

New Englander

Chess Club Update – January 2021

Chairman's Chatter

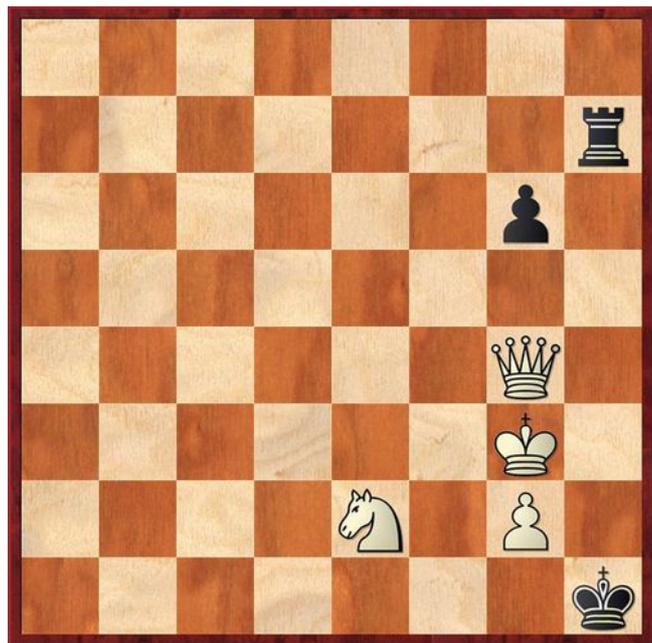
Happy New Year! 2021 marks a fresh start both on the calendar and in due course, for the club's home. We were lucky to be hosted so generously by the Lancaster Club in Yaxley for a decade but its closure was possibly not unexpected given the current hard times for the hospitality industry. Worse still is that we have more months of restrictions to endure before looking for a replacement venue and even longer until the confidence returns to meet together.

In the interim, however, we have a feast of online chess. There are events to suit all tastes and keep up your skills. I hope you will support the teams, revel in the competitive challenge and enjoy the social interaction.

Paul Hanks

Puzzle Problem

White to play and mate in 2



Last Month's solution (Guidelli 1916)

Position : 4KQ2/3pN3/1PpkpR1/8/1P1p1r1p/4N3/b6B/2q1R3

1 Kf7 e5+ 2 N7d5# [1 ... Be5 + 2 N7f5#; 1 ... Bg5+ 2 N3f5#; 1 ... Ke5 2 Nc4#; 1 ... Bxe7+ 2 Bxf4#; 1 ... other 2 Qb8#]

Result Round-up

Online Club Championship

Round 1			
J Sadler = Rd 2 (1)	P	P	P Turp

Round 2			
P Turp	P	P	E Knox (0)
R Taylor (½)	P	P	P Hanks (0)
Round 3			
P Walker(2)			P Spencer (2)
C Russell (½)			J Sadler (1+P)
E Knox (0+P)			R Taylor (½+P)
M Tarabad (0)			P Turp (2P)
Round 4			
P Hanks (0+P)			M Tarabad (0)
J Sadler (1+P)			P Walker(2)
P Spencer (2)			R Taylor (½+P)
C Russell (½)			E Knox (0+P)
P Turp (2P)			P Hanks (0+P)
Deadline : 31 st January		Next draw : 1 st February	

Online tournaments : November/December 2020

Player	Nov		Dec			Total	Tie break
	4th	18th	2nd	9th	16th		
P Walker	3	2	2	4	4	13	2
P Hanks	2	1	-	2½	3	10½	-
P Spencer	-	3	3	2	-	8	-
R Ilett	1½	2	-	2	-	5½	-
M Tarabad	1	0	1	1	2	4	0
C Russell	1½	1	-	-	2	4½	-
E Knox	-	-	-	2	-	2	-
P Weinberger	2	-	-	-	-	2	-
S Walker	1	-	0	-	1	2	-

Iceni League : Final positions

Pos	Team	Points
1	Norfolk and Norwich	8
2=	Broadland A / Linton Tigers	6½
4	Norfolk Nomads	4½
5	Dons A	4
6	Bury St Edmunds	3½
7	Suffolk Warriors	2
8	New England	1
9	Woodbridge	0

EACU Team Championship

New England A	1	Norwich Dons	3
R Taylor	1	J Dolamore	0
P Turp	0	B Shah	1
P Spencer	0	S Livermore	1
E Knox	0	G Jones	1

New England B	½	St Johns Norwich	3½
P Hanks	½	M Lim	½
Default	0	D Payne	1
S Walker	0	D May	1
J Sutherland	0	G Clayton	1

Match of the Month

Our club is a great upholder of tradition, particularly in the run-up to the festive season. Fortunately, tickets are still available for the front-row seats.

