

Author's preface

In July 1969 Apollo 11 successfully achieved the first manned lunar landing. A few months later Pete Conrad, Dick Gordon and Al Bean set off to attempt an even more challenging mission. Free of the 'burden of history', these three close friends were determined to have fun. This is the story of their mission. In addition to the official documents issued prior to and after the mission, I have drawn on the flight transcript and debriefing to recreate the drama. I have edited quotations for clarity, for brevity, and to eliminate the intermingling of spontaneous conversation, but have endeavoured to preserve the sense of the moment.

Apollo 12 dramatically showed how conservative Apollo 11 had been. Of course, the rationale for selecting a bland target for the first landing was fully justified, but just imagine if Neil Armstrong had set Eagle down amongst a cluster of craters and he and Buzz Aldrin had walked over to an earlier unmanned lander and snipped off its camera! With its 31.5 hours on the lunar surface, double moonwalk, deployment of geophysical instruments and geological traverse, Apollo 12 undertook what many people had hoped would be attempted by the first landing crew. It set the scene for a program of scientific lunar exploration.

Apollo 12 – On the Ocean of Storms supplements my earlier *The First Men on the Moon – The Story of Apollo 11* in a series of books devoted to the lunar missions.

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