

**Pietersburg Dutch Reformed Church  
(Moedergemeente/Mother Church)**

Part of SoS National Heritage Site Nomination

MUSEA CONSULTANCY CC

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**A BRIEF OUTLINE/SUMMARY OF THE GENERAL  
HISTORY OF THE DUTCH REFORMED CHURCH IN THE  
LIMPOPO PROVINCE IN RELATION TO THE  
PIETERSBURG DRC**

AND

**MANAGEMENT PLAN**

**JULY 2013**

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Annexure A to the SoS: Pietersburg Dutch Reformed Church  
(Moedergemeente)

National Heritage Site Nomination, April 2013

SAHRIS case ID. 2058

# Annexure A: Pietersburg Dutch Reformed Church (Moedergemeente / Mother Church)

## A BRIEF OUTLINE/SUMMARY OF THE GENERAL HISTORY OF THE DRC IN THE LIMPOPO PROVINCE IN RELATION TO THE PIETERSBURG DRC

### *PIETERSBURG DUTCH REFORMED CHURCH (MOEDERGEMEENTE / MOTHER CHURCH) – IT'S IMPORTANCE IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF RELIGIOUS COGNIZANCE AND OTHER SOCIAL DEVELOPMENTS IN THE LIMPOPO PROVINCE*

#### **INTRODUCTION**

The aim of this Annexure is to give a very brief outlay of the general history of the DRC in the Limpopo Province, its influences on the social development and religious cognizance of its inhabitants<sup>1</sup>. The aim is not to give an in depth analysis of church influence across the whole Province, this in itself will require a whole different study and thesis, which falls outside the structure of the grading, nomination and declaration process as prescribed by SAHRA.

The early history of the DRC in South Africa, as well as in the Limpopo Province is complicated, intricate and diverse. Different opinions and ideas were mostly at the heart of the complications that faced the church on its ways towards spiritual enlightenment. This was not different in the general historical church development in the Limpopo Province

#### **CHRISTIANITY AND ITS INFLUENCE ON SOUTH AFRICAN SOCIETY**

“Not many countries in the world have been as influenced by Christianity as South Africa. The churches and missionary societies played a crucial role in the shaping of South African culture

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<sup>1</sup> This annexure is part of the SoS: Pietersburg Dutch Reformed Church (Moedergemeente, National Heritage Site Nomination, April 2013, SAHRIS case ID. 2058

as much in the colonial period as during the years of the formation of the Union and the apartheid era”.<sup>2</sup>

Christianity is the dominant religion in South Africa, with almost 80% of the population in 2001 professing to be Christian. No single denomination predominates, with mainstream Protestant churches, Pentecostal churches, African initiated churches, and the Catholic Church all having significant numbers of adherents.<sup>3</sup>

The Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) took a decision to start its own mission work under Black South Africans at its first synod held in 1824. In 1857, the DRC synod decided to have separate church services for White and Colored members, and in 1881 a separate church was formed for non-White members, called the Dutch Reformed Mission Church (DRMC) and in 1951 the Dutch Reformed Church in Africa (DRCA) was formed and in 1994 the DRMC and the DRCA united to form the Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa (URCSA).<sup>4</sup>

A comprehensive study was made on the Dutch Reformed Church missionary work, written by William A Saayman: *Being missionary, being human*, 2007. “He describes the social history in terms of waves of changes, and separates the historical time-line into four different waves: the first wave: 1779-1834, the second wave: 1867-1939, the third wave: 1954-1976 and the fourth wave starting around 1990.”<sup>5</sup> The author is a respected missiologist who is also well acquainted with the history of mission in Southern African context. His method of research can be termed an interdisciplinary approach of interaction between culture, religion and political economy. He concludes his study with some conclusions on the role that women played in mission work and critique towards the DRC for its failure to acknowledge her role in the institutionalization and preservation of apartheid. This resource can be utilized for future missionary studies on the DRC in general.

During the early 1900s, in the former homeland of Lebowa, which included Sekhukhuneland where the BaPedi live, “the evangelist Phillipus Mantsene, together with his supporters Reverend and Mrs. AP Burger, laid the foundation for the involvement of the Transvaal Vrouesendingvereniging, which was established on 15<sup>th</sup> November 1905. This led to the calling of Rev and Mrs. AJ Rousseau, who pioneered the first mission station in Sekhukhuneland, called Burger, which was officially opened in 1929, as missionaries. The first black missionary for this area, Rev EM Phatudi, was ordained on 27<sup>th</sup> March 1943 at Mphahlele.” According to Jordaan

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<sup>2</sup> *From Church History to Religious History*, by Philippe Denis, 1997

<sup>3</sup> Christianity in South Africa, Wikipedia free encyclopedia

<sup>4</sup> Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa, Wikipedia free encyclopedia

<sup>5</sup> Van der Merwe, C., 2011, “Missionary History of the Dutch Reformed Church”, HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies 67(3), Art. #1127, 2 pages.doi:10.4102/hts.V67i3.1127

white and black evangelist and missionaries made a major contribution to the growth of the mission stations, and later these mission stations were phased-out to make way for the later inclusion with the Dutch Reformed Church in Africa (DRCA - established 1951).<sup>6</sup>

It can generally be concluded that other DRC mission stations across the Limpopo Province may have developed and followed the same route more or less than the one described by Jordaan in Sekhukhuneland. A further generalization could be made that the white dominated DRC developed parallel to that of the Dutch Reformed Mission Church (DRMC) but must be seen as two separate developments within the DRC.

### **EARLY HISTORY OF THE DRC IN THE LIMPOPO PROVINCE**

The Nederduits Gereformeerde Kerk (Dutch Reformed Church, DRC or NGK) is a Reformed Christian denomination in South Africa. It also has a presence in neighboring countries, such as Namibia, Swaziland and parts of Botswana and Zimbabwe. Originating in the 17<sup>th</sup> century from the Dutch Reformed Church of the Netherlands, it is the largest church within South Africa's Dutch Reformed tradition and along with the Nederduits Hervormde Kerk, and the Reformed Churches in South Africa, is one of the three sister churches of South Africa.<sup>7</sup>

In the early 1800s the Dutch Reformed Church became the official Church of the Cape colony. The inability to secure the border areas for the Dutch farmers, a large number decided to move further east and north, away from the British government in the Cape. This resulted in the Great Trek, and the eventual establishment of the South African Republic (Z.A.R or the Transvaal Republic, united in 1852 with the signing of the Sand River Convention), consisting of what is known today as Gauteng and Limpopo Province. The Zoutpansberg District was located north of the Waterberg, known later as Northern Transvaal, and became part of Z.A.R in 1864.

