

Wilfred Colin Evans - Part 1, by Brian Stephenson

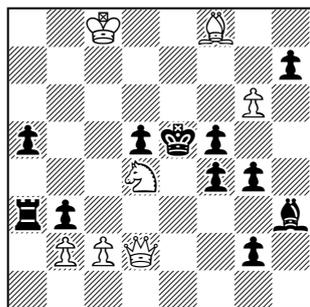
At present, there are probably fewer than 40 active chess problem composers in the UK. It hasn't always been thus: in the last century chess magazines, chess columns in newspapers and this magazine published originals by a goodly selection of British composers, many of them also active players. The problems by the composers who won awards are quoted often, but the problems of those who didn't often attract the eyes of judges are republished only in databases and their names aren't so well-known today. My aim in this, the first article in a planned occasional series, is to introduce modern solvers to some entertainment from the past by these lesser-known composers. My perusal of the comments by solvers in this magazine and in others has convinced me that these problems, if not often worthy of awards, were enjoyed by solvers and that gives them a right to be re-published.

Our first subject, though *not* meeting the description above of not often winning awards, is Wilfred Colin Evans (known as Colin), who lived from 1909 to 1996. He was born in Denbighshire, the youngest of five children. He learned chess as a child from an uncle and played against his brothers. The family moved to Sheffield in about 1919 and Colin started playing chess in local leagues when he was sixteen. An early success was winning the championship of Hartshead Friends Chess Club in 1928. He became a strong player, winning the first of his eight Sheffield Championships in 1933 and the Yorkshire Championship in 1945-1946. He was a regular in the Yorkshire team. He moved to Rotherham around 1946 and remained there for the rest of his life. Colin Vaughan, our late President, who himself spent his younger years in Sheffield, remembered with pride the one time he managed to beat Colin Evans. For these biographical details I acknowledge the website of Yorkshire Chess historian Steve Mann (<http://mannchess.org.uk/>).

I have been able to trace just over 30 problems by Colin. Unusually for novice composers he seems to have started with three-movers and stuck with them and four-movers thereafter. I only know of one two-mover that Colin published. I have selected the following 17 problems. They are all well worth solving, so those who enjoy solving three-movers are encouraged to have a go at them before reading the rest of this article.

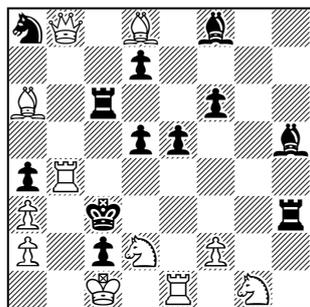
Colin's first published problem was **A**, a joint composition with then #3 sub-editor Thomas Ricketts. The flight $1...Ke4$ is provided with $2.Qe2+ Kxd4 3.c3\#$, a model mate, but $1...Kf6$ is unprovided. Despite the unprovided flight, solvers found this one difficult, perhaps because they were loath to take the set flight. The strong key is $1.Qd3!$ providing $1...Kf6$ with $2.Qxf5\#$ and threatening $2.Qxf5+ Kxd4 3.Qxf4\#$. Variations are $1...bxc2 2.Bg7+ Kd6 3.Qxa3\#$; $1...hxc6 2.Qe2+ Kxd4 3.c3\#$; $2...Kf6 3.Qe7\#$; $1...g3 2.Sf3+ Ke6, Kf6 3.Qa6\#$. Four model mates, including the 'lost' one from the set play.

A Evans, Wilfred Colin & Ricketts, Thomas CD
The Problemist 1965



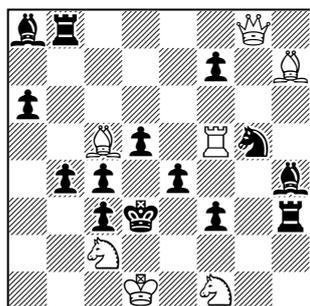
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B Evans, Wilfred Colin
1 Pr *The Problemist* 1966



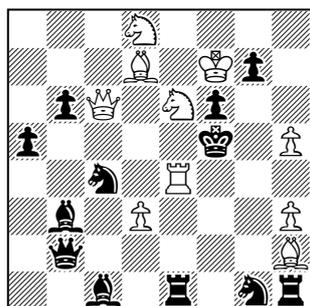
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C Evans, Wilfred Colin
The Problemist 1967



