



COLUMNISTS

The Kibitzer

Tim Harding

Early Games of Chess by Telephone

The *Oxford Companion to Chess* is wrong about telephone chess (see the second edition, page 416). The late David Hooper and Ken Whyld wrote that “the first such game documented was played in January 1878 between F. Thompson and J. Cooper, separated by the three miles between Belper and Milford in Derbyshire.” That information, as we shall see, was correct in itself, but they had overlooked the documentation of a slightly earlier game.

Perhaps Hooper and Whyld were going by a reference to the Derbyshire game in the *Huddersfield College Magazine* (vol. 6 March 1878: p137), which did not mention the one in America.

“Apropos of the article about the telephone in our present number, Mr. Thompson informs us of his intention to play a game at Chess by telephone...”

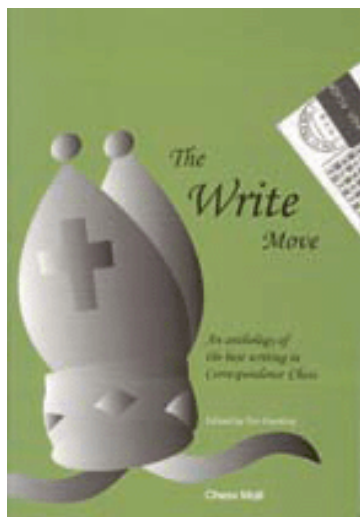
Had Hooper and Whyld gone back to read the primary source, Thompson’s chess columns in the *Derbyshire Advertiser*, they would have seen it was *not* the first game: another was played a few weeks earlier in the USA. Thompson himself certainly knew about the precedent, and had set out to emulate it. By the time the *Huddersfield College Magazine* was printed, the event was long past and the story had moved on.

In his column of 25 January 1878, Thompson wrote “By the courtesy of the Messrs. Strutt, we hope this week to play a game of Chess through the Telephone between their Milford and Belper Mills.” He continues with the text of the telephone match report from the *Hartford Times*, about the first phone game in the United States, which, as far as can be ascertained, was the first anywhere in the world.

I don’t have the exact date, but as it appeared in the *Derbyshire Advertiser* of 25 January 1878, it was presumably in the *Hartford Times* two or three weeks previously.

“CHESS BY TELEPHONE.

The first game of Chess on record played by the Telephone was contested, last week, by a committee of the Hartford Chess Circle.



The Write Move
by Tim Harding

Through the courtesy of Mr. and Mrs. S. G. Crane, the telephone line between Dr. Crane's dental office, No 6 State-street, and their residence, Asylum-avenue, was placed at the disposal of the Circle, and all the members were cordially invited to be present at the house. The following players were selected to conduct the game — Mrs. J. W. Gilbert and Mr. John G. Belden on the one side, and Messrs. A. E. Olmstead & C. G. Lincoln on the other. The two latter were stationed at the Doctor's office, and the former took position at the private residence, where a goodly number of players had congregated to watch the novel contest. Dr Crane telephoned the moves from the office, while Mrs. Crane, Mr. C. S. Davidson and Mr. William Seavey took turns in performing the same duty at the other end of the line."

Mrs. J. W. Gilbert & John G. Belden – A. E. Olmstead & C. G. Lincoln

First Telephone Game, Hartford, Connecticut, USA, January 1878

Petroff Defence [C42]

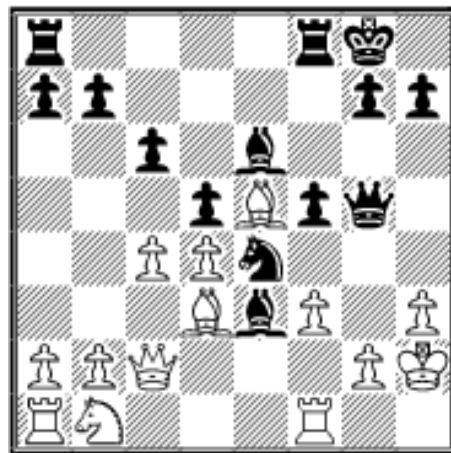
1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nf6 3 Nxe5 d6 4 Nf3 Nxe4 5 d4 d5 6 Bd3 Be7 7 0-0 0-0 8 h3 Be6 9 c4 c6 10 Qc2 f5 11 Ne5 Nd7 12 Bf4 Bg5 13 Nxd7 Bxd7

13...Qxd7 seems preferable, inasmuch as the subsequent move of the bishop shows it to have been lost time.

14 Be5 Be6 15 f3

The advance of this pawn was premature.

15...Be3+ 16 Kh2 Qg5



Chess was not the only business of the evening. The report has some colourful details.

