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BRYANSTON 2021

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RAFOC NEW RAMBLINGS

17th AUGUST 2026

OBSERVATIONS:

I don't know if any body else has noticed the cold weather in and around South Africa. Most unlike our weather to be at 1°C as the sun shows its head above the horizon and then increasing to mid-teens by noon. It looks as if we will be spared those temperatures again this year.

RED BARROWS STEP IN TO REPLACE STRANDED RED ARROWS:

The Red Arrows will be replaced by a squadron of wheelbarrows at a seaside show after the team was stranded in Canada.

The RAF's aerobatics team was due to perform at the RNLI's Lifeboat Week in Lyme Regis, Dorset, at 11:30 BST on Sunday following its tour of the US, but poor weather has grounded the squadron. However, Devon-based wheelbarrow performance group the Bradninch Red Barrows have stepped in to fill the void left by their high-flying counterparts.



Lifeboat Week lead Mark Ellis said a "squadron of wheelbarrows is not quite what was planned" but the event was delighted to welcome them at such short notice.

The Bradninch Red Barrows were formed to raise money for charities by doing parody displays of the Red Arrows. The group describes their performances as: "Precision formation flying through rings of fire, smoke trails and death-defying low passes at airshows across the South West."

Eight barrow pilots, two ground crew, a squadron leader, a nurse and an announcer are expected to land in Lyme Regis for the display.

Red Barrows squadron member Flt Lt Cyclone said: "We are absolutely honoured and particularly because it's raising money for the RNLI. "This will be the first time out of our home county so an extra honour there and we are very much looking forward to it. "As always what we do is to bring joy to people and raise money for charity."

Lifeboat Week organisers said the rest of the week would continue as planned, including a display by two Spitfires on Wednesday and a flypast by aircraft of the RAF's Battle of Britain Memorial Flight on 21 and 22 August.

WHAT DO THE RED ARROWS THINK OF THE RED BARROWS?

Flt Lt Ollie Suckling, Red 9, and Flt Lt Dustin Wales, Red 5, who are based at RAF Waddington in Lincolnshire, gave the BBC their review of the group's performance.

The "Red Barrows" haven't got planes, but they do have wheelbarrows to perform their "precision barrow-flying". They describe themselves as "like the Red Arrows, but slower and lower".

They even have their own take on the pilots' famous red flying suit and have been known to use ramps and a hoop on fire for their displays.

The RAF's Red Arrows - one of the world's premier aerobatic display teams - are the inspiration for a group of Devon men and women.

Check this out from the BBC: <https://bbc.com/news/articles/c62e1892vino>

SAA HITS THE HEADLINES AGAIN:

South African Airways has consumed over R32 billion in government bailouts since 2019, and the people who extracted that money from South African taxpayers at gunpoint call this a success story. Understand what a bailout actually is. Politicians don't produce wealth. They confiscate it from productive citizens and redirect it toward politically favored projects. Every rand pumped into SAA came from someone who earned it, someone who had no say in the transaction. Coercion is the correct word for this arrangement, not "public investment." The airline entered business rescue in December 2019, accumulated debts exceeding R40 billion, laid off thousands of workers, and still the government relaunched it in September 2021 under new branding. That relaunch required another R3.5 billion injection. The market had already delivered its verdict on SAA's viability. Politicians simply overruled it. This is what makes state-owned enterprises so persistently destructive. Prices and profit signals exist to communicate real information about whether resources are being used well. A private airline losing money faces liquidation, freeing up aircraft, labor, and capital for ventures consumers actually value. SAA instead consumed those resources for decades while shielding management from accountability. Johannesburg residents and Durban factory workers paid for business-class seats they never occupied, subsidizing connections between cities that private carriers would serve profitably if politicians cleared the runway. The moral case matters here. No airline is entitled to survive. An airline that cannot cover its costs through voluntary ticket sales has no rightful claim on anyone else's income. The moment a state uses tax revenue to override that reality, it transforms every citizen into an involuntary shareholder in someone else's vanity project, stripped of any exit option.

https://x.com/handre/status/2088163714251784284?s=48&t=QuSY9zay1i_CHY8YW_Xh7A

NASA'S 'DRAGON LADY' IS UNCOVERING HOW WILDFIRES CREATE STORMS:



NASA is using a modified version of the U-2 spy plane, created during the Cold War, to study one of Earth's least understood weather phenomena: wildfire generated storms.

