

Lorraine Parsons, Provincial Archives of the Moravian Church of Great Britain and Ireland

*The Pioneering Medical Work of Dr Arthur and Adie Keevill with the Moravian Missions in Tanzania*

The mission work of the Moravian Church in the Unyamwezi district of present-day Tanzania began at the end of the nineteenth century but was later disrupted during the First World War when Moravian missionaries were interned at Tabora. Following the war, the Church faced the challenge of rebuilding its mission infrastructure in a region where ailments such as leprosy, smallpox, sleeping sickness, malaria, bilharzia, and leprosy were prevalent. In 1922, renewed efforts were underway to re-establish and expand the mission work, with a particular emphasis on developing medical work and services.

Then, Dr Arthur Keevill and his wife, Adie, were called as medical missionaries to Sikonge in 1923. Shortly after his arrival, he founded a hospital that became the centre of Moravian medical work in the region. They began to develop a comprehensive medical programme that included outpatient care, surgical treatment, public health initiatives, and later established a dedicated leprosy hospital, responding to a critical and stigmatised health need within the local population.

Adie Keevill played a central but often under-recognised role in this work. She initiated a maternity clinic for Wanyamwezi women at a time when no comparable maternity services existed in Tabora, significantly expanding the Moravian Church's engagement with women's health and maternal care. Her contribution highlights the vital role of missionary wives in sustaining and shaping the outreach of the Church.

Arthur Keevill also specialised in the treatment of sleeping sickness, undertaking experimental work that later gained wider recognition. During the Second World War, he served under the government of Tanganyika, reflecting the close interaction between mission medicine and colonial health administration. He subsequently returned to Moravian medical service for a further five years before retiring after almost four decades serving in Tanzania.

The proposal for a paper at the Inaugural Conference is to reconstruct the pioneering work of the Keevills and highlight the development of medical services in Tanzania, drawing upon their unpublished correspondence and mission reports.