N Wedley, P Turp, N Foreman

v

C Russell, M Tarabad, J Sadler

Christmas Special, 22.12.2020

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 d6 3 h3

A handy move against the King's Indian Defence, it often occurs at move 5 or 6 after 3 Nc3 g6 4 e4 Bg7 and optionally, Petrosian's 5 Nf3 when it is known as the Bagirov System. Maybe, the Allies playing White were dreaming of a future transposition or are they just ahead of their time?

3 ... g6 4 Nc3 Bg7 5 e4

Back to the normality – for now! This Peter Pan of an opening never seems to age despite modern theory.

5 ... b6

But here is a theoretical novelty. Like Little Red Riding Hood, Black chooses a path less trodden through the wild wood – well, not trodden at all. The favourite move at this point is 5 ... 0–0 which achieves a reasonable percentage score and to a lesser extent 5 ... Nbd7. Despite the text move not appearing at grandmaster level, the computer ranks it roughly equivalent to the popular moves.

6 Be3 0–0 7 Qd2 e5 8 d5 Bb7 9 g4

As if by magic, this is a sequence of near-optimal moves and although Fritz would continue development with 9 Be2, the position is still equal.

9 ... Nbd7 10 Be2 Nc5 11 f3 c6 12 Bxc5

12 dxc6 Bxc6 13 0–0–0 puts pressure on d6.

12 ... dxc5 13 h4 a6 14 h5 cxd5

Believe it or not, we are emerging from the opening with the assessment yo-yoing between ±0.2 pawns.

15 h6 Bh8 16 0–0–0

Here though, is the pantomime villain – boo, hiss - when the evaluation dives to -2.25. Fritz prefers 16 exd5 when it expects Black to open up lines towards the white king with 16 ... e4 17 Nxe4 Re8 18 Ng5 b5.

16 ... d4 17 Nd5 b5 18 Kb1 Nxd5 19 cxd5 c4 20 Bf1 Bf6 21 Nh3 a5

A little slow versus 21 ... Rc8. Played by Sleepy?

22 f4

With a position rated at -2.71, White cannot slumber for 100 years and needs to find some counterplay. Fritz recommends 22 g5 but its continuation 22 ... Bh8 23 Rg1 can hardly be called active.

22 ... c3 23 Qf2

White can recover the pawn by 23 bxc3 dxc3 24 Qxc3 Rc8 25 Qb2 exf4 26 e5 Bh8 27 Bxb5 but would you fancy the safety of the white king?

23 ... Qd6 24 Rc1 b4 25 f5 Rac8 26 Bd3

26 g5 Bh8 27 f6 puts one genie back in the bottle but leave Black with a free hand on the queenside.

26 ... Qb6 27 b3

27 g5 Bd8 28 Rhf1 a4 29 fxg6 hxg6 still favours Black but at least, they now have something to think about.

27 ... a4 28 Bc4

28 bxa4 b3 29 Bb5 bxa2+ 30 Ka1 Ba6 31 Qe2 would have been another method to try to defend but the dark squares are too weak to hold out – 31 ... Bxb5 32 Qxb5 Qd6 33 Rc2 Rb8.

28 ... Rxc4

28 ... Ba6 is Fritz's first choice but it is the season for giving gifts.

29 bxc4 b3

29 ... g5 would delay White showing what big teeth he has on the kingside.

30 a3

Who missed 30 Rxc3?

30 ... c2+

a3 is the black spot, Jim lad, and aiming at it with 30 ... Qd6 is immensely strong. Aarrgh!

31 Kb2 Be7



32 Rhf1

White's must walk the plank - his position is hopeless e.g. 32 Qe2 Bxa3+ 33 Kxa3 (33 Ka1 b2+ 34 Ka2 Qb3#) 33 ... Rb8 - a computer move showing how helpless White is -

- 34 Qd2 Bxd5 35 exd5 Qc5+ 36 Kb2 a3+ 37 Ka1 b2+ 38 Ka2 Qxc4+
- 34 Nf2 Ba6 35 Qd2 Qc5+ 36 Kxa4 Bxc4 37 Qa5 Bb5+ 38 Kxb3 Bd7+.