#3

D Evans, Wilfred Colin
4 Pr *The Observer* 1967



#3

Just a year after his first problem, Colin won a first prize with **B**. The sacrificial key $1.Qd6!$ threatens $2.Se4+ dxe4 3.Qd2\#$. If Black captures the queen with rook or bishop then there are second move Nowotny interferences on f3 – $1...Rxd6 2.f3$ & $3.Se2, Re3\#$ ($2...Rc4$ no longer possible) and $1...Bxd6 2.Sdf3$ & $3.Se2, Re3\#$ ($2...Bh6+$ not possible). Other variations are $1...Bh6 2.Rb3+ Kd4 3.Re4\#$; $2...axb3 3.Qb4\#$; $1...Rc4 2.Rxc4+ Kd3 3.Qxd5\#$; $2...dxc4 3.Se4, Ba5$; $1..Rd3 2.Ba5$ ($3.Rb\sim$ on rank) $2...Rd4 3.Rb3\#$; $1...f5 2.Qxe5+ d4 3.Qxd4\#$. G.F.Anderson, the judge, wrote of this problem, "To compose a problem of this depth, with a pre-conceived key and few duals, requires composing ability of a high order."

Colin was still investigating Nowotnys in 1967. In **C**, there are Nowotnys by the white queen following line-openings by Black. It solves by $1.Qg7!$ carrying a short threat of $2.Qd4\#$. The thematic variations are $1...Se6 2.Qg3$ ($3.Se1, Rxf3\#$) $e3 3.Rxd5, Rf6, Rxf7\#$ and $1...f6 2.Qb7$ & $3.Sxb4, Rxd5\#$. $1...Bf2$ leads to duals $2.Se1+$, $2.Bxf2$ or $2.Qd4+$.

Despite the multiple short threats, **D** pleased the judge in *The Observer* in 1967. 1.h4! threatens immediate mate by any move of the wSe6. Black can defeat all of these by any move of bSc4, and these lead to five quiet variations. 1...Se5+ 2.Ke8 (3.Sd4,Sxg7#) Bxe6 3.Q,Bxe6#; 1...Sd6+ 2.Kf8 (3.Sd4,Sxg7#) Bxe6 3.Bxe6#; 1...Sd2 2.Kxg7 (3.Sd4#) Bxe6 3.Q,Bxe6#; 1...Sa3 2.Kf8 (3.Sd4, Sxg7#) Bxe6 3.Q,Bxe6#; 1...Se3 2.Rc4 & 3.Se any but f4,Qe4#.

E, composed with Thomas Ricketts, was successful in France. As we have come to expect with Evans, quiet play is central. 1.Qf7! (2.Rxd4+ exd4 3.Qf5#) leads to thematic variations 1...Sd1 2.Kxh4 & 3.Sg5#, 1...Sd3 2.Kg4 & 3.Sg5#; 1...Sa4 2.Kg6 & 3.Sg5# and 1...Sc4 2.Kh5 & 3.Sg5#. Other variations are 1...dxe3 2.Rd4+ exd4 3.Qf5# and 1...Ra4 2.d3+ Bxd3 3.Sd2#. 1...Rd3 and 1...d3 lead to duals.

Another prize-winner for Colin was **F**, a resetting of an earlier problem from 1965 that proved to have an illegal position. The solution is 1.Rxf3! (2.Rd3+ Kc4 3.Rxd5#); 1...Rxa3 2.Rc3 (3.Rc4,Qf6#) Rxc3 3.bxc3#; 1...Qa6 2.Sc3 & 3.Sb3,Se6,Qxd5#; 1...Qb3 2.Sc3 (3.Sxb3,Se6#) Qxc3 3.bxc3#; 1...Qb5 2.Sc3 (3.Sxb5,Se6,Qxd5#) Qxc5 3.Qf6#; 1...Rg1 2.Re3 & (3.Se6,Re4#); 1...Rg3 2.Re3 (3.Se6,Re4#) Rxe3 3.dxe3#; 1...Re4 2.Se3 (3.Sc2,Qxd5#) Rxe3/Qb3 3.dxe3,Sxb3#. Judge Joseph Warton wrote of this problem, "A poor and obvious key is the introduction to a very clever task problem. Black makes four captures (two on c3, two on e3) resulting in mates by the white pawns at b2 and d2 and these mates are prefaced by four quiet second moves. A most remarkable achievement."

