

# Fun in Gent

Like many Brits, Tim Kett enjoyed visiting the Gent Festival, where he didn't drink *too* much and did OK at the chessboard too



Straight after the South Wales International, Tom Brown and I headed for St Pancras station and a Eurostar train to the beautiful Belgian city of Gent (often spelled 'Ghent', but locally they prefer no 'h'). As soon as you arrive you are quickly reminded that you are in Flanders rather than the Francophone southern half of the country: in this most multi-lingual of places and tournaments, we heard Flemish, Dutch, English and German all being spoken more than French, the first language I used to associate with the country.

I'd also heard about the Gent Festival – a massive musical (and beer-drinking!) extravaganza that completely takes over the centre of town and attracts about 1.5 million visitors every year. We met up with a quite a few English players who are regularly drawn here by all aspects of the entertainment on offer.

Mainly though we were here for the chess and the basic set-up was this: a 9-round Swiss with around 220 players in the main group, headed up by four GMs and another 2500 player, more of whom later. A decent sprinkling of 2400s, 2300s and 2200s were then followed a large troupe of 2000-2200s. 84 of the field had FIDE ratings over 2000 so we were going to meet plenty of them.

My first round win is probably best skipped over. With White against a 1700 I played a fairly shallow and dubious line, but my opponent succumbed at the first opportunity and lost in 13 moves. On to the first proper test in round 2.



*The Gent Open was a truly multilingual event and do observe the high board numbers.*

## A.Mauquoy-T.Kett Round 2



I've been reading Ilya Smirin's excellent new book *King's Indian Warfare* recently and had decided to play the KID at every opportunity in this tournament (with the pleasing result of 3/3). At this point I have decent chances, but White's well-centralised queen and rook mean it won't be easy to break through. Fortunately I recalled Smirin's chapter on releasing the power of your dark-squared bishop and the examples he gave of sacrificing a pawn to do just this. The thought suddenly occurred to me that sometimes you might have to give away two...

**22...e3! 23 fxe3 e4! 24 ♖d2**

The small downside risk when playing this was opening the f-file for White's king's rook, but Black is just in time there: 24 ♖f1 ♜ab8 25 ♜xf7 ♜xb2+ 26 ♔d1 ♜b1+ 27 ♜c2 ♜c3+! 28 ♜xb1 ♜b2#.

**24...♜b6 25 ♜b1 ♜fd8**

Black takes over control of all the main lines, and I won in a further 44 moves.

Round 3 saw another poor white opening from me: **1 e4 e5 2 ♖c3 ♜f6 3 ♜c4 ♜xe4 4 ♜h5 ♜d6 5 ♜b3** (hoping for the Frankenstein-Dracula variation **5...♜c6 6.♜b5!?**, but my sensible young 2107-rated

opponent saw no reason to enter that maelstrom) **5...♜e7 6 ♜f3 ♜c6**. Now I reasoned that since Black wouldn't have any serious problems if I recaptured the pawn with **6 ♜xe5** that it made sense to continue to offer a gambit with **7 d3?** instead. Black simply continued with **7...g6 8 ♜g4 h5 9 ♜h3 ♜f5** and had a better position with a pawn up to boot (0-1, 33). Lesson learned? Probably not.

Round 4 was a tough manoeuvring battle in another KID which became more like a Benoni. At move 41 we reached the following position where the liberation of my dark-square bishop finally heralds the end (even if it's the light-squared colleague who delivers the final blow).

