

**St Vaast La Hougue - Normandy 19 - 25 August 2006**  
**The Only Fools and Horses Tour (aka The Homage to Franglais Tour)**

Day 1: Mange tout, mange tout Rodders ..... and une bootel de chardonay s'il vous plait .... you can just imagine what this trip was going to be like ....!

The week started off in Weymouth on the Friday night in the same style as every other dive holiday – in the local. After a huge meal in the George Inn we were forced out by the “band” and went to the pub next door .... to be met with the dulcist tones of the local karaoke.

Things were going downhill. A 3 a.m start on the Saturday (well for the skipper and crew) saw us doing our first dive mid afternoon on the Strathalbyn off



Cherbourg. What can I say – plus bonne viz, loads of poisson, and the stern and prop look awesome. It was also our first introduction to the prehistoric size of lobsters that are found on the wrecks. How do you say "come and have a go if you think you're hard enough" in true French voyou style. (That's franglais for hooligan Rodders). These things didn't even run away they were that big. First casualty of the trip was Martin's drysuit which decided to pop a few teeth in the zip and let in la Manche (English Channel) – one very wet suit. As the sewing kit and sealant came out we motored into St Vaast. Bonnet de Douche Rodders!!!



Day 2: Bonne nuit, bonne nuit Trigger ....plume de me tante.

Pretty bumpy weather didn't put a stop to two excellent dives, one the LST523 still has Sherman tanks on it. Second casualty of the trip was Jeremy's suit which succumbed to a fist being put through the neck seal. Martin continued to dive and deployed his lift bag in order to "self recover" himself from the seabed on more than one occasion. While we waited for the second dive we anchored up off Omaha Beach and watched 'Saving Private Ryan' – well you do don't you. The evenings were starting to follow a familiar pattern which involved copious amounts of cheap vin rouge de table and huge plats au fruit de mer Rodders. The franglais was getting worse and worse by this stage.....

Day 3: Homage to Fromage....mon Dieu, surely une mistake?

After David's arrival the night before (with a dry suit to replace the leaky zip one), work began on Jeremy's neck seal. The patient survived the operation despite being worked upon in heavy seas. Unfortunately David's own neck seal had other differing ideas on the concept of being dry and flooded the first time it was used. Really glad we brought the new suit ... ne pas Rodders. Anyway, the wet suit was on hand so he continued to plonge. Diving on the HMS Broadsword brought out the usual plethora of "Broadsword calling Danny Boy" imitations and was superb. 15m of visibility and shoals of fish that surpassed the solent by a long way. During a petit tete a tete we were discussing the new Pink Panther film (must have been the accents going around) it was mentioned that it was a homage to Peter Sellers. Does that come with biscuits someone piped up! That's fromage Rodders, fromage ..... you purlonker!





Day 4: Pot pourri Marlene, l'escargot avec pate fois gras ...  
Je suis impressed!

It was glorious weather and our luck with dry suits had turned and Jeremy's neck seal, while looking like something from a 1960's Hammer horror movie, was holding out la Manche with true British grit ....mon Dieu!. We did another two fantastic dives one of which was a little like a visit to the local aquarium as two huge conger eels had managed to get trapped in a large lobster pot. A large amount of teeth and somewhat unsavoury

temprement ensured that they would unfortunately remain in the said pot and probably end up as dejuener that evening. Our only satisfaction was the thought of the local homme de peche lifting them onto his ridiculously small boat and consequently being bitten on something soft and fleshy by a very very irate and rather hefty poisson! As usual the day ended with a night out on the town, and far too much vin de table. Ruth's excuse for not being able to walk in a straight line was too much sun and the motion of the boat.... Steve and David in Uncle Albert style kept us entertained with tales of military life, bonnet la douche, bonnet la douche, although David was a little bemused at Steve's description of 'cracking one off' when walking past senior ranks. Must mean something different in the Navy ....!