"Owing to the novelty of the thing, the interval between the moves was occupied by the members of the Circle in demonstrating how easily the new invention permitted people to converse, though miles apart. The Doctor delighted the company by singing several songs and whistling *Yankee Doodle*. Of course, these

telephoniosities slightly interfered with good chess play, but the contestants were as much interested as the others, and might have even felt disappointed if the sport had ceased."

17 Nc3

Taking the knight would have precipitated a fierce attack, which would have required all White's resources to overcome.

17...Bf4+ 18 Bxf4 Qxf4+ 19 Kg1 Ng3 20 Rf2 dxc4 21 Bf1 Qxd4 22 Rd1 Qf4 23 Rfd2 Qe3+ 24 Kh2 Nxf1+ 25 Rxf1 Rad8 26 Re2 Qf4+ 27 g3 Qh6 28 Rfe1 Rfe8 29 f4 Kf7?

Weak. 29...g5 is stronger and more aggressive.

30 Qa4 a6 31 Qb4 Rd7 32 Na4 Rde7 33 Nc5 b5 34 Nxa6 Qf6 35 Nc5 Bd5 36 Re5 ½-½

“Owing to the lateness of the hour, the game was not played to a conclusion, and if the reader chooses he may call it a drawn game. As it looks now, Black's advantage of a Pawn is quite neutralised by his inferior position. The game abounds with interesting situations, and the critical condition of the game, as it now stands, will richly repay the student for a close and careful analysis.

At the close a vote of thanks was tendered by the Circle to the Doctor and his amiable wife for their kindness, courtesy, and accommodating spirit in tendering the free use of the line, and in throwing open their house and office to the members of the Chess Circle, and in other ways doing all in their power to make the occasion pleasant and enjoyable.”

In the brief notes to the game itself, Belden wrote of the final move, 36 Re5, that “the Rook is now well posted and Black's cramped position is hardly compensated by the advantage of a Pawn.” This comment doesn't make sense to me as Black can immediately regain the pawn with a probably winning position, which raises the question of whether there is an error in the printed score. Perhaps nobody took the game seriously, as with the one in Derbyshire soon afterwards. It was the novelty that counted.

In the American game, it appears from the above account that the telephone line remained open throughout the conduct of the game. In the case of the game played about a week later in Derbyshire, a separate call was put through for each move. Twenty-one moves each were made on the night. I quote from Thompson again:

“The ‘We’ of this Chess Column and John Cooper, Esq., of Sunny Hill, near Derby, were the disputants; the Messrs. Strutt's Telephone between Milford and Belper was the medium; and the time occupied, from 6:30 to 8:45 p.m... A game at Chess was chosen by Pofessor (Sir Charles) Wheatstone thirty years ago, as a test of the practical

invention of the telegraph. We can safely assert that the game played last Friday was equally conclusive of the *reality* of the Telephone. No better experiment surely could be made to establish the utility of the Telephone. Forty-two distinct messages, all forming a sequence of moves... prove the accuracy of the singular instrument...

The Chess reader will surely not be so unkind as to criticise the following game. Let him remember that the TELEPHONE was at work. Mistakes, no doubt, will be discovered on both sides; but not through the bad working of the Telephone. *That* was all that could be desired.”

“The first game of chess played by telephone in Europe.”

John Cooper – Fred Thompson

First European Telephone Game, Derbyshire, 25 January 1878

Irregular Open Game [C20]

1 e4 e5 2 c3

“Our opponent in the game is one of those original players who does not slavishly follow ‘book-play.’”

2...Nf6

“We played this move, not seeing a better one on the board.”

3 d4

“Being suspicious of this move, Black quickly Telephoned.”

3...Nxe4 4 dxe5 d5 5 Be3 Nc6 6 Qa4 a6 7 Nd2 Nxd2 8 Bxd2 b5?

“This was a slip on the part of Black, and might have cost him the game.”

9 Bxb5 axb5

“Before taking this Bishop, we Telephoned, asking if the Mayor of Derby had arrived. The reply back was ‘Is he expected?’ Our answer was, ‘Yes, Pawn takes Bishop.’”

Unfortunately, the report concludes, although the Mayor of Derby was desirous of witnessing the game, he was prevented, but there were several named witnesses. White was accompanied by his son and A. Laing, Esq. of Derby. Thompson had the services of W. R. Bland (soon to be chess

columnist of *Design and Work*) to write down his moves, and among those also named as present with them at the Milford end of the line were a Dr. Cooper (maybe related to White?) and a Sergeant Littlewood of the Thirteenth Derby Royal Volunteers.

10 Qxa8

“Not so bad for Black after all. White’s Queen has taken what often proves a dummy piece, so, laying this flattering unction to his soul, Black played...”

