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NEUROLOGICAL STAMP

David Livingstone (1813–73)

Livingstone graduated in medicine at the Faculty of
Physicians and Surgeons in Glasgow in 1840. He had
offered his services in 1838 to the London Missionary
Society. His ambition had been to go to China, but as
Britain was at war with China (the opium war) that was
impossible and he was sent to Africa. He travelled over a
third of the continent and as a result of his explorations
the map changed profoundly. He gave an accurate
description of African sleeping sickness and its transmit-
sion by the tsetse fly. The tsetse fly, which enters the
central nervous system, often after many years, had yet to
be discovered.

From 1866 he was lost to the world for five years while he
wandered over vast tracks of Africa making valuable
observations but losing his health and strength. As a mis-
sionary he was a great pioneer opening up the whole of
Central Africa to the influences of Christianity and his
observations and reports after encountering the famous
Arab slave dealer Tippoo Tib were important in the aboli-
tion of the slave trade.

With his disappearance he was believed dead, and the
New York Herald sent HM Stanley to search for him.
When he finally located him in Ujiji, Stanley uttered the
famous remark, "Dr Livingstone, I presume". Stanley
gave Livingstone, who was sick, desperately needed food
and medicine but could not persuade him to leave Africa
with him. Livingstone died in Africa two years later, in
1873. He is buried in Westminster Abbey. Before his bur-
ial his body was examined at the headquarters of the
Royal Geographical Society so that a positive identifica-
tion could be made. After 11 months his features were
unrecognisable, but a lump in the left humerus where it
had been shattered by a lion nearly thirty years earlier
allowed identification. Livingstone has been honoured a
number of times on stamps as an explorer. The stamp
issued by Kenya, Uganda, and Tanganyika in 1971
(Stanley Gibbons 63, Scott 237) illustrates the meeting
between Livingstone and Stanley.

L F HAAS