British Endgame Study News
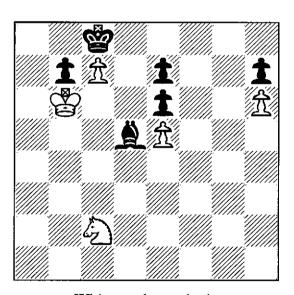
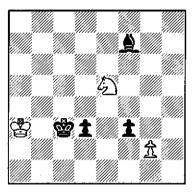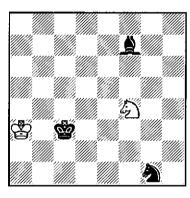## The Studies of

H. A. Adamson
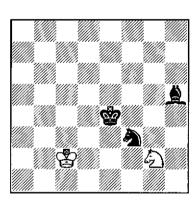

White to play and win

The studies of H. A. Adamson

"The best, and indeed excellent, composer of the *Chess Amateur* days was H. A. Adamson," wrote John Roycroft in *Test Tube Chess*, but few of his studies are well known today. Let us remedy this.

According to Jeremy Gaige's invaluable *British Chess Personalia*, Adamson was born in Ealing, London, in 1871, but he spent most of his later life in Falmouth. He died in 1941, and an obituary by T. R. Dawson appears on page 275 of that year's *BCM*. Dawson describes him as "a powerful mathematician, third wrangler of his year [third in the mathematical graduation list at Cambridge], and a brilliant chess problem analyst." Most of his composition was in the field of fairy chess, where Dawson rated him very highly indeed. He played on top board for Cornwall, and as an endgame analyst he was correspondingly strong if not quite in the class of Grigoriev. Some of his studies were refuted at the time and the computer has demolished a few more, but enough remain to provide a highly entertaining selection.
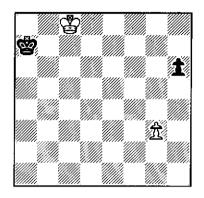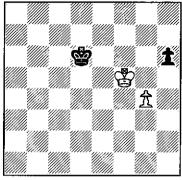

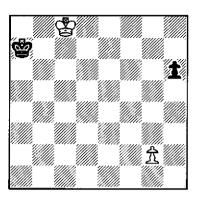| 1 - draw? | 1a - after 2...g1N | 1b - after 7...Bh5 |

Although nearly all Adamson's studies appeared in the *Chess Amateur*, his first published study appears to have been **1**, which appeared in the *British Chess Magazine* in 1912. The then columnist, C. E. C. Tattersall, liked to set endings for solution without giving the result away, and the stipulation was "White to play. Can he draw?" The answer was No, and the solution given was **1 Nxd3** (if 1 Nxf3 then 1...Bd5 and bP will promote) **fxg2 2 Nf4 g1N!** (see **1a**) **3 Ng2** (3 Ka4 Kd4 will lead to the same finish) **Nf3 4 Nf4** (4 Ne3 Bb3! 5 Nf1/Nf5 Nd4/Nd2 and Black mates) **Kd2 5 Kb2** (5 Nh3 Ke3 and 6...Be6, or 5 Ng2 Kd3 etc) **Ke3 6 Ng2+ Ke4 7 Kc2 Bh5** (see **1b**) **8 Kc1** (the square d1 is poisoned on account of 8...Nh4+ and 9...Nxg2, so wK is held at bay) **Bg4 9 Kc2 Bh3** and wN is lost. The computer has nothing to add. The editor commented, "A pretty little ending, on which we congratulate Mr. Adamson."