10...Nxe5 11 Be3 Nd3+

“Preventing him from Castling, and capturing a Pawn at the same stroke.”

12 Kd2 Nxb2 13 Qc6+ Qd7 14 Qxd7+ Bxd7 15 Re1 Nc4+ 16 Kc2 Be6 17 Bc1

At this point in the game, perhaps inspired by the account of the Hartford game, there was a musical interlude. Thompson played a tune, *Paddle Your Own Canoe*, on Dr Cooper’s violin. “Immediately afterwards there came through the wire a clear whistle from Mr. Laing, repeating the song in admirable style. This was the finest illustration of the powers of the Telephone given during the evening. After ‘doing’ *Rule Britannia* and receiving an appropriate reply, we laid down the fiddle and played...”

17...Bc5 18 Re2 0–0 19 Nf3

“Black, seeing another pawn in the distance, Telephoned to Belper to ignore the rail and take to the road, and to pick him up *en passant*; but it was finally agreed to return by the next Manchester train to Derby, and to draw the game after a few more moves.”

19...h6 20 h3 Bf5+ 21 Kd1 Bd3



“And Belper replied, through the mouth-piece of Mr. Laing, “Good-night; peace be with you,” and we rushed off to our respective stations.”

The game was soon concluded by post. On 8 February the following moves were published:

22 Ree1 Bxf2 23 Re7 Bg3 24 Nd4 Bd6
1/2–1/2

With the comment from Thompson, “Black has the chance of winning the game if White refuses the draw; but will Black take the chance? He sleeps on it!” (Presumably he was thinking of 25 R7e1 Bg3 26 Re7 Bd6 etc.) No more was said in the column, so presumably a draw was agreed.

The story continued quite amusingly because there was an argument between the two feuding chess columnists in Hartford, Connecticut. Thompson took the side of Belden.

On 1 March, there’s an item where the *Hartford Globe* copied a phone game from the *Detroit Free Press* (columnist: T. P. Bull) under the headline “The First game of Chess played by telephone,” but Thompson pointed out that the Derbyshire game was a few days before the Detroit game (10 Feb), and in turn Hartford takes precedence. Did the *Globe* columnist not read the *Hartford Times* column, he wondered?

On 24 May (in the Derbyshire paper), the *Hartford Sunday Globe* columnist Max Peiler throws discredit on the Hartford phone game, claiming that the game scored as the “First Game” by telephone *was not played by telephone*, except an exceedingly small portion. However, Thompson thinks if, say, ten non-book moves were made (which was certainly the case) then it should count as the first phone game. Derby was happy to be second (first in Europe) and Detroit was clearly after them.

The next British phone matches

A few years later, the Derbyshire game had apparently been largely forgotten as it did not receive publicity outside the locality. So in later years we see other telephone matches being claimed as the first. The editor of the *Sussex Chess Journal* in 1892 thought that a Brighton-Worthing match of 1886 was the first, until he was reminded of the eight-board 1884 Bradford-Wakefield match – apparently the first team match played by telephone (at least in Britain) – which is discussed below. So even in Sussex it seems an 1880 precedent was fading from memory.

Hooper and Whyld’s book states that “In 1880 a consultation game was played between the clubs of Brighton and Chichester, and in September 1884 an eight-a-side match was played between Bradford and Wakefield.” The latter is right, but the first part of the claim in *The Oxford Companion* is not quite correct in three respects. There were actually two Brighton-Chichester telephone games in 1880; in the first match, at least, the Chichester players did not actually telephone from their home town; finally, it is doubtful whether the Brighton players on the first occasion represented a club.

According to the *Preston Guardian* of 25 February, the Chichester players actually had to travel by train to Littlehampton (about half the distance to Brighton) to play it, but this still meant the game was played over a much

longer phone line than the previous ones. It took two sessions to complete the game. I am grateful to Brian Denman of Hove for sending the game to me, with some additional information.

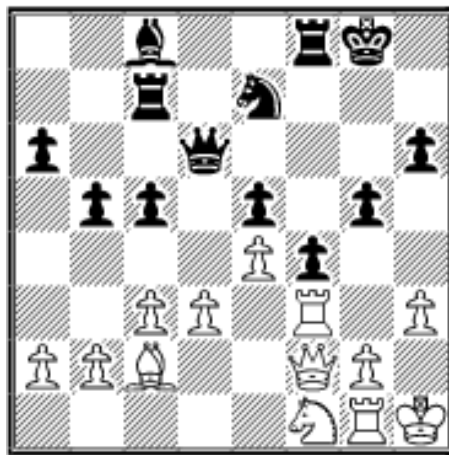
Chichester – Brighton

Telephone Consultation Game, 6th and 13th February 1880

Ruy Lopez [C77]

