David Livingstone – Fact File

Date of birth 19 March 1813

Place of birth Blantyre, Lanarkshire, Scotland

School From the age of ten, David and his three brothers worked as a ‘piece’ in a cotton mill. This meant he would be crawling around under the spinning frames, twisting together broken threads and often covering 20 miles a day. At the end of the day, he spent two hours at the company school learning to read and write.

University Andersonian University, Glasgow, 1836 – 1837

David studied for a medial degree

London Missionary Society David began his missionary training in 1838

1841 Arrived at Mission station in Kuruman, southern Africa

1845 Married Mary Moffat and set up a mission station at Chonwane.

1849-1856 Made several journeys northwards, crossed the Kalahari Desert and found Lake Ngami. First European to cross the continent from the Atlantic coast to the Indian coast.

1852 Mary Livingstone and children left Africa

1855 After many journeys and illness, accompanied by numbers of local people and with supplies from Chief Sekeletu, Livingstone first sees the Mosioatunya (the smoke that thunders) which he names the Victoria Falls

Livingstone received the Royal Geographical Society’s gold medal in response to his despatches to the Society

1856 Returned to Britain to receive his medal

1857 Wrote Missionary Travels and Researches in South Africa – a bestseller

Speech at Cambridge University led to the establishment of the Universities Mission for Christian Work in Africa. Resigned from London Missionary Society, whose directors were not convinced that he was spreading Christianity on his journeys.

1858–1863 Left for Africa as Her Majesty’s Consul for the East Coast of Africa. Explored Lake Nyasa (today Lake Malawi) and the Zambia, Shire and Ruvuma rivers.
1858  **Expedition to River Zambezi** sponsored by the British government to find out about the agricultural and mineral resources of the area. Accompanied by his brother, Charles who went as a photographer, John Kirk, a botanist, Richard Thornton, a geologist and Thomas Baines, an artist.

1861  Helped the Universities Mission set up a mission station near Lake Chilwa.

1862  Mary Livingstone dies from malaria.

1864  Expedition abandoned and surviving members returned to Britain.


**1866-1873** Last expedition sponsored by RGS to find the source of the Nile. Appointed British consul to Central Africa. Returned to Africa via Bombay, where Africans James Chuma and Abdullah Susi join him. Seven years of travelling through central Africa, failed to find the source of the Nile. First European to reach the Lualaba River.

1871  Witnessed a massacre at a town called Nyangwe, where Arab slave traders killed over 400 locals.

1872  Meeting with journalist Henry Stanley who was sent to try and find Livingstone. Stanley met him with the famous words: “Dr Livingstone, I presume?”

1873  In May, Livingstone dies at Chitambo’s village in Ilala. (Present day Zambia) His heart is buried beneath a tree. Chuma and Susi decide to carry his body to the coast, along with Livingstone’s papers and instruments.

In June, East African slave trade abolished.

1874  Livingstone’s funeral held at Westminster Abbey – a day of national mourning.

The *Last Journals of David Livingstone in Central Africa* published. These were edited by Horace Waller who based the descriptions of Livingstone’s death on the accounts of Chuma and Susi.