



August sails in with a breeze and this month's newsletter is packed full. We've got all the club essentials: a message from your Club Secretary, the August birthday list and a flashback of the last quiz night

But that's just the beginning. Fifty years ago, August 1975 was ablaze with global shifts: the *Helsinki Accords* were signed, marking a pivotal moment in Cold War diplomacy and human rights; Ethiopia's last emperor, Haile Selassie, was murdered; Viking 1 launched toward Mars, beginning its interplanetary journey. Led Zeppelin's Robert Plant was seriously injured in a car crash in Greece. A hundred years ago, August 1925 was equally vivid. The *Jazz Age* was in full swing, and Mount Rushmore was officially proposed as a national memorial. This is just to set the scene.

We've gathered stories about robot soccer, once a sci-fi chuckle, now sprinting and scoring with astonishing precision; the gripping courage of Shavarsh Karapetyan, who plunged into icy waters to save lives between Olympic feats; and sporting highlights that remind us why grit and grace belong on the same pitch.

This month's lifts off with tales of tomorrow's firepower—where American air supremacy is being reshaped not just by stealth and speed, but by the brainpower behind AI-coordinated swarm tactics and sixth-generation fighter concepts. Beneath the surface, hydrogen-powered submarines are emerging as a cleaner, stealthier answer to traditional diesel-electric models, with designs that hint at a submerged future of sustainable, nearly silent warfare. Ukraine is charting its own sea-change—deploying drone-based miniature aircraft carriers that punch far above their weight. And then, we bring you the poetic feat of Captain John Phillips of the SS Warrimoo, who in the final hours of December 1899, navigated his ship to a spot in the mid-Pacific where it stood simultaneously on opposite sides of the equator and International Date Line and time zones.

There is a peek at the science behind Agatha Christie's murders—how chemistry and cunning collide in fiction—and what might one day soar above us as the next Concorde. We'll take you to the granite heights of Mount Rushmore, where history was chiselled into stone, and dive into the smoke and shadows of Dog Day Afternoon, with a biography of Al Pacino.

So, whether you're raising a toast to August birthdays or pondering robot soccer, let's keep the spirit of discovery alive in our club newsletter.

Message from the Club Secretary

(Tattler - Thanks Euan!)

Hello Members!

Can you believe that July is nearly done already? It has been good to see many of you enjoying the Club despite the wet and windy weather this month and it has been cold! Even for a UK born chap like me. Maybe my blood is just getting thin?

We have had some good events again this month with lots of sport in the northern hemisphere summer and in the southern hemisphere. Incoming overseas rugby across the globe. This has drawn nice crowds down to watch the various events on the big screen and the other screens around The Club.



There was so much sport that at times we encountered a clash with two big events happening at the same time. This led to the suggestion that we might look at the possibilities of having dual channels on our incoming feed. After some research, however, your committee found that this change would effectively double the cost to The Club and would also require some work to be done with cabling etc meaning more cost. So, for now, it is parked but we will continue to keep an eye on any developments at our supplier.

The sport has included several Grand Prix and The Club has been open on a Sunday where the timings have been appropriate. As I write this, we will be open again this coming Sunday for the next race. These Sunday afternoons are enjoyed by a good group of members and friends with a similar interest in motor sport and others, like me, just keen to learn the ins and outs of what, I have now found out, is quite a game of chess on wheels!

Happy hour continues to be better attended now that it is separated from The Quiz. Happy Hour will continue to be the first Tuesday of the month. In August that will be the 5th. The Quiz was, as usual, well attended this month and a great, quizzical time was enjoyed by all. Once again, the winning margin was a narrow couple of points in fifty or so. The Quiz in August will take place on the 13th.

With all the rain we have had a couple of leaks spring from unexpected places in the roof but as ever our always vigilant volunteer maintenance man Sean Gourley has plugged them with alacrity. The Friday draw continues to expand and has crossed the thousand Rand barrier. Last Friday those at the Club were enthralled by the antics of a young African Harrier Hawk or Gymnogene in one of the trees outside.

Talking of trees, we are working with STADCO to remove some of the obstructions to our fabulous view out over the bay. Come down to The Club and look at our newly expanded fabulous view!

See you at The Club!

Cheers

Euan

Has the club ever had a **Club Song**? Would it be good to have one?

An Australian friend created a song for us using AI. We think it is rather good. What do you think? Click the speaker below.



Editorial

All Blacks vs South Africa (1956)

(Back in the day before a million cameras and TMOs)

(From KeithQuinnRugby)

For the second test in Wellington the All Blacks called in a fresh young Otago forward, Frank McAtamney. He was 22 years of age. Frank had been holding his own around the New Zealand rep scene for a couple of seasons. But on a grey Wellington afternoon Frank and his fellow prop Ian Clarke had massive trouble holding up the Springbok scrum. In a bitter encounter the test was lost by the All Blacks.

Tattler - So, for the next test they picked a boxer called Skinner.

(From RugbyTalk)

Skinner made his presence felt in the first minute when he knocked Koch down with a right hook whose whack on impact could be heard five rows deep.



(From Total Rugby)

(Tattler - The New Zealand "version")

"I told Chris (Koch) don't do that again my friend. But he did. So, I hit (punched) him. And he didn't do it again."

Kevin Skinner occupies a legendary place in New Zealand rugby history for his decisive and uncompromising role in the 1956 Test series against the touring South African Springboks—a series that marked the first time New Zealand would defeat the Springboks in a full series on home soil.

Skinner, a former national boxing champion and experienced prop, had already retired from international rugby but was recalled by the selectors after the All Blacks were physically dominated in the first two Tests of the series. The second Test had seen South Africa apply significant pressure through overt physical intimidation, especially targeting the younger New Zealand forwards.

Recognising the need for both composure and controlled aggression, the All-Blacks' management—headed by coach Jim Parker, manager Tom Morrison, and captain Bob Duff—turned to Skinner. His reputation as a technically sound scrummager and mentally unshakeable competitor made him the ideal figure to confront the Springboks on their own terms.

In the third Test at Lancaster Park in Christchurch, Skinner's impact was immediate and emphatic. Without fanfare or theatrics, he dealt with two of South Africa's most physical forwards—Jaap Bekker and Chris Koch—with what would later be described as "precise and measured force."

Eyewitnesses and later accounts described how Skinner landed a pair of well-timed punches early in the match—one in a scrum and one in open play—delivering a clear message that New Zealand would no longer be bullied. From that point forward, the Springboks' physical intimidation subsided noticeably. Their pack, previously dominant, was neutralised.

New Zealand won the third Test 17–10, shifting the momentum of the series. Skinner retained his place in the side for the fourth Test, which the All Blacks won 11–5, sealing the historic series victory. His contribution went beyond scrummaging prowess—it was psychological. He restored belief and authority to the New Zealand pack and galvanized a nation.

To this day, Kevin Skinner is remembered not merely as a rugby player, but as a man who answered his country's call, stood his ground, and through sheer presence and resolve, turned the tide of one of the most iconic series in All Blacks history.

Just a lad named Riley

Every now and again they arrive. A few locals that spring to mind are Peter Kirsten, Herschelle Gibbs and Schalk Burger. The brother of one of our club members, Lee Barnard also fits the description. I am talking about genuinely talented sportsmen who excel in more than one sport

Along comes this fellow, Riley Norton. In a country rich with sporting talent, it's not every day you come across a young athlete like Norton. At just 20 years old, Riley has already achieved what most can only dream of, excelling at national level in not one, but two of South Africa's biggest sports: rugby and cricket.