Adamson's first composition in the *Chess Amateur* was **2**, which appeared in 1915. Again, the stipulation was "White plays: what result?" The immediate rush 1-4 Kg6 Ke3 5 Kxh6 is met by 5...Kf3 with a draw, and 1 g4 Kb6 is no better. So White plays **1 Kc7**, with the idea that if Black plays 1...Ka8 he can gain a move by 2 g4 and then go for the h-pawn. Black, of course, plays **1...Ka6** instead, but after **2-5 Kc3 Ka2 6 Kc2** he has no choice; he must play **6...Ka3**, and now **7 g4! Kb4 8-9 Ke4 Kd6**

10 Kf5 seems to have given White his win (see **2a**). But there is a sting in the tail: **10...h5!** converts the g-pawn into an h-pawn, and Black draws after all.
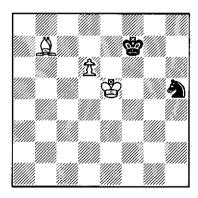

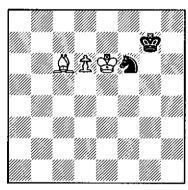**2** - White to move; result?   **2a** - after 10 Kf5   **3** - White to move; result?

This was accompanied by **3**, in which wP starts on g2. We still have **1-6 Kc2 Ka3** as before, but now **7 g3 Kb4 8 Kd3 Kc5 9 Ke4 Kd6 10 Kf5** does indeed win because the dodge of converting the g-pawn into an h-pawn is no longer available. And if Black tries **8...Kb3**, hoping for 9-11 Kg6 Ke3 12 Kxh6 Kf3, White plays **9 g4!!** and Black is a crucial tempo behind the play in **2** and again the conversion dodge is unavailable (**9...Kb4 10 Ke4 Kc5 11 Kf5 h5 12 gxh5** and **13-15 h8Q**).
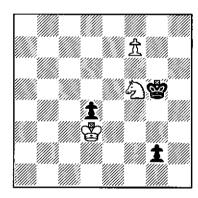
An extended version of this study was published by Gorgiev in 1936 (see *Test Tube Chess*), but I am among those who prefer the simplicity of the original: not least, because it highlights the comparison with **2**.

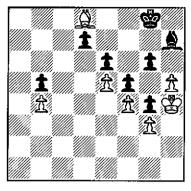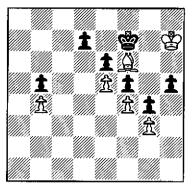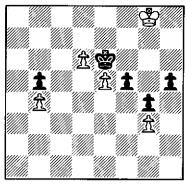**4** - win   **4a** - 1...Nf6+, after 4 Bc6   **5** - win

1923 saw the publication of **4**, a fine natural study of which we give only the main lines: **1 Be4 Ng7 2 Bg6+! Kf8 3 Kf6 Ne8+ 4 Bxe8 Kxe8 5 Ke6**, or **1...Nf6 2 Bd5+ Kg6** (2...Kg7 3 Ke6 Kg6 4 Bc4 Kg7 5 Bd3 Ne8 6 d7) **3 Ke6 Kg7** (3...Kg5 4 Bc6 Kg6 as below, or 4...Nh7 5 Ke7 Nf6 6 Be4 Ng8+ 7 Ke6 Nf6 8 Bd3) **4 Bc6** (see **4a**) **Kg6** (4...Nh7 5 Ke7 and either 5...Nf6 6 Be4 Ng8+ 7 Ke6 or 5...Nf8 6 Be8 Kg8 7 Bh5 Kg7 8 Bf7) **5 Bb5 Kg5/Kg7 6 Bd3**. "Some delicate play," wrote Dawson, who considered the occasional alternatives unimportant in such a study: a view with which I concur.

Later in the year came **5**, an elegant stalemate avoidance specially contributed to the magazine's "Beginners' section": **1 f8Q g1Q 2 Qg7+ Kh5! 3 Qh6+ Kg4 4 Qg6+ Kh3! 5 Qh5+ Kg2 6 Nh4+ Kg3 7 Qg5+ Kf2 8 Qf4+** and soon mates.
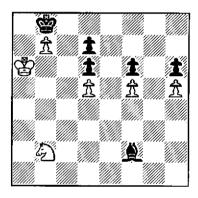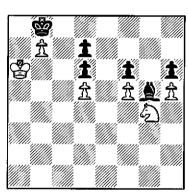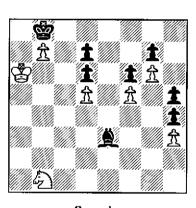
| 6 - win | 6a - after 5 Kxh7 | 6b - after 8...Ke6 |