A group of Voortrekkers, under the leadership of Louis Trichardt, ended their long trek at the foot-hills of the Zoutpansberg in 1836, and later the town called Schoemansdal will be established here (in 1848 – known firstly as “Oude Dorp” and later as Zoutpansberg Dorp).<sup>8</sup> In 1852, the Zoutpansberg Congregation became an independent congregation (they were part of the Rustenburg Congregation (Magaliesberg Congregation), but there was confusion as to which church doctrine this congregation subscribed. The first clergy to visit this area in 1852

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<sup>6</sup> *History of the Dutch Reformed Church mission in Sekhukhuneland and Church Development 1875-1994*, GJ Jordaan, 2011

<sup>7</sup> Nederduits Gereformeerde Kerk, from Wikipedia, free encyclopedia, page 1

<sup>8</sup> Pietersburg 1886-1986, by Louis Changuion, 1986; page 9

was Rev. Andrew Murray and Rev. Neetling from the DRC and their visit on 10 April 1852 was seen as the date of inception of the DRC in this area and after the official release from the Magaliesberg Congregation (Rustenburg) on 30 April 1852, the church became independent.<sup>9</sup> But Rev. Dirk van der Hoff of the Nederduits Hervormede Church was the chairperson at the first official Church Council Meeting on 1<sup>st</sup> April 1854 and was the first minister to administer Holy Communion.<sup>10</sup> A combination of the two church doctrines was accepted by the congregation but it was not long before the differences in opinion and church doctrine became problematic.

Confusion regarding the inclusion of the Zoutpansberg Congregation within the Cape Synod resulted in the later rift between the DRC and the Nederduits Hervormde Church. A deeply divided congregation, on religious as well as political grounds was already very apparent during this time.<sup>11</sup>

In 1862 the DRC established a mission station called Goedgedacht amongst the Buys-people, the descendants of Coenraad Buys, a white colonist who left the Cape Colony in 1814 with his three black wife's and who settled in the Zoutpansberg area, where his descendants are still living today.<sup>12</sup> The first missionary was Alexander McKidd whose work was later carried on by the well-known DRC missionary Reverend Stefanus Hofmeyr (1836/7 - 1905).<sup>13</sup> For nearly a quarter of a century he would work for the benefit of the all people, black, colored and white of the Northern Transvaal.<sup>14</sup> Hofmeyr also wrote about his missionary work: "*Twintig Jaren in Zoutpansberg. Een verhaal van twintig jarigen arbeid onder de heidenen in de Transvaal*", (1890, Kaapstad).

Reverend NJ van Warmeloo of the Nederduits Hervormde Church was the first officially appointed minister in Schoemansdal and he appointed the first official teacher, C van Boeschoten.<sup>15</sup> The first church was built in Schoemansdal in 1857, but the town was abandoned in 1867 when the inhabitants of the town had to evacuate the town due to unrest with the local black population. The Congregation then established itself at Marabastad, approximately 15km south of (today) Polokwane (formerly Pietersburg). Especially Rev. Hofmeyr played a leading

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<sup>9</sup> Geskiedenis van die Pietersburg NG Kerk, by M. Horn, unpublished, 2002; Chapter 1: The first Twenty Years, page 4

<sup>10</sup> Pietersburg 1886-1986, by Louis Changuion, 1986; page 11

<sup>11</sup> Geskiedenis van die Pietersburg NG Kerk, by M. Horn, unpublished, 2002; Chapter 1: The first Twenty Years, page 11

<sup>12</sup> Pietersburg 1886-1986, by Louis Changuion, 1986; page 7

<sup>13</sup> Pietersburg 1886-1986, by Louis Changuion, 1986; page 11

<sup>14</sup> Geskiedenis van die Pietersburg NG Kerk, by M. Horn, unpublished, 2002; Chapter 2: Eerwaarde Stephanus Hofmeyr, page 5

<sup>15</sup> Pietersburg 1886-1986, by Louis Changuion, 1986; page 11

role in keeping the scattered congregation together.<sup>16</sup> From 1866, the Dutch Reformed Church became the established church of the Transvaal Republic.<sup>17</sup> In the mid 1870's a new church\* was built on the Farm Weltevreden (Rhenosterpoort Area)<sup>18</sup> as well a school for the congregant's children was founded with Barend Vorster as the teacher.<sup>19</sup> A church bell was added in 1879, and a communion service/set was purchased. The bell is today in the possession of the Louis Trichardt DRC Congregation and the communion service is still being used by the current Pietersburg congregation.<sup>20</sup>

(According to the current reverend of the Pietersburg DRC, Rev. GG Haumann, the Pietersburg DRC congregation existed in a vacuum between 1852 and 1872, when during this time, the Nederduits Hervormde Church was seen as the "official church". Further secession of the congregation happened when part of the congregation seceded to the Reformed Church. On 23 September 1872, the Pietersburg DRC was established as the first Nederduits Gereformeede Church – Dutch Reformed Church of the Zoutpansberg, later to be called Pietersburg DRC.<sup>21</sup> Thus there were 3 main church "groups" in the Province: Dutch Reformed, Nederduits Hervormde and Reformed).