Maties (University of Stellenbosch) printed this prior to the rugby U20 world cup - "Riley's mind-blowing CV at the tender age 18 is enough to reduce many an adult champion to feelings of inadequacy ... U19 South African Cricket World Cup, Paul Roos Head Boy, Western Province Cricket AND Rugby. Now he is a first year BCom Investment Management student and a proud newcomer as a lock to the Maties FNB Varsity Cup squad."

He went on to captain the "baby boks" to world cup winners.

In the final RugbyPass gave him a score of 9/10 and said this - "The captain was the workhorse that his side needed in the decider, chewing through tackles at will. His decision-making both in open play and as captain steered his side well. He rewarded the faith shown in him with the captaincy. A game-high of 24 tackles was registered, with the lock well and truly leading from the front in a historic win."

Let's hope that he makes the correct decisions in terms of the choice he must make. It would appear, that it is rugby, but we will wait and see.

Formula 1 - The rumours, assertions, denials and other skinner!

(Tattler thanks Jim Page for this contribution. The headline is ours!)

The Red Bull / Horner issue:

The story has grown legs and changed course at least three times since I started writing this!

We all know that Christian Horner was summarily dismissed from his role as team principal at Red Bull. It apparently came after a heated exchange between Jos Verstappen, Horner and another Red Bull employee.

Rumor and speculation abound, with little clear and definitive explanation around the matter. What is known, is that Horner had raised the possibility of bringing Sebastian Vettel onboard as a consultant. This may have been seen as a threat to Helmut Marko, who is close to the Verstappens.



What for Horner's future? Given his relationship with Toto, it is unlikely that he would go to Alpine and must work with Mercedes as their engine supplier, although Alpine is one of the few teams that he could potentially buy an interest in. Could he go to Aston Martin? Adrian Newey was able to obtain a shareholding in Aston as part of his deal to join the team. Aston will also be switching from Mercedes to Honda next year. However, Aston's new team principal has only been in the role since the beginning of 2025, so is unlikely to be turfed out, to accommodate Horner.

There's been rumblings in the paddock over Fred Vasseur's tenure, so the possibility of Horner moving in that direction would not be a total surprise. However, there would be no possibility of Horner obtaining the part ownership he so desperately wants.

For my money, Ferrari is far more likely than Audi or Cadillac. In the meantime, Horner remains employed by RB and is technically on "gardening leave". The reasoning seems to be that if he remains on the payroll, he could move after only six months – and the payout for breaking his contract could be more favorable for the team.



Fred Vasseur

To further complicate the whole F1 silly season is the possibility of Max leaving Red Bull. His contract has an escape clause that could see him looking for a new drive for 2026. He is currently third, and holds an 18-point advantage over George Russel, and 46 points ahead of Charles LeClerc. To activate the escape clause, Max would have to be lying outside the top four after the Hungarian GP. For this to happen, Max would have to DNF the next two GP's and Charles would have to win both. An unlikely scenario I would think.

I suppose it had to happen.....

Robot Soccer Match

(From **1440 Daily Digest**)

China hosted a world-first soccer match between teams of fully autonomous humanoid robots Saturday. The child-sized robots were powered by artificial intelligence and equipped with visual sensors.

The robots were supplied by Booster Robotics, a company founded in June 2023. The teams, composed of three players each, were distributed to four universities, each of which developed and installed its own algorithms for player formations and passing strategies, among other variables. Tsinghua University's THU Robotics ultimately won the championship title, defeating China Agricultural University's Mountain Sea team 5-3.



The match was a preview of Beijing's upcoming World Humanoid Robot Games in mid-August, featuring over 10 competitions, including gymnastics and track. China's robotics market is projected to reach \$108B by 2028. By 2050, it is expected to have 302.3 million humanoid robots in use, outpacing the US' projected 77.7 million.

A true hero - Shavarsh Karapetyan

Picked this up on FaceBook and other sources

In 1976, Shavarsh Karapetyan, an Armenian Olympic swimmer, had just completed a 12-mile run with his brother when they saw a trolley bus crash into a dam reservoir. The trolley bus sank 80 feet offshore at a depth of 33 feet. Shavarsh immediately dove in and swam to the bus and despite zero visibility, managed to kick in the back window, injuring himself in the process. He proceeded to save twenty people trapped in the bus, one at a time, for hours.

The combined effect of the cold water and his inquiries from breaking the glass window led to his hospitalization for 45 days after the incident, during which time he developed pneumonia, sepsis, and lung damage which ended his athletic career.



For years, his story wasn't known, until an article about the event identified him by name in 1982. In 1985, he happened to pass by a burning building and rushed inside, again saving people trapped inside one at a time until he collapsed. He was again hospitalized with severe burns and lung damage. He's still kicking it at 66. Just an awesome person I learned about today and thought I'd share.



What makes you human

Unlikely as it sounds, the trolleybus rescue was not the first time Shavarsh Karapetyan saved lives. In 1974 the young athlete prevented an accident involving a bus that carried 30 people. The driver had parked the bus to check on some mechanical issue but left the engine running. Suddenly, the bus began rolling down an incline toward a mountain gorge. Karapetyan, who was on the bus, broke down the partition that separated the driver's compartment, grabbed the wheel and steered the vehicle away from the abyss.

Neither was the trolleybus rescue Shavarsh's last. In 1985 he happened to be near Yerevan's Sports and Concert Arena when a fire broke out in the building. Shavarsh was one of the first people rushing to help the firefighters, getting burned and injured in the process. "Anyone can find himself in a place where somebody needs help, and more than once, too," he said. "The main thing is to remember what makes you human."

Tattler discovered this little gem (or large rock?) on 15 July

Mars Rock Breaks Record

The largest piece of Mars on Earth sold for nearly \$5.3M at Sotheby's yesterday—the most valuable meteorite ever auctioned. See photo of the 54-pound rock.



The segment was discovered in November 2023 by a meteorite hunter in Niger's Agadez region of the Sahara Desert. The rock has a distinct Martian reddish hue and is partially composed of glass (21.2% by volume), believed to have been forged from the heat and pressure applied to Mars' surface when an asteroid struck it, propelling the chunk 140 million miles through space. It has the scientific name NWA 16788, referencing its discovery in Northwest Africa, and was validated as a Martian rock in the leading journal for meteoritic science earlier this year.

Martian meteorites are rare, composing roughly 400 of the more than 77,000 officially recognized meteorites. Most meteors burn up as they enter Earth's atmosphere, with remnants largely landing in the ocean.

Who pulled the plug?

This is the Ladybower reservoir spillway in action. The Ladybower Reservoir is a large Y-shaped, artificial reservoir, the lowest of three in the Upper Derwent Valley in Derbyshire, England.

The River Ashop flows into the reservoir from the west; the River Derwent flows south, initially through Howden Reservoir, then Derwent Reservoir, and finally through Ladybower Reservoir.

The area is now a tourist attraction, with the Fairholmes visitors' centre located at the northern tip of Ladybower. The east arm of the reservoir, fed by the Ladybower Brook, is overlooked by Hordron Edge stone circle. The dam's design is unusual in having two totally enclosed bellmouth spillway overflows (locally named the "plugholes") at the side of the wall. These are stone and of 78 ft (24 m) diameter with a drop of 66 ft (20 m). The plugholes regulate water levels in the reservoir by draining away excess water when they overflow.

This video shows what it looks like in detail and when the water level is lower. Click on the image to watch.

