

## Timothy Whitworth 1932 - 2019

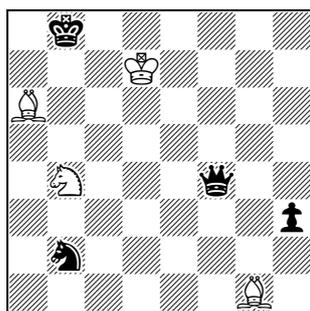
Timothy Whitworth died in April 2019. I knew him only through chess, but he had taught History and then Economics and Political Studies at King's College Taunton for thirty years, and he epitomised the meticulousness and accuracy of the best kind of schoolmaster.

In his book *Test Tube Chess*, John Roycroft identifies the impresario as one of the characters who inhabit the world of the chess endgame study, and although Timothy composed studies of his own (we shall see a couple later on) I think he regarded this as his primary role. He produced the standard collections in English of the studies of Gulyaev/Grin, Kubbel, Mattison, and the Platov brothers, he was for many years endgame study columnist of the *British Chess Magazine*, and it was he to whom Mike Bent entrusted the writing of his selection *The Best of Bent*. And of course he was joint author of *Endgame Magic*.

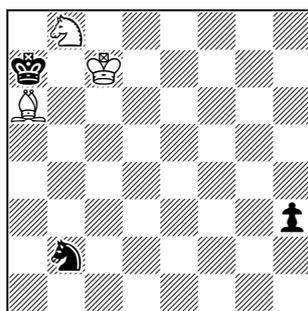
His contribution to *Endgame Magic* was a massive one (the order of authors' names was merely alphabetical). His knowledge of studies worldwide was much greater than mine, and most of the more complex examples towards the ends of chapters were included at his suggestion. His views on English style were much stricter than mine. And the scholarly notes in Appendix B, which are one of the book's strengths, were almost wholly his. Like most writers on chess endgame studies, I would take the word of a normally reliable secondary source. Timothy would go to the chess collection of the Koninklijke Bibliotheek in Den Haag to check the original.

The results were sometimes surprising. Two examples of particular note were his demonstration that the credit for the sparkling move 4 Bd7 in the famous Réti/Rinck study which is 1.1 in *Endgame Magic* appears to have been due neither to Réti nor to Rinck but to František Prokop (see the second edition of *Endgame Magic*, page 181), and his restoration of Alfred Crosskill's original 1864 analysis of the ending K+R+B v K+R. I had quoted this as given in *The Oxford Companion to Chess*, with a note that the definitive computer analysis now available showed it to be non-optimal at one point. Timothy went to the University Library in Cambridge to look at the original (this time he didn't have to travel to Den Haag), and found that Crosskill had in fact given the computer's move; the version in the *Oxford Companion* was faulty. It turned out that Berger had published what he thought was an improvement on Crosskill but wasn't, that Chéron had improved on Berger while remaining inferior to Crosskill's original, and that the authors of the *Oxford Companion* had understandably taken Chéron's as the last word on the subject. For a fuller treatment, see special number 50 of *British Endgame Study News*.

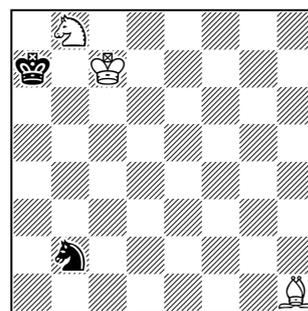
As for Timothy's achievements as a composer, when we were writing *Endgame Magic* we made a deliberate decision not to include anything by ourselves, but had we been writing without this constraint there are two of his which I would have suggested be at least short-listed.



1 - White to play and win



1a - after 5 Kc7



1b - after 7 Bxh1

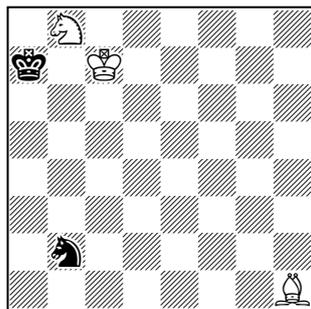
1 (*British Chess Magazine* 1979) was a joint composition with William Lemmey, then a student of his. Despite its modest use of material, this is a study in the grand manner. White will have to play for a mate, so the diversionary sacrifice 1 B

## h2

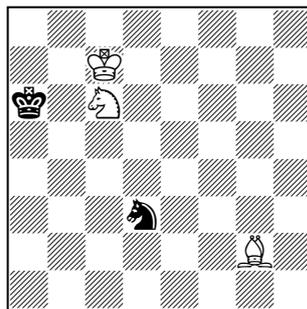
 is not wholly surprising, but after 1...Q

## xh2

 White is reduced to a bare B+N and will have to walk a tightrope if Black is not to escape. The first step is clearly 2 Nc6+ Ka8 3 Kc8 threatening mate by Bb7, in reply to which Black has to play 3...Qb8+ 4 Nxb8 Ka7. But 5 Kc7 keeps the Black king pinned and threatens a new mate by Bb7 and Nc6 (see 1a), and Black's only way of stopping this is to sacrifice a second queen by 5...h2 6 Bb7 h1Q. Now 7 Bxh1 gives 1b, and we notice that each of the three men to vanish has done so by deliberate self-sacrifice; even the Black pawn has proved to be more than a mere blocker.