As the areas around Pietersburg were expanding with newcomers and farmers there was a need for more religious instruction by the church, and for this purpose new wards of the DRC were established in 1879: Klein Spelonken, Groot Spelonken, Rhenosterpoort, Mathibaskraal, Marabastad, Sterkloop and Doornkraal and each ward was represented by elected deacons and elders.<sup>22</sup>

After the First Boer War (1880-1881) political unity was established, and the three Dutch sister churches: the DRC, the Nederduits Hervormde Church and the Reformed Church also decided that unification between the three churches is a possibility. The Zoutpansberg Congregation, between 1883 and 1885, made a formal protest against unification. But in the end they lost

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<sup>16</sup> Geskiedenis van die Pietersburg NG Kerk, by M. Horn, unpublished, 2002; Chapter 1: The first Twenty Years, page 17

<sup>17</sup> Geskiedenis van die Pietersburg NG Kerk, by M. Horn, unpublished, 2002; Chapter 1: The first Twenty Years, page 18

<sup>18</sup> Geskiedenis van die Pietersburg NG Kerk, by M. Horn, unpublished, 2002; Chapter 2: Herorganisasie van die Gemeente, page 2

<sup>19</sup> Geskiedenis van die Pietersburg NG Kerk, by M. Horn, unpublished, 2002; Chapter 2: 'n Skool in die Gemeente, page 5

<sup>20</sup> Geskiedenis van die Pietersburg NG Kerk, by M. Horn, unpublished, 2002; Chapter 2: Opknapping van die kerk op Weltevreden, page 6

<sup>21</sup> Personal communication with Rev. GG Haumann, July 2013

<sup>22</sup> Geskiedenis van die Pietersburg NG Kerk, by M. Horn, unpublished, 2002; Chapter 2: Opknapping van die kerk op Weltevreden, page 6

against the tactics used by Rev. Neethling and this led to the founding of the Nuwe Verenigde Kerk (The United Church), with Reverend Biccard as the minister. This unity only lasted approximate 18 months and it was decided to divide of the property of the United Church.<sup>23</sup> In May 1887, the two churches parted ways, with the Nederduits Hervormde Church started out on its own (again). They were later awarded the church property in Marabastad.<sup>24</sup> But in November 1887 the DRC Congregation again decided to join the United Church and became known as the Nederduitse Hervormde of Gereformeerde Gemeente Zoutpansberg, and was awarded the church square property in the newly formed Pietersburg.<sup>25</sup> This congregation later became the known as the Pietersburg DRC (Moedergemeente or Mother Church) and it was from this foundation that all other DRC congregations in the Province originated from.

A new town, with a site for a new church was promised to the people of Schoemansdal after the evacuation in 1867. This promise was fulfilled in 1886, when the town Pietersburg was officially established. The Dutch Reformed Church (or the, Nederduitse Hervormde of Gereformeerde Gemeente Zoutpansberg) was allocated a stand in Market Street, located between Market square and Church Square, and the first church was built here. The corner stone of the Weltevreden Church was used in this church, and Vinnicombe and Schultz were the building contractors. On 18 October 1890, the new church was inaugurated by Reverend P.J.J. Boshoff.<sup>26</sup>

### **EARLY MISSIONARY WORK OF THE DRC**

On 21<sup>st</sup> October 1890, Reverend Hofmeyr held a meeting with the church council of the Nederduitse Hervormde of Gereformeerde Gemeente Zoutpansberg, to discuss the missionary work that he undertook for the church. He spoke about the relationship between the white farmers and their workers, especially those in the Cape Province. He was of the opinion that the unease that existed between the two groups was enhanced by the overseas missionaries. These missionaries do not understand the local conditions and is therefore problematic. He therefore asked the church council to establish their own local missionary action, to counter the foreign

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<sup>23</sup> Geskiedenis van die Pietersburg NG Kerk, by M. Horn, unpublished, 2002; Chapter 2: page 11-13

<sup>24</sup> Geskiedenis van die Pietersburg NG Kerk, by M. Horn, unpublished, 2002; Chapter 2: Kerk diefstal, page 18

<sup>25</sup> Geskiedenis van die Pietersburg NG Kerk, by M. Horn, unpublished, 2002; Chapter 2: Kerkvereniging misluk, page 11-12

<sup>26</sup> Geskiedenis van die Pietersburg NG Kerk, by M. Horn, unpublished, 2002; Chapter 2: Eerste Kerk in Pietersburg, page 19

missionaries.<sup>27</sup> This would assist in better relationships between black and whites in the area, he said.

According to a study done by Kirkaldy and Kriel, (circa 2001) “Christianity was first introduced into the Soutpansberg area by Africans, rather than white missionaries. The individuals were converted to Christianity while working as migrant laborers in Natal and the Cape Colony during the 1860s. While some abandoned their new faith, others managed to retain it. To varying degrees, the latter group blended Christianity with aspects of African Religion.

Missionaries entered the area from the late 1860s. With their arrival, and their commitment to enforcing what they saw as conformity to doctrinally pure Christianity, new tensions were introduced. Those local Christians who transformed their religious beliefs to meet local context faced censure or excommunication. In addition, with the presence of the new representative of the Christian God, they suffered a diminution in status – they were now the assistants and interpreters (both cultural and linguistic) of the representatives, rather than the representatives themselves.”<sup>28</sup>

The missionaries performed an important task in that they were the first people to “write down detailed accounts of what they first saw and experienced in the Soutpansberg and its surrounds but they made strenuous efforts to find out as much as they could about local beliefs and practices, medicines and diseases. They provided a detailed account of cultural interactions between Germans, Vhavenda, Bahananwa, Tsonga-Shangaan, British and Boers.... Added to this, the missionaries were the first to bring Western education and hospital services to the indigenous people of the area and the first to produce a Tshivenda orthography.”<sup>29</sup>

Reverend Hofmeyr convinced the church council, and they appointed their own evangelist. This enforced the well-meaning attitude of the DRC towards missionary work.<sup>30</sup>

In 1893, a further 9 wards were created for the Nederduitse Hervormde of Gereformeerde Gemeente Zoutpansberg: Dorp, two at Rhenosterpoort, two for Spelonken, two for Marabastad

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<sup>27</sup> Geskiedenis van die Pietersburg NG Kerk, by M. Horn, unpublished, 2002; Chapter 2: Die Gemeente se eie Sendingsaksie, page 19