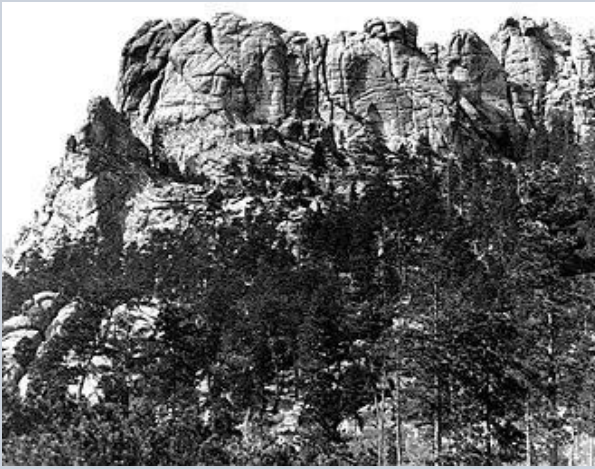


Mount Rushmore

(Source: Wikiwand and Wikipedia)

It was 100 years ago, on August 14, 1925, when Gutzon Borglum climbed Black Elk Peak and reportedly said upon seeing Mount Rushmore, "America will march along that skyline". In 1923, the Secretary of the South Dakota State Historical Society, Doane Robinson, who would come to be known as the "Father of Mount Rushmore", learned about the "Shrine to the Confederacy", a project to carve the likenesses of Confederate generals into the side of Stone Mountain, Georgia, that had been underway since 1915. Seeking to boost tourism to South Dakota, Robinson began promoting the idea of a similar monument in the Black Hills.

Borglum decided to depict four American presidents: George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Abraham Lincoln, and Theodore Roosevelt. The four presidential faces were said to be carved into the granite with the intention of symbolizing "an accomplishment born, planned, and created in the minds and by the hands of Americans for Americans".



Mount Rushmore (Six Grandfathers) before construction

Between October 4, 1927, and October 31, 1941, Gutzon Borglum and 400 workers sculpted the colossal 60-foot-high (18 m) carvings of the United States Presidents to represent the first 150 years of American history. In total, about 450,000 short tons (410,000 t) of rock were blasted off the mountainside.

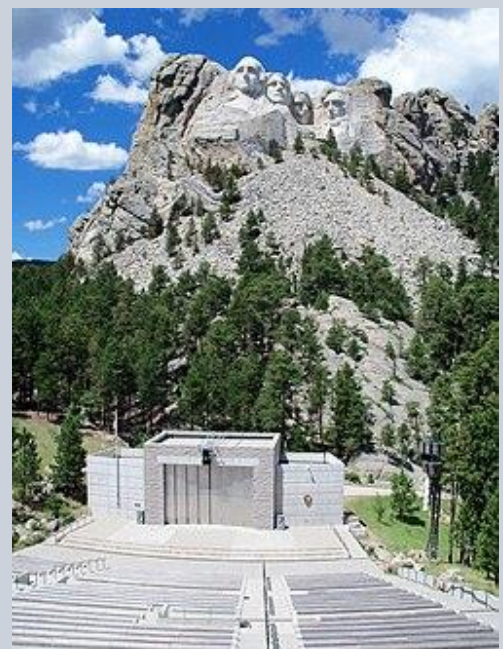
The image of Thomas Jefferson was originally intended to appear in the area at Washington's right, but after the work there was begun, the rock was found to be unsuitable, so the work on Jefferson's figure was dynamited, and a new figure was sculpted to Washington's left.



The chief carver of the mountain was Luigi Del Bianco, an artisan and stonemason who emigrated to the U.S. from Friuli in Italy and was chosen to work on this project because of his understanding of sculptural language and ability to imbue emotion in the carved portraits.

The 1,278-acre (517-hectare) site of Mount Rushmore National Memorial extends northward from the sculptures to include the entirety of Mount Rushmore and half of Old Baldy Mountain, and southward to Grizzly Bear Creek. Mount Rushmore National Memorial is centered on the monumental sculptures, which are faced by a building and terrace complex that is designed to optimize viewing of the sculptures.

A broad walkway known as Avenue of Flags is situated between the main parking lot, the park shops, and the Grand View Terrace. The Grand View Terrace (added in 1998, along with the amphitheatre), is designed to offer a prime vantage point for the sculptures.



Montgomery Reef - A true wonder!

(Source: Wikipedia & Other)



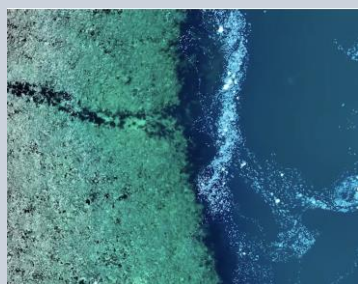
Montgomery Reef has an unusual wide tidal range, up to 10 metres (33 ft). When the tide is out, vast lagoons, sandstone islets, and a central mangrove island are revealed.

The outward movement of the tide forms a torrent of water, creating a river cutting through the reef and hundreds of cascading waterfalls. At low tide, more than 4 metres (13 ft) of reef can be exposed.



While the tide is going out, the waterfalls attract migratory wading birds, feeding turtles, manta rays, black tipped reef sharks, and dugongs.

To watch this short video, click on the image below:



A new Concorde?

(From Mechanics Mix)

After more than two decades of inactivity, the legendary Concorde is preparing to return to the skies by 2026, but this time with a bolder and more efficient new design. The new model, being developed by Fly-Concorde Limited, will not just be an updated version; it will represent a paradigm shift in the world of high-speed aviation. It will feature a lightweight airframe made from advanced composite materials and engines powered by sustainable aviation fuel (SAF), capable of propelling the aircraft to speeds exceeding Mach 2—more than twice the speed of sound.



The new Concorde will fly at an altitude of 60,000 feet, exceeding the limits of conventional commercial aircraft, allowing it to fly above turbulent weather and significantly reducing air resistance. The nose and wings have also been shaped to improve aerodynamics and reduce the sound signature over land, especially after the US ban on supersonic flights, which was lifted in 1973, was lifted.

Impressively, the flight time between London and New York will be reduced to just over two hours, redefining the concept of distance and time. While companies like Boom and Hermaeus race in the race for speed and sustainable technologies, Concorde, with its iconic design and engineering, is making a comeback. Are we on the cusp of a new era of aviation?

Tattler came across this gem

(It is NOT MEANT to give club members any unsavoury ideas!)

(Courtesy - BIG THINK BOOKS — June 27, 2025)

Murder, she measured: The impressive science behind Agatha Christie's poisons.



A collection of Agatha Christie novels. (Credit: Kenny Louis / Wikimedia Commons)

Kathryn Harkup, chemist and author of *V Is for Venom*, joins Big Think to discuss why Christie isn't just a brilliant writer but a unique science communicator.

Dame Agatha Christie stacked up quite the body count during her long and esteemed career. The “Duchess of Death” wrote 66 detective novels, 14 short story collections, and 20 plays. Across those tales, her many victims were shot, bludgeoned, stabbed, electrocuted, strangled, run over, drowned, axed, and pushed off all manner of precipitous edges — from stairs to cliff sides — to let gravity sort out the messier details.

Christie has probably envisioned more creative ways to murder someone than Hannibal Lecter, Dexter Morgan, and Freddy Krueger combined, and readers have enjoyed solving her puzzle-box stories for a century — making her one of, if not THE bestselling author of all time.

I'm one such reader. I've adored Christie's stories since I picked up a well-worn Pocket Books edition of *MURDER ON THE ORIENT EXPRESS* in a used bookstore my freshman year. The book is considerably older than I am yet retains a treasured perch on my bookshelf — that subtle fragrance of vanilla, aged books acquire, growing stronger with each reread. Value for money, it is easily the best \$2 I've ever spent, and it kindled an enduring fondness for Christie's characters.

But it wasn't until I spoke with Kathryn Harkup, a chemist turned science writer, that I began to appreciate a side of Christie that I hadn't noticed before.

“She's a brilliant science communicator. She puts across all the science you need to know in her stories to be able to figure it out,” Harkup tells me during our conversation. “You (probably) won't because she's very good at disguising who'd done it. But all the science is there, and you never feel that you're sitting through a chemistry lesson.”

