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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 transmission by the tsetse fly. The trypanosome, 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 missionary 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 abolition 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 burial his body was examined at the headquarters of the Royal Geographical Society so that a positive identification 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.

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