<sup>28</sup> Mission History, by A. Kirkaldy & Lize Kriel, page 21-22

<sup>29</sup> Mission History, by A. Kirkaldy & Lize Kriel, page 21-22

<sup>30</sup> Geskiedenis van die Pietersburg NG Kerk, by M. Horn, unpublished, 2002; Chapter 2: Die Gemeente se eie Sendingsaksie, page 20



and two for Houtboschberg. In 1897 the wards of Malietsiesland, Lage Velden, Wolkberg, Chuniespoort, Olifantsrivier and Strydpoort were added to the church administration.<sup>31</sup>

### **ANGLO BOER WAR (1899-1902) AND BEYOND**

Pietersburg officially entered the war arena relatively late on the 8<sup>th</sup> of April 1901, when General Plumber took control of the town. Shortly here-after he set up the Pietersburg Concentration camp, officially “opened” on 11<sup>th</sup> of May 1901. All white women and children from the Zoutpansberg area were transported by ox-wagon to the camp.<sup>32</sup> It is logical to ascertain that the formal religious instruction also deteriorated as the war progressed, and that only informal religious activity was undertaken by the people themselves in the camp and in the beginning mainly by Mr. HJW Pienaar, a theological student. Reverend Kriel (the Pietersburg DRC minister at this time) was removed by the British command in November 1901 and until the camp was evacuated on 18 February 1902, two elders and a Mr. Schoeman looked after the spiritual needs of the camp inmates.<sup>33</sup> It was only after the war, with the return of Reverend Kriel in August 1902, that formal religious activity began anew to give structure to the dis-enfranchised communities of the Soutpansberg district.

During the war years the church building was used by the British as a military barracks, and was dilapidated and vandalized. Money from the government helped in partially restoring the building to an extent that it could again be used for services. The various wards that were ministered to by the church included: Lageveld, Houtboschberg, Chunespoort, Bloed- and Sandrivier, Malietsiesland, Rhenosterpoort, Spelonken, Louis Trichardt and Pietersburg town.<sup>34</sup>

The DRC was also responsible for the founding of an orphanage for children from the war and later all the children were relocated to the Langlaagte Orphanage. A church school was also started, the beginnings for the later Christian Nationalist school system.

During the 1903 General Church Meeting it was decided to organize the Transvaal Congregations into various convocations. The Zoutpansberg congregation formed part of the

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<sup>31</sup> Geskiedenis van die Pietersburg NG Kerk, by M. Horn, unpublished, 2002; Chapter 2: Rinderpest en Droogte, page 24

<sup>32</sup> Geskiedenis van die Pietersburg NG Kerk, by M. Horn, unpublished, 2002; Chapter 2: Smarte in die Konsentrasiekamp, page 25

<sup>33</sup> Geskiedenis van die Pietersburg NG Kerk, by M. Horn, unpublished, 2002; Chapter 2: Smarte in die Konsentrasiekamp, page 27

<sup>34</sup> Geskiedenis van die Pietersburg NG Kerk, by M. Horn, unpublished, 2002; Chapter 3: Hervatting van Gemeentelike Bedrywighede, page 3

Rustenburg Convocation, together with congregations of Rustenburg, Pretoria, Zeerust and Waterberg. In 1906, the members of the church in Louis Trichardt were given the right to start their own independent congregation.<sup>35</sup> This was the first of many such independent congregations in the Province. In 1916, the wards of Spelonken and Lageveld became the independent congregation Soekmekaar.<sup>36</sup>

### **GROWTH OF THE CONGREGATION AND THE BUILDING OF A NEW CHURCH, 1917**

The church grew in size and the church building could not accommodate the growing numbers of parishioners. A site already belonging to the DRC, (since 1897) on the corner of Grobler- and Biccard Streets was earmarked for this development. Preparations for the building of the new and larger church started during April 1914 under the leadership of Reverend BH Swart and Wynand H Louw was appointed as the architect. The Building Commission was made up of prominent members of the church one of which was LLH Mentz (later Colonel and Member of Parliament for Pietersburg). The Great War (1914-1918) started in Europe as well as the South African Rebellion of 1914-1915 but this did not deter the congregation to move forward with the building program and a contractor Adams and Mason was appointed in 1916 and in 1917 the cornerstone was laid (see photo below) on 31 March 1917. It was the congregation's faith in God that sustained the congregation to complete the construction of the church building during this most difficult of times. The inauguration of the church building took place on 5th of April 1918.

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<sup>35</sup> Geskiedenis van die Pietersburg NG Kerk, by M. Horn, unpublished, 2002; Chapter 3: Die Afstigting van die Gemeente Louis Trichardt, page 10

<sup>36</sup> Geskiedenis van die Pietersburg NG Kerk, by M. Horn, unpublished, 2002; Chapter 4: Die Afstigting van die Gemeente Soekmekaar, page 14



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*Photo (above), the Dutch Reformed Church Council as seen at the cornerstone-laying ceremony on 31th March 1917; cornerstone was donated by PD du Preez (member of the building commission)*



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*Photograph (above) of the inauguration of the church building – 5<sup>th</sup> April 1918.*

### **PIETERSBURG DRC CONGREGATION MEETS THE CHALLENGES OF THE FUTURE**

In 1920, the Church officially had its name changed from Zoutpansberg Congregation to that of the Pietersburg Congregation.

The Pietersburg Congregation moved from strength to strength throughout the years despite dismal droughts, the depression of the 1930s, political changes during the 1940s etc. and despite these changes occurring all around the Church during its history, the building and its content stayed mainly the same. Small practical changes were made for instance in 1934 when the pipe organ was replaced with the current one; 1997-2001: a general renovation (started in

1997) of the interior of the church, renovations to the clock tower, woodwork (stripping old varnish and wood-stain from benches, floors, pulpit etc.) was completed in 2001.

During the 1930s the urbanization of Pietersburg resulted in the enlargement of the congregation and the town wards were increased as well as those in the district. Wards included: Oliphantsrivier, Marabastad, Houtbosch, Rhenosterpoort, Wolkberg, Witklip, Zandrivier, Kalkbank, Bloedrivier, Malietsiesland, Haenertsburg and Chuenespoort. The selected elders of these wards were instructed to visit these wards at least twice a year.