Specifically, she is referring to when Christie plays the literary poisoner, a role that has delivered some of the author's most beguiling and devious mysteries.

Harkup has dedicated two books to Christie's poisons, the bestselling *A IS FOR ARSENIC* (2017) and its sequel, *V IS FOR VENOM* (2025). In each, she explores a dozen of the author's chemical killers: their composition and toxicology, their history and traditional uses, how Christie employs them, and how their antidotes work (if they have one). She even dives into some disturbing real-life cases.

The books are part history, part scientific explainer, and part literary criticism that aren't only fun, informative reads. They also heighten your admiration of Christie as a writer.

Christie's goal was always to keep the readers guessing by delivering the deadly blow in an unexpected yet ultimately credible manner. When it came to her poisonous plots, she never drew attention to the science so as not to distract from the mystery. But in doing so, Harkup reveals, she leaves all the clues necessary for readers to begin learning about these noxious chemicals.

Death by chocolate (but mostly poison)

When most people think of science communication in stories, their minds turn to science fiction. Makes sense — it's right there in the name. This reputation is further cemented by the fact that many of the genre's most respected writers either worked as scientists or held positions in scientific organizations. Think Isaac Asimov, Arthur C. Clarke, and Gregory Benford.

Like those authors, Christie brings a scientific background to bear in her stories, too. During the First World War, before becoming a writer, she worked as a pharmacist's assistant at her local hospital. Before securing the job, she had to pass the exams and undergo strenuous training to handle the many chemicals stocked on the pharmacy's shelves.

As Harkup points out, back in Christie's day drugs didn't come ready in pre-packaged pills. Pharmacists and their assistants were more like chemical cooks than dispensers. They measured, weighed, mixed, and

packaged all manner of medical tinctures and creams in-house. They even added flavours and colourings to make bitter or unappealing concoctions palatable.

Medicinal mishaps could prove deadly, and further complicating matters, prescriptions weren't yet standardized. Doctors had their preferences for treatment and dosage, and pharmacists had to be careful. A mistake could deliver an unhealthy dose or combine drugs that react poorly together. In *V IS FOR VENOM*, Harkup even shares a story where Christie saved a patient from a dangerous situation by noticing a mistake in the pharmacist's calculations.

"Christie understood the difference between the therapeutic and lethal dose as well as appreciating the dangers of not doing her job properly," Harkup writes. She also notes how the job introduced Christie to the many "quirks and little stories" surrounding these chemicals, showing her how people used them or how they might realistically find their way into someone's home. This experience and knowledge proved a boon to a future writer of detective stories.

Consider her short story "The Chocolate Box" (1923). Its victim, one Monsieur Paul Déroutard, dies from sudden heart failure. Those present note how his face flushed bright red before he collapsed to the floor. The cause was an overdose of nitro-glycerine secreted into his favourite chocolates.

That may seem an odd, almost arbitrary choice. Nitro-glycerine is famously the explosive ingredient in dynamite. Deadly, sure. But eating the stuff unawares? Hardly plausible, right?

It turns out that a small dose of nitro-glycerine is also a reliable treatment for anginal chest pain because it dilates and relaxes blood vessels. A surplus, however, can drop a person's blood pressure to fatal levels. Even so, it is generally considered safe and is still administered today in patches, sprays, and extended-release capsules. Early-20th-century pharmacology took a different route, though: chocolate.

The nitrate's naturally sweet taste meant it paired well with cocoa. In fact, it is "the only medicine to have been officially prepared in chocolate tablets," Harkup writes, and a book Christie likely studied for her exams, *THE ART OF DISPENSING*, contains several recipes for nitro-glycerine tablets. Thanks to this confectionary camouflage, the poor Déroutard never tasted the deadly additive.

In the story, this information — from the symptoms to the drug's preparation to how they came to be in the house — is true to life. However, it isn't presented as a lesson by some all-knowing character. It is revealed naturally as clues Poirot gathers by speaking with characters and making observations. The result feels far more engaging and dynamic than the vicarious lectures so many other stories, detective and science fiction, lean on.

Christie even one-ups her true-crime counterparts with this one. As Harkup points out, plenty of attempted assassinations have gone the death-by-poisoned-sweets route. In one famous case, someone tried to lace a walnut whip with strychnine (read: rat poison). The intended victim never ingested a lethal dose though. The reason: The foul taste led them to put down the chocolate.

"It was surprising where [Christie] found her inspiration," Harkup says. "She was certainly a reader of true crime and fictional crime, but her pharmaceutical knowledge meant she could go to places where even criminals hadn't thought of going."

Murder is queasy

Another reason Christie's poisons communicate their science so well isn't just the nature of the tools. It's also the nature of the crimes. As Harkup and I discuss, poison isn't a heat-of-the-moment weapon. You don't slip arsenic into someone's tea because they cut in front of you at the bank.

"You really have to think about it," she says. "You must acquire the stuff. You must figure out where you're going to put it. Then you must sort out your alibi and make sure the person doesn't survive because some poisons are quite survivable."

Such premeditation must be built into the story and revealed slowly through the detective's investigation. This not only makes the clues satisfying to piece together but also allows Christie to make her poisons "characters themselves within the story" — complete with backgrounds and a kind of personality.

"The way the poisons will behave, you can sort of make predictions about it, and you can tell the characteristics of who might use them," Harkup says.

A great example comes from the novel *MURDER IS EASY* (1939). One of its many victims — the title is apt — is killed using oxalic acid. Oxalic acid isn't uncommon for a poison. In fact, you probably have some in your home right now.

A low-grade corrosive, it's found in cleaners and stain removers. It also occurs naturally in many foods. For instance, rhubarb stems are perfectly safe to eat if cooked, but the leaves should be tossed out because they store a potentially unsafe concentration of the stuff. Oxalic acid is so common that the trick isn't acquiring the stuff; it's finding a way to administer the poison that makes for a surprising yet satisfying mystery. And Christie doesn't disappoint.

In *MURDER IS EASY*, the killer swaps a bottle of cough syrup for hat paint, the latter of which contains a potent amount of oxalic acid. Back in the day, hat paint was used to change one's on-the-town look without the expense of a new hat; however, it fell out of fashion decades before the story takes place. It's also a poor choice of poison because it is easily treated. Had the killer not delayed medical aid by haphazardly jamming the door with a pair of pincers, the victim may well have survived.

Using the poison's history and its characteristics, Christie subtly presents several important clues to who the killer is: their age, gender, social status, and even some elements of their personality. Slot those clues in with the others sprinkled throughout the story, and a "sleuthy" reader should know who the killer is well before the reveal.

Pick your poison

I asked Harkup what her favourite Christie poison is, and she chose Christie's use of hemlock in *FIVE LITTLE PIGS** (1942).

"It is brilliantly woven into the plot to the point where you need to read it twice to appreciate how good it is," Harkup says. "When you go back, you're like, 'Oh God, yeah. I should have spotted that. That was damn obvious if I had paid attention to that bit.' Her creativity is astonishing in that respect."

She adds that Christie's use of thallium poisoning in *THE PALE HORSE* (1961) is so accurate that the book is credited with saving two lives thanks to readers recognizing the symptoms from its description.

Of course, I had to know if Christie made any serious blunders or stretched the truth to the breaking point, and Harkup admits that Christie will sometimes push plausibility. For instance, she often must concoct situations where medical aid is delayed, like in *MURDER IS EASY*. Otherwise, many of her stories would be shelved under *ATTEMPTED MURDER MYSTERIES*. She'll also sometimes lower the deadly dose to something more manageable, like in "The Chocolate Box," or speed up poisonings so readers don't have to read about "hours of vomiting and diarrhoea and convulsions" (which I appreciate).

