

# Australian Geographic to screen lost Moon footage

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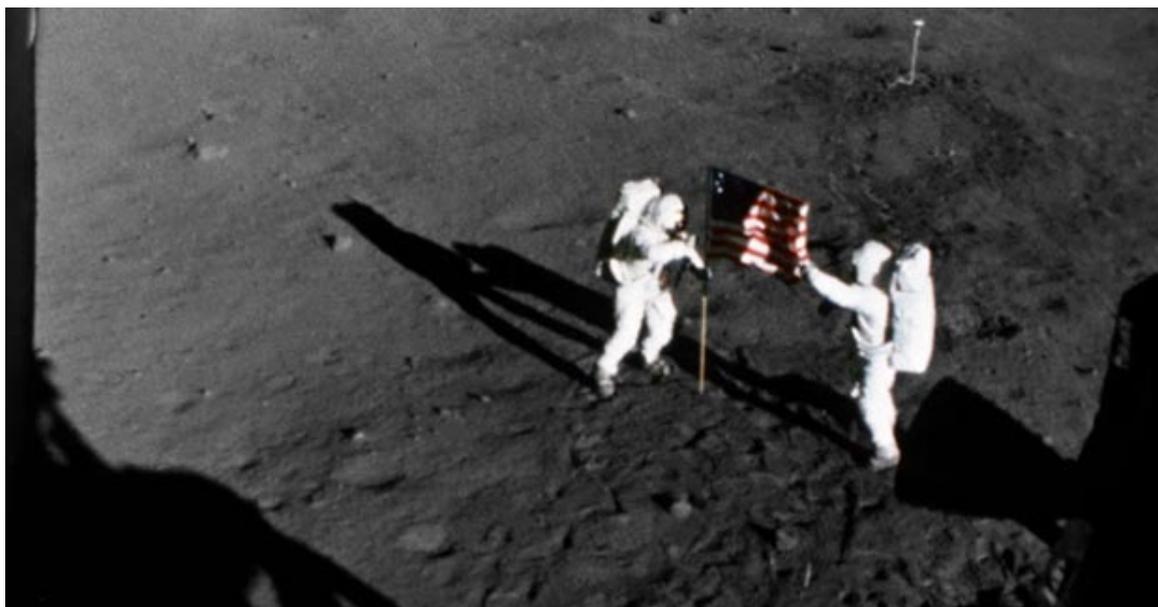
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Completely restored footage of the 1969 Moon landing, some of which was found in Australia, will be screened next week.



Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin with the US flag on the surface of the Moon (Photo: NASA).

**FULLY RESTORED FOOTAGE OF** the historic Apollo 11 moonwalk will be shown for the first time publicly at the 2010 Australian Geographic Society Awards in Sydney on 6 October, where former astronaut Buzz Aldrin will be the guest of honour.

The video highlights of the three-hour moonwalk include a clearer picture of Neil Armstrong's descent down the stairs of the lunar module, which was taken from the Parkes Radio Observatory and the Honeysuckle Creek tracking station outside Canberra on 21 July 1969 (Australian time).

The long-forgotten video footage was uncovered during a decade-long search for the original recordings of the moonwalk, and involved lengthy detective work and clandestine meetings, says astronomer and telescope operator John Sarkissian from the CSIRO at Parkes, who headed up the search.

"We found lots of videos and things all over the place and we compiled them into a single seamless video of the whole moonwalk", John told *Australian Geographic*. This was then restored to clean up the degradation of the videos experienced over the past 40 years, he adds. The three-hour video has only been seen by a few veteran astronauts, including Buzz Aldrin.

## Originals lost forever

At the time of the Moon landing, three stations - Goldstone in California, Honeysuckle Creek in Canberra, and Parkes in New South Wales - simultaneously recorded the events onto magnetic data tape. The direct recordings were not of broadcast quality, says John, so they had to set up a regular TV camera pointed at a small black-and-white TV screen in the observatory to obtain higher-quality images that could be relayed to television stations around the world.

"Original signals weren't HD quality TV. They weren't even broadcast quality, even by 1969 standards," he says. "They were better than what was broadcast to the world; that's why we went looking for them."

The Goldstone camera settings to convert Neil's descent down the stairs were not correct and showed an image too dark to see. So the decision was made to switch to the Honeysuckle Creek footage, and after eight minutes, to the Parkes footage, which was used for the rest of the moonwalk.

It was this clearer footage, which had not been seen since 1969, that John and his search team were hoping to recover from the NASA archives, where the tapes had been sent.

Unfortunately, they hit a roadblock. "We discovered, to our horror, that in the 1970s and 80s NASA had taken the tapes in the national archive and erased them all to record other missions."

About 250,000 tapes from the Apollo era, likely including the 45 tapes of the moonwalk, are likely lost forever, John says - "unless someone did the right thing by doing the wrong thing and took them home and put them in their garage."

### **Painstaking work**

After some digging, they found that in the 1980s someone made a VHS tape of the Honeysuckle Creek magnetic tape, "a bootleg copy if you like, that was severely degraded," John says. A copy of that copy was given to an Apollo enthusiast who was tracked down to Sydney by the search team. This footage included a brighter and clearer version of Apollo 11 mission commander Neil Armstrong's descent to the lunar surface and was used to replace the darker Goldstone images at the start of the broadcast.

At the awards ceremony, select scenes from the entire restored video will show Neil's first step on the Moon's surface, Buzz Aldrin's decent of the lunar module ladder, the plaque reading and the raising of the US flag. The restoration took months of painstaking work as the videos had to be cleaned frame-by-frame.

John says NASA may soon release the full video. In 2009 NASA released some [digitally remastered footage](#) of the 1969 Moon landing - but they did not include the Armstrong clip to be shown next week and then published here on the *Australian Geographic* web site.

### **About the Awards**

The [Australian Geographic Society](#) funds conservation, research, adventure, exploration and community projects. The [Australian Geographic Society Awards](#) are the longest running awards for adventure in Australia and this year also marks 100 issues of the *Australian Geographic* journal.

The awards bring together adventurers, scientists, conservationists and Society supporters to salute the courage and resilience of all the winners. Award categories include: 'Lifetime of Adventure', 'Adventurer of the Year', 'Young Adventurer of the Year', 'Lifetime of Conservation', 'Conservationist of the Year', 'Young Conservationist of the Year', 'Spirit of Adventure' and 'Honorary Lifetime of Adventure'. See the [2009 winners here](#).

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**VIDEO: A 2009 clip from NASA, below, shows part of the digitally remastered footage of Buzz. The new footage \*\*\*to be released next week\*\*\* features unseen footage of Neil Armstrong descending the stairs of the Lunar Module.**