The jet, which NASA calls the ER-2, contains a flying laboratory of scientific instruments rather than military defenses and has different wiring. The aircraft's newest mission is to study weather generated storms.

Fire clouds, scientifically known as pyrocumulonimbus storms, are gigantic thunderstorms produced by wildfire heat. These storms can include lightning, strong winds, and in some cases, fire tornadoes. "It's kind of like a chimney where the smoke from the fire is being pushed upward into the thunderstorm, accelerated through that vertical column, and then released," said David A. Peterson, a meteorologist at the Naval Research Laboratory.

He is the principal investigator for NASA's INjected Smoke and PYRocumulonimbus Experiment, or INSPYRE, a mission that will study these storms' erratic behavior.



*A pyrocumulonimbus "fire cloud" seen from the Gulfstream V jet by the INSPYRE science team.
Bernadett Weinzierl/NASA*

"The generated smoke column is basically a warm bubble that triggers the thunderstorm, so it's like any other really tall, severe thunderstorm cloud, but now you've filled it with smoke. The fire at that point is essentially feeding itself," Peterson said.

Meteorologists have not been able to properly forecast pyrocumulonimbus storms because they form during unpredictable conditions. Only recently, scientists discovered that these fire generated weather systems can surpass a natural atmospheric barrier, reaching the stratosphere.

"There's a volcano-like effect, with smoke being pushed really high into the atmosphere, and we've learned in recent years that once smoke reaches these high altitudes, it can obviously be transported by jet stream winds really fast," Peterson said.

NASA, which is tasked with aeronautics research, as well as space exploration, is using their ER-2 jets because of their high-altitude flying capabilities.

"Think of it as a steerable satellite. It's flying above the weather at maybe 65,000 feet, and we can basically have it orbit back and forth over a wildfire," Peterson said. "All of the instruments on the plane are tied to measuring the fire energetics of the plume. So, there's radars that can tell you how big the plume is, the altitude it's at, and then also the air motion within it. It's also tracking lightning, so electric field within these clouds."

And while the ER-2 plane is flying over the storm, NASA is simultaneously flying a Gulfstream 5 jet inside of the clouds.

"The idea is that the data they collect (can) inform each other," Peterson said. The G-5 is directly in the clouds, and so it can inform the radars that are seeing the cloud and then relate that to what the airborne satellite, is telling you."

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The goal of this mission is mainly to one day being able to predict these storms.

"We're both using tools that are just being developed now by some of our science team members to help guide the mission, but we're also using the mission to help feed back to improve those prediction tools," Peterson said. "There will inevitably be a component of the mission where we produce better tools to predict this type of fire behaviour."

<https://www.cnn.com/2026/08/14/us/nasa-is-flying-a-modified-u-2-spy-plane-to-study-how-wildfires-can-create-storms>

(Eds comment - I have a friend in the UK, now retired from the RAF, who commanded 'Snoopy' the C130 weather plane. It would be interesting to hear his comments on this article. How about it Chas?)

UK'S ANDY GREEN SETS HYDROGEN – POWERED CAR SPEED RECORD:



The only person to break the sound barrier in a car earned has another world record in a show of force for hydrogen power.

British driver Andy Green reached 653.909km/h in a car powered by two hydrogen internal combustion engines with a combined 1600 horsepower, setting the record for that vehicle category, according to the Fédération Internationale de l'Automobile, the governing body of motor sports.

The 64-year-old retired Royal Air Force pilot rocketed across the crystalline crust at Utah's famous Bonneville Salt Flats in a 9.75m car engineered by British construction equipment manufacturer JCB.

The engines, adapted from those used in the company's heavy machinery, mix pressurised hydrogen gas with air and ignite it to create bursts of power.

