# Only Fools and Horses' secret Gulf War episode offers rare glimpse of wartime camaraderie



Only the most dedicated fans of *Only Fools and Horses* might be aware of a unique episode that never aired on UK television, yet holds a special place in the show's history. Created in 1991, this rare segment, titled "The Robin Flies at Dawn," was designed specifically for British troops stationed in the Persian Gulf during the Gulf War. The brief five-minute special was recorded at RAF Strike Command in High Wycombe and was exclusively broadcast to service members far from home.

In this one-off episode, the beloved characters—Del Boy, Rodney, and Uncle Albert—bring a message of camaraderie and support to the troops. Del Boy, played by David Jason, is seen holding a folder labelled "Top Secret" while addressing the soldiers from what is pretended to be a covert location in southern England. However, in true comedic style, Rodney inadvertently reveals their actual filming location—High Wycombe, lighting up the segment with their signature charm.

The production was a labour of love, with the entire cast and crew volunteering their time to create a piece that was light-hearted yet meaningful. John Sullivan, the show's creator and writer, was present on set overseeing the project. Reflecting on the experience, he remarked, "It was great fun, and after we finished filming, they laid on a buffet for us." This informal, home-movie-style shoot was completed in just one day, capturing the spontaneous spirit that *Only Fools and Horses* is known for.

Del Boy's antics continue throughout the episode as he unveils a modified version of the iconic Reliant Regal van, now decked out in camouflage and proudly displaying a Union Jack, complete with a mounted machine gun. This tongue-in-cheek suggestion that the van could serve as a secret weapon against Saddam Hussein's forces highlights the mix of humour and heartfelt sentiment intended for the troops. As the episode concludes, it delivers a touching message of appreciation and solidarity for the soldiers and their families.

Although never aired in the UK, this special remains historically significant and can be viewed at the Imperial War Museum in London. Its exclusivity has only added to its allure among fans of the show, further cementing *Only Fools and Horses* as more than just a sitcom; it is a cherished cultural phenomenon that engages even during times of adversity.

Today, the legacy of this rare episode continues to evoke nostalgia among fans, showcasing how comedy can serve as a vital link to soldiers facing the isolation of conflict. The episode not only entertains but also embodies the spirit of support and gratitude, reminding viewers of the sacrifices made by those in uniform.

### 📌 Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.mylondon.news/news/tv/only-fools-horses-episode-never-31793036), [[2]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Robin_Flies_at_Dawn)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.mylondon.news/news/tv/only-fools-horses-episode-never-31793036), [[3]](https://www.bucks.radio/news/i-didnt-know-that/unseen-only-fools-and-horses-episode-was-filmed-in-high-wycombe/), [[4]](https://www.mylondon.news/whats-on/whats-on-news/only-fools-horses-episode-never-24292755)
* Paragraph 3 – [[5]](https://www.britishclassiccomedy.co.uk/only-fools-and-horses-the-forgotten-bits), [[6]](https://jharding.co.uk/only-fools-and-horses-robin-flies-at-dawn-gulf-war-special/)
* Paragraph 4 – [[1]](https://www.mylondon.news/news/tv/only-fools-horses-episode-never-31793036), [[6]](https://jharding.co.uk/only-fools-and-horses-robin-flies-at-dawn-gulf-war-special/)

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.mylondon.news/news/tv/only-fools-horses-episode-never-31793036> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Robin_Flies_at_Dawn> - 'The Robin Flies at Dawn' is a special edition of the British sitcom 'Only Fools and Horses', filmed specifically for British troops serving in the 1990–91 Gulf War. The five-minute episode was filmed at RAF Strike Command in High Wycombe, with all cast and crew donating their time for the one-day shoot. The storyline features Del Boy, Rodney, and Uncle Albert addressing the troops from a 'secret location in Southern England', which is inadvertently revealed as High Wycombe. Del suggests their modified Reliant Regal van, adorned with a Union Jack, camouflage, and a machine gun, could be the alliance's secret weapon. The episode concludes with a message of appreciation for the troops. This special was never broadcast commercially but is available for viewing at the Imperial War Museum in London. ([en.wikipedia.org](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Robin_Flies_at_Dawn?utm_source=openai))
3. <https://www.bucks.radio/news/i-didnt-know-that/unseen-only-fools-and-horses-episode-was-filmed-in-high-wycombe/> - An unseen episode of Britain's most popular comedy programme, 'Only Fools and Horses', was filmed in High Wycombe. The five-minute episode, titled 'The Robin Flies at Dawn', was made exclusively for British soldiers serving overseas during the 1991 Gulf War. It can now only be seen in one place – The Imperial War Museum in London. The episode was filmed at RAF Strike Command in High Wycombe, featuring main characters Del Boy, Rodney, and Uncle Albert, with all the actors giving their time for free to film the one-off special. The episode begins with the Trotters addressing the troops from a 'secret location' in southern England, with Del holding a folder marked 'Top Secret' under his arm. However, it isn't long before Rodney accidentally gives away their location as High Wycombe. The wives of some of the troops serving in Iraq also appear in the film. And of course, the famous three-wheeled van makes an appearance albeit with some adaptations – a Union Jack, camouflage, and a machine gun mounted on it! The episode was shot in one day in the style of a home movie. Writer John Sullivan has previously said of the episode: 'It was great fun and after we finished filming they laid on a buffet for us.' ([bucks.radio](https://www.bucks.radio/news/i-didnt-know-that/unseen-only-fools-and-horses-episode-was-filmed-in-high-wycombe/?utm_source=openai))
4. <https://www.mylondon.news/whats-on/whats-on-news/only-fools-horses-episode-never-24292755> - Titled 'The Robin Flies at Dawn', the episode was filmed at RAF Strike Command in High Wycombe. It features the core cast of Del Boy, Rodney, and Uncle Albert, with each of the actors giving their time for free to film the one-off piece. John Sullivan was also on set to help bring the piece together, having volunteered to write it alongside Gareth Gwenlan, who also directed it. Recalling the filming, which was shot in the style of a home-movie and wrapped after just one day, Sullivan said: 'It was great fun and after we finished filming they laid on a buffet for us.' ([mylondon.news](https://www.mylondon.news/whats-on/whats-on-news/only-fools-horses-episode-never-24292755?utm_source=openai))
5. <https://www.britishclassiccomedy.co.uk/only-fools-and-horses-the-forgotten-bits> - 'The Robin Flies at Dawn' was filmed for the British troops serving in Gulf War 1, Del, Rodney, and Albert send our troops a goodwill message. Broadcast 1st December 1990. ([britishclassiccomedy.co.uk](https://www.britishclassiccomedy.co.uk/only-fools-and-horses-the-forgotten-bits?utm_source=openai))
6. <https://jharding.co.uk/only-fools-and-horses-robin-flies-at-dawn-gulf-war-special/> - 'Only Fools And Horses Robin Flies At Dawn Gulf War Special' was filmed for the British troops during the 1990-1991 Gulf War. Filmed at an RAF base in High Wycombe, all cast and crew gave up their time for free to film the mini episode. ([jharding.co.uk](https://jharding.co.uk/only-fools-and-horses-robin-flies-at-dawn-gulf-war-special/?utm_source=openai))
7. <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt30760780/> - 'Only Fools and Horses: The Robin Flies at Dawn' is a 1990 short film featuring Del, Rodney, and Uncle Albert delivering a goodwill message to British troops serving in the 1990-91 Gulf War. ([imdb.com](https://www.imdb.com/title/tt30760780/?utm_source=openai))