G is yet another prize-winner featuring the trademark Evans quiet play. The solution is 1.Sf7! (2.Sd8 & 3.Sb7#); 1...Sb5,Se8 2.Sxg5 & 3.Se4,Se6#; 1...Sd5 2.Sd6 & 3.Sb7#; 1...Se6 2.cxd3 & 3.b4#; 1...Bd5 2.b4+ Kc4 3.Sd6#; 1...Sf5 2.b4+ Kc4 3.Se5#. Why, you may ask, did I find it necessary to produce a version of this problem?

Way back in 2000 I was the director of the WCSC in Pula. I spent the weeks before the event selecting and typesetting the problems and studies to challenge the solvers. A few days before solving was due to start I was on a flight on my way to Croatia and I had the master copies of the solving sheets in my hand-luggage, ready for photocopying on arrival in Pula. Sitting next to me was Michael McDowell, a member of the British Solving Team, who was solving three-movers from a book he had with him. From time to time he would show me one of the problems he particularly liked. One of them was one I had selected for the WCSC!! So, when I got to Pula, my first task was to replace that problem with another one. I didn't have my chess problem books with me, of course, but I did have my Meson Chess Problem Database (not then online) on my laptop. In those days it had fewer than 40,000 problems in it, so my enforced reselection was somewhat constrained. Eventually I found this problem by Colin. It had a very strong key of 1.Rh5, pinning the bQ. Luckily, I was able to reset it to have a better key.

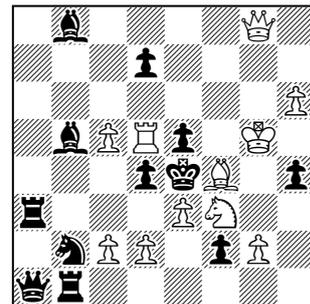
H shows Colin back to one of his favourite ideas – square vacations by the wK following decoys of black pieces. The solution is 1.Sc6! (2.Rxe5+ Sxe5 3.Sxe7#); 1...R1xf5 2.Ka3 & 3.Sb4#; 1...R8xf5,Rf7 2.Ka5 & 3.Sb4#; 1...Sxf5 2.Kxc3 & 3.Sb4#; 1...Qh7,Qh8,g4 2.Kb5 & 3.Sb4#; 1...Re8 2.Sd4 & 3.Bc6,Be6#.

The solution to I is on page ???

(Part 2 will appear in a future issue – Ed)

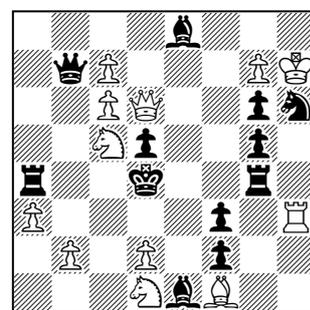


E Evans, Wilfred Colin & Ricketts, Thomas CD
3 Pr *Europe-Echecs* 1967



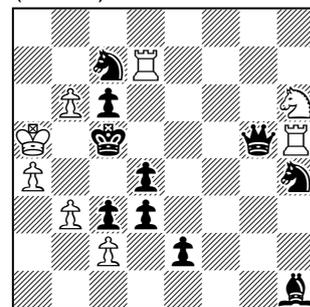
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F Evans, Wilfred Colin
6 Pr *BCPS* 1967



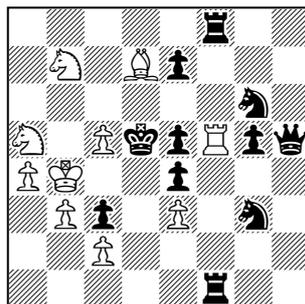
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G Evans, Wilfred Colin
4 Pr *The Problemist* 1968
(v BDS)



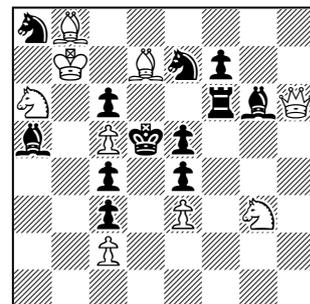
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H Evans, Wilfred Colin
The Problemist 1968



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I Evans, Wilfred Colin
The Problemist 1969



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