Even so, Harkup adds, Christie doesn't fall back on the expedience of lazy poisoning clichés like many modern crime dramas — where someone takes one sip of wine, coughs twice, and falls stone dead. Nor does she fabricate phony poisons like Arthur Conan Doyle did for Sherlock Holmes or Shakespeare in *HAMLET*.

Not that that's a problem. "It only matters for a writer to be accurate within the world they have constructed. It's an invented world, so they can do whatever they want if it obeys the rules of that world." Even so, Harkup adds, "As a chemist, I appreciate it when people like Christie go to so much trouble to get things right."

Death comes as the end

As mentioned, Harkup also chronicles several true crimes featuring Christie's poisons. "I was unfortunately blessed with an abundance of examples of the worst of humanity," she says.

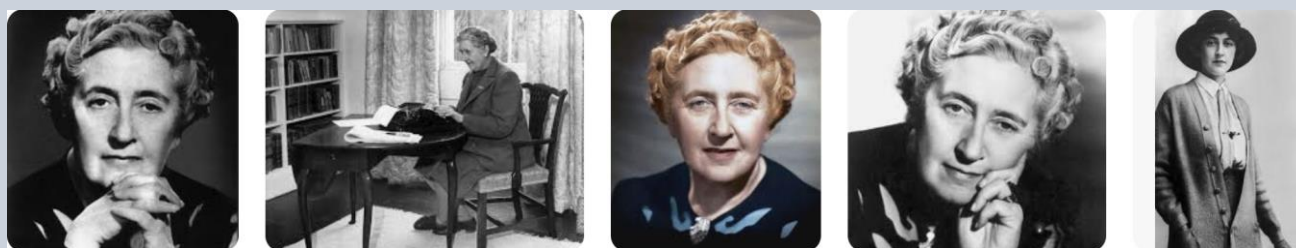
For instance, in 1901 a young woman was found dead with nitro-glycerine residue in her stomach. Her suitor was brought to trial, where he was found to have provided the nitro-glycerine under the false belief it was an abortifacient. However, the exact cause of death remains a mystery since the amount of nitro-glycerine likely wasn't enough to kill her. Alcohol, other substances, and perhaps even the morphine the doctors administered while treating her convulsions may have contributed.

Another incident Harkup recounts involves oxalic acid killing two people in 2015. The poison was found in Hokkaido tea, and given the amount, officials strongly suspected it was added deliberately. However, without concrete evidence or a strong motive pointing to a suspect, no one has been charged. The case remains unsolved.

"The poisons have changed. The way they're administered has changed, but it still happens," Harkup says.

What I found interesting about these true crimes wasn't just the history but how they left me feeling. After reading them, a cold discomfort settled over my afternoon like a fog. That's understandable given what these tales reveal about people, their inhibitions, and the random cruelty that can bring life to a sudden, unfair end. But why do I find Christie's stories so appealing then? Why, despite the murder, greed, and the worst of humanity on display, do these stories feel so warmly comfortable?

"It's that extra layer of nastiness that fascinates us," Harkup says. "[Stories are] a safe way of finding out about something that is so unknowable since most of us — I would hope — will never kill another human. It's a safe trip into the darkest bits of the human psyche."



Most Expensive Painting ever sold

Tattler finds it interesting that the artist who painted the most expensive painting ever sold is not known for sure!

(From wikipedia) - The record payment for a work is approximately US\$450.3 million for the work Salvator Mundi (c. 1500) generally considered to be by Leonardo da Vinci, though this is disputed. The painting was sold in November 2017, through the auction house Christie's in New York City.



But it is important to recognise that the most famous paintings, especially old master works created before 1803, are generally owned or held by museums for viewing by patrons. Since museums rarely sell them, they are considered priceless. Guinness World Records lists Leonardo da Vinci's Mona Lisa as having the highest insurance value for a painting. On permanent display at the Louvre in Paris, the Mona Lisa was assessed at US\$100 million on 14 December 1962. Taking inflation into account, the 1962 value would be around US\$1.039 billion in 2024.

Club Managers Report

100 Club Winners July 2025

Lt E. Noble (Ret) – R300

Mr A. Bullock – R300

Mr S.B. Gourley – R300

Capt W.H. Rice (Ret) – R1000

Birthdays August 2025

We wish the following members a very Happy August Birthday. May the year ahead be filled with good health and happiness. For our usual bit of fun, we note a few historic events across the world.

Capt P.R. Le Roux (Ret) – 03 August.

Cdr P.R.C. O'Hanlon (Ret) – 03 August.

1492 – Christopher Columbus set sail from Spain on his first voyage to the Americas.

1958 – The USS Nautilus became the first submarine to cross under the North Pole, a Cold War milestone.

Mr S.F. Haselum – 08 August.

1928 – Penicillin's origin story begins. Alexander Fleming returned from holiday to find Mold had contaminated one of his petri dishes. Instead of tossing it, he noticed the Mold killed surrounding bacteria. That Mold was Penicillium notatum, and the discovery led to the first antibiotic.

Lt H. Burger – 09 August.

1483 – The Sistine Chapel opened in Rome. Michelangelo's ceiling would come later, but the grandeur began here.

S Lt E. Schnalkenberg – 12 August.

30 BC – Cleopatra, the last Pharaoh of Egypt, died—allegedly by asp bite.

Capt K.E. Packer (Ret) – 13 August.

Mrs P. Standley – 13 August.

1961 – Construction of the Berlin Wall began, dividing East and West Berlin for nearly three decades.

Lt Cdr K. Farrell – 22 August.

1896 – Radioactivity revealed itself. Henri Becquerel, frustrated by cloudy weather, stored uranium salts in a drawer with photographic plates. Days later, he found the plates had developed images—proof that uranium emitted radiation without sunlight.

Mrs N. Green – 25 August.

1768 – Captain James Cook set sail on his first voyage aboard the HMS Endeavour, bound for the Pacific.

Mr E.W. Sedwick – 26 August.

1609 – Galileo demonstrated his telescope to Venetian lawmakers, changing astronomy forever.

Mr J. Winter – 27 August.

27 August 1979 – Lord Mountbatten was assassinated by the IRA while lobster fishing in Ireland.

Mr M.E. Bagley – 28 August.

Mr J.H. Smit – 28 August.

1845 – The first issue of Scientific American was published, launching one of the longest-running science magazines.

1963 – Martin Luther King Jr. delivered his iconic “I Have a Dream” speech during the March on Washington.

Mr R.C. Mc Gowan – 30 August.

1945 – Hong Kong was liberated from Japanese occupation, ending nearly four years of brutal control.

New Club Members.

We welcome the following new club members and wish them a fun and joyful association.

Lt Cdr Ewald Engelbrecht (Ret) and his wife Sonja who reside in Ibsis Way Sunnydale. Ewald, who previously served in the SA Navy Hydrographic Unit as well as the Operational Sea Training Section is retired from the SAN and is currently Self Employed.

Aye,
Glen

Seven Seas Club Monthly Quiz

The Club's July Quiz was held on the 9th. We had a good turnout (rather than a great turnout!)

Five of the seven categories were structured around humour. For example, the 3 questions below caused much mirth:

What unusual job does a “knocker-upper” do? (Makes women pregnant, wakes people up, plays drums in parade, fixes door knockers?)

What happens if you tickle a penguin? (It faints, it sneezes, it laughs, it goes to sleep?)

Why do wombat droppings have a cube shape? (To attract mates, to stack them, to build a home, to stop them rolling away?)

(Answers - wakes people up, it laughs, to stop them rolling away)

As has been the case at most of our quizzes, the winners snuck in just a point or 2 ahead of the next two teams.

Here they are - They called themselves the "Lucky Losers"!