The 1936 Bantu Trust and – Lands Act of 1936 resulted in that a large part of the white owned areas such as Seshego, Nebo, Bochum and Mathisbaskraal became trust areas for the black people living in these and other areas.<sup>37</sup> With this, the DRC wards in these areas were incorporated into other wards, and some inhabitants migrated towards Pietersburg and settled here. In this way, Pietersburg became the administrative center for the later “Homeland Policy” of the Province.

The symbolic “ossewa trek” of 1938, the centenary year of the Great Trek of the Voortrekkers from the Cape Colony, became the catalyst for the awakening of the Afrikaner Nationalism, that would also dictate the way forward for the DRC throughout South Africa in the years to come.

By the mid-1940s the town wards already reached a total of eleven, and the outlying areas included: Bloedrivier, Chuenespoort, Dalmunie, Dendron, Driedoornhoek, Haenertsburg, Houtbosdorp, Kalkbank, Marabastad, Olifantsrivier, Platkoppies, Rhenosterpoort, Rietvlei, Sandrivier, Waterval, Witklip and Wolkberg.<sup>38</sup>

In 1946, the Dendron Congregation branched out from the Pietersburg DRC and consisted of the following wards: Kalkbank, Dendron, Driedoornhoek and Dalmunie.<sup>39</sup> In 1950 the Pietersburg-North Congregation separated from the Pietersburg DRC Mother Church, and operated as an independent congregation within Pietersburg<sup>40</sup> and in 1958, the Marabastad

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<sup>37</sup> *Pietersburg, 1886-1986*, Louis Changuion, 1986, page 139

<sup>38</sup> *Geskiedenis van die Pietersburg NG Kerk*, by M. Horn, unpublished, 2002; Chapter 6: Administratiewe Vernuwung, page 10

<sup>39</sup> *Geskiedenis van die Pietersburg NG Kerk*, by M. Horn, unpublished, 2002; Chapter 6: Afstigting van die Dendron Gemeente, page 14

<sup>40</sup> *Geskiedenis van die Pietersburg NG Kerk*, by M. Horn, unpublished, 2002; Chapter 7: Die Afstigting van Peitersburg-Noord, page 5

Congregation became independent which incorporated the following wards Waterval, Voorspoed, Rietvlei, Eerstegoud, Wildebeesfontein and Bloedrivier.<sup>41</sup>

In 1951, the Dutch Reformed Church in Africa (DRCA) was founded for black people and continued its work in the Province.

Reverend Eckard was, during his time as minister (1929-1959) of the Pietersburg DRC, very active in the missionary field, and his missionary commission was responsible for the founding of the Theological School at Turfloop College (later the University of the North - 1970) and a missionary station was founded next to Turfloop.<sup>42</sup> In 1967, the Pietersburg-East Congregation was formed as an independent Congregation.<sup>43</sup> A separate ward, at Bewaarkloof, 160km from Polokwane, was also part of the responsibilities of the Pietersburg DRC.

The 1980s were turbulent years, and the church did not escape these events. In May 1985, five students of the University of the North visited the church during the Sunday service, their aim of the visit was never really made clear. It did however, result in that multi-racial attendance at the church needed to be addressed. The Pietersburg DRC, however, never officially reacted on this event, and today several black and colored families are part of the congregation.

Today the DRC are represented in all major towns and cities in the Limpopo Province and the five independent DRC Congregations in Polokwane are Pietersburg, Pietersburg North, Renosterpoort, Pietersburg East and Bendor.

## CONCLUSIONS

There is no doubt that the Dutch Reformed Church has played a significant historical role in the Limpopo Province. Seen against the transformation of post-1994, this role has its controversies and detractors, and good or bad, this role and influence has shaped this Province.

The Pietersburg Dutch Reformed Church (Moedergemeente) was the first congregation in the Province and from this congregation others were formed and became independent congregations. It also played a part in the early missionary work, and this paved the way, together with the DRC in general, to form the Dutch Reformed Mission Church, 1881 (DRMC)

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<sup>41</sup> Geskiedenis van die Pietersburg NG Kerk, by M. Horn, unpublished, 2002; Chapter 7: 'n Mosie om aft e stig, page 7

<sup>42</sup> Pietersburg, 1886-1986, Louis Changuion, 1986, page 171

<sup>43</sup> Geskiedenis van die Pietersburg NG Kerk, by M. Horn, unpublished, 2002; Chapter 8: Die Afstigting van Pietersburg-Oos, page 6



and in 1951 the Dutch Reformed Church in Africa (DRCA) and in 1994 the DRMC and the DRCA united to form the Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa (URCSA). In this way, the church played a significant role in the religious orientation of a large part of the inhabitants of the Province. And it is in this that the church building becomes an integral part of the general history and significance for the Limpopo Province. Without its presence, the history of this Province may have been very much different than it is today, and it is therefore important to have this building declared a national monument, so that this part of the history can be preserved for future generations.

The essence of the building still symbolizes the same strength and endurance of the past. The motto of the Church: "God is Faithfull" is still as relevant today as it was during the early years of the congregation.

#### **AUTHORS NOTES**

I have relied mainly on the unpublished manuscript by M. Horn regarding the history of the Pietersburg DRC. It is therefore possible that some errors may occur regarding the formation of the early church and other events.

\*Page 5: the corner stone of this church was re-used in the later "First Pietersburg DRC" building, today a National Monument on the Civic Square, Polokwane. When this building was sold by the Church Council in 1941, the corner stone was removed, to be later used in a newly planned church hall at the current Pietersburg DRC complex. This, however, was never done and the corner stone is still stored in a corner of the 1917/18 church.

#### **REFERENCE**

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3. Horn M; *Geskiedenis van die Pietersburg NG Kerk*; unpublished; 2002
4. Jordaan GJ; *History of the Dutch Reformed Church Mission in Sekhukhuneland and Church Development 1875-1994*, 2011
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7. Wikipedia Free Encyclopedia; *Christianity in South Africa*
8. Wikipedia Free Encyclopedia; *Nederduits Gereformeerde Kerk*
9. Wikipedia Free Encyclopedia; *Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa*



**DRAFT (1) SITE MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR:****NATIONAL HERITAGE SITE NOMINATION | PIETERSBURG DUTCH REFORMED CHURCH BUILDING, POLOKWANE IN THE LIMPOPO PROVINCE****1. INTRODUCTION****1.1 Social Assessment, Identification of Stakeholders and Formation of management Committee**

Musea Consultancy cc was approached by Goudmeyer (PTY) Ltd, on behalf of the Pietersburg DRC Congregation, to assist with the declaration of its church building as a National Monument. As the building dates from 1917/18, it seems appropriate that the social impact of such a declaration will be of great importance to the local community, and to Limpopo Province as a whole.

