

# New Englander

## Chess Club Update – Christmas 2024

### Chairman's Chatter

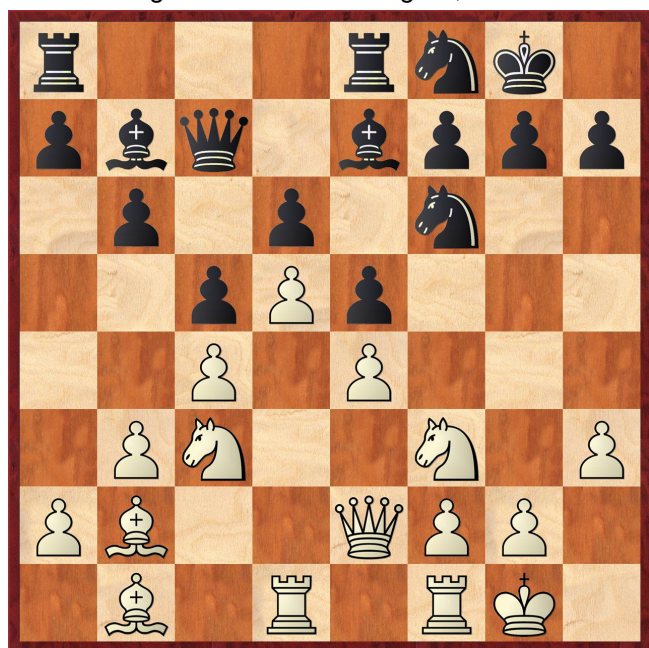
*"Should auld acquaintance be forgot  
and never brought to mind?"*

It is getting to that time of year when everyone can rightly get caught up in the celebrations and general merriment to dispel the gloom of the winter months. I hope you have plans to enjoy the festive season to the full, indulge moderately in traditional fare with all the trimmings and rejoice in the jovial company of friends and family.

After Christmas, we shall have to get used to writing 2025 for the year – already a quarter of a century since the millennium! January is named after Janus, the god of beginnings and endings - more symbolic of reflection on times past and hope for the future than your chess technique! Looking back on 2024, here is the event at the board I most regret...

#### P Hanks v A Kaszuba

New England A v Peterborough A; 29.02.2024



15 Nh2

Already I miss an obvious tactic in 15 Nxe5 dxe5 16 d6 Qc6 (16 ... Bxd6 17 Nb5 regaining the piece on the d file) 17 dxe7 Rxe7 18 Nd5 with a better position due to the knight outpost and the bishop pair ready to exploit the more open central pawn structure.

|    |      |      |
|----|------|------|
| 15 | ...  | Ng6  |
| 16 | Bc1  | Bc8  |
| 17 | f4   | exf4 |
| 18 | Bxf4 | Nxf4 |
| 19 | Rxf4 | Nd7  |
| 20 | Ng4  | a6   |

21 Rdf1

Again, not looking deeply at the e5 square is my undoing. Over the past few moves, I have been clearing lines on the kingside ahead of an attack but I fail to notice 21 e5 when the threat of 22 e6 would give me exactly the position I should wish for as a Christmas present.

21 ... Nxe5 22 Nxe5 Bf6 23 Qc2

21 ... dxe5 22 d6

- 22 ... Bxd6 23 Nd5
  - 23 ... Qb8 maintains support for the exposed bishop on d6 but 24 Nh6+
    - ◆ 24 ... Kf8 25 Rxf7#
    - ◆ 24 ... Kh8 25 Nxf7+ Kg8 26 Bxh7+ Kf8 (26 ... Kxh7 27 Qh5+) 27 Nxd6+ with a material and eventually checkmate advantage
    - ◆ 24 ... gxh6 25 Qg4+ Kh8 (25 ... Kf8 26 Rxf7+ Kxf7 27 Rf1+ Nf6 28 Rxf6#) 26 Rxf7 Bf8 (26 ... Nf6 27 Qg7#) 27 Rxh7#
  - 23 ... Qd8 24 Qe4 with threats everywhere e.g. 24 ... Nf8 25 Ndf6+ gxf6 26 Nxf6+ Kh8 27 Nxe8 exf4 28 R/Nxd6
- 22 ... Qa7 23 dxe7 Rxe7 24 Nd5 Re6 (24 ... Re8 25 Nh6+ with the previous winning attack) 25 Bxh7 + Kxh7 26 Rxf7. Although it is not obvious how White should proceed, Fritz rates the position as +14 because White threatens 27 Qe4+ Rg6 28 Ngf6+ Kh8 29 Qxg6 mating.

21 ... f6

I had expected only 21 ... Bf6 when I have the more coherent pieces after 22 e5 dxe5 23 Qe4 exf4 (23 ... g6 24 Rxf6) 24 Qxe8+ Nf8 25 Nxf6+ gxf6 26 Ne4 Qe5 27 Qc6 Rb8 28 Qxf6 and Black's pawns are weak. Instead, Black has solidified the e5 square and the f file has been nullified.

22 Nh6+

This is too much! My attack was never strong enough and I lost miserably in short order.

Janus is often depicted as having two faces. In this game, I did not countenance a promising continuation but smiled on a losing variation. I was given a lesson I should not forget and in 2025, I will try to bring it to mind by looking for resources in every position but with accurate analysis not just optimism!

Merry Chessmas and take a cup o' kindness yet, for auld lang syne.

*Paul Hanks*