From the *Brighton Herald* of 21st Feb. 1880

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bb5 a6 4 Ba4 Nf6 5 Nc3 Bb4 6 0–0 0–0 7 Nd5 Bc5 8 d3 b5 9 Bb3 h6 10 c3 d6 11 h3 Ba7 12 Be3 Na5 13 Nxf6+ Qxf6 14 Bc2 Nc6 15 Nh2 Qg6 16 Kh1 Ne7 17 Bxa7 Rxa7 18 f4 f5 19 fxe5 dxe5 20 Qe2 f4 21 Rf3 c5 22 Qf2 Rc7 23 Rg1 Qd6 24 Nf1 g5



25 g4 Ng6 26 Qd2 Kg7 27 Nh2 Bb7 28 Rf2 Nh4 29 Qe2 Rfc8 30 Nf3 Nxf3 31 Rxf3 c4 32 dxc4 Rxc4 33 Rd1 Qc6 34 Rd5 Qe6 35 Rd1 R8c7 36 Kh2 Qc6 37 Rfd3 Rxe4 38 Qxe4 Qxe4 39 Rd7+ Rxd7 40 Rxd7+ Kf6 41 Bxe4 Bxe4 42 Rd6+ Ke7 43 Rxh6 a5 44 Kg1 a4 45 Kf2 Bd3 46 Ke1 e4 47 Kf2 Bc4 48 Rg6 e3+ 49 Kf3 Bd5+

Potter's column in *Land and Water* of the same day ended here, saying "and after one or two checks a draw was agreed upon."

50 Ke2 Bc4+ 1/2–1/2

Mr. Denman informs me that the Chichester players were Sergeant Major W. McArthur, Dr. H. J. K. Vines, G. R. Downer, C. H. R. Ballard, and Colour Sergeant Woods, while Brighton were represented by L Leuliette, R. Rabson, E. Booth, D. Thomas, G. White and R. Stuckey. He adds: "It should be mentioned that there was probably no Brighton Chess Club at this time and the group of players for the above game was not the strongest contingent available. A few months later after the new Brighton CC had been formed another such match was played, which was completed by correspondence."

The following, found in W. T. Pierce's column in the *The Brighton Herald* of 11 December 1880, is the earliest telephone game given in the books by Italian researcher Carlo Alberto Pagni about early matches between clubs.

Brighton Chess Club – Chichester Chess Club

Second Telephone Game, 1880

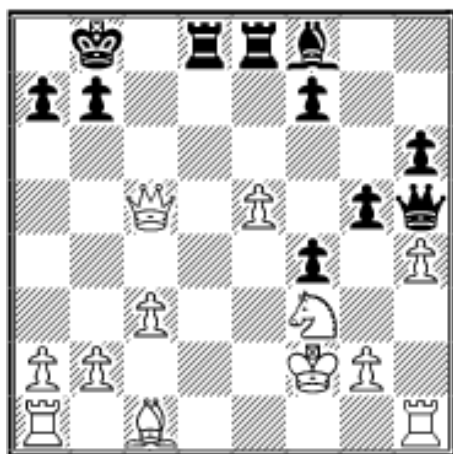
Bishop's Gambit [C33]

Brian Denman checked the *Brighton Herald* for me and confirmed that the match was played by telephone on 12 November 1880 up to the move 38 h6, and then completed by correspondence. Pierce wrote that the Brighton CC players were L. Leuliette, F. Edmonds, (H?) Erskine and W. T. Pierce, while the Chichester CC was represented by Sergeant Major W. McArthur, G. R. Downer, Sergeant-Instructor J. Scott and Mr. Geddis. The inclusion of Erskine and Pierce meant a significant strengthening of the Brighton squad, and for the first time a telephone game ended in a decisive result.

1 e4 e5 2 f4 exf4 3 Bc4 Qh4+ 4 Kf1 d5 5 Bxd5 g5 6 Nc3 Bg7 7 d4 Ne7 8 Nf3 Qh5 9 e5 c6 10 Bc4 Bf5 11 h4 h6 12 Ne2! Nd7 13 c3

Better is 13 Kf2.

13...0-0-0 14 Qb3 Nd5 15 Bxd5 cxd5 16 Qxd5 Bd3 17 Kf2 Nxe5 18 Qc5+ Kb8 19 dxe5 Bxe2 20 Kxe2 Rhe8 21 Kf2 Bf8



22 Qc4?

This jeopardizes the game. 22 Qb5 a6 23 Qe2 Rd5 24 Nd4 wins according to Pierce, whereas now Black can fight for the initiative.