6 was published in 1922. Play starts **1 Kg5 gxh5** (lines such as 1...Kg7 2 Bf6+ Kf7 3 Kh6 Bg8 4 hxg6+ Kf8 5 Bg5/h4 are hopeless) **2 Kh6 Kh8 3 Bh4** (or any other waiting move) **Kg8** (if 3...Bg8 then 4 Kg6 Bh7+ 5 Kf7 etc) **4 Bf6 Kf7 5 Kxh7** and White has won bB (see **6a**), but this is not the end of the matter because Black can win it back by **5...d5**. White cannot let this P run, so **6 exd6** is forced, and after **6...Kxf6** we have a pawn ending which is not without subtlety: **7 Kg8 e5** (7...h4 8 Kf8 etc) **8 fxe5+ Ke6** (see **6b**) **9 d7!** (9 Kf8 f5!) **Kxd7 10 Kf7** and wins.
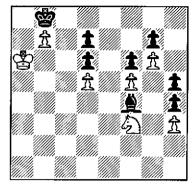

| 7 - win | 7a - after 5...Bg5 | 8 - win |

From November 1923 to January 1924 came a six-study "special solving contest", two studies each month, featuring N v B. **7** gave a gentle start: **1 Nc4 Bc5** (to guard b6 and d6) **2-3 Ne4 Be5 4-5 Ng4 Bg5** (see **7a**) **6 Kb6! Be3+ 7 Kb5!** (this is now possible because ...KxP is met by NxB) **Bg5** (else NxP) **8 Ka6** and bB must move.
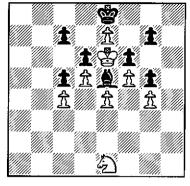
In **8** we have **1-2 Ne4 Be5 3 Nd2 Bf4** (nothing better) **4 Nf3** (see **8a**) and bB must hold d4 (else 5 Nd4 and 6 Ne6) and also g5 or f6 (else 5 Ng5 and 6 Ne6). So bPh4 cannot be held, and after 4...Be3 (say) **5 Nxh4 B-- 6 Nf3 h4** (else 7 h4 and 8 Ng5) 7 Nxh4 the bB will soon be overwhelmed.

9, from December, is a pictorial frolic: **1 Nc2** (threatening 2-3 Nb5 etc) **Bb2 2 e5** and either **2...fxe5 3 f6 gxf6 4 Ne3 f5 5 gxf5 e4 6 Ng4** etc or **2...dxe5 3 d6 cxd6 4 Ne3 Bc3 5 Nd5 Ba5 6 Kxd6 e4 7 Ke6 e3 8 Nxe3 B-- 9 Nd5 Ba4 10 Kd6**.

The same month's **10** has more to offer. **1 Nd4** (a diversion to threaten 2 Nf5 and 3 Nxg7+) **g6** (necessary, but now f6 becomes a target) **2 Nb3** (back to the Q-side) **a4** (best) **3 Nc5 Bb7!** (to stop 4 Na6 without allowing 4 Ne4) **4 Nxa4!** (4 Nxb7 is too slow) **a5 5 Nc5 a4** (apparently a mere spite sacrifice, but it sets up a stalemate

defence) **6 Nxa4 g5 7 Nc5 g4 8 Nxb7** (a promoted a-pawn would have drawn, but a bQ on g1 can be captured) **g3 9-10 Ne4 g1Q 11 Nf6+ Kf7 12 e8Q+ Kg7** (12...Kxf6 13 Qf8+ K-- 14 Qg8+ is easy) **13 Qg8+ Kh6** (careful!) **14 Qh7+ Kg5 15 Qg7+**.