A management committee, consisting of Reverend GG Haumann, representing the Pietersburg DRC and Mrs H Potgieter, as heritage consultant was formed. Various meetings with Goudmeyer (PTY) Ltd and the management committee was held to debate and consolidate information for the Statement of Significance for the nomination and declaration processes. Stakeholders were identified, and contact has been made with all relevant participants.

**1.2 Documentation, Research and Investigation of the Identity of the Site**

Over a period of three months, the church history, physical aspects and documentation of the building were recorded and compiled into a report called: *National Heritage Site Nomination: Pietersburg Dutch Reformed Church (Moedergemeente), Polokwane, Polokwane District Municipality, Limpopo Province (1)*.

**1.3 Analysis of the Information gathered**

This document was submitted to SAHRA through the SAHRIS platform, with case ID. 2058. After consultation with the SAHRA case worker, Mr G. Ondong, we were referred to the local PHRA, namely LIHRA for the Limpopo Province.

**1.4 Development of Appropriate Responses**

In order for us to comply with the NHA, 1999, it is important for us to follow the correct procedures as set out in the National Heritage Act. The document (1) was presented to the Department of Arts, Sports and Culture (DSAC), represented by Mr Donald Lethole, on 18<sup>th</sup> of June 2013 for submission to the LIHRA Council for comments.

**1.5 Implementation Plan**

Our documentation, namely: (1) *National Heritage Site Nomination: Pietersburg Dutch Reformed Church (Moedergemeente), Polokwane, Polokwane District Municipality, Limpopo Province* and this document (2) *Site Management plan for: National Heritage Site Nomination | Pietersburg Dutch Reformed Church Building* will be presented to LIHRA for consideration of grading as well as declaration for heritage status. We will

work together with LIHRA to ensure that all aspects required are met appropriately and timeously.

For the sake of completeness, I have added an Annexure that briefly outlays the general history of the DRC in the Limpopo Province in relation to the Pietersburg DRC. This document has been submitted to SAHRA and LIHRA using the SAHRIS platform.

If our application for declaration of heritage status as national Monument, Provincial Site, Grade II is successful, we undertake to make an annual report to LIHRA on the status of the building, the management of the site implementation plan and preservation actions undertaken. In all aspects LIHRA will be kept up to date as to the progress and implementation of the various actions to be undertaken.

## **2. DEFINITIONS**

2.1 Heritage site management is the control of the elements that make up physical and social environment of the site, its physical condition, land use, human visitors, interpretation etc.

2.2 Management may be aimed at the preservation or if necessary at minimising damage or destruction or at presentation of the site to the public.

2.3 A site management plan is designed to retain the significance of the site. It ensures that the preservation, enhancement, presentation and maintenance of the site is deliberately and thoughtfully designed to protect the heritage value of the site.

## **3. SoS OF NOMINATED SITE (STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE)**

(See document: *National Heritage Site Nomination: Pietersburg Dutch Reformed Church (Moedergemeente), Polokwane, Polokwane District Municipality, Limpopo Province*)

### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF SoS:**

For nearly 100 years, the Pietersburg Dutch Reformed Church (PDRC) has stood solidly, stately and dignified as a salient landmark for many residents in Polokwane. Its exterior is a masterpiece of architectural design.

This building owes its historical significance, foremost, to its monumental architectural value, magnificent stone masonry and almost perfect workmanship: building practises that are not in use today. This building reflects the determination, love and respect that the Pietersburg DRC Congregation has for this building and this is significant in that this church was built during very difficult and austere times.

To appreciate and preserve the architectural heritage of Polokwane there is a need for public buildings of unique value to be given heritage status. With this mind, the building deserves to be proclaimed as a National Heritage Resource due to its architectural significance and historical interest, this to ensure that the unique and divers aspects of

the architectural heritage of Polokwane can be preserved and appreciated by future generations.

#### **4. SITE DESCRIPTION AND ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING**

Address: 66 Biccard Street, c/o Biccard- and Grobler Streets, Polokwane.

GPS co-ordinates: lat. S23° 54' 29.1" and long. E29° 27' 23.5"

The church stands on the south-western corner of consolidated Erf 5699 (erf 574, 1897 and erf 573, 1905), with the main entrance facing Biccard Street. The building lies in the heart of the inner city of Polokwane. It is part of the Church complex, stretching from Biccard to Voortrekker Street and from Grobler Street to almost half of the street block towards Jorissen Street. The complex consists of the church, church hall and administrative office and other buildings, conference facility housed in the circa 1925 parsonage (along Grobler Street) and parking areas and the parsonage of the current Reverend, GG Haumann (Biccard Street 68).

#### **5. HISTORY OF THE SITE**

##### **5.1 EARLY HISTORY AND BUILDING OF A NEW CHURCH**

The first official congregation in the historical Zoutpansberg area was established on 30 April 1852, and the first church was built in Schoemansdal in 1857. The town was abandoned in 1867 when the inhabitants of the town had to leave due to unrest with the local population. Already during this time there was a strong element of evangelising especially under Reverend Stefanus Hofmeyr who played a significant role in the spiritual life of the DRC congregants during the 1850s up to the 1890s. The Church was also campaigning for better education for children overall.

A new town, with a site for a new church was promised to the people of Schoemansdal after the evacuation in 1867. This promise was fulfilled in 1886, when the town Pietersburg was officially established. The Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) was allocated a stand in Market Street, opposite the Market square, and the first church was built here and was inaugurated in 1890. The congregation was made up not only of the local population of Pietersburg, but also served the wider community (wards) as far as Fort Klipdam; Malietsiesland, Chuenespoort, Haenertzberg and others around Pietersburg.

