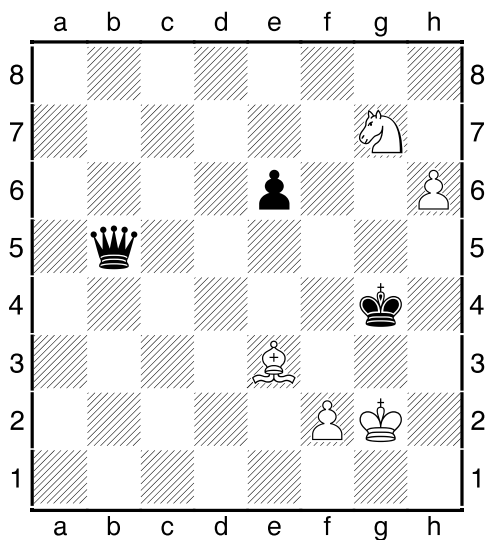
R Guy, BCM, 1940



Win

The BCM column, which Richard Guy wrote around seventy years ago, now features four endgame studies each month. I am its current writer, and I like to publish new studies by British composers, so please do have a go at composition and send them to me at ian@irwatson.uk. The first of these is by two well-known names from the English county chess circuit, Paul Byway and Steve Law. In recent years, Paul has concentrated on composing and has become arguably the leading expert on ‘miniatures’ – positions with seven or fewer pieces; this study isn’t quite a miniature, but it is nonetheless light and elegant. It has an eight-move main line, but it isn’t too hard to find.

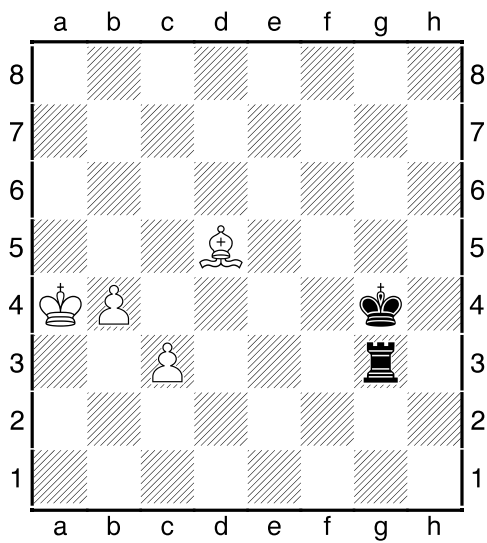
P Byway & S Law, BCM, 2020



Win

Our next study, this time by Paul Byway alone, is indeed a miniature. The position could have arisen in a game. It may even have done – it is so natural. If it has, I doubt whether the White player found the surprising solution.

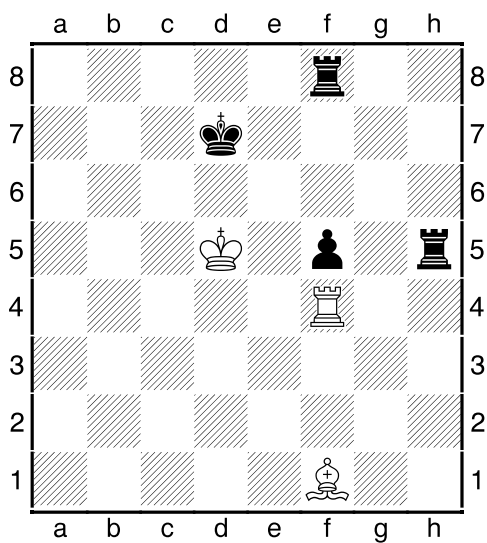
P Byway, BCM, 2020



Win

Paul Michelet is another composer whose works appear regularly in BCM. This one could have been composed a century or more ago - no sidelines, no complexity, but of course a surprise move. When you've seen that move, the draw will immediately be clear to you.