22...g4 23 Bxf4

23 Nd4 is stronger according to Pierce, but that doesn't seem right because of 23...g3+ 24 Ke1 Rxe5+ 25 Kd2 f3 26 Kc2

and it's not clear if White has any advantage. Maybe 23 Qxf4 gxf3 24 g4 is best.

23...gxf3 24 g3 Rc8 25 Qd5 Bc5+ 26 Kf1 Ka8 27 Rd1! Bb6?!

Here 27...f6 looks critical.

28 Rd3 f2 29 Qf3 Qxf3?

Now White's task is much easier. Black should keep it complicated by 29...Qf5.

30 Rxf3 f6 31 Bxh6 fxe5 32 Rxf2 Bxf2 33 Kxf2 Rcd8 34 Be3

Pagni's book ends here, but more moves were sent by telephone.

34...Rf8+ 35 Ke2 Rf7 36 g4 Rh7 37 h5 Rdh8 38 h6

The game was completed by correspondence:

38...Kb8 39 g5 Rg8 40 Kf3 1–0

There is some information about the Bradford-Wakefield phone match, which I mentioned above, in volume 8 of *The Chess Player's Chronicle and Journal of Indoor and Outdoor Amusements*. The issue of 24 September 1884 (page 122) reported that a proposed telephone match between the clubs in the neighbouring cities of Bradford and Leeds “has fallen through. Leeds refused to play.” So Bradford immediately began negotiating with Wakefield to play a match over eight or ten boards. The event nearly fell through, but was eventually played on 29 September 1884, and two of the games appeared in the magazine the following month. Unfortunately the final outcome of the match was not published in the *CPC*, but maybe it was printed locally. Anyway the occasion was more important than the result.

Here are the two known games. The standard was not very high.

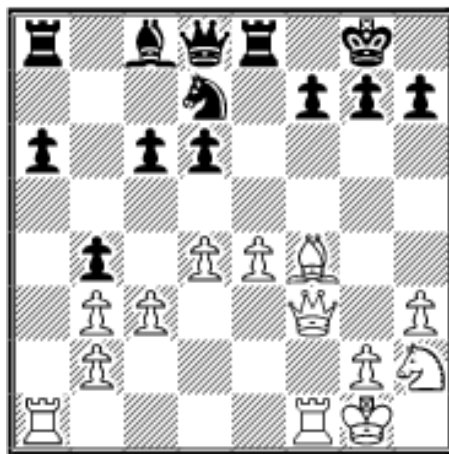
Mr. Macmaster (Bradford) – J. W. Young (Wakefield)

Bradford-Wakefield Telephone Match, 29.09.1884

Ruy Lopez [C77]

Notes by Tim Harding, based on *CPC* 8 October 1884.

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bb5 a6 4 Ba4 Nf6 5 d3 d6 6 Nc3 Be7 7 h3 0–0 8 0–0 b5 9 Bb3 Na5 10 Nh2 b4 11 Ne2 Nxb3 12 axb3 c6 13 f4 exf4 14 Nxf4 Nd7 15 d4 Bg5 16 c3 Re8 17 Qf3 Bxf4 18 Bxf4



18...f6

White has a clear advantage in the diagrammed position. Black has to defend f7 so lets the d-pawn go. 18...Nf8? would not prevent 19 Bxd6; 18...Nf6 seems the lesser evil, but White could choose between the awkward pin 19 Bg5, or 19 e5 with pressure, or 19 Bxd6 Qxd6 20 e5.

19 Bxd6 Qb6

Trying for counterplay.

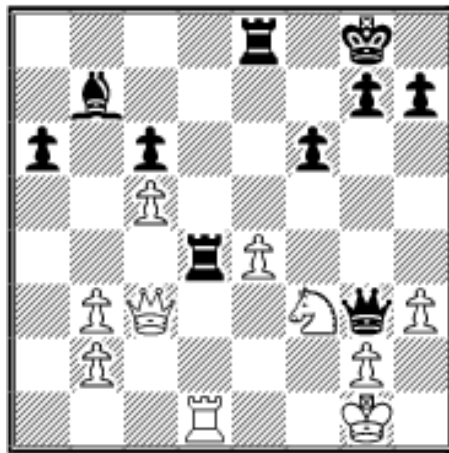
20 Rad1

Rather timid. 20 Qh5 is strong, for if 20...g6 (20...Rxe4 21 Rae1) 21 Qf3 and the f6 bulwark has been weakened.; 20 Ng4 threatens a sacrificial stroke at h6 or f6 in a few moves. Or if 20...bxc3 21 bxc3 Qxb3 22 e5 with a strong attack; 20 Bxb4 c5 21 dxc5 Nxc5 22 Qe3 Nd7 23 Qxb6 would presumably win in the end.

20...bxc3 21 Qxc3?!

