# Only Fools and Horses’ secret Gulf War episode surfaces after decades



Nostalgia often intertwines with historical events in unexpected ways, and for fans of the beloved British sitcom "Only Fools and Horses," a particular unseen special episode serves as a poignant reminder of the country's recent past. Titled "The Robin Flies at Dawn," this five-minute segment was crafted not for commercial broadcast, but exclusively for British troops stationed during the Gulf War in 1991.

Filmed at RAF Strike Command in High Wycombe, the episode features the show's iconic trio: Del Boy, Rodney, and Uncle Albert. Notably, the production was entirely voluntary, with all cast members donating their time for this unique project. John Sullivan, the show's creator, was on set to supervise the filming, which took place in a relaxed atmosphere reminiscent of a home movie. Sullivan later reminisced, “It was great fun and after we finished filming they laid on a buffet for us,” reflecting the camaraderie present during its creation.

In a storyline that retains the show's signature humour, the Trotters address the troops from a so-called 'secret location' in southern England. Del Boy, comically holding a folder marked 'Top Secret', inadvertently has their location revealed by Rodney as High Wycombe. The episode takes a whimsical turn as Del unveils their modified Reliant Regal van, now bedecked with a Union Jack, camouflage paint, and a mounted machine gun, suggesting it could serve as a secret weapon against Saddam's forces.

While the episode encapsulates the irreverent charm of "Only Fools and Horses," it also serves a heartfelt purpose. It features appearances by the wives of the soldiers, with Del and Rodney humorously offering to look after them while their husbands are deployed abroad. The concluding message expresses a sincere appreciation for the sacrifices made by the troops during a challenging time.

Despite its significance, "The Robin Flies at Dawn" has never been available for general viewing on television, a fact that often surprises even the most devoted fans. However, those keen to see the episode can find a recording at the Imperial War Museum in London, preserving a slice of comedy history that is intricately linked to the trials of war.

In a world where many media productions often prioritise commercial success, the existence of this special reminds us of a time when entertainment sought to bolster morale and connect with those on the front lines. "Only Fools and Horses" not only entertained but also understood the profound impact of humour in difficult times.

### 📌 Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.mylondon.news/news/tv/only-fools-horses-episode-never-31793036), [[4]](https://www.mylondon.news/whats-on/whats-on-news/only-fools-horses-episode-never-24292755)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.mylondon.news/news/tv/only-fools-horses-episode-never-31793036), [[2]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Robin_Flies_at_Dawn), [[3]](https://www.bucks.radio/news/i-didnt-know-that/unseen-only-fools-and-horses-episode-was-filmed-in-high-wycombe/)
* Paragraph 3 – [[5]](https://www.imdb.com/title/tt30760780/), [[6]](https://www.thetvdb.com/series/only-fools-and-horses/episodes/864081), [[7]](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 serve as 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 was filmed at RAF Strike Command in High Wycombe, featuring main characters Del Boy, Rodney, and Uncle Albert, with all 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. 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> - Only the most ardent 'Only Fools and Horses' aficionados might know about the numerous episodes created for charitable or educational purposes, often aired as one-offs. Yet, there's a particular 'Only Fools and Horses' special that even the most dedicated fans probably haven't seen, as it never graced UK television screens. Crafted in 1991 and shown exclusively abroad, this special was intended for British troops stationed in the Persian Gulf during the conflict with Saddam Hussein's Iraq. The short segment, lasting around five minutes and titled 'The Robin Flies at Dawn', was filmed at RAF Strike Command in High Wycombe, featuring Del Boy, Rodney, and Uncle Albert, with the actors generously donating their time to the project. John Sullivan was present on set to oversee the production, having volunteered to pen the script with Gareth Gwenlan, who took on the directing role. Reflecting on the shoot, which was completed in a single day and had the casual feel of a home-movie, Sullivan reminisced: 'It was great fun and after we finished filming they laid on a buffet for us.' In the episode's storyline, we begin with the three Trotters addressing the troops from a 'secret location' in southern England, Del nonchalantly carrying a folder labelled 'Top Secret'. However, their covert location is inadvertently revealed by Rodney as High Wycombe. During his address to the troops, Del unveils the iconic Reliant Regal, now sporting a Union Jack, camouflage paint and a mounted machine gun. He suggests it could be deployed against Saddam's secret weapon. The soldiers' wives are also present, and Del and Rodney cheekily offer to look after them while their husbands are away. The episode concludes with a touching message of appreciation for the troops. Although this episode was never broadcast, those eager to watch it can find a recording at the Imperial War Museum in London. ([mylondon.news](https://www.mylondon.news/whats-on/whats-on-news/only-fools-horses-episode-never-24292755?utm_source=openai))
5. <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt30760780/> - 'The Robin Flies at Dawn' is a short comedy episode from the British sitcom 'Only Fools and Horses', released in 1990. The episode features Del Boy, Rodney, and Uncle Albert delivering a goodwill message to British troops serving in the 1990-91 Gulf War. The cast includes David Jason as Derek 'Del Boy' Trotter, Nicholas Lyndhurst as Rodney Trotter, and Buster Merryfield as Albert Trotter. The episode has a runtime of 5 minutes and 10 seconds. ([imdb.com](https://www.imdb.com/title/tt30760780/?utm_source=openai))
6. <https://www.thetvdb.com/series/only-fools-and-horses/episodes/864081> - 'The Robin Flies at Dawn' is a special episode of the British sitcom 'Only Fools and Horses', originally aired on December 1, 1990. The episode has a runtime of 30 minutes and is rated TV-PG in the United States. The episode was directed by Tony Dow and written by John Sullivan. ([thetvdb.com](https://thetvdb.com/series/only-fools-and-horses/episodes/864081?utm_source=openai))
7. <https://jharding.co.uk/only-fools-and-horses-robin-flies-at-dawn-gulf-war-special/> - 'The Robin Flies at Dawn' is a Gulf War special of 'Only Fools and Horses', 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))