GEORGE EARNEST MORRISON Born 1862 at Geelong Victoria

Timeline: to May 1883..... He turned 21 on February 4th 1883.

ACHIEVEMENTS ALL BEFORE HE WAS 21

1. ***Walked...*** ***from GEELONG to QUEENSCLIFF*** *and* ***RETURN in 1 DAY.***

   as a ***16.y.o. in 1878 on his own***

2. ***Walked...*** ***from GEELONG to ADELAIDE.***

   as a ***17.y.o. in 1879 on his own***

3. ***Canoed...*** ***down THE MURRAY*** *from* ***ALBURY to THE COORONG*** *then*

   Walked... ***back to Melbourne***

   as an ***18.y.o. in 1880 on his own***

4. ***Investigate Blackbirding and the Kanaka trade on a Queensland Slaver. Shipwrecked, and other MINI ADVENTURES.....then.***

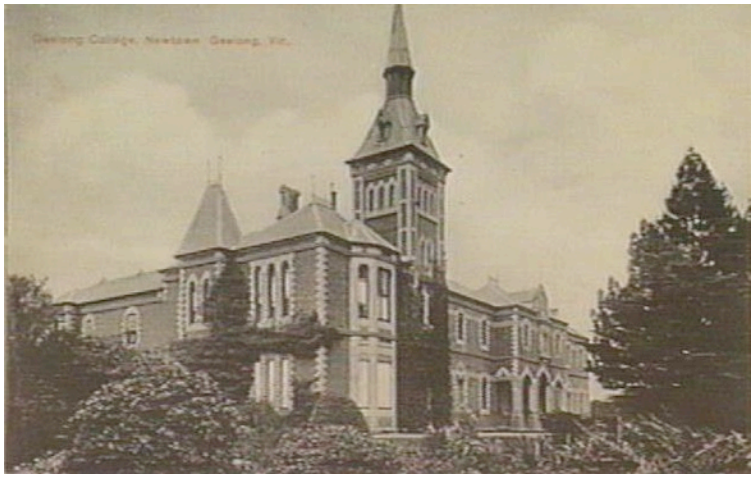
   Papua New Guinea, ***made way***

   to ***NORMANTON Q.L.D.***

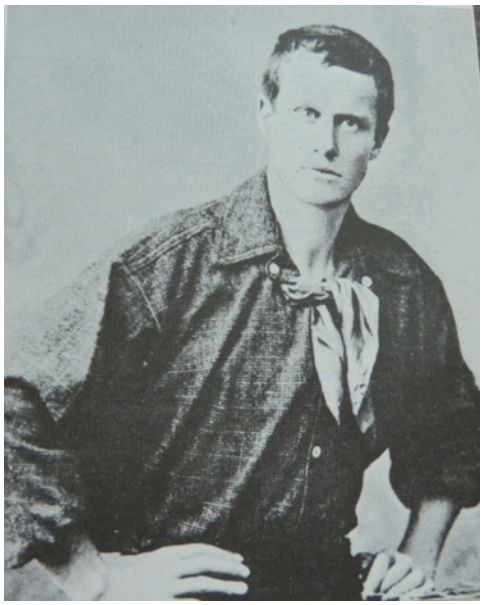
   Walked... ***Normanton QLD. to MELBOURNE VIC.***

   as a ***20 y.o. in 1882/1883 on his own***

View and Read on McDuff.....



Geelong College.



At 19

As Resident Surgeon at Ballarat Hospital 1893

1. Walked... ***from GEELONG to QUEENSCLIFF and RETURN in 1 DAY.***

as a 16.y.o. in 1878 on his own

The Event.

* He got up that morning at about 4 o clock to prepare for the walk. His Mum would have given him" sustenance" rations, and probably a word of warning to be home by dark. On the way to Queenscliff, he stopped off at a Public House at Wallington for a "shandy." Must have been hot! and he must have had a bit of "jingle" in the pocket.

* Having visited Queenscliff, over the years with his family for holidays, the route would not have been foreign. After all, the hilltop placement of Geelong College where he lived, with its 360 degree panorama ; would have made him aware of hills, valleys, a river and Corio Bay. But being on his own the excitement of cresting the last hill, and beneath him Swan Bay, Port Phillip bay and right opposite, a long way away, Arthurs Seat, on the other side of Port Phillip Bay, would have been "exciting."