8a - after 3...Bf4 4 Nf3   **9** - win ("The Xmas tree")   **10** - win
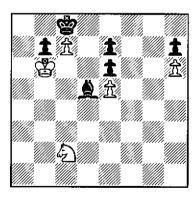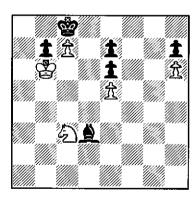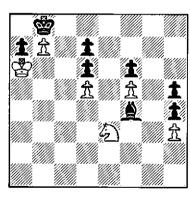
11 (January 1924) has become a classic. White wins immediately if wN can reach b5 or g6, and more slowly but no less certainly if he can capture any P. Hence **1 Na3 Bc6** (else 2 Nb5) **2-3 Nc3 Bd3** (else 4 Nb5 or 4 Ne4, the latter being shown later in the solution to be a win for White). This gives **11a**, and now comes a superb manoeuvre: **4-5 Nc5 Bd5** (else 6 Nxb7 or 6 Nxe6) **6-7 Nf4 Bf5** (else 8 Nxe6 or 8 Ng6) **8 Ne2 Bd3** (so as to meet 9 Nd4 by 9...Bc4, but...) **9 Nc3!** and we are back at **11a** but with Black to move. Moving only a knight, White has contrived to transfer the move to his opponent. There might follow **9...Bc4** (nothing better) **10 Ne4** and either 10...Bd3 11 Nc5 or 10...Bb3 (say) 11 Ng5, in either case with the win of a P.

11 - win   **11a** - after 3...Bd3   **12** - win

12 completed the set. This has a lot in common with **8**. Black cannot allow the loss of a P nor can he permit Ng6 followed by Nf8, and Ne6 is also a potential winning move. **1 Nc2 Bd2** (1...Be5 2 Ne1 Bd4/Bg3 3 Ng2 Bf2 4 Nf4, or 2...Bf4 3 Nf3 Bg3 4 Nd4) **2 Nd4 Be3** (2...Bh6 3 Nb5 Bf4 4 Nxa7 Be3 5 Nc8 Bc5 and 6-7 Ng6) **3 Ne6** (first objective achieved) **Bh6 4-5 Nf7 Bf4** (say) **6-7 Ng6 Bh6/Bg7 8 Nxh4 B-- 9 Ng6 Bg7** (9...Bh6 10 h4 Bg7 11 Nf4) **10 Nf4 h4 11 Ng6**.

This set attracted twenty solvers, of whom nine scored over 75 per cent. They rated **10** the spiciest, and **11** the most beautiful and profound. I wonder how many would take part in a similar competition today!

Adamson published several pawn studies, but this is an area in which I have thought it appropriate to be fairly selective. They gave pleasure in their day and one pointed out an error in a standard co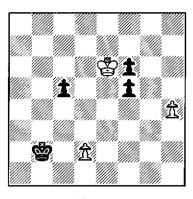ntemporary textbook, but in truth most were no more than medium-grade material; only a few bear comparison with the work of the real masters of the art. **13**, from 1922, is one of the exceptions. The solution is **1 Kg6 Kb6 2 Kf5!** (2 Kf6? Kxc6 3 Ke5 Kc5 and wins) **a4 3 Ke5** and either **3...a3 4 Kd6** or **3...Kxc6 4 Kd4**, and the position looks even more surprising than that of its famous predecessor since the wK is so much further away from the fleeing bP. This was one of the studies chosen by Dawson for Adamson's obituary in the *BCM*.