White should be thinking about attack, not defending weak pawns, so 21 bxc3 and if 21...Qxb3 22 Ng4.

21...Bb7 22 Rfe1 Rac8 23 Bc5 Nxc5 24 dxc5 Qc7 25 Rd4 Rcd8 26 Nf3 Qg3 27 Red1 Rxd4



28 Rxd4?

28 Nxd4 is best as White has the superior minor piece and a queen exchange reduces the counterplay. Then if 28...Qxc3 29 bxc3 Rxe4 30 Nf5 threatening both Rd8+ and Rd7 is awkward to meet.

28...Bc8 29 Ne1

Black threatened ...Bxh3.

29...Qg6 30 Qd3 f5!

Exploiting the undefended knight at e1.

31 Rd8?

Even here White could have kept some chances of a win by 31 e5 Rxe5 32 Nf3 Re8 33 Rd6.

31...fxe4 32 Rxe8+ Qxe8 33 Qe3 ½–½

Mr. S. Hudson (Bradford) – Mr. Schofield (Wakefield)

Philidor Defence [C42]

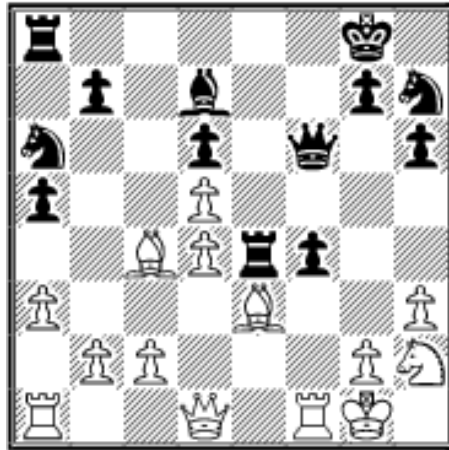
Bradford-Wakefield Telephone Match, 29.09.1884

Notes by Tim Harding, based on *CPC* 8 October 1884

1 e4 e5 2 Bc4 Nf6 3 Nf3 d6?

Black declines to accept the Boden-Kiesersky Gambit (3...Nxe4 4 Nc3 Nxc3 5 dxc3) but plays instead a passive move costing a pawn. 3...Nc6 is the Two Knights Defence.

4 Ng5 d5 5 exd5 Bd6 6 h3 0-0 7 d3 h6 8 Nf3 Bd7 9 Nc3 a5 10 a3 Re8 11 Ne4 Na6 12 Be3 Nh7 13 Nxd6 cxd6 14 0-0 f5 15 d4 e4 16 Nh2 Qf6 17 f3 f4 18 fxe4 Rxe4



19 Rxf4?

This gross blunder, losing a piece, bears no comment in *CPC*.

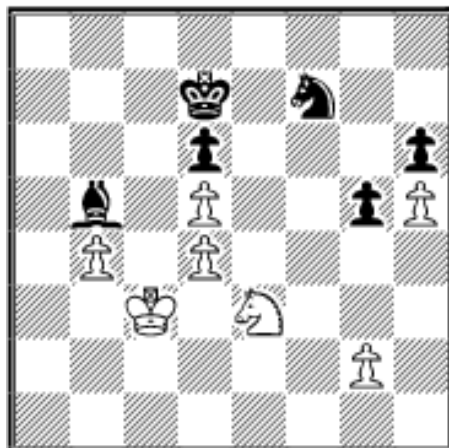
19...Rxf4 20 Bxf4 Qxf4 21 c3 Nc7 22 Qf3 Rf8

Adequate, as is ...Qxf3, but with an extra piece, Black could have retained queens by 22...Qg5 and played for the attack.

23 Qxf4 Rxf4 24 Re1 Nf6 25 Re7 Re4?

Making his task far harder. Why not eject the rook by the natural 25...Kf8 here? The player with extra material is usually advised to exchange pieces, but Black's problem is that the pawn structure does not facilitate converting his advantage of a minor piece against two pawns. Keeping rooks on gives the attacker more options.

26 Rxe4 Nxe4 27 Bd3 Ng5 28 c4 Kf8 29 b4 axb4 30 axb4 b5 31 h4 Nf7 32 Nf1 bxc4 33 Bxc4 Nb5 34 Bxb5 Bxb5 35 Ne3 Bd3 36 Kf2 g5 37 h5 Ke7 38 Ke1 Kd7 39 Kd2 Bb5 40 Kc3



CPC says that "At this point it was decided to adjudicate upon the unfinished games. Wakefield claimed this as a win, Bradford contended it was a draw only. It was finally decided to submit the position to an expert."

I don't know what the expert decided, but I would adjudicate this a win for Black if I were to do it on objective criteria. In practice, Black was probably unable to win the game...