Day 5: Jois de vivre, Jois de vivre ..... nous sommes hungover ....

Headaches had subsided after second breakfast (being on the White Horse is a little like being a hobbit – you start with 1st breakfast of toast and cereal, then move on the 2nd breakfast of bacon, sausage and egg rolls, then lunch, then cake for afternoon tea, along with a constant supply of fruit and chocolate bars in between should you feel a little peckish). The first dive bought the next dry suit failure with another broken zip. This was feverishly repaired by Steve .... who simply put loads of sealant on it! Seem to work though if a little damp. To add interest to the dive Martin, who by this time had already forgotton his weight belt on 2 occasions I have to point out to the masses .....Rodders you numpty, decided to get a little too up close and personal with a net. Some consternation mais oui, mais oui. David also decided that it would be a good time to practice his bail out drills as water decided to enter the loop of his CCR for some strange reason. Moral ... dont put it together when you still have a bit of a headache from the night before. Another cracking couple of dives and no end to the number of wrecks that we still hadn't seen.



Day 6: Sacre Blue Del Boy..... that's une plus grande lobby

While it was lovely and sunny on land, we woke up to a bit of a gale at sea so we decided that it would be nice to see a bit of France and went off to Utah Beach and Sainte Mere Eglise. Oh mon oui, mon pleasure monsieur Our organisation of the event was a little like the Jolly Boy's outing to Margate - the episode where the coach driver got drunk, Denzil had to drive, the coach was burnt out due to a faulty radio and Rodders ended up in the nick for twatting a copper with a football ..... well something along those lines. Sur la tete son, sur la tete. It all worked out well in the end and everyone enjoyed seeing a bit more of France

and the history behind the wrecks we had been diving. The last night in St Vaast was a little heavy on the old chardonnay.... in the haze there are recollections of playing with a dog in a cyber cafe without computers (our local haunt for the week) trying to get meat from a swimming crab ... sure it was not just for decoration Graham? and even more really terrible jokes from Martin aka Grandad. The crème de la menthe was when Ruth decided to go for a walk in St Vaast and deciding to use the bow hatch rather than the usual stairs. Finding the hatch was actually rather heavy, and managing to accidentally knock the blocks that hold it up from underneath the hatch, she found herself stuck and shouting for assistance to shipmates who were already inebriated from trop vin de table and incapable of climbing out of their bunks. Thankfully Graham and Martin were in slightly better shape and rescued the boat's stricken female while at the same time suggesting that sleeping it off might be better than walking it off. Zoute Allors and all that!

Day 7: Lovely Jubbly.... bonjour St Vaast! (or is it au revoir?)

We left just after 9am and as the tides were not in our favour had to settle with a drift dive just off the coast from St Vaast. Some who felt a little ill after drinking till gone 3am found that the words discretion and valour sprang to mind all too easily and stayed in bed. Je suis je reste Del. The others enjoyed a nice little "head clearer" supposedly on a small reef. Steve and Martin came back with half a dozen plaice and tales of a rock reef, baby cuttlefish, and wonderful marine life, while David and Ruth surfaced after 20 minutes having grown bored of looking at sand and convinced that there was nothing to be found. Oh well, merde happens! The rest of the crossing back to Weymouth was in glorious sunshine with slight seas.

All in all it was a Lovely Jubbly week of diving and socializing. Everyone agreed that we'd love to do it again especially as there are still so many cosmic and cushty wrecks to be discovered. Great wrecks, loads of sea life, superb visibility, and good food and places to drink on shore at reasonable prices! doesn't get much better really. This really is a holiday suitable for Advanced Open Water divers while still having enough scope for technical divers due to size and interest value of the wrecks in the 30m range. To top it all the water is warm enough for a wet suits (good job really). Many thanks to Jon and Jake (skipper and mate) for helping us have a really triffic week; we hope to see you again. Fabrique en Belgique Rodders!