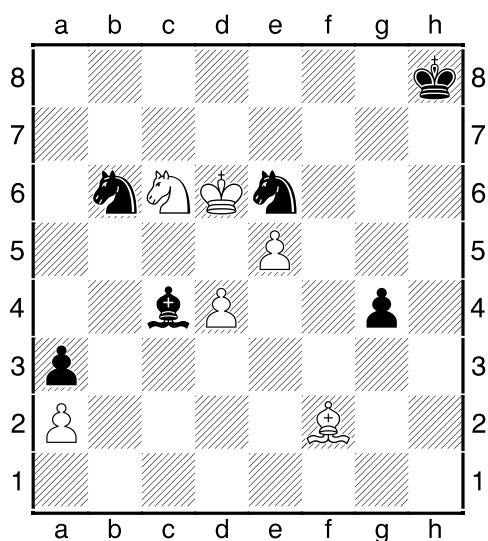
P Michelet, BCM, 2020



Draw

To round off this article, a composition by another extraordinary person, John Nunn. The studies editor of The Problemist described this study as "a player-friendly sacrificial episode ending up in a stalemate".

J Nunn, *The Problemist*, 2020



Draw

To see more endgame studies, visit the British Chess Problem Society website at www.theproblemist.org or the ARVES site at www.arves.org.

Solutions

(Guy - 1939) 1.Bb4 Rh2+ 2.Kg7 Rg2+ 3.Kf7 Rf2+ 4.Ke6 Re2+ 5.Kd5 and 5...Re3 6.Kd4 wins. (2.Kg8 and 4.Ke7 are minor duals – alternative White moves which also solve.) 1.d8Q? Rb8.

(Guy - 1940) 1.fxg8N Bxb6 2.d8R Bxd8 3.h7 Bb6 4.h8B wins. 2.d8Q? Bd4+, as also 4.h8Q? Bd4+. All three underpromotions. That had been done before, but not, as far as I know, with so few moves and so few pieces.

(Byway & Law) 1.f3+ Kh4 2.h7 Qb8 3.h8Q+ Qxh8 4.Bd4 e5 5.Bxe5 Qd8/f8 6.Bg3+ Kg5 7.Ne6+ K~ 8.Nxd8/f8 winning. White sacrifices his queen merely to deflect the Black queen.

There are a lot of sidelines, but they are both understandable and findable by humans: 1.h7?/1.Bd4?/1.Nxe6? are all met by checks on the long diagonal. 2.Bf2+? Kg5 3.h7 Qb8 4.Bd4 Kg6. 2.Nxe6? Qb2+ 3.Kf1 Qa1+ 4.Ke2 Qa2+ 5.K~ Qxe6. 3.Nxe6? Qg3+; 3.Nf5+? exf5 4.Bd4 Qg3+ 5.Kf1 Qxf3+; 3.Bf2+? Kg5 4.Bd4 Kg6; 3.Bd4? Qg3+ 4.Kf1 Qxf3+ 5.Bf2+ Kg4 6.h8Q Qd1+ 7.Be1 Qd3+ 8.Kg1 Qe3+ 9.Bf2 Qc1+ 10.Kg2 Qc6+ and can keep checking by 11.Kh2 Qc7+ 12.Kg2 Qc6+ 13.Kf1 Qc4+ 14.Ke1 Qc1+ 15.Ke2 Qc2+ 16.Ke3 Qc3+ 17.Ke4 Qc2+ and so on. 4...Qd8/f8 5.Bf2+ Kg5 6.Nxe6+. 4...Qh6 5.Bf2+ Kg5 6.Be3+.

(Byway) 1.b5 Rxc3 2.b6 Re3 3.b7 Re8 4.Be6+ Kg5 5.Bc8 Re1 6.Be6 and Black cannot stop the pawn, e.g. 6...Re4+ 7.Ka3 Re3+ 8.Kb4 Re4+ 9.Kc3 or 6...Ra1+ 7.Kb4 Rb1+ 8.Bb3. White has to push his b-pawn immediately, even at the cost of the other pawn, else Black's king has time to get across – 1.c4? Kf5! is eventually a draw.

This study shows the 'mousetrap theme' – White opens a door and then closes it, in this case by moving his bishop from e6 and back to e6, so it's also a 'switchback'.

(Michelet) 1.Be2 Rh6 2.Bg4 Rhf6 3.Rxf5 Rxf5+ 4.Ke4 Ke6 5.Bh3 and Black cannot unlock his pieces. The bishop dominating the two rooks by the pin has been known for a century or so, but the play leading up to it here is new to me.