This was also a set of questions - test yourself, your partner, your family.

Category - Songs that made us laugh

- 1) Who sang "The Ballad of the Southern Suburbs" (Ag pleeez daddy!)?
- 2) Featured in the movie, "Life of Brian" , which "group" produced "Always look on the bright side of life"?
- 3) Allen Sherman's "Hello muddah, hello faddah" was about a son in which camp?
- 4) Complete the title of this Louis Prima song "Yes, We Have No"
- 5) "Right Said Fred" made a song with a title involving an item of clothing. Give the full title
- 6) Who performed the worldwide hit "Mambo No. 5"
- 7) As famous for its text as for its music, this darkly comic bass aria from "Don Giovanni" is sung by the servant Leporello to Giovanni's jilted lover Elvira. Who composed it?
- 8) 'I am the very Model of a Modern Major General' by Gilbert and Sullivan is from which opera?
- 9) The ridiculous song often played at weddings and similar - Guys, guys! Come here! I've got a dance I wanna show ya! Oh, I know this! It's the dance, where you clap your hands and flap your arms! What is it known as?
- 10) It's not enough to credit Chuck Berry with the creation of rock and roll. For as long as there has been rock, there have been novelty songs. And as long as there have been novelty songs, there have been songs about genitalia. What was his "big one"?

And it wasn't all fun and games - some serious concentration!



The August quiz will be on the 13th at 19h00 sharp!
All are welcome!

Maritime, Naval and Military

Submarine powered by hydrogen

Source: Australian Naval Institute 06/07



S-80 Plus-class Isaac Peral (S-81)

The oceans are central to global geopolitics—and Spain has made its move. The Navy has deployed the S80 Plus submarine, the only one on the planet that operates without diesel, conventional batteries, or nuclear power, BytesEU reports. It's a blend of cutting-edge naval engineering, chemical science, and biofuels: a fuel cell powered by hydrogen, generated on board from plant-based bioethanol. Developed by Navantia, the S-80 Plus integrates a unique technology known as AIP-BEST (Bio-Ethanol Stealth Technology), which allows the submarine to stay submerged for up to 28 days without surfacing. 4 This air-independent propulsion system (AIP) gives it the stealth and endurance of a nuclear submarine— but without the associated costs or risks.

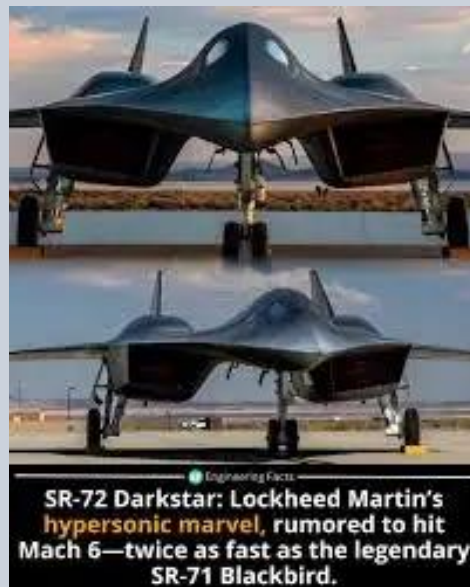
Unlike other AIP systems—like the German ones that store highly toxic hydrogen or ethanol, as reported by Motorpasion—the S-80 safely generates its own hydrogen on board through catalytic reforming of renewable, plant-based bioethanol. This not only reduces the sub's thermal and acoustic signature but also avoids the danger of storing compressed hydrogen in a confined, hostile environment like a submarine. This breakthrough has its scientific origins in Argentina. In 1991, Miguel Laborde, a researcher with CONICET and professor at the University of Buenos Aires, developed a method to produce hydrogen from ethanol. In 2005, Spanish company Abengoa acquired this method through an agreement with CONICET, aiming to integrate it into fuel cells. As a result, Spain has created a virtually invisible submarine.

The exhaust gases produced during propulsion—mainly carbon dioxide and water vapor—dissolve in seawater as carbonated water, significantly reducing the vessel's thermal and acoustic trail. At over 80 meters long and based on the Scorpène-class project—originally co-developed by Navantia and France's DCNS—the S-80 Plus is now a fully home-grown product with a national patent. After the two shipyards went separate ways in 2009, Spain pursued its independent development, one closely tied to the submarine domain. Source:

The SR-72 Darkstar is the future of American Air Power

Source: Brandon J Weichert May 29, 2025

NEVER MIND TOP GUN - THE FUTURE IS HERE



AT MACH 6, THE SR-72 CAN CUT ACROSS RADAR FIELDS OF VIEW SO QUICKLY THAT ESTABLISHING A CONTINUOUS TRACK BECOMES NEARLY IMPOSSIBLE.

Back in the heady days of the Cold War, the SR-71's Mach 3.3 speed made it virtually impervious to the then-cutting edge air defences of the Eastern Bloc. Today, the SR-72 takes that advantage further, leveraging a turbine-based combined cycle (TBCC) engine that integrates traditional jet propulsion for take-off with a scramjet for hypersonic flight.



This propulsion system enables the SR-72 to operate across a wide range of speeds and altitudes, making it difficult for even the most advanced Russian or Chinese air defence network to reliably track and intercept.



Plus, the SR-72's advanced materials, such as carbon-carbon composites, address the thermal challenges of hypersonic flight, allowing it to withstand the extreme heat at altitudes above 80,000 feet. These technological advancements ensure the SR-72 can operate in environments where conventional aircraft or even missiles struggle.

Navy News – The Ursula and Black Widow

Source: *Forbes Aerospace & Defence* 18/07

Miniature Aircraft Carrier Fits in a Bathtub but Packs an FPV

Ursula is the latest addition to Ukraine's drone boat fleet. At just one meter (about three feet) long, it may look more like a toy than a serious piece of military hardware, but this robot vessel may be the world's smallest aircraft carrier, transporting an FPV drone for reconnaissance or attack missions.

Ukraine has previously carried out successful attacks on Russian forces in coastal areas with FPVs launched from larger drone boats. Ursula, smaller and able to travel further up rivers and through swampy areas, could hit the Russians in a lot of new places.



Photo: Association of Ukrainian Engineers

Ursula was revealed in a video released by the Association of Ukrainian Engineers, a group set up to share ideas, publicize members' work and attract investors.

The drone boat was developed by ToviTechNet, a previously unknown company.

A multi-role vessel, Ursula can be fitted with sensors to carry out river patrols or be armed with small explosive charge for suicide attacks on enemy boats. It can transport a drone.

Similar drone boats or Uncrewed Surface Vessels (USVs) are in operation and flying drones from USVs is already standard practice.

The **Black Widow** miniature drone boat is already in service with the Ukrainian military

Photo: Ukraine MoD

Ukrainian military news source Militarnyi, noted in January 2025 that the armed forces were receiving Black Widow 2 USVs.

Little more than a meter long, the Black Widow 2 is capable of speeds of up to 25 mph. It has a raised camera on a gimbal for reconnaissance. The battery is sufficient for several hours of operation, but with the engines turned off it can wait in lurking mode for several days. Black Widow 2 can carry a 3-kilo explosive charge, enough to destroy a small boat or damage a larger vessel.



The SS Warrimoo

Tattler has featured this previously, but we think it worth repeating!
(From **Neil deGrasse Tyson** Group)

It's truly mind-blowing! On 31 December 1899, the passenger steamer SS Warrimoo was sailing quietly across the mid-Pacific, on its way from Vancouver to Australia.

The navigator finished checking the stars for the ship's position and gave the result to Captain John D. S. Phillips:

Latitude: $0^{\circ} 31' N$ (just north of the Equator)

Longitude: $179^{\circ} 30' W$ (near the International Date Line).

