

One Giant Leap!

By Steven Duncan

20th July 1969

Late last night, American Neil Armstrong became the first human to leave planet Earth and walk on the surface of the moon. The astronaut, watched by millions around the world, stepped onto the Moon's surface (the Sea of Tranquility) at approximately 2:56am from the Eagle lunar module.



Apollo 11 astronaut (Neil Armstrong) on the surface of the moon.

Armstrong had earlier reported the lunar module's safe landing at around 8pm with the words: "Houston, Tranquility Base here. The Eagle has landed." As he put his left foot down first, Armstrong declared, "That's one small step for man, one giant leap for mankind." He later described the surface as being like soft, powdered charcoal.

The historic moments were captured on television cameras installed on the Eagle, broadcasting remarkable footage to television screens around the world. Armstrong spent his first few minutes on the Moon taking photographs and soil samples in case the mission had to be aborted suddenly.

Moments later, he was joined by his colleague Edwin "Buzz" Aldrin and the two collected data and performed various exercises (including jumping across the landscape) before planting the American flag. They also unveiled a plaque bearing President Nixon's signature and an inscription reading: "We came in peace for all mankind."

As Aldrin and Armstrong collected samples, Michael Collins told mission control in Houston he had successfully orbited the Moon in the mother ship Columbia. The astronauts are expected to take-off from the moon's surface in the coming hours.