

Nigel's Webspaces News

A newsletter distributed by [Nigel's Webspaces](#), a website dedicated to the history of English football cards 1965/66 to 1979/80.

David Fussell's Esso 1970 World Cup Coins story

David Fussell recently contacted [Nigel's Webspaces](#) with his story about collecting Esso coins. I was so impressed that I asked if I could turn the story into a Newsletter article.

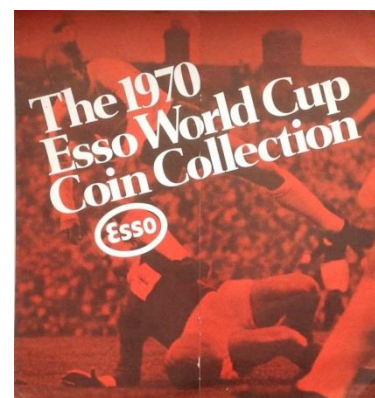
David's story

My dad used to go to a club every Monday night where one of his drinking buddies was Graham, a manager of a local Esso petrol station. One night he asked my dad whether I collected these coins, pulling a few of them out of his pocket. My dad said I did not but that I would do, so Graham said he would bring me some the next week.



Learning of this the next day I was quite excited and could not wait for the next week. The following Tuesday morning I was woken by my mom shouting up the stairs to get up because I had a lot of coins to open. I ran down stairs to find a plain brown cardboard box full of the coins in their wrappers. I cannot be sure of the size of the box now but I would say it was probably at least 12 inches by 12 inches by 8 inches high. It might have been quite a bit bigger than this. With hindsight it is probably safe to assume it was one of the boxes as distributed to the petrol stations.

I had maybe half an hour before I had to get ready for school and I was joined by my sister and my mom to open them. Quickly we started to build piles of each player. And I mean piles, in some instances perhaps several piles. By the time I set off for school we had only opened around half of them, but that was enough to have made my tender 7 year old fingers and thumbs rather sore from tearing away at the fibrous paper wrappers (I'm not expecting sympathy!). We finished opening them later that evening. My dad said there was some sort of folder to put them in and that he would get one for me and my sister who had decided that she did not want to miss out. A few days later my dad gave us each the red folder to put the coins in.



If we were not already aware before that, it was now clear that we did not have a full set. I think we were missing about 2 coins. Even to my young brain it felt like we were pretty unlucky not have several full sets. Looking back I reckon we must have opened about 500 coins as a conservative estimate. I remember my uncle enquiring whether we had any spare copies of player X or Y as a workmate of his needed them, but guess what?.... they were the ones we were missing. I can even remember the adults discussing whether certain coins were in deliberate short supply to make the set harder to collect. We did eventually complete the 2 sets. I think we got the final coins again off Graham. (I do remember that for the 1990 World Cup coins after a certain date Esso offered a swapping service at their petrol stations).

So all was well (apart from England getting knocked out) except that I had only got the red folder. The luxury blue mounting board was advertised within that so I knew all about it and wanted one. They cost 2'6 (12.5p) and dad said he would get us one of those soon. I am not sure whether cost had come into it but just think of all the petrol my dad had not needed to buy! He did try to get us one eventually but they were all sold out. Not even Graham could get one by that stage. I had even given away a couple of near full sets to 2 lads down the road and their dad had bought them each a blue board. In fact everyone at school seemed to have the blue board except me. Having been so far ahead of the game at the beginning my collection was now second rate.

Nigel's Webspaces News

A newsletter distributed by Nigel's Webspaces, a website dedicated to the history of English football cards 1965/66 to 1979/80.

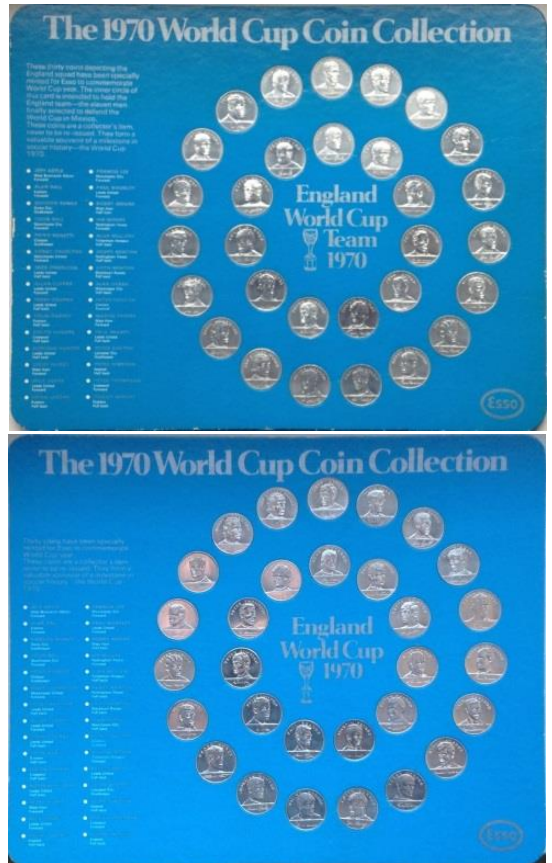
So roll on some 30 odd years. My collection in its red folder had survived, albeit a bit tatty. But there was now a realistic possibility I could at last get hold of a blue mounting board thanks to eBay and that's just what I did.