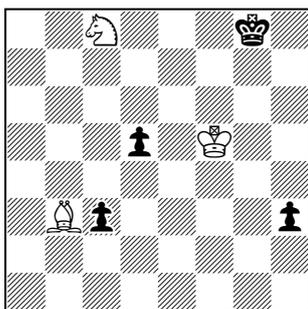


1b repeated

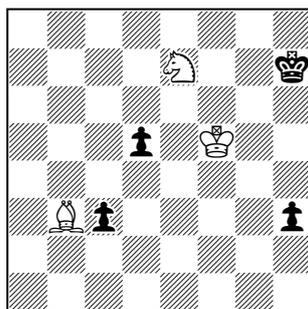


1c - after 9 Bg2

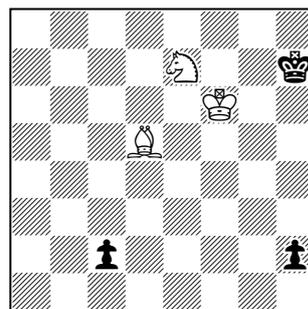
The threat of mate by Bb7 and Nc6 is still there, so the Black knight must come to the defence of c6. Try 7...Nc4: no, 8 Bb7 anyway, with 8...Na5 9 Bd5 Nb7 10 Nc6+ Ka8 (10...Ka6 11 Bc4 mate) 11 Nd8 and 12 Nxb7, or 8...Ne5 9 Bc8 Ka8 10 Ba6 Ka7 11 Bb7 and mate next move. Better is **7...Nd3** (every man originally on the board has now moved), because 8 Bb7 can now be met by 8...Nb4 (9 Be4 Na6+, or 9 Bc8 Nd5+, or 9 Nd7 Na6+ 10 Kc8 Nb4 and any move other than the repetition 11 Kc7 will allow Black to escape). But White also has **8 Nc6+**, and if 8...Ka8 then 9 Ne7+ Ka7 10 Bb7 and mate by Nc8. Hence **8...Ka6**, and now comes the final touch: the quiet move **9 Bg2!** bearing on the one square on the diagonal f1-a6 which Black cannot defend (see **1c**). A knight move will allow 10 Bf1+ and mate next move, hence **9...Kb5**, but although Black has escaped from the corner it is to no avail: **10 Bf1 Kc4 11 Ne5+ Kd4 12 Nxd3**. White has successfully walked the tightrope for eleven moves.



2 - White to play and win



2a - after 1...Kh7



2b - after 3...c2

**2** (EG 1982) was by Timothy alone, and although smaller in scale it is in its way even more impressive; it would have made an excellent example for the "Fighting to promote" chapter of *Endgame Magic*. White's bishop cannot stop the pawns on its own and the king is too far away to help (1 Kf4 c2 2 Bxc2 h2), so the opening move **1 Ne7+** is fairly obvious. 1...Kf8/Kh8 allow a tempo-gaining check at once (2 Ng6+ K-- 3 Nf4 h2 4 Bxd5 c2 5 Ne2 and the pawns are stopped), 1...Kg7 will allow one a little later (2 Ke5 h2 3 Nf5+ K-- 4 Ng3), and 1...Kf7 fails because after 2 Nxd5 h2 the capture 3 Nxc3 will discover check and White will have time for 4 Bd5. This leaves **1...Kh7** (see **2a**), after which things are more difficult. 2 Kf4 still doesn't work (2...h2 and if 3 Bxd5 then 3...c2), and knight and bishop moves are soon seen to lead nowhere; 2 Nxd5 loses to 2...h2, 2 Bxd5 to 2...c2, and 2 Bc2 to 2...h2 and if 3 Ke5+ then 3...Kh8. What to do?

The answer is **2 Kf6!** unexpectedly leaving the pawns alone and going for the Black king. A move by it will allow a tempo-gaining knight check and 2...d4 lets in 3 Bc2+ K-- 4 Nf5, but **2...h2** forces **3 Bxd5** and **3...c2** appears to ensure a Black promotion (see **2b**). Now what?

The obvious try is 4 Be4+ and if 4...Kh6 then 5 Bg6 and mate, but after 4...Kh8 White has nothing. Correct is **4 Bg8+** after which it is 4...Kh8 that will be met with a quick mate (5 Kf7 and 6 Ng6). Hence **4...Kh6**, but **5 Nf5+ Kh5 6 Bd5** threatens mate by Bf3, and the only sensible answer **6...Kg4** allows **7 Ne3+** picking up the c-pawn; by going for the Black king at move 2, White has put himself in a position where he can drive it down the board to a square which allows a knight fork. There is still a little mopping-up to be done (given is 7...Kg3 8 Nxc2 Kf2 9 Nd4 Kg1 10 Nf3+ Kg2 11 Ng5+ Kg1 12 Nh3+), but the win is now routine.

He leaves a handsome legacy, and a very pleasant memory.