* Anyway just before midday, after half an hours rest, he set off on the return journey. 42 miles and twelve and a quarter hours all up. Very little details of this walk are available, so we just have to speculate.

Points to Ponder.

* Whilst at Queenscliff, he arranged and "had a bath" to ease his muscles, and sore feet. Where he did that, or who he "conned" we don't know. Remember hot water was "not on tap" as we now it today. It might have been the Owner of the Boarding Rooms his parents frequented annually.

* His journey whilst relatively safe, after all it was in the era of the "Ned Kelly Gang" and others. In that era quite a few persona "would have been sleeping rough in the bush" and able to act rough and tough. After all society in that age did not support the unfortunate. At 15 years of age he had started shooting animals and "collecting things" so his mind would have been very "full" as he experienced that day.

* The Telegraph system had been connected to Queenscliff in Jan. 1855, and as in his later travels, he was no stranger to its operation, and ability to have sums of money transferred to him if necessary.

* In his words, he had started a "daily rum sort of diary" at that age. The "event" appears to be the very beginning of his life long quest to see, record, and to possibly publish his writing's.....for money.

2. Walked… from GEELONG to ADELAIDE.

as a 17.y.o. in 1879 on his own

The Event.

* This was really the start of his expeditions, about 650 miles around the coast. It should be remembered that at this stage he was "into" athletics, football, cricket and rowing.

* A friend accompanied him a little way after Queenscliff, just to see him on his way. Then he was on his own! There must have ***"family discussions"*** before this grand undertaking. Maybe his parents thought he was just going for a longish "walk." . On his journey he did Telegraph and write to his Mother on occasions..

* He set out with a tomahawk "for defence", cooking utensils packed into 2 billies, that also contained writing materials. His rucksack contained a penknife, bandages, tooth brush and paste. A small amount of meat and bread; tough trousers, boots shirt and jacket. Also a small amount of money.

* He must have had a good sense of timing, AND he must have been aware of the date. He actually recorded that he had to break into a trot for some miles so that he could see a very famous cricketer, Arthur (Alfie) Jarvis, the Australian Wicketkeeper, born in Hindmarsh, bat at ***The Oval Adelaide*** on the Saturday he arrived at Adelaide.

* He really did stick to the westward heading coastal track. Falling in with various people, and having the ability to "write them up. In rough sequence he travelled to Cape Otway, Port Campbell, Portland, Cape Bridgewater, Mt. Gambier, Millicent, Kingston, Wellington, Strathalbyn, then to Adelaide.

Points to Ponder.

* Maybe the strictures of academic School "life" proved a little difficult. Maybe also he became "overly familiar" with an Academic Environment. However, he was soon due to leave home when he was 18; and live at Melbourne's Scotch College where his Uncle was Headmaster, and another Uncle was a Tutor, so that he could attend Melbourne University and study to be a Medical Doctor. His Fathers second son Norman, eventually took over as Headmaster and became owner of Geelong College.

* What his parents did not know, that whilst at Adelaide, staying with a family friend, he actually applied, unsuccessfully, to get a seaman's job on a ship that was leaving Adelaide for Western Australia.

* He returned to Melbourne by Steamer. The ***Syme brothers*** owners of ***The Weekly Leader***, and ***The Age***, paid him a fee to write of his adventures. This he did and they were published in 4 weekly articles initially called ***Diary of a Tramp in no.1,*** in ***The Leader Supplement Melb. Sat May 1, 1880,*** then for subsequent articles called ***"Diary of a Tramp-from Queenscliff to Adelaide no. 2 to 4.***

3. Canoed… ***down THE MURRAY*** *from* ***ALBURY to THE COORONG*** *then*

Walked… ***back to Melbourne***

as an ***18.y.o. in 1880 on his own***

The Event.

* He bought a clinker built cedar canoe 14 feet long, with an up curving bow and stern, with an arched deck. A long paddle and small mast with a small lug sail. His journey was approximately 1550 miles

* He has with him 100 cartridges, cocoa, biscuits, a small bottle of chlorodyne and a flask of brandy.

* After passing through Customs on the Albury side, he began his journey. He lived of the abundance of birds, wild pigs, kangaroos, rabbits, wild cattle, iguanas, porcupines, and snakes. Lonely Station Managers also offered him hospitality. Some properties were visited by 4 or 5 "Murrumbidgee Whalers (Tramps) a day and were usually given flour and tea.

