

Schuil, Catherine Jeanette (1899–1974)

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Catherine Jeanette Schuil was a British missionary educator, administrator, and curriculum developer for the Adventist schools in Kenya. She served for over two decades before returning to England in 1951 after her mother became ill and needed her care.

Early Life

Catherine “Jean” Schuil (pronounced SCOYLE) was born in Willesden, London, on November 23, 1899.¹ She was the eldest of the three children of Johannes “John” Schuil, an electrical engineer by trade, and Ellen Schuil.² Her parents were of Dutch origin and had settled in northern England before she was born. Catherine was raised at Tyneside in Newcastle in northeastern England. Her father owned a factory that manufactured electric goods.³

Becoming an Adventist

John Schuil heard of the Seventh-day Adventist faith when he became ill and was admitted to the Leicester Sanitarium, then run by the Adventists.⁴ He was baptized in August 1910, and his family also became Adventists. He became actively involved in the affairs of the SDA Church in Newcastle from then on, and his daughter attended local schools before training to become a teacher. On June 6, 1926, John Schuil died in a road accident while traveling to Leeds from Newcastle.⁵ He was survived by his wife and children. His business was sold after



Catherine Schuil

Photo courtesy of the British Union Conference.

his death.

Moving to Africa

Catherine Schuil taught in Newcastle for some years before she received the call to mission service. In 1930, [Grace Clarke](#), who had started the [Kamagambo School](#) for Girls in 1922, was in England on furlough. She met Schuil and convinced her to travel back to Africa with her to teach at her school. She accepted, and they arrived at Kamagambo in December 1930. Schuil began her missionary service, assisting Clarke at the girl's school⁶ She joined the faculty at the school, which included Principal [E. Roy Warland](#), Ruth Raitt, and Conrad J. Hyde.

In 1933, Schuil was appointed the director of the Normal Department at Kamagambo⁷ She was then responsible for training teachers following the government of Kenya curriculum. At this time, the Adventists already had 150 schools that needed teachers. Schuil excelled at the Normal School, and her students passed government examinations well. She upheld high standards, and her teachers also turned out well and were in high demand. Besides overseeing teacher training, she also taught at the boy's school⁸ A gifted musician, Schuil taught music and also trained the boys choir at Kamagambo.⁹

Return to England

In March 1951, she was forced to cut short her missionary work to care for her ailing mother. She left Kamagambo and was replaced at the Normal School by Vera Lauderdale.¹⁰ She settled at the Markyate Village near Dunstable in Bedfordshire, north of London.¹¹ She attended the Luton Church, where she served as their organist.¹² She also served as the church treasurer as well as the church clerk.

Death

In 1974, she became ill for several weeks after returning from a holiday in France and was hospitalized at Luton. She seemed to get better and had been discharged from hospital, and then travelled to Crieff in Scotland with her brother, Dr. Philip Schuil, and his wife.¹³ Dr. Schuil was a professor at Newbold College. Catherine's situation took a turn for the worse and was admitted at the Crieff Nursing Home, where she passed away on September 16, 1974.¹⁴ She was unmarried and did not have children. She was laid to rest three days later at Crieff.

Legacy

When Catherine Schuil first arrived in Kenya, the country was transitioning from its tribal culture, and the status of girls and women was extremely low. Girls were valued only for the dowry they could bring their parents and, upon marriage, were considered part of their husband's wealth. Schuil transformed this situation by introducing modern education to girls, enabling them to pursue employment as teachers, nurses, and in other professions.

This not only allowed them to contribute to their families' welfare, but also to the nation's development. She set high standards in teacher training, earning accolades from the colonial government for the professionalism displayed at the Kamagambo Training School. Although she did not have children of her own, she nurtured and educated hundreds of girls and boys at her school, imparting important life skills and empowering an entire generation.

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NOTES

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2. <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:XWC2-XSR>, accessed August 4, 2024.

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4. A. Wilson, "Schuil," obituary, *The Missionary Worker*, September 10, 1926, 7.

5. Ibid.

6. C. H. Anscombe, "Miss Schuil who is taking up school work . . .," Transportation Notes, *The Advent Survey*, February 1, 1931, 8.

7. E. R. Warland, "The Call of the Hour in Africa is Education," *The Advent Survey*, December 1, 1933, 6.

8. Virgil Robinson, (Mrs.), "News Items from Kamagambo Training School," *Southern Africa Division Outlook*, May 1, 1948, 2.
 9. W. C. S. Raitt, "Co-operation in Radio Work in Kenya," *Southern Africa Division Outlook*, February 15, 1953, 3.
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 11. Hulbert, 6.
 12. Ibid.
 13. Ibid.
 14. Ibid.
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