However, careful scrutiny on eBay revealed that there was an alternative version of the blue board. The 'Team' version states that the inner circle of 11 is designed to hold the team chosen to defend the World Cup. Given that the team would change over the course of, and during, the games the idea seems to be a little flawed. Because this is the version which featured as an advert in the red folder and the red folder came out at or near the start of the promotion, it seems likely that this was the original version. The other version had dropped the word 'Team' from the centre of the board and the descriptive text had also been edited down to remove reference to the inner circle.

From eBay it is clear that the 'Team' version is the harder to find of the two, suggesting that the original print run was not that great. That is despite Esso's confidence that the promotion would be a big success. Perhaps they were less certain that the blue board would prove popular or perhaps the whole promotion was so successful that even Esso were caught on the hop.

Ironically the red folder became harder to find than the blue board versions.

As you are aware there were a few issues with some of the coins. Your Facebook entry from November 2013 refers to the coins of Colin Harvey and Tommy Wright having transposed images. This is true for the standard coins but the bronze and silver versions, of which you are also aware, have the correct versions. A selection of images are below (red folder, standard, bronze, silver, poster):



I am not aware of any exceptions to those coin formats, i.e. all the standard ones have wrong images and all the bronze and silver ones have correct images, it would seem.

Nigel's Webspaces News

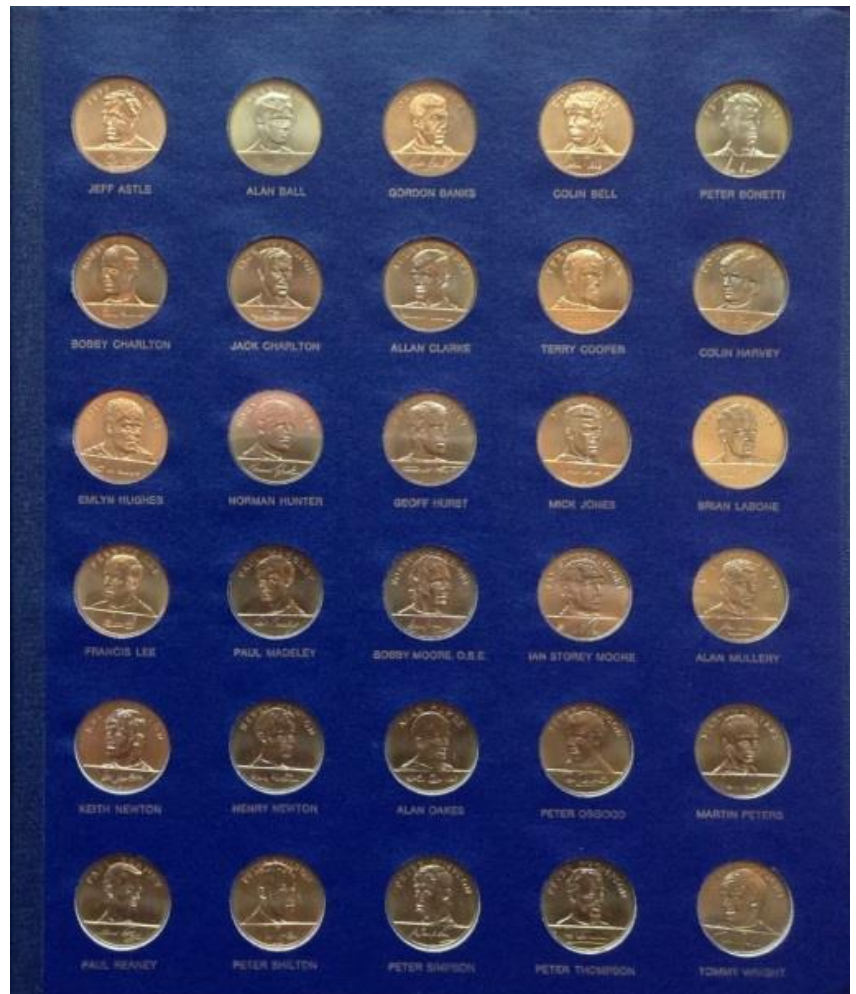
A newsletter distributed by [Nigel's Webspaces](#), a website dedicated to the history of English football cards 1965/66 to 1979/80.