32 ... Rc8

32 ... Bxa3+ follows earlier variations. It's behind you!

33 Nf4

Is White trying to confuse the issue? 33 Ra1 was necessary.

33 ... Qa5

33 ... Bxa3+ again! Black is more likely to announce Mornington Crescent than checkmate!

34 Ne2

34 Qe1 Qxe1 35 Rcx1 exf4 at least reaches an endgame.

34 ... Bg5

34...d3 was suggested in the post-mortem but after 35 fxg6

- 35 ... f6 36 gxh7+ was suggested. It was just smoke and mirrors because 36 ... Kh8 is a tough nut to crack. Everyone overlooked 36 d6 when all replies e.g. 36 ... Bd8 37 Qf5 let the white queen reach the end of the rainbow on d7.
- The clock has struck midnight and Black must forsake the glass slippers with 35 ... Bxa3+ 36 Kxa3 f5 37 Qxf5 Qc5+ and a perpetual check.

Fairest of them all is 34 ... Bxa3+ 35 Kxa3 [35 Ka1 Qb4 36 Qf3 Bxc1 37 Nxc1 (37.Rxc1 Qa3#) 37...Qa3+] 35 ... Qc5+ 36 Kb2 a3+ 37 Ka1 b2+ 38 Ka2 Qxc4+ 39 Kxa3 Ra8+ 40 Kxb2 Ra2#.

It is time to start believing in fairy godmothers?

35 fxg6 f6

White is now winning! Oh yes he is! 35 ... Bf4 instead would be the signal for the song-and-dance routine but what a headache for the choreographer! So much variety and movement... 36 gxf7+ Kxf7 (36 ... Kf8 37 Nxd4) 37 Qg3 (37 Nxf4?? Qc3#) 37 ... Rxc4 38 Rxf4+ exf4 39 Qxf4+ Ke7 40 Rf1 is one possibility and even after 40 ... c1Q+ 41 Rxc1 Rxc1 42 Qxc1 (42 Kxc1 Qe1+ with mate in 5) Qb6 43 Qg5+, White should be getting the high kicks.

36 gxh7+

The mirror cracked from side to side. The pawn on g6 is the goose that lays the golden egg, particularly when having an ugly sister on h6. White just has to find a route for the dame to make a grand entrance on f/g/h7. After 36 Qf5, White need not fear 36 ... hxg6 (37 Qxg6+ Kf8 38 Qg7+ Ke8 39 h7) and penetrating via e6 or d7 would grant one of her three wishes e.g.

36 ... Qc7 37 Qe6+ Kh8 38 g7+. If the various Allies enjoy a French farce, the game might have gone 36 ... Bxh6 37 Qxf6 Bxc1+ 38 Kxc1 b2+ 39 Kxb2 c1Q+ 40 Nxc1 Qd2+ 41 Kb1 Qh6 42 Qf7+ Kh8 43 Rh1 Rf8 44 Rxh6 Rxf7 45 gxf7 Kg7 46 Rxh7+ Kf8 47 Rh8+ Kxf7 48 Rh7+ Kf6 49 Rxb7 with Black ending up like Brain Rix.

36 ... Kxh7 37 Qf5+ Kh8 38 Qg6

Without the g6 pawn, the threats have vanished into thin air – a King's Indian rope trick? 38 Qd7 Qc7 39 Qxc7 Rxc7 40 d6 Rd7 41 c5 shows promise. 41 ... Bxc1+ 42 Nxc1 Bxe4 43 Rxf6 reveals hidden treasure for both sides in the shape of 4 passed pawns. Objectively, the position is drawn but it is most unlikely there would be such a happy ending. However, Black's road would be paved with gold after 41 ... Ba6 42 Rce1 Bxe2 43 Rxe2 d3 44 Ree1 d2 and one Cinderella will go the ball.

38 ... Rg8 39 Qf7 d3 40 Qxb7

Now, the trapdoor opens but there was no escape via 40 h7 Rb8 41 Rxf6. Black would not be tempted by the wicked witch to enter the gingerbread cottage with 41 ... Bxf6 and after 41 ... Bxc1+ 42 Nxc1 Qc5, the threats of 43 ... Qd4+ or 43 Kc3 b2 bring down the final curtain.

40 ... dxe2 41 Rfe1 Bxc1+

41 ... Be3 is a beast but hay ho, it's Christmas!