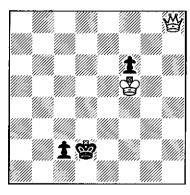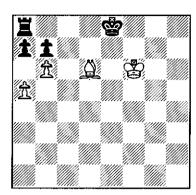13 - draw (after Réti)   14 - win   15 - win

In 1922, Dawson announced a tourney for "asymmetric" problems (problems with a symmetrical position but an asymmetric solution), and although it appeared in the "fairy chess" section of the magazine it included a section for studies. With every respect to Dawson, this tends to be a recipe for dullness; the result depends on the edge of the board in a way which is often rather trivial, and the need to create a symmetrical position severely restricts the composer's scope. However, Adamson submitted several entries which were published in 1924, and since he obviously delighted in constructing such studies we ought to include an example. The main line in **14** runs **1 Kd6 c4 2 Kd5!** (2 Kc5 Kd3 3 h3 c3 4 bxc3 Kxc3 5 Kd5 Kb4 is only a draw because bK will reach f8) **Kd3 3 h3** and Black is in zugzwang, and the reason that 1 Kd6 rather than Kf6 is necessary is that the line **1...Kf3 2 Kxc5 Kg2 3 b4 Kxh2 4-6 b7 g2 7 b8Q+** is a win with wQ against bPg2; the corresponding ending against bPc2 would only be a draw. This took 2nd-4th Prize in the tourney, together with two other pawn studies. Adamson also contributed three studies with K+B+N v K+N in a straight line, one of which took first prize, but two were demolished by human analysis (see *EG* 19 p 84 for the demolition of the prizewinner) and the computer has refuted the third. Although this ending is normally drawn, the stronger side has resources which were not fully appreciated before the advent of computers.

Adamson produced several studies in which a P must be left uncaptured in order to avoid a Q v P7 stalemate. **15** and **16**, from 1926, are the most interesting. In **15**, we have **1 Kg6!** ("NOT 1 Kxf6 c5 2 h4 Kd3 3 Ke5 Kxd2 4 Kd5 Kd3! 5 Kxc5 Ke4 drawn," wrote Dawson) **f5 2 Kg5!** (2 Kxf5 still only draws) **Ke4** (but 2...f4 can be met by 3 Kxf4 since wK is now near enough to win the ending Q v Pc2) **3 h4 f4 4 Kg4 f3 5 Kg3 f2** (5...Kd3 6 Kxf3 wins) **6 Kxf2 Kf4 7 d4 Kg4 8 Ke3 Kxh4 9 Kf4** wins.

In **16**, the winning procedure **1 Kd5! f4 2 Ke4** is simple enough, but why not 1 Kxf5? Because after 1...Kc2 2 h5 Kxd2 3-5 h8Q c2 not even the presence of bPf6 helps White (see **16a**); it prevents the move 6 Qd4+ which White would like to play, and neither 6 Qd8+ Kc3! nor 6 Qh2+ Kc3! nor 6 Qh6+ Kd1! 7 Qh5+ Kd2! leads anywhere.

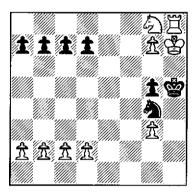

16 - win   **16a** - 1 Kxf5, after 5...c2   **17** - what result?
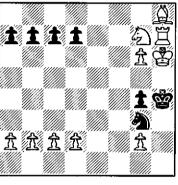
The only Adamson study I have seen published after the cessation of Dawson's *Chess Amateur* column was a pawn study which was provisionally given 5th Honourable Mention in the 1931-32 endings tourney of the British Chess Federation. However, a subsequent note said that a number of "anticipations, cooks and other defects" had been found after publication of the award, and this was one of the entries discarded. No details were given.
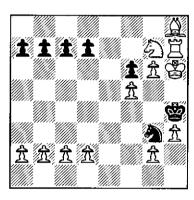
There remain two other sides to Adamson's chess endgame work: his analyses, and his puzzle studies. He had several fine pieces of endgame analysis to his credit. 1923 saw an examination of 2B v N which is now only of historical interest but about which Dawson wrote prophetically, "This beautiful display of manoeuvring, in which bN is cornered in every quarter and corner of the board, even when he manages to join bK, raises the question: Do 2B usually win against N?" Later in the same year came a complete analysis of the endgame of K+R v K at Kriegspiel: six closely packed pages (*Chess Amateur*, Oct-Dec 1923, pp 28-9, 59-60, 92-3) which detail a fully systematic winning process. Nor should we overlook the work that underlay **7** to **12**. We have contented ourselves here with a simple demonstration of the winning process, but what happens if White deviates from the given line? Sometimes he merely loses time and can reach the winning position sooner or later, but in other cases Black can pounce on the mistake and hold the draw. Typically, in such a case, there is a set of "corresponding squares" which bB can occupy, one for each possible position of wN, and if White once permits Black to occupy such a square he can hold wN at bay for ever. The set of squares in **11** amounts to more than twenty.