First Mate Payton realized something exciting:

"Captain, we're just a few miles from the point where the Equator and the International Date Line meet!"

The captain saw a chance to do something unforgettable.

He slightly changed the ship's course and adjusted the speed.

The night was calm, the sky was clear, and the timing was perfect.

At exactly midnight, the SS Warrimoo was positioned so that:

- The front of the ship (bow) was in the Southern Hemisphere, enjoying summer.
- The back of the ship (stern) was in the Northern Hemisphere, in the middle of winter.
- The date at the back was still 31 December 1899.
- The date at the front had already become 1 January 1900.

This meant the ship was in:

- ✓ Two different days
- ✓ Two different months
- ✓ Two different years
- ✓ Two different seasons
- ✓ Two different centuries — all at the same time!



This month in History - August 1975

(50 years ago)

General

5 Aug - U.S. President Ford signed into law a U.S. Senate resolution posthumously restoring the American citizenship of Confederate Army General Robert E. Lee, restoring his American citizenship. Lee had died in 1870 but had signed an oath of allegiance in 1865 as part of being granted amnesty.

5 Aug - South African troops drove ten miles into Angola, resulting in a decision by Cuba to increase its presence in the African nation.

9 Aug - Mark Donohue set the world record for speed on a closed racecourse, averaging 221.120 miles per hour while driving a Porsche 917.30 at the Talladega Motor Speedway. The record would stand for 11 years, but Donohue would be killed in a racing accident ten days later.

11 Aug - British Leyland Motor Corporation, the United Kingdom's largest auto manufacturer, came under 78 percent control of the British government.

15 Aug - The Birmingham Six – Hugh Callaghan, Paddy Joe Hill, Gerry Hunter, Richard McIlkenny, Billy Power and Johnny Walker- were sentenced to life imprisonment in Great Britain, after being wrongfully convicted of the murder of 21 people in the bombings of the Mulberry Bush pub and the Talk of the Town Pub in Birmingham on November 21, 1974. After a 16-year campaign that would show that the police coerced their confessions and mishandled evidence, their convictions would be overturned in 1991.

20 Aug - NASA launched the Viking 1 planetary probe toward Mars. Liftoff took place from Cape Canaveral. After a journey of ten months and 505 million miles, Viking would enter orbit around Mars on June 19, 1976, and the lander would reach the surface of Mars on July 20, sending back pictures and data until November 13, 1982.

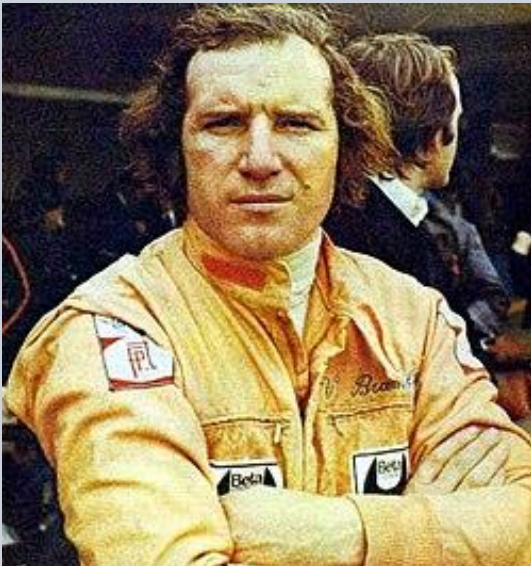


Sport

3 Aug - Motor Racing - The German Grand Prix - It was won by Argentinian driver Carlos Reutemann driving a Brabham BT44B his first win of the season. Reutemann won by 1 minute and 37 seconds over the Williams FW04 of French driver Jacques Laffite. It was a stunning result for Laffite, his first point scoring finish in Formula One. It was also the peak result for Frank Williams Racing Cars, the first Formula One team run by British team principal, Frank Williams. While it was the team's third podium result, it was the first and only podium they would achieve in one of their own cars, having previously achieved second places at the 1969 Monaco Grand Prix and the 1969 United States Grand Prix with a customer Brabham. 46 seconds further back in third position was world championship points leader, Niki Lauda driving a Ferrari 312T.

10 Aug - PGA Championship Men's Golf, Firestone CC: Jack Nicklaus wins his 4th PGA crown by 2 shots from Australian Bruce Crampton.

17 Aug - Motor Racing - Austrian Grand Prix - Mastering the wet weather, the race was won by Italian driver Vittorio Brambilla driving a March 751. It was Brambilla's only Formula One win in his seven-year Grand Prix career. He took a 27-second win over British driver James Hunt in his Hesketh 308. Eight seconds further back was the Shadow DN5 of British driver Tom Pryce in the first of just two podiums in his abbreviated career.



Italian Vittorio Brambilla, winner in a March-Ford

28 Aug - 3 Sep - Cricket - England and Australia draw. McCosker and Ian Chappell score hundreds, England need to follow on, but Bob Woolmer gets a big century and Edrich a 96 to prevent an Aussie win. (Lilley got 6, Thompson 5 wickets). This was the 3rd draw in a series won by Australia 1 – 0.

Music



Movies



Dog Day Afternoon (1975) is one of those rare films where the tension is electric, the humour is darkly human, and Al Pacino delivers a performance so raw it feels like he's bleeding emotion onto the screen. Directed by Sidney Lumet and based on a real-life bank robbery, the film follows Sonny Wortzik (Pacino), a desperate man who attempts to rob a Brooklyn bank to fund his partner's gender-affirming surgery. What begins as a botched heist spirals into a media circus, a hostage crisis, and a deeply personal unravelling.

Pacino's portrayal of Sonny is a masterclass in emotional range. He's manic, tender, volatile, and heartbreakingly sincere. One moment he's rallying the crowd with his improvised "Attica!" chant—channeling the rage of the recent prison riots—and the next, he's quietly dictating his will to a bank teller, leaving money to his estranged wife and his lover Leon. His phone call with Leon (played by Chris Sarandon) is devastating; Sonny's vulnerability cracks through his bravado, revealing a man cornered by love, shame, and circumstance.

What makes Pacino's performance so unforgettable is its authenticity. He reportedly stayed in character off-camera, using method acting to inhabit Sonny's psyche. His voice, physicality, and erratic energy all serve the character's internal chaos. And yet, he never loses the audience's empathy. Sonny is flawed, but Pacino makes him achingly human.

Lumet's direction amplifies this realism. The film feels almost like a documentary, with natural lighting, handheld camerawork, and a script that allows for improvisation. Pacino's famous "Attica!" moment? Completely unscripted. It's this spontaneity that gives the film its pulse.

If you're drawn to character-driven storytelling with social undercurrents, Dog Day Afternoon is a goldmine. And Pacino? He's not just acting—he's detonating!!!

So, this got me wondering what is the "Attica " or your "Attica"?

Ah, yes—Attica! That electrifying moment in Dog Day Afternoon when Al Pacino's character, Sonny Wortzik, steps outside the bank and starts shouting "Attica! Attica!" to the crowd. It's not just a random outburst—it's a loaded reference to the 1971 Attica Prison uprising in New York, where inmates protested brutal conditions and the state's violent response left dozens of people dead.

Sonny invokes "Attica" as a rallying cry, a symbol of state oppression and injustice. He's trying to turn the crowd against the police, painting himself as a rebel standing up to the system. It's a moment of theatrical defiance, and Pacino improvised it on set, drawing from real-life tensions to give Sonny's desperation a political edge.

The brilliance of that scene is how it blurs the line between performance and protest. Sonny's not just robbing a bank—he's staging a spectacle, tapping into the anger and disillusionment of the era. And the crowd responds, not with fear, but with cheers. It's chaotic, poignant, and oddly triumphant.