* On his journey some very interesting characters and properties were discovered. One particular Squatter's property actually had a Murray river frontage of 212 miles.

Points to Ponder.

* After leaving his parents at Geelong College, he went and stayed at his Headmaster Uncle Alexander's Scotch College. This would have been in preparation to him undertaking Medicine studies at Melbourne University.

* Two interesting things emerge. His fascination with the explorer Henry Morton Stanley (of Dr. Livingstone fame), and his personal writing of ***a History of Adventurers in Australia.***

* Whilst in Melbourne he indulged himself in all sports, most noticeably sculling. This would have given him an inkling into his next adventure. Maybe he had read about the Scottish Captain Cadell of River Boat fame, who had rowed a canvass canoe from the Gold Mining area of Swan Hill, using some out of luck miners as rowers.

* He actually wrote a small article for an Uncle whilst at Scotch College, summarising the Adventures of some of Australia's early explorers, which he sold. He dedicated the book to Henry Moreland Stanley of doctor Livingstone fame. He also did some Latin translations for his Uncle at the College, again for money, so he probably paid his way for the canoe purchase and the associated travel by train etc. to Wodonga, the starting point.

* It is interesting to note that ***G.A.Syme*** as the editor in Chief of ***The Leader***, did not like Morrisons articles regarding this particular expedition. They were called ***Down the Murray in a Canoe. Signed G.E.M. Melbourne University*** .Rather amateurish and mundane. George actually agreed. The articles ceased with mutual agreement.

*Maybe he read of Ibn Battista, or Marco Polo or who ever.....at this stage. All who were young men at the crucial point of their own lives.

4. Investigate Blackbirding and the Kanaka trade on a Queensland Slaver. Shipwrecked, and other MINI ADVENTURES.....then.

Papua New Guinea, made way to NORMANTON Q.L.D.

Walked…Normanton QLD to MELBOURNE VIC.

as a 20 y.o. in 1882/1883 on his own

The Event.

*The mini adventures, prior to his Big Walk, written below, are ***unbelievable, and deserve more.***

* He arrived in Normanton on the 19th Dec.1882, and immediately made very basic purchases at Normanton. Such as..a rough swag. Containing, bush hat, heavy boots, corduroys oil cloth, blanket a billy and a quart pot.

* The locals all thought he was mad, particularly as The Wet Season was approaching. At this time Normanton, about 50 miles up river from the River Normans Entrance; where Burke and Wills desisted in their efforts to get to the sea, and was a centre for the Etheridge and Palmer Goldfields. It had been named after Captain Norman, who commanded the first Victorian Naval Vessel that was sent to help The Burke and Wills expedition if necessary.

*In his journal he said" my telescope was stolen in Cooktown, my quinine was accidently thrown away on Thursday Island, and my compass was destroyed in Papua New Guinea." Even today, life expectancy in the outback is reduced to zilch, if subjected to 2 or 3 days in the blinding Sun, without water, or even in the Top End floods.

*Wading through flooded creeks and rivers. Stuck at Cunnamulla as a bum, for about a week because he had run out of money and had to await a telegraph from his parents. A rough summary of his route encompassed Normanton, Cloncurry, Winton and he struck Coopers Creek about 200 miles to the North of Bourke and Wills base at Nappa Marie, Thargomindah, Hungerford where NSW and Queensland state lines cut in the Townships middle, Wilcannia, Hay, Deniliquin, Echuca then SSE. to Melbourne.

Points to Ponder.

*"How did he do it?" Force of personality perhaps, honed by his Family background.

*Maybe just plain "big picture—big attitude.?"

*After his failure at 2nd year medical exams at Melbourne University, he decided to expand his Journalistic career. He called ***on David Syme*** and said he could visit and write about "blackbirding" On ***The Age*** staff was ***Alfred Deakin a future Australian Prime Minister.***

*His Father and Mother tried to dissuade him, but he explained that ***David Syme*** of ***The Age*** might pay the costs.

*Finally got to Mackay, where Nellie Melba as Mrs. Charles Armstrong, lived before her Opera career commenced, married to a Sugar Cane Farmer. His cousin Elisabeth Carter, also lived in Mackay.

MINI ADVENTURES PRIOR to the Walk..