As regards puzzle studies, **17** was published in 1916 with the stipulation "What result?" This involves some simple retrograde analysis (it is White's move, so Black has just moved; neither bP has moved, so Black's move must have been with bK or bR; hence Black cannot castle). Finding a win is less easy, but **1 a6** is eventually seen to overwhelm Black's defences, and we note that 1...0-0-0 would have held the draw had it been legal.

Our last example, from 1919, is another puzzle study. In **18**, whoever moves first on the right will allow immediate mate, so all depends on the pawns. A full analysis is complicated, but White's strategic aims are simple: he will win by blocking bPs, thus making Black move on the right, or by promoting first *provided that Black cannot reply by promoting with check on b1*. The key line is **1 c4 c5** (best) **2 a3 a6 3 b4**. If Black now captures, **3...cxb4**, he can indeed promote on b1, but after **4 axb4 b5** (or 4...b6 5 b5 a5 6 c5, a pretty line) White can interject **5 d3!** to block the diagonal, and after **5...d6 6 c5 dxc5 7 bxc5 b4 8-10 c8Q** he wins since **10...b1Q** is not check. If Black waits at move 3 by playing **3...b6** or **3...d6**, White will reply **4 b5**, after which Black can promote only on c1 or d1 (for example, 3...b6 4 b5 axb5 5 cxb5 d5 6 a4 c4 7 a5 d4 8-10 a8Q c1Q) and again White wins. But if White plays 1 b4, Black waits at move 3, 1...b5 2 d3 d6 3 c4 c6, and he will promote on b1 with check.

18 - win   **19** - win (unsound)   **19a** - win (version of **19**)

This was followed by **19**, with intended solution **1 b4** since the danger square is c1 instead of b1. However, there is more to it. 1 b4 does win, but only because if Black captures at move 3 (1...b5 2 d3 d6 3 c4 bxc4) White promotes on d8 with check while bP is still on c2 (4 dxc4 c5 5 b5 d5 6 cxd5 etc). But **1 c4** also wins; even if Black waits at move 3, thus promoting on c1, White wins because wPd2 blocks the check.

So **19** is unsound. However, if we replace bPg4 by wPh3 and add wPf5/bPf6 (see **19a**), the situation on the right is still reciprocal zugzwang (a bN move no longer allows immediate mate, but it allows wN to move after which White wins on material) but there is no check from d8 and so Black defeats 1 b4 by capturing at move 3. Now only **1 c4** works. So can we restore the twinning by making the same changes to **18** (replace bPg5 by wPh4 and add wPf6/bPf7)? I think we can. The line 1 c4 c5 2 a3 a6 3 b4 d6 4 b5 axb5 5 cxb5 d5 6-8 a6 d4/c3 9 dxc3 dxc3 10-11 b8Q c1Q looks awkward at first, but White wins easily enough (for example, 12 Qe5+ Nxe5 13 Ne7 Qb1+ 14 Kg8+ Kg4 15 Rh6 Kh3 16 Kh8 Ng4 17 g8Q Nxh6 18 Qg5 Ng4 19 h5 etc).

This is paradoxical; the danger square has changed, but the choice of pawn to move first remains the same. Would Adamson have approved of this development of his idea? One can only guess, but I like to think he would have been sympathetic.