There is also another error coin being that of Bobby Moore and a mix up over whether he was a CBE or OBE. He had in fact been awarded an OBE but the original standard coin stated CBE. The CBE version is by far the most common of the 2 types. eBay sellers often claim that the CBE version is a 'rare' error coin and that Esso tried to recall them but a 'few slipped through' or words to that effect. Given that these coins were produced in their millions, placed in sealed packets and then mixed up for distribution, the idea that they tried to recall the incorrect version of one is rather far-fetched. It is far more likely that they simply produced a smaller number of corrected versions later in the promotion. Again the bronze and silver versions appear to only exist in correct versions (although I have only seen a small sample of what exist in apparently small numbers anyway). The Bobby Moore versions are here:



The small print on the wrapper states that the copyright date is 1970 and that they are made in USA. It seems that they were made by Franklin Mint in the USA, the same company that made the bronze and silver versions.

As you are already aware, there were limited edition sets made in both bronze and silver. I cannot add anything to the information you previously learned in respect of these (see Nigel's Webspaces [Esso page](#) for details). The silver set (not shown) is effectively the same as the bronze set except is in silver naturally. The coins are retained within the thick board with the help of clear perspex strips to front and back and each set was issued within a plain white storage box.



Nigel's Webspac News

A newsletter distributed by Nigel's Webspac, a website dedicated to the history of English football cards 1965/66 to 1979/80.

Interestingly I came across this advert from what appears to be some sort of coin/medal dealer's trade paper which clearly dates to 1998 by virtue of reference to the impending World Cup in France. It tells the tale of how Esso had recently discovered a number of leftover bronze sets in one of their stores. They had acquired these sets (in bulk) and were offering them in mint condition at an amazing price of just £29.50 each!

SPECIAL PURCHASE

England World Cup Medallions Collection - 1970

LESS THAN £1 A MEDALLION

A really fantastic special purchase - these impressive sets of medallions were produced by the Franklin Mint for the Esso Petroleum Company to commemorate the England football squad for the World Cup Competition held in Mexico 1970. The full collection comprises 30 medallions each bearing a different portrait of an England team member and a reproduction of their signature. The common reverse is the Esso logo and appropriate inscription. The England Squad in alphabetical order are:

Jeff Astle; Alan Ball; Gordon Banks; Colin Bell; Peter Bonetti; Bobby Charlton; Jack Charlton; Allan Clarke; Terry Cooper; Colin Harvey; Emyln Hughes; Norman Hunter; Geoff Hurst; Mick Jones; Brian Labone; Francis Lee; Paul Madeley; Bobby Moore OBE; Ian Storey Moore; Alan Mullery; Keith Newton; Henry Newton; Alan Oakes; Peter Osgood; Martin Peters; Paul Reaney; Peter Shilton; Peter Simpson; Peter Thompson and Tommy Wright.

Now some of you will no doubt remember that these medallions were used for promotional purposes at the time. You got a medallion with every so many gallons of petrol. But these are not the same! The give away medallions were aluminium, whereas the ones we have are Bronze!

The collections we are offering are all special 'VIP' presentation sets that come complete in a handsome dark blue embossed presentation album and in the original cardboard storage box - all mint fresh! We bought them direct from Esso, where they had lain forgotten in a store room for the last 28 years! See, we're not the only company that misplaces things!

Although England as defending champions went to Mexico in 1970 with high hopes - they were unfortunately put out by West Germany 3-2 in the quarter finals. Some of the victorious 1966 England squad are still represented here.

This is a particularly appropriate offering with the World Cup competition in France this year. Football memorabilia is always popular - so we anticipate demand for these collections will be high - several members of staff have already tried to buy some! There aren't many of these complete sets around - so if you'd like to add one to your collection, get in early!

ZMI0019 England World Cup Medallion Collection.....£29.50



VIP BRONZE PRESENTATION SETS

Nigel's Webspaces News

A newsletter distributed by Nigel's Webspaces, a website dedicated to the history of English football cards 1965/66 to 1979/80.

Having rediscovered my love for these coins through eBay I decided to acquire anything else associated with it. There exists a poster associated with the team which for years I assumed was directly associated with the promotion itself, for display within the petrol stations. However there is no actual mention of the promotion on the poster, just a reference to the World Cup squad. Furthermore, the poster contains 31 players as Alex Stepney and Tommy Smith have been added but Peter Osgood has been removed (despite making the final squad). This suggests that it would still have been produced prior to the naming of the squad but at a different date to when the coins were produced. Assuming that the coins needed a fairly lengthy production time it might date to more or less any time within say the first half of 1970. Then recently I came across an advert for the poster which it turns out was available as a promotion in its own right, presumably at some time prior to the coin launch (the coin promotion running through the World Cup).