Whatever computers may say, it is no longer obvious that Black can win

because every square by which the black knight could try to enter the game is controlled by an enemy pawn. Black could try to penetrate with his king, but the only vulnerable point on the queenside is a4. However Black cannot (if his king is on b5) find any way to dislodge the white king from a3-b3 and of course the white knight controls all entry points and defends the key pawns (d5, g2/g4) and the squares f5 and c4. Evidently 40...Be2 41 g4 locks the position up tight.

The last – and correct – possibility for Black is to create an entry point for the king and knight by sacrificing a pawn with 40...g4!! 41 Nxg4 Ke7 and the king manoeuvres to g7 after which ...Ng5 is playable and Black should win. 41...Ng5 possibly works too, but requires careful calculation, e.g. 42 Nxh6 Ne4+ 43 Kc2 Nf6 44 g4 Be2 45 g5 Nxh5 46 g6 Ng7.

The development of the telephone service in England was rather slow, because the government and civil service found it hard to decide what should be left to private companies and what should be run by the Post Office. The main points at issue were to do with who should be responsible for telephone exchanges and a long-distance system. The difficulties, which are beyond the scope of this article to explain in any detail, were partly because of the fact that the British inland telegraphs had in the late 1860s been nationalized, under the control of the Post Office, but had proved more expensive than the original calculations. Now with the coming of the phone, the telegraph no longer looked like such a good investment.

However for chess, the telegraph is a superior way of playing long-distance chess. The chief advantage is that there is a written record of the move, so misunderstandings over the move transmitted are not as likely as in a telephone match, and with the telegraph they are certainly more likely to be detected and corrected. As anyone who has played in a telephone match knows, there tend to be delays and the moves have to be brought to and from the person responsible for communication, just as in a telegraph match. The events become an endurance test if the games are of long duration and it is not surprising that in the early phone matches games were frequently unfinished in the time allowed.

The first time the telephone was used for a large-scale chess match between strong players over a long distance may have been on 12 December 1891 in the first consultation match between the Liverpool Chess Club and the British Chess Club in London. The first of these received greater publicity than any previous telephone match, at least in Britain, being well-documented in *The Field*.

Two games were played, each club having White in one of them, and the players were different in each game. Leopold Hoffer reported on the event at some length in *The Field* of 19 December. Liverpool won 1½-½. It's not

clear from that report who was involved at the Liverpool end in which game, probably because Hoffer was in London, but Richard Forster's book on Amos Burn (page 418, following *British Chess Magazine*) says that Burn along with Messrs. Dod, Howard, Rutherford, and Wellington conducted the game draw with Black. So presumably the game that Liverpool won was played by the others whom Hoffer names: the veteran Rev. John Owen and M. Kaizer. The players for London in this game were Adonis Donisthorpe, Hoffer, George Newnes and H. W. Trenchard – quite a powerful line-up.

Liverpool CC – British Chess Club

Telephone Consultation Match (Game 1), 12.12.1891

Zukertort Opening [D02]

1 Nf3 d5 2 d4 e6 3 e3 c5 4 b3 Nf6 5 Bb2 Nc6 6 Bd3 b6 7 0–0 Bd6 8 Nbd2 0–0 9 a3 Bb7 10 Qe2 Rc8 11 Ne5 Qc7 12 f4 cxd4 13 exd4 Ne7 14 Rac1 Ng6 15 g4 Rfe8 16 g5 Nd7 17 Qh5 Ndf8 18 Rf3 Bxe5 19 fxe5 Re7 20 Rcf1 b5 21 R1f2 a5 22 Nf1 Bc6 23 Ne3 Be8 24 Ng4 f5 25 gxf6 Rf7 26 Rh3 gxf6 27 Nxf6+ Kh8 28 Qh6 Rg7 29 Rg2 b4 30 a4 Qe7 31 Bc1 Qa7 32 Be3 Bf7 33 Kh1 Be8 34 Nxe8 Rxe8 35 Bxg6 1–0

If 35...Nxc6, then 36 Rxc6.

The fixture was renewed the following December, but the teams were not quite as strong. Amos Burn was not involved. The match was played on 17 December 1892, not 1893 as given by Pagni. *The Field* volume 80 (24 Dec. 1882) pp. 982-3 has the original report. The players for Liverpool on this board were Messrs Bully, Cairns, George Ferguson and Wellington. For the British CC: Heppel, Hoffer, Lord and Trenchard.