42 Rxc1 e1Q 43 Rxe1 Qxe1 0–1

and they all lived happily ever after – or is it time for recrimination?

Serious Study

Bonng... Bong... and off go the fireworks. We can only reminisce about the comforting familiarity of heralding the New Year at midnight and disgracing ourselves with a conga down the street. Before that, even in the current abnormal circumstances, the TV schedulers give us a review of the previous year. So, what happened in the chess world during 2020?

Obviously nothing was above the effects of the Covid pandemic and professional chess was no different. A few tournaments went ahead - some with perspex screens in the summer lull between waves of infection whilst later, the participating players had to endure self-isolation and testing protocols. The shift to online events was almost total and with it came shorter time controls and remote access.

In January 2019, Vladimir Kramnik announced his retirement but by August, a 40th birthday present was organised for wealthy patron Ilya Levitov, a private chess tournament! It had a decidedly retro feel – no internet broadcasts, no instant computer analysis, no chatrooms with their opportunities for spitefulness and inanity. This relaxed format tempted Kramnik back to the board in what appeared to be the last hurrah for one of the great players of our time. However, without the need for travel or the stress of long sessions, online participation due to the lockdown restrictions has ushered in a new chapter in his career.

Kramnik did not endear himself to me with the Berlin Defence by pioneering boredom as a potent weapon at grandmaster level. I found his style difficult to understand but he was capable at times of stylish attacking chess. If I could penetrate the secrets of his methods, I might discover that there are lessons even for such a club player of little ability. Here is an example taken from "Kramnik : My Life and Games."

Vladimir Kramnik (2625) v Smbat Lputian (2585)
Debrecen, 1992

1	d4	e6
2	c4	Nf6
3	Nf3	d5
4	Nc3	Be7
5	Bf4	0-0
6	e3	c6
7	Qc2	Nbd7

So far, an unremarkable classical Queen's Gambit. I have reached analogous positions on several occasions. After 1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 c6 4 Nf3 Nf6 5 Bg5 h6 6 Bh4 g5 7 Bg3 Nbd7 8 e3 Bb4 9 Qc2 (P Hanks v M Vigor, Patriots v Godmanchester, 2010), the position differs in three respects :-

- White's dark-squared bishop is on g3 rather than f4 having taken an extra two moves (corresponding to two pawn moves by Black). These moves were omitted in Hanks v Tovey, Fenland Cup 2013.
- Black has chosen to develop his dark-squared bishop on b4 instead of e7
- It is Black to move! Where has that tempo gone? Of course. In the text game, Black has castled - not an obvious choice in my game.

Typically, I take control of the pawn structure with c4xd5 before I run into a stumbling block – the question "Now what?"

In the featured game, an extraordinary thing now happened – nothing! If White refrains from the pawn exchange in the centre, both sides know Black will play d5xc4 at some point to initiate a plan with b7-b5, Bc8-b7 and c6-c5. White wants to recapture Bf1xc4 in a single move; Black to delay the pawn swap until White has played Bf1-d3 thereby wasting a tempo. And so a waiting game ensues for a few moves.

8	h3	a6
9	Rd1	h6
10	a3	dx4

Black blinks first! The learning point from this spell of shadow boxing is quite illuminating. Moves 1 to 7 can be considered a primary phase of the opening. In this period, it is difficult to anticipate your opponent's responses because there are several alternatives at every turn. You have instead to rely on "general-purpose" moves which lead to an acceptable position in terms of pawn structure, piece development, central control and without vulnerabilities or open lines that gift the initiative to you opponent. Through inertia, I tend to continue this process until all my pieces land on natural (but not necessarily co-ordinated) squares.

Kramnik, on the other hand, is happy he has achieved the required stability with two pieces still on their home squares. He confronts the "What now?" problem at least two moves earlier than me and can complete his final piece deployment in line with his strategy – thus saving tempi and enabling any regrouping before he clutters his own lines with all his mobilised forces.

What does this mean in the current situation?

- Firstly, Kramnik's keen sense of weakness latched on to h7-h6 which means that if the h7 square is attacked diagonally, its defence by g7-g6 no longer creates the normal robust rampart
- The best defenders of h7 are the black knights and their exchange or derangement is desirable
- When g7-g6 is forced, this pawn becomes the target e.g. from a knight outpost on e5
- The purpose of an attack may not be checkmate but with pieces immobilised by defensive duties, Black may not be able to resist pressure on a second front.