"It's magic to be able to showcase this technology and to showcase how good the engineering is on the best racing surface in the world, Bonneville Salt Flats," Green told The Associated Press after the run.

To be clear, Tuesday's feat didn't come close to approaching the overall land-speed record, which Green set with jet power in 1997. That year, he climbed into the Thrust SSC, a black needle sandwiched between two large jet engines, and hit 1227.985km/h, breaking the sound barrier and achieving a feat no one has come close to matching.

He returned with the goal of beating that mark using hydrogen power, which he has called the "fuel of the future."

In targeting his diesel speed, Green easily topped the previous hydrogen combustion world record of 298.5km/h.

Green said the cockpit of the car he used was "probably a little hotter" than in the jet-powered vehicle from 1997, with temperatures routinely above 50C.

"But I have been training four months for that, both training in the gym and actually just getting used to it with hot baths," he said.

A remnant of a prehistoric lakebed, the Bonneville Salt Flats are about 160km west of Salt Lake City and sit atop a shallow aquifer that cools the tyres. The low-friction surface and dry desert air are conducive to speed.

"It looks like snow, and it behaves a bit like packed snow – it is surprisingly slippery," Green said.

Australian Associated Press

<https://www.thesenior.com.au/story/9328753/uks-andy-green-sets-hydrogen-powered-car-speed-record/>

LANCASTER SENDS EMERGENCY ALERT AFTER ENGINE ISSUE: 12 July

An investigation has been launched after a Battle of Britain Memorial Flight (BBMF) Lancaster bomber suffered an engine problem earlier, the RAF has confirmed.

The Avro Lancaster PA474, which had been taking part in the RAF Waddington Families Day in Lincolnshire, sent a general emergency alert as black smoke was seen coming from one of its four engines.

According to the RAF, the crew of the iconic World War Two aircraft “diagnosed unusual engine behaviour” and returned to its base at RAF Coningsby “as a precautionary measure.”

An RAF spokesperson added: “Crew are well trained to handle such events, and an investigation of the aircraft has been launched.”

None of the aircrew were injured and it’s not known if the investigation will impact upcoming scheduled appearances.

The BBMF also operates five Spitfires, two Hurricanes and a C47 Dakota. The Lancaster is the most famous and successful RAF bomber of World War Two. Out of 7,377 that were built, the PA474 is one of only two airworthy Lancasters left in the world.

(Ed – Some of the stories only surface a bit later, well in this case a month later, but are worthy of noting when the aircraft is as special as this one is)

SOUTH AFRICA’S \$18.5M REPATRIATION BILL MEETS RESISTANCE AS NIGERIA DENIES REQUEST, GHANA REJECTS LIABILITY:

Solomon Ekanem 15 August 2026

South Africa is facing resistance from Ghana and Nigeria over its attempt to recover about \$18.5 million spent supporting the repatriation of foreign nationals, with both countries disputing Pretoria’s position on the costs of returning their citizens.



- South Africa is seeking reimbursement from several African countries for \$18.5 million spent on repatriating foreign nationals.
- Nigeria and Ghana both dispute Pretoria’s demand, with Nigerian officials claiming they never received a formal payment request.
- Ghana has explicitly rejected any responsibility for South Africa’s repatriation costs, stating it funded its own citizens’ evacuation.
- The discrepancies between South Africa’s and Nigeria’s accounts highlight diplomatic tensions and confusion over the reimbursement demands.

Solomon Ekanem 15 August 2026

https://africa.businessinsider.com/local/lifestyle/south-africas-dollar185m-repatriation-bill-meets-resistance-as-nigeria-denies-request/efs3myr?utm_medium=email&utm_source=transactional&utm_campaign=share-button

(Eds comment - if the \$18.5 million was paid, I wonder who’s pocket it would end up in. Nice Christmas present for the ANC big wigs)

THANK YOU:

The NEW RAMBLINGS is made possible by contributions from, mostly, committee members and compiled. If you have any contributions please send them to bookings@rafoc.org so they can be considered for inclusion.

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