Liverpool CC – British Chess Club

Second Telephone Match, 17.12.1892

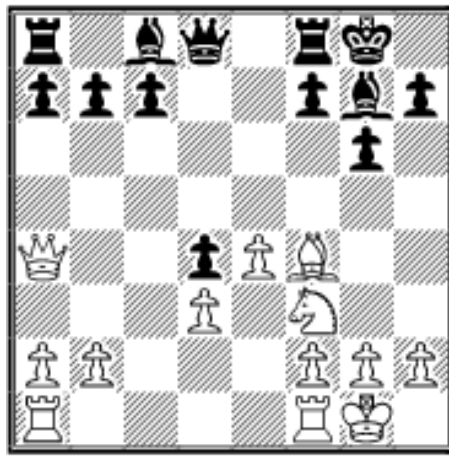
Ruy Lopez [C65]

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bb5 Nf6 4 d3 d6 5 c3 g6! 6 Nbd2 Bg7 7 Nf1 0–0 8 Ne3 d5 9 Qc2 d4

Black deviates here from 9...a6, played by Chigorin in the fourth game of his 1892 match against Steinitz.

10 Nc4 Nd7 11 0–0 Nb6 12 Bxc6 Nxc4 13 cxd4 Nb6 14 Ba4 Nxa4 15 Qxa4 exd4 16 Bf4

In the 8th edition of the *Handbuch* (page 446 row 18 and note 10), Schlechter considered that White probably stands a tiny bit better; so he was critical of Black's eighth move.



16...Bg4 17 Ne5 Bxe5?

Hoffer says this ill-judged move arose “partly from being satisfied with a draw, Board No. 2 having had a good game, but chiefly from want of time, fifteen moves an hour being insufficient for a consultation game, when four divergent opinions have to be reconciled.” Better is 17...Be6.

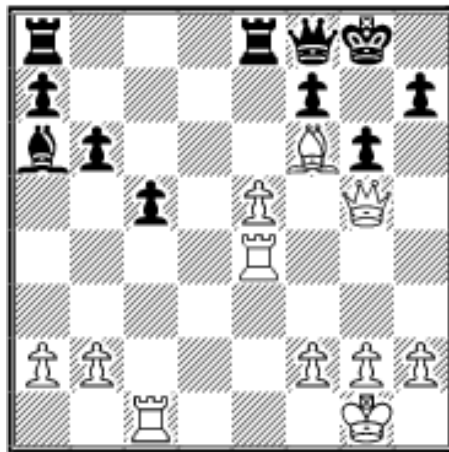
18 Bxe5 Be2

Better is 18...c5 19 b4 b6 20 Rfc1 Qe7 21 Bg3 Rfc8 said Hoffer, leaving White with the weak d-pawn.

19 Rfe1 Bxd3 20 Bxd4 Qe7 21 Qb3 Ba6 22 Qc3 b6 23 Bf6 Qc5 24 Qd2 Rfe8?

24...Qh5 was discarded on account of 25 Re3, but it would have been better.

25 Rac1 Qd6 26 Qg5 c5 27 e5 Qf8 28 Re4



28...Re6

28...h6 was the idea at move 24, but then comes 29 Rh4 Kh7 30 Rc3 Bc8 31 Rcc4, followed by the sacrifice of the rook and wins.

29 Rc3 Rae8 30 Rh3 Bc8 31 Rxh7! 1-0

If 31...Rxf6, then 32 Reh4.

Even when the telephone had become established as the preferred means of rapid communication for internal matters, submarine cables continued to be used for international chess, as in the Newnes Trophy matches between Britain and the United States. Radio games were a variant, probably being first used between ships that carried the equipment. Around August 1902, an unfinished game was played on the Atlantic Ocean between the *SS Philadelphia* and the *SS Oceanic* (does anyone know the exact date?). The report probably appeared first in the *Brooklyn Eagle* and was then reprinted in various publications.

Then, on 16 January 1903, the *Philadelphia* was involved in what was possibly the first complete game by radio between ships, terminated rather

abruptly by a blunder on Black's twelfth move. Between the 3rd and 5th July 1908, in six sessions of play, the *Oceanic* and *Lucania* (three passengers on each side). After 52 moves, the game had to stop in a queen ending, so it was agreed a draw "with honour to" Black. However, the story of radio matches is really another chapter in chess history.

Chess players have been among the earliest adopters of technology. In 1844, about a year before the first chess telegraph game in England, some games were played between Baltimore and Washington DC, using the Morse system of telegraphy. According to D. W. Fiske, in his book of the [First American Chess Congress](#), one of the games was published, but he did not say where or when, so I am uncertain if he had actually obtained the score of the game. If any reader has more information on this, especially if they can supply a copy of the source, I should be most grateful.

As this article shows, the telephone in its turn was also used very early on for chess playing. Unfortunately the telephone is not really suited to chess, as Hooper and Whyld indeed wrote. Yet it continued to be used until the 1990s when Internet real-time play became possible, which transformed the experience of playing chess with distant opponents.

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