(Nunn) 1.d5 Nxd5 2.Kxe6 Bxa2 3.Kf5 g3 4.Bxg3 Ne7+ 5.Nxe7 Bb1+ 6.Kg5 a2 7.Kh6 a1Q 8.Bh4 Qxe5 9.Ng6+ Bxg6 10.Bf6+ Qxf6 stalemate.

1.Nb4? Nf4 2.Kc5 Nfd5 3.Nxd5 Bxd5 4.Kxb6 Bxa2 or in this line 2.e6 Bxe6 3.Ke5 Nfd5. In the main line, 3...Bb1+ 4.Kxg4 a2 5.Bd4. Also in the main line, 4...Bb1+ 5.Kg5 a2 6.e6 a1Q 7.Be5+. Finally, in the main line, 7.Bh4? Kg7.

Chess Problem News

by Ian Watson

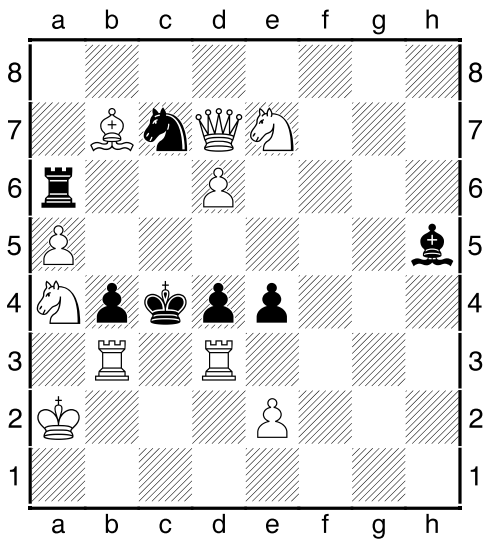
Britain has an active chess problem community, particularly the British Chess Problem Society. The BCPS publishes one of the world's leading problem magazines, *The Problemist*, from which five of our problems here are taken.

The Society also organises chess solving events, in which competitors solve chess problems and studies, against the clock, including the annual British Chess Solving Championship, sponsored by Winton. Chess solving events are held by most of the chess-playing nations, and there is a parallel world to over-the-board chess, with chess solving FM, IM and GM titles, and chess solving Elo ratings, and there is a European and also a World Championship each year. Sadly, in 2020, most solving events around the world were cancelled once COVID lockdowns started, but fortunately, the British Championship was in February, so was unaffected. John Nunn won, taking the national title for the tenth (!) time. Although most physical solving tournaments were unable to happen, there have been online solving competitions. If, for example, you visit www.netchex.club, you will find regular daily and monthly solving challenges. Please do try it – the software is solver-friendly, and it will give you a solving Elo rating estimate based on how well you solve.

Solving thus continued through 2020, but all online. Composing of problems, however, continued in its normal way - which is a composer with a chess board (and a computer to check if the problem is sound...)

This composition, by David Shire, is a two-mover (White to play and force mate in two moves). Your task is to find the key move (White's first move), but be careful because there are two 'tries' (near solutions, which only fail to a single Black reply).

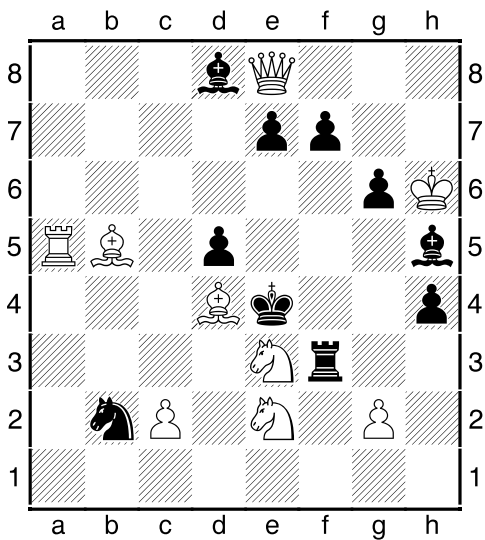
D Shire, *The Problemist*, 2020



Mate in 2

Now here's a three-mover. It was composed by Don Smedley, who died in October. Don was a fine composer both of chess problems and bridge problems, and a former President of the British Chess Problem Society.