The church grew in size and the church building could no longer accommodate the growing numbers of parishioners. A site, already belonging to the RDC, since 1897 on the corner of Grobler- and Biccard Streets, was earmarked for this development. Preparations for the building of the new and larger church started during April 1914 under the leadership of Clergyman BH Swart and Wynand H Louw was appointed as the architect. The building Commission was made up of prominent members of the church one of which was LLH Mentz (later Colonel and Member of Parliament for Pietersburg). The Great War (1914-1918) started in Europe as well as the South African Rebellion of 1914-1915 but this did not deter the congregation to move forward with the building program and a contractor Adams and Mason was appointed in 1916 and in 1917 the cornerstone was laid (see photo below) on 31 March 1917, and it was the

congregation's faith in God that sustained the congregation to complete the construction of the church building during this most difficult of times. The inauguration of the church building took place on 5th of April 1918.

## **5.2 CONGREGATION MEETING THE CHALLENGES OF THE FUTURE**

In 1920, the Church officially had its name changed from Zoutpansberg Congregation to that of the Pietersburg Congregation.

The Pietersburg Congregation moved from strength to strength throughout the years despite dismal droughts, the depression of the 1930s, political changes during the 1940s etc. and despite these changes occurring all around the Church during its history, the building and its content stayed mainly the same. Small practical changes were made for instance in 1934 when the pipe organ was replaced with the current one in use; 1997-2001: a general renovation (started in 1997) of the interior of the church, renovations to the clock tower, woodwork (stripping old varnish and wood-stain from benches, floors, pulpit etc.) was completed in 2001. The essence of the building still symbolises the same strength and endurance of the past. The motto of the Church: "God is Faithfull" is still as relevant today as it was during the early years of the congregation.

## **6. STAKEHOLDERS**

- 6.1 GOUDMEYER (PTY) LIMITED current owners of the site
- 6.2 PIETERSBURG DUTCH REFORMED CHURCH CONGREGATION
- 6.3 POLOKWANE MUNICIPALITY
- 6.4 LIMPOPO HERITAGE RESOURCES AGENCY (LIHRA) and SAHRA
- 6.5 HERITAGE CONSULTANTS

## **7. LEGAL FRAMEWORK AND MANAGEMENT CONTEXT**

We are guided by the framework set out via the NHA, 1999<sup>44</sup>, and will adhere to the guidelines and to the input given by LIHRA. All aspects regarding the management of the

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<sup>44</sup> No. 25 of 1999: National Heritage Resources Act, 1999: To introduce an integrated and interactive system for the management of the national heritage resources; to promote good government at all levels, and empower civil society to nurture and conserve their heritage resources so that they may be bequeathed to future generations; to lay down general principles for governing heritage resources management throughout the Republic; to introduce an integrated system for the identification, assessment and management of the heritage resources of South Africa; to establish the South African Heritage Resources Agency together with its Council to co-ordinate and promote the management of heritage resources at national level; to set norms and maintain essential national standards for the management of heritage resources in the Republic and to protect heritage resources of national significance; to control the export of nationally significant heritage objects and the import into the Republic of cultural property illegally exported from foreign countries; to enable the provinces to establish heritage authorities which must adopt powers to protect and manage certain categories of heritage resources; to provide for the protection and management of conservation-worthy places and areas by local authorities; and to provide for matters connected therewith.

site will be made available to all stakeholders and other interested parties through the usual channels.

At the time of application there is no known legal aspects regarding ownership of the site or boundary disputes, nor any other legal aspects regarding the site.

## **8. PRESENT AND PAST USES OF THE SITE**

When the former Pietersburg (today Polokwane) was established in 1886, the Dutch Reformed Church was given erven in compensation for the loss of property in Schoemansdal. The First DRC was built on one of these erven, today part of the Civic Plaza, Polokwane.

The Dutch Reformed Church also purchased the current site (combined erf 5699) in 1897 and 1905 respectively.<sup>45</sup> The DRC congregation has always used the church for their services, and is still being used today in this context.

In January 2006 the church site (consisting of combined erven 1599) was purchased by Goudmeyer (PTY) Ltd, and it currently administrates the property.

The nomination only affects the original 1917/18 church building, build on the south-western corner of combined erven 1599.

## **9. SITE CONDITION AND HISTORY OF CONSERVATION**

### **9.1 CONDITIONS ON SITE**

The solid base provided by the shallow bed-rock in this area, together with the permanence of the granite blocks as foundation stones, the exceptional workmanship of the stonemasons and masons are most probably the reason for the almost perfect condition of the building today. No significant cracks or other structural defects were noted during the initial survey, the brick work and mortar seems to be in a very good condition, seeing that the building is nearly 100 years old and is situated in the busy inner city with a high pollution potential.

The roof is constructed from wooden trusses and covered with corrugated iron sheets. According to Temple & Associate Architects, who undertook the task of drawing the site plans and elevations, the original roof and materials used are also in a very good condition.

The Bros. Feldman (German made) clock and bell, 1934, is also in an excellent working condition. The overall condition of the interior of the tower is also excellent. The ventilation grids are sealed off with chicken wire to prevent birds from nesting in the tower.

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<sup>45</sup> Cadastral information, 1973

Some windows still have its original green glass-and-lead glazing, but some glazing has been replaced over the years with modern glass (green).

Some modern interior modifications were made to accommodate legislative safety regulations e.g. fire extinguishers, hand railings and light fixtures.

### **9.2 CONSERVATION/PRESERVATION** (also see SoS, pages 35 and 36)

The church building is well maintained and preservation and maintenance is an important priority for the governing body of the church. Future maintenance and upkeep is part of the budgetary priorities of the Congregation.

Between 1997 and 2001 extensive renovation was done on certain components of the church building.

9.2.1 The original church benches of Oregon and yellow wood were originally stained to a uniform dark exterior, to fit the “austere” characteristics of the very conservative DR Church. Nearly 100 years later, these benches needed a “face-lift” as the dark stained wood was looking old and invariably “stained” the clothes of the congregation seated on the benches. It was then decided to “clean” the benches to their original wood character, and in a way it was a cleansing of the old to make way for the new era in the church and congregation’s history.

The wooden floors were renovated to its former glory, as well as the doors, doorframes and all brass and copper.