*He Shipped out from Mackay as an Ordinary Seaman for New Hebrides back to Mackay.
*He later wrote articles called***, *A Cruise in a Queensland Slaver, by a Medical Student.***
*10 days after getting to Mackay shipped out with men going to work on Palmer River Goldfields Shipwrecked!
* Shipped out from Bowen to Cooktown. Then worked his passage on a Missionary steamer to Port Moresby then took passage on a Chinese Junk back to Cooktown. Nearly Ship wrecked.
* Somehow went up to Thursday Island stayed with Police Magistrate, then took a steamer to Normanton arrived 19th Dec 1882.

. YOU !!! CAN DECIDE ON HIS CHARACTER TYPE

Was it outright egotistical stupidity, tinged with "must do something," bravado to make a name for himself. After all he was surrounded by the "atmosphere" of Geelong College " owned by his Father the Headmaster Surrounded by books of exploits, education, Teachers who encouraged efforts, both mental and physical, and other relatives in the "Teaching business". One who was the Headmaster of Melbourne's Scotch College, and another who taught there.

Deciphering some of his notes/letters, it seems that he relished "doing it" on his own. Maybe, as he indicated, he experienced natural fear but was driven to overcome it. You make up your own mind!

He always seemed to "have something" as a deadline or something to do after an expedition.

* As a schoolboy at Geelong he faced demon Australian bowler Fred Spofforth, who stopped bowling underarm to over arm, after watching Dr. W.G. Grace's bowlers on their Australian Tour--. On his walk to Adelaide he just made it in time to see Australian Cricketer and "Keeper" Arthur Harwood Jarvis, the boy from Hindmarsh, bat at the Oval in Adelaide--. On his marathon from Normanton he was keen to make a College dinner at Melbourne.

SUMMARY OF HIS LIFE..

*He was tallish, strongly built. A good all rounder at sport. alcohol. He always kept himself fit. The ability to express himself by writing, including daily diaries, especially letters to his Mother came naturally, so that the Journalistic-Correspondent, part of his career, was no hardship. He would have been aware of the Australian Poets, Adam Lindsey Gordon, Henry Kendall, Banjo Paterson and Henry Lawson. He married his secretary, and had 3 sons.

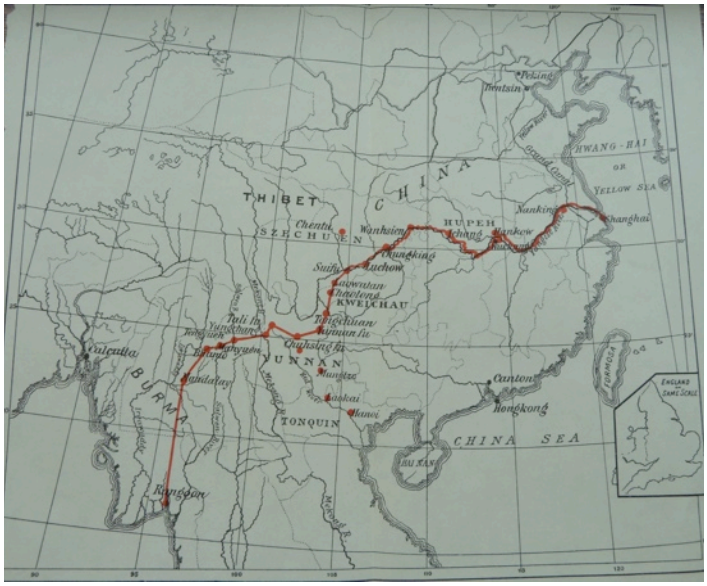
*Probably realised that he had better Graduate so that he had a "income " for his " exploring and journalistic activities."

*Was his big walk from China to Burma, a later in life fulfilment, or necessary to impress Chinese War Lords or Sun Yat Sen as well as his Press Syndications to Britain and Australia?

*After graduating in Medicine in Scotland in 1887, he practised all over the world. First in North America, the West Indies, in Spain, then Ballarat, where he was sacked from the Hospital. This was 35 years after William Wills (of Bourke and Wills) worked for his Doctor Father in Ballarat. Travelling on to the Philippines, to China, where he became an "Advisor" to Chinese Leaders. Japan. Vietnam and Burma, and Eastern Russia, then U.K.

* At Yantai (Chefoo), in China, he actually met with Banjo Paterson, who in His journalistic career, was trying to get to St. Petersburg by train.

Morrison, in Chinese dress, leaving Yunnan City during his walk across China in 1894



Map of the Big walk. Size of England and Wales to the right.