It is good to know what you are doing before you commit the reserves of your army.

11	Bxc4	Nd5
12	0-0	Nxf4
13	exf4	Qc7
14	Ne5	Nf6

Only now does Kramnik worry about 14 ... c5. I should have been expending time checking this counterthrust for several moves but if it had been played earlier, due to 9 Rd1, d4xc5 would have opened the d file dangerously for Black. In the present position, there are attacking continuations such as 14 ... c5 15 Ba2 cxd4 16 Bb1 Nf6 17 Nd5.

15	Ba2	Bd7
16	Bb1	Be8

To bolster g6.



17 d5 Rd8

If 17 ... c/exd5 18 Nxd5 when the bishop on e7 is hanging with check after 18 ... Qxc2 and of course, White threatens both 19 Nxc7 and 19 Nxf6+ with 20 Qh7#.

18 Rfe1 Kh8
 19 dxe6 Rxd1
 20 Rxd1 fxe6
 21 Ne4 g6
 22 Nc5 Bxc5

Good vision of the whole board shows that defending e6 by 22 .. Qc8 fails to 23 Nxc6+ Bxc6 24 Qxc6 Bxc5 25 Qxh6+ Kg8 26 Qg5+ and 27 Qxc5.

23 Qxc5 Rg8
 24 Ba2 Kg7
 25 Bxe6 Rf8

White's army is a picture of harmony and co-ordination.

26 Nd7 1-0

Black has to defend against 27 Qxf8+ and if the rook moves e.g. 26 ... Rh8, 27 Qe7+. Sadly, 26 ... Nxd7 27 Rxd7+ Bxd7 28 Qe7+ Kh8 29 Ng6# or 27 ... Qxd7 28 Bxd7 Bxd7 29 Qd4+ and 30 Qxd7.

What about giving up material by 26 ... Rf7 or 26 ... Nh7? It costs more than the exchange.

- 26 ... Rf7 27 Bxf7 Bxf7 (27 ... Bxd7 28 Qe7 is zugzwang! 27 ... Kxf7 28 Qf8+ Ke6 29 Nc5 Kf4 30 g4 Kxf4 31 Ne6+) 28 Qf8+ Kh7 29 Nxf6#
- 26 ... Nh7 27 Nxf8 Nxf8 28 Rd7+ N/Bxd7 29 Qe7+ mating.

I actually wrote these bulk of these lines at the end of 2019 as a valedictory appreciation of Kramnik's chess life. One of the beauties of the game is how great play can enthrall long after the participants can perform at that level. Indeed, because of the pandemic, Vladimir is enjoying a new lease of life and we may marvel (and learn from!) his efforts for some time to come. It is not all bad news!

Eye Opener

Peter Svidler (2723) v Bu Xiangzhi (2705)
 FIDE Online Steinitz Memorial, 17.05.2020

1 e4 e5
 2 Bc4 Nf6
 3 d3 c6
 4 Nf3 d5
 5 Bb3

You may think that use of the archaic Bishop's Opening is prompted by the faster time controls of online chess. Not so. This position was reached in the classical Altibox tournament which possibly had the strongest field in the current era. The game continued 5 ... Bb4+ 6 Bd2 Bxd2+ 7 Nbx2 a5, Carlsen v Caruana, Stavanger 2018.

5 ... a5

Black simply wants to trap the bishop with a5-a4.

6 Nc3

So White covers the a4 square with another piece. Surely, the knight is not stable on c3. Peter Svidler, however, knows this trap and actually sets one of his own.

6 ... d4
 7 Nxe5 dxc3
 8 Nxf7 Qe7

This is not the best square for the queen. As an alternative continuation, Black has 8 ... Bb4 9 Nxd8 cxb2+ 10 Bd2 bxa1Q 11 Qxa1 Kxd8. This leads to material equality but the open lines and exposed black king mean that the position favours White.

9 Nxe8 Be6
 10 bxc3 g6
 11 0-0 Bg7
 12 Nxc6 hxg6

Black has managed to recoup the trapped knight but has still lost material. What better time to tempt him with redressing the balance a little further?



13 Ba3 Qxa3
 14 Bxe6 Qxc3
 15 Rb1 b5

Black's position is lamentable. The king will come under attack in the centre and he has no time to develop due to the isolated queen – that is, if he senses danger...

16 d4 Na6
 17 Rb3 1-0