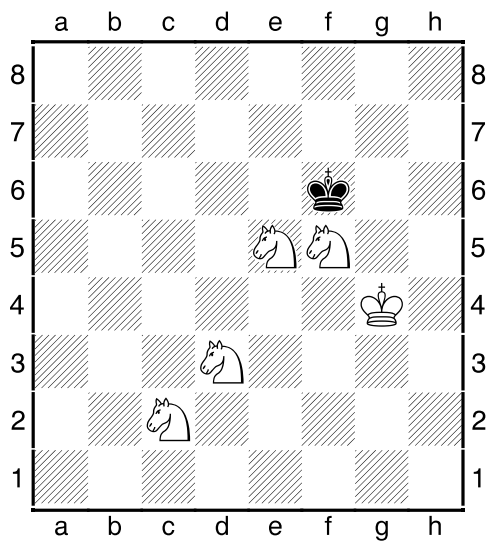
D Smedley, *Matthews JT*, 2002



Mate in 3

Many over-the-board players have taken up composing. Here's a four-mover by Paul Lamford, a strong player both of chess and bridge; it's his first published problem, although he is already known as a composer of endgame studies.

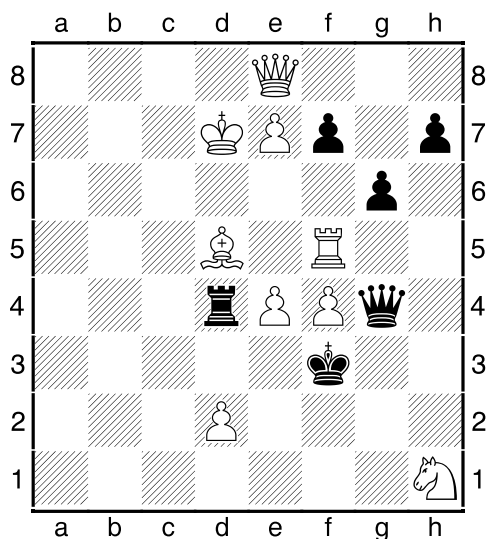
P Lamford, *The Problemist*, 2020



Mate in 4

Michael McDowell is one of the UK's leading composers (and one of its leading solvers too). His problem below is a helpmate, which means White and Black are cooperating together to give checkmate to the Black king. In helpmates, the move sequence is unusual in that Black plays first; in this two-move helpmate, the move sequence is BWBW, with the second White move giving checkmate. This particular problem is a 'twin' – solve the diagram position, then relocate the knight in the diagram to c1 and solve again.

M McDowell, *The Problemist*, 2020

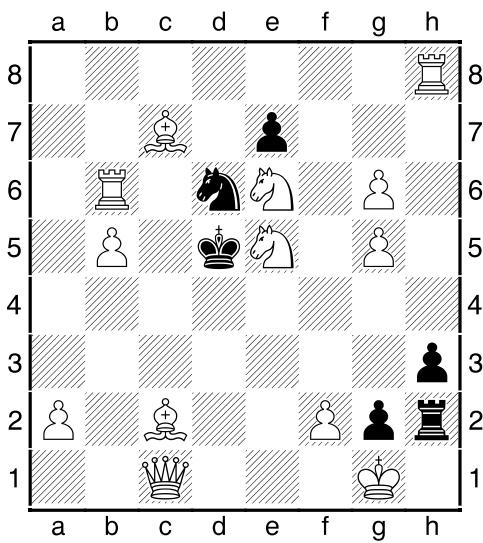


Helpmate in 2

(a) diagram, (b) transfer N from h1 to c1

Now for a selfmate. This one is by Cedric Lytton and Stephen Taylor. In selfmates, White is trying to get himself checkmated and Black is trying to avoid giving mate. The move sequence goes, WBWB, with Black's second move giving mate. In this one, if Black were otherwise stalemated, he would have to play ...Rh1 mate, but can you immobilise Black's king and knight?