Free!
World Cup Squad pictures when you buy two pints of Esso motor oil or four gallons of Esso petrol

Call in at your nearest Esso station now

There also exists an Esso promotional record which I must admit I was rather sceptical about acquiring. Turns out though that this is where the story begins to get more interesting. It is a 45 rpm 'single' type record with a cardboard picture sleeve. The front is fairly unexciting but the reverse shows the aforementioned poster and hints at the contents of the recording.

My copy of the record cover has fortunately been date stamped by the petrol station with "RECEIVED 16 MAR 1970". The record is clearly intended to explain the promotion to the petrol stations ahead of its launch although it also goes on to state that the Esso rep will be paying a visit well in advance of the national launch, suggesting that the promotion would not be starting for a few more weeks at least.

The cover states that millions of coins are being minted, 1 free for every 4 gallons of petrol, there will be a free collectors card, also a luxury version available for sale, there are 30 different coins, each one security-wrapped, Esso will be booking TV time and national newspaper space (adverts) and that Esso have the exclusive rights (in the petrol and allied field). "A 10% increase in petrol sales should be in the bag!"

Nigel's Webspac News

A newsletter distributed by Nigel's Webspac, a website dedicated to the history of English football cards 1965/66 to 1979/80.



Turning to the record itself, Side 1 has highlights of the 1966 World Cup Final with commentary by Brian Moore. Perhaps not too remarkable in itself but refreshingly different to hear an alternative version to Kenneth Wolstenholme's. My research indicates that this is actually taken from the BBC's radio commentary so it may also be of interest to the 1966 collector.

Side 2 is described as "The Esso 1970 World Cup". Unfortunately I no longer have access to a record player and so I am relying on a brief transcription I made when I last heard it and from memory. Again Brian Moore is the 'commentator' and he is going around the factory where they are making the coins. To me there was one key piece of information which made me stop the record and play the section again – some of the players were to be kept in short supply, deliberately held back! I could not believe it when I heard that but everything started to make sense, why I never managed to get that full set from 500+ coins. And here Esso were, blatantly admitting it.

It went on to say that the promotion to the public was due to start at the beginning of April and that England could not be knocked out of the World Cup until 11 June. Clearly Esso had gone to a lot of trouble over this promotion, a lot of investment, and they wanted to maximise their return.



Nigel's Webspaces News

A newsletter distributed by [Nigel's Webspaces](#), a website dedicated to the history of English football cards 1965/66 to 1979/80.

There was also a further medallion produced by Esso. I have no idea what its purpose was or how you could obtain one but it commemorates the 1970 World Cup itself, not the England team. It is made of sterling silver (as stamped on its edge) and comes in its own wallet holder, which appears to be made from the same material as the Esso Squelchers holder. It is a very high quality medallion but I have been lucky enough to get hold of two of these previously and one was noticeably thicker than the other. It is also larger than the other coins being around 4.5cm in diameter.



So that more or less concludes the story of the Esso 1970 World Cup. No doubt it was a very successful promotion for Esso as rival petrol companies started to mount similar campaigns shortly after, eg. Shell's Historic Cars and Man in Flight coin sets. Esso continued to produce other football related promotions and resurrected this for the 1990 World Cup. The idea was also resurrected by Sainsburys for later campaigns and Esso did a cheaper cardboard based version for 2010.

But there was to be one more final twist to the tale. Customs and Excise had obviously noted how successful the promotion had been and, despite the coins being of little intrinsic value, claimed as much as between £100,000 and £200,000 (according to various references) in Purchase Tax off Esso (Purchase Tax apparently being a forerunner to VAT). The claim was disputed by Esso and the legal case went all the way to the House of Lords in *Esso Petroleum Ltd v Commissioners of Customs and Excise* (1976). The case revolved around contract law and whether the coins were

Nigel's Webspaces News

A newsletter distributed by [Nigel's Webspaces](#), a website dedicated to the history of English football cards 1965/66 to 1979/80.

part of the contract to buy petrol. Esso eventually won the day by a 2 to 1 majority, that the coins were part of a separate contract for which no money changed hands. Googling the case reveals the odd piece of information such as the promotion was extensively advertised in the press and on television and that 4,900 petrol stations took part.

With thanks to Graham and my dad for starting off my love for these coins and everything associated with them.

David Fussell

18 April 2014

**Esso 1970
World Cup Coin
Collection.**

Have you completed yet?

Which of England's great players are still missing from your set? You've still got time to collect all thirty of these superbly-minted souvenir coins.

Collect from Esso Action Stations.
A free coin with every 4 gallons.

Esso The Action Station.

And I am very grateful to David for sending all of this fascinating and very important information, some of which was previously unknown.

Until next time...**Nigel**