9.2.2 Over the years some of the original lead-and-glass in some windows were replaced by louvered glass, and other green glass.

9.2.3 In 1982 it was decided to replace the loose chairs on the gallery with solid wooden benches that resemble the church benches used on the ground floor, and these were made by the woodwork students of the Tom Naudé Technical School.

9.2.4 For safety reasons and in compliance with the Health and Safety Act, fire extinguishers, hand railings at the various entrances and other safety applications were installed and are maintained by the Congregation. Care was taken to minimise the impact on the aesthetical value of the interior and exterior. If the need does arise to address certain aspects of these applications, the Church is more than willing to address these issues.

## **10. SWOT ANALYSIS (STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES, OPPORTUNITIES AND THREATS)**

### **10.1 STRENGTHS**

10.1.1 Divine worship has always played a significant role in man’s development and culture, and this was no less pertinent to the history of Polokwane. The red brick church with its prominent clock tower has always symbolised the strong connection between church and its people. Even today, this church is by far the most popular for special family events such as weddings and baptisms.

“There is a growing awareness that our architectural heritage is constantly being eroded, with a great many buildings that are worthy of preservation either in a state of disrepair, or in danger of being bulldozed for modern development. On the other hand many people have made worthy contributions to the conservation of buildings of note, and as a result much of value remains to be appreciated”.<sup>46</sup>

This same sentiment is can be applied to the Pietersburg Dutch Reformed Church (Moedergemeente) building in Polokwane. The congregation has preserved this building for nearly 100 years, and is committed to continue to do so for future generations. This commitment to preservation and conservation needs to be encouraged and rewarded.

To proclaimed this building as a National Heritage Resource due to its architectural and historical interest will ensure that the unique and divers aspects of the architectural heritage of Polokwane is kept intact and will encourage other role players to join this race to protect the past for future generations.

10.1.2 The Pietersburg Dutch Reformed Church (Moedergemeente) is one of the few public buildings still in use in its original form in Polokwane, which enforces the need that this building has to be protected as a national heritage site to ensure that this type of architecture and its symbolic significance can be preserved for future generations.

10.1.3 The unique workmanship and materials used in the building are of historical value, as these are not practised anymore, and gives an insight into the way things were being done in the past.

## 10.2 WEAKNESSES

10.2.1 Polokwane, as the capital of Limpopo Province, has a very limited listing of National Monuments, only those that were declared in the pre-1994 era and are listed as Provincial Heritage Sites: namely Irish House (today it houses the Polokwane Museum), First DR Church (1890) (today it houses the Photographic Museum) and First National Bank (previously Barclays Bank; still in use as a banking institution).

It is important for any town or city to preserve its architectural heritage and to give acknowledgement to the achievements made during its historical development. If these structures are not preserved under the National flagship ownership, these structures will deteriorate and eventually be lost for future generations to appreciate.

## 10.3 OPPORTUNITIES

10.3.1 Although the political landscape has changed dramatically since 1994, the importance of this link to our shared history and the liberation of the South African people cannot be ignored. For future generations to clearly understand and appreciate their liberation history, cultural resources of the past (correct or incorrect in its history) needs to be preserved and conserved.

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<sup>46</sup> Picton-Seymour, Désirée; “Historical Buildings in South Africa”; published 1989

10.3.2 To show case the architectural heritage of the early settlement of the town.

10.3.3 By declaring the building a National Monument it will encourage further preservation of the architectural landscape of Polokwane and the Limpopo Province. Too many buildings of note have sadly disappeared throughout the years, and if a strong alliance can be formed between SAHRA, LIHRA and heritage consultants, the few remaining buildings can still be saved for our future generations.

#### 10.4 THREATS

10.4.1 The inner city development encroaches on the historical development of the town, and many old and worthy buildings have been “sacrificed” for modern development and futuristic development. In itself the “modernisation” the inner city follows a natural path for development and growth in any modern city and cannot be denied, but care should be taken that not all traces of the past are wiped out in order to attain the “modern utopia”.

It is important in any development that certain aspects of the past should remain intact, so that future generations can understand where they come from and where they are heading. Without tangible evidence, the “past” will become lost and the liberation from colonial and apartheid oppression will have no tangible evidence to measure against future achievements.

### 11. GUIDING PRINCIPLES

No. 25 of 1999: National Heritage Resources Act, 1999, sections 5 to 10 of part One of the Act; section 24 to 26 of part 2 of the Act has been used as guiding principles, and will dictate actions implemented by LIHRA.

### 12. VISITOR MANAGEMENT

It is important that the building be accessible to the public. As the building is still used today for religious purposes, restricted access at certain times will have to be put in place. Visiting times and if necessary guided tours will be made public through the local media, internet access and notice boards at the site.

### 13. OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGIES

To create awareness, to preserve a heritage resource and to educate interested parties and groups on the historical and social values represented in this building. To enable us to achieve these objectives the building needs to be declared a heritage resource which in turn will give credence as to the value of the building within the local community, the wider community of Polokwane and the public as a whole of the Limpopo Province.

This in turn will also enable the Local Government and Polokwane Municipality to show case Polokwane as cultural diverse city.



**14. ACTION PLAN (inclusive of management of site, site presentation, interpretation, safety, education and research, marketing and site conservation)**

14.1 Declaration of building.

14.2 Implementation of management plan: emphasis on education, public safety aspects, further research and continuous preservation of the building.

14.3 Marketing of the site through various media, inclusive of internet and social media.

**15. PLANS AND COMMITTEES**

The Management Committee will stay in place until such time that it is replaced with a new committee to take over the responsibilities of the management of the proclaimed site.

**16. MONITORING AND EVALUATION**

The Management Committee will make an annual report to all stakeholders regarding the state of the building and if action has to be taken regarding preservation or otherwise.

**17. DOCUMENTATION OF IMPLEMENTATION AND MONITORING**

All actions taken regarding the building will be documented and will be presented in the annual report to stakeholders.

**REFERENCES**

1. Cadastral information, 1973
2. No. 25 of 1999: National Heritage Resources Act, 1999
3. Picton-Seymour, Désirée; *“Historical Buildings in South Africa”*; published 1989