Today, while the word still holds historical weight, it's less likely to be used as a spontaneous rallying cry. Not quite in the same way. The cry of "Attica!" in *Dog Day Afternoon* was deeply tied to the political climate of the 1970s—raw, immediate, and symbolic of state violence after the Attica Prison uprising. It resonated because it tapped into a collective memory of injustice and rebellion.

Al Pacino's life

His life reads like a gritty New York drama with flashes of Shakespearean grandeur. Born Alfredo James Pacino on April 25, 1940, in East Harlem, he was the only child of Sicilian-American parents. After his parents divorced when he was two, he was raised by his mother and grandparents in the South Bronx—his maternal grandparents had emigrated from Corleone, Sicily, which adds a poetic twist to his later role as Michael Corleone in *The Godfather*.²



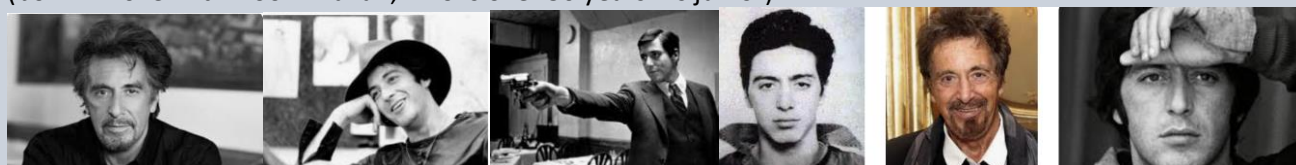
He was nicknamed "Sonny" as a teen and dreamed of becoming a baseball player before discovering acting. He dropped out of high school at 17 and worked odd jobs—janitor, busboy, messenger—to support himself while studying at the Herbert Berghof Studio, and later at the Actors Studio under Lee Strasberg, where he embraced Method acting.

His early successes came on stage: he won a Tony Award for *Does a Tiger Wear a Necktie?* in 1969, and his film breakthrough followed with *The Panic in Needle Park* (1971). Then came *The Godfather* (1972), which catapulted him to stardom. He followed it with *Serpico*, *Dog Day Afternoon*, and *Scarface*, each cementing his reputation for intense, layered performances.



He started smoking and drinking at age nine, was homeless for a time in the 1960s, and once tried stand-up comedy. He's a devoted fan of Shakespeare and even directed a documentary, "Looking for Richard III". He was offered the role of Han Solo in *Star Wars* but turned it down.

Pacino has never married but has had several high-profile relationships, including with Diane Keaton and Beverly D'Angelo. He has four children: Julie (a filmmaker), twins Anton and Olivia (with D'Angelo), and Roman (born in 2023 with Noor Alfallah, who is over 50 years his junior).



Al Pacino's Shakespeare obsession is more than a passing fancy—it's a lifelong pilgrimage. He's described Shakespeare as "holy," comparing him to Michelangelo, and once said that performing the Bard's work gave him "a deeper understanding of the world". In his youth, he would roam Manhattan reciting soliloquies into the night, training himself on iambic pentameter like a street prophet of Elizabethan drama.

His first major Shakespearean role was Richard III in Boston, a part he revered for its complexity and legacy. But he didn't stop there. In 1996, Pacino directed and starred in *Looking for Richard*, a hybrid documentary-performance that explores Richard III while interrogating Shakespeare's relevance in modern America. It's raw, chaotic, and deeply personal—he cast fellow actors like Winona Ryder and Kevin Spacey, interviewed scholars and passersby, and tried to demystify the Bard for the "common man". He didn't want to explain Shakespeare—he wanted to feel him.

Later, he played Shylock in *The Merchant of Venice* (2004), bringing gravitas and vulnerability to one of Shakespeare's most controversial characters. He's long advocated for more Shakespeare on film, believing it allows actors to express the humanity embedded in the text.

Al Pacino's interests are as layered and intense as his performances. He's famously obsessed with acting—not just as a profession, but as a philosophy. He once said, "I can't imagine my life without acting," and that devotion spills into his hobbies.

Beyond the Bard, Pacino has a deep love for theatre and often returns to the stage between film roles. He's known to frequent underground plays and has even funded obscure theatrical productions just to keep the art alive.



He's also a jazz enthusiast, a poker player, and a voracious reader—particularly of biographies, poetry, and philosophy. He's fascinated by real-life figures and has portrayed several, including Roy Cohn, Jack Kevorkian, and Phil Spector. His interest in psychology and moral ambiguity often guides his role choices.

And then there's his quieter side: he's said to enjoy long walks, solitude, and watching old films. His home is reportedly filled with cardboard boxes of toys—for his children, yes, but also because he finds comfort in their presence.

As of 2025, Pacino is 85 and still active. He recently revealed a harrowing near-death experience during the early days of COVID-19—his pulse stopped, and paramedics revived him. He described the moment as "you're here, you're not," and said he didn't see a white light, just "strange porridge". He's also promoting his upcoming autobiography, *Sonny Boy*, and still plays poker with Winona Ryder, who once confessed she was "actively in love" with him in her twenties.

What a man!

And, 100 years ago

1 Aug - Many British seamen began a strike in response to their monthly wages being cut on this day from £10 to £9. Many who were on land refused to sail out; others at sea stayed wherever they landed, from Australia to New Zealand to South Africa.

6 Aug - The Dallas Hilton, the first high-rise hotel to bear the Hilton name, was opened.



14 Aug - Invited to the Black Hills region of the U.S. state of South Dakota, sculptor Gutzon Borglum scouted for an alternative location for carving a monument on the side of a mountain (See separate article).

24 Aug - Welterweight boxing champion Mickey Walker fought William "Sailor" Friedman to a no-decision in Chicago. Al Capone met Walker in the dressing room before the match and advised him to go easy on Friedman ([Tattler](#) - "Advised" him?)



Mickey Walker

30 Aug - Italy's Ministry of Aeronautics was formed as a cabinet level department to regulate both the Italian Air Force and civil aviation, and as an equal to the Ministry of War and the Ministry of the Navy. Prime Minister Benito Mussolini appointed himself as the first Aeronautics Minister.

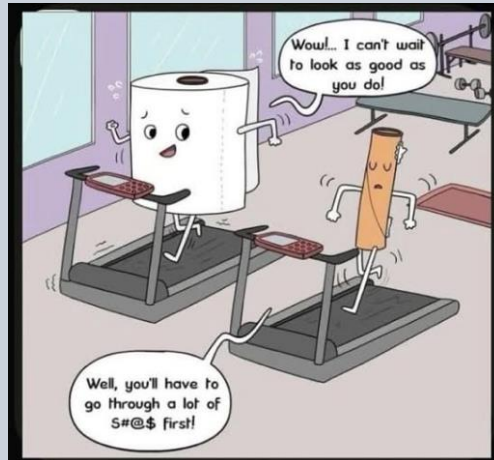
Tattler – Laugh

Your monthly funny video
Michael McIntyre!



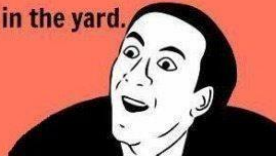
Apparently, when you drink a pint of beer,
you shorten your lifespan by 9 minutes.

So according to my calculations, I died
sometime in 1644.



I hate it when people are at your house and ask
"Do you have a bathroom?"

No, we shit in the yard.



- 1) Jeremy Taylor
- 2) Monty Python
- 3) Grenada
- 4) Bananas
- 5) I'm too sexy for my Shirt
- 6) Lou Vega
- 7) Mozart
- 8) Pirates of Penzance
- 9) the Bird Song or the Birdy Song
- 10) My ding-a-ling

We really would value more feedback. Please feel free to comment or submit
items. Our email addresses
are jonathanagolding@gmail.com and colettepatience@gmail.com
Have a good month.