

Monday, July 21, 1969
Manchester (STD code 061) 832-3444

FIRST WORDS: TRANQUILLITY BASE... EAGLE HAS LANDED

From ARTHUR SMITH in HOUSTON, TEXAS

THEY'VE done it. America's Moon men last night made a perfect landing on the Moon—bang on time.

History was made at 9.18 British time when the module, call sign Eagle, made its touchdown in the Sea of Tranquillity after a tense ride down from the orbiting

mother ship Columbia.

And so President John F. Kennedy's challenge to the nation to land men on the Moon before the end of the decade was brilliantly answered.

At the moment of touchdown, Aldrin said: "Tranquillity base. Eagle has landed."

And Houston replied: "You've got a bunch of guys here turning blue. We're breathing again."

Then Armstrong congratulated Aldrin on the landing.

"Buzz, good show. Fantastic," he said.

Boulders

Ten minutes after landing Aldrin radioed:

"We'll get to the details of what's around here. But it looks like a collection of every variety of shape, angularity, granularity. A collection of just about every kind of rock.

"Colour depends on what angle you're looking at... rocks and boulders look as though they're going to have some interesting colours."

Armstrong reported that Eagle could blast off when necessary. The Mooncraft was not tilted too far one way or the other, he said.

Astronauts Neil Armstrong and Edwin Aldrin, beginning a 22-hour stay on the Moon, were the representatives of 400,000 people who have built and launched the Apollo and the mighty Saturn V rocket.

With command module pilot Mike Collins still in orbit in Columbia, they have travelled 240,000 miles to their rendezvous with history.

Their taciturn approach to the biggest adventure in the story of the human race has earned them the nickname "The three quiet Americans."

But the world, hungry

'Rocks of every size and colour'

for sensation, could find no quarrel with their ultra-professional, unflustered performance of their incredibly complex task.

Armstrong and Aldrin were to follow up their landing with a brief excursion on to the Lunar surface early today.

And the return to Columbia's welcoming arms was to be made in a complicated series of manoeuvres starting at 8.5 p.m. tonight.

The busiest day in the lives of the three astronauts began for them at 12 noon British time, when mission control at Houston woke them as they orbited the Moon at 3,600 mph.

Although they must have been intensely excited at the prospect of landing, the crew's responses were brief and technical.

Only a jocular reference to being woken so early brought light relief.

During the next six and a half hours there was no time for anything but business.

Armstrong, 33, from Wapakoneat, Ohio, and Aldrin, 39, from Montclair, New Jersey, spent most of this time preparing their Lunar module, Eagle, for the hazardous descent to the Lunar surface.

Strangest

They had to perform hundreds of tasks and check the working of hundreds of systems, gauges, meters and switches before they were sure they were ready.

Eagle, as it separated from the more elegant Columbia, was the strangest-looking craft ever devised by man.

It bristled with probes, antennas, rocket motors and aerials, as well as the eleven-foot high landing legs.

Armstrong and Aldrin flew Eagle standing up in front of their fantastically complicated instrument panels.

They wore their £100,000

Space suits complete with gold-plated visors.

At 6.47 BST the spring-loaded latches which held the two craft together were released, and they undocked.

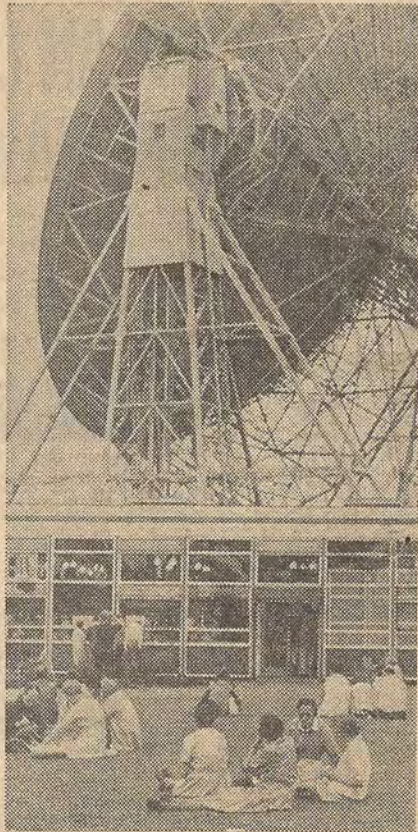
For almost an hour, Columbia and Eagle swung across the visible face of the Moon, never separated by more than two and a half miles.

At 8.8 p.m., when both craft had disappeared behind the Moon, the computer-controlled descent

of Eagle to the Moon's surface began.

The final vertical descent to touchdown in the Sea of Tranquillity began at 150 feet, with Armstrong and Aldrin selecting a safe landing site and steering towards it with their swivelling descent engine.

So, at a rate of not more than three feet per second, the Lunar module Eagle settled on to the Moon's surface and a new phase of man's exploration of the Universe had begun.



Day trippers join vigil

THE tracking labs were cordoned off, but that didn't prevent 2,000 trippers getting a ringside seat yesterday at Jodrell Bank radio telescope for the Moon landing. They paid 3s. each to tour the tracking station at Goosetry, Cheshire.

For those who stayed overnight—the station is open until 10 o'clock this morning—colour TV sets were rigged up.

In another room BBC transmissions were relayed on to 12ft. high screen.