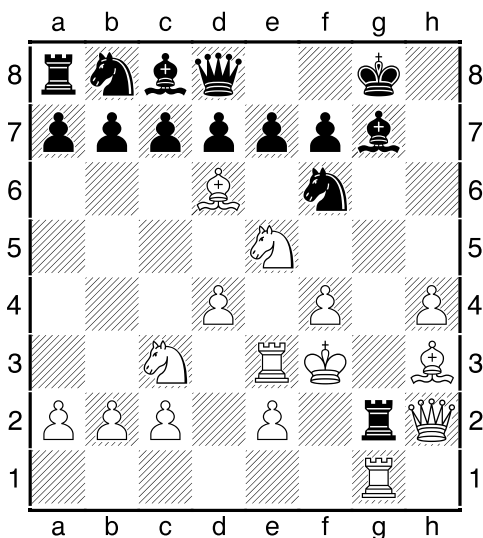
C Lytton & S Taylor, *The Problemist*, 2020



Selfmate in 2

Last year, in this Yearbook, I challenged you to solve what is called a “proof game”; here’s another – you have to find a legal game that would lead to the diagram position; the moves may be ones that would never occur in an over-the-board game, but they must all be legal moves. In Stephen Taylor’s composition, you are told that the position arose after Black’s sixteenth move. In proof games, there is only one sequence of moves that is possible, which is very useful information to help you solve it. Of course, it’s very likely that the composer has built in some surprises; a typical one is for pawns to have promoted.

S Taylor, *The Problemist*, 2020



Position after Black’s 16th move: what were the moves of the game?

To see more chess problems, visit the British Chess Problem Society website at www.theproblemist.org

Solutions

(Shire) 1.Nc6 with the threat 2.Ne5, and with defences 1...Kd5 2.Rxd4, 1...Kb5 2.Rxb4, 1...Rxc6 2.Qxc6, 1...Rxa5 2.Nxa5. To appreciate the problem, you need to see the tries, their mates, and their refutations. There is 1.Nf5? threat 2.Rxd4 with defences 1...Nb5 2.Qe6, 1...Rxd6 2.Nxd6, 1...Rc6 2.Qxc6, 1...exd3 2.exd3, but 1...Ne6! and there is 1.Nd5? threat 2.Rxb4 with defences 1...Nxd5 2.Bxa6, 1...Rb6 2.Ndxb6, 1...Rc6 2.Qxc6, but 1...Bxe2! Notice how the key move gives Black's king freedom to move, which it didn't have in the diagram.

(Smedley) 1.Nxd5 (threat 2.Bd3+ Nxd3/Rxd3 3.Ndc3/Nf6). The defences are: 1...Nc4 2.Ndc3+ Rxc3/Kf5 3.Bc6/Bd7; 1...e6 2.Nf6+ R,Bxf6/Kf5 3.Bc6/Bd3; 1...Kf5 2.Qxf7+ Ke4/Kg4 3.Qe6/Qxf3; and 1...Bxa5 2.Qxe7+ Kxd5/Kf5 3.Qe5/Bd7. A splendid problem.

(Lamford) 1.Na3 Ke6 2.Kg5 Kd5 3.Nb5 Ke6 4.Nc7, or 3...Ke4 4.Nc3. It's unusual for a problem to start with promoted pieces on the board, but here it looks pleasing.

(McDowell) In helpmates, because Black moves first, it's conventional to write the solutions like this, with the Black moves after the move number: (a) 1.Rxe4 Bc4 2.Rxf4 Qa8 (b) 1.Qxf4 Rg5 2.Qxe4 Qxf7. One solver described the problem thus: "Black's rook and Black's queen try twice to self-pin, each succeeding at the second attempt, while White's queen mates along the line of the first attempt."

(Lytton & Taylor) 1.Qa3 Kxe5/Kxe6/Nc8/Ne8/Nf7/Nf5/Ne4/Nc4/Nxb5/Nb7 2.Qb3/Qc5/Rxc8/Rxe8/gxf7/Bxf5/Qf3/Qb3/Qa5/Qa8 and 2...Rh1 mate.

(Taylor) 1.d4 h5 2.Bf4 h4 3.Bd6 h3 4.f4 hxg2 5.h4 g5 6.Rh3 g4 7.Re3 g3 8.Nf3 g1N 9.Bh3 g2 10.Kf2 Nf6 11.Qxg1 Rg8 12.Qh2 g1R 13.Ne5 R8g2+ 14.Kf3 Bg7 15.Nc3 Kf8 16.Rxg1 Kg8.