



an agency of the  
Department of Arts and Culture

**COMMITTEE MEETING DATES:**

GDRC: 14 Nov 2018

EXCO: 21 Nov 2018

HRM COM: 30 Nov 2018

COUNCIL: 31 Jan 2019

## GRADING SUBMISSION

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SUBMITTED BY: Built Environment Unit

DATE: 07/11/2018

FILE REF / SAHRIS SITE ID:

SAHRIS SITE CATEGORY

Significance Category (THEMES):

ENQUIRIES: Palmira de Almeida / Ben Mwasinga

ITEM: Proposed Nomination of Site for Grade 1 Site Status: The Lesseyton Methodist Seminary and The Lessyeton Methodist Mission Station and Lesseyton Village, Enoch Mgijima Local Municipality, Eastern Cape, South Africa

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### A1. BACKGROUND

- A1.1. Lesseyton Methodist Seminary is located in Lesseyton village in the Eastern Cape, South Africa.
- A1.2. It was historically a theological training school that had survived 33 years (1883-1916). It is a Christian church and has strong ties to the history of missionaries and the development of formal Theological Training schools for Africans. It forms part of a large Wesleyan Methodist domination that operates across Southern Africa.
- A1.3. On the advise and guidance from the NHC, the Lesseyton Methodist Church submitted a nomination to SAHRA, received on 24 July 2017 for declaration before any refurbishments to the site takes place.

### A2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- A2.1. Established in 1847 as a Mission Station, Lesseyton later became an Industrial Institute offering industrial education. When the industrial education came to end, the site was used for primary and secondary schooling and is the remaining building of the Leeseyton Methodist Theological Training School.
- A2.2. The nominators, the Lesseyton Methodist Church Board are also the owners of the site and are currently managing it.

A2.3. Concerns are however raised to due to the poor condition of the site which are considered to hinder the grading and declaration of the site.

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**1. PURPOSE OF THE SUBMISSION**

1.1. The purpose of the submission is to assess whether Lesseyton Methodist Seminary and Mission Station should be graded with Grade 1 status and eventually declared a National Heritage Site.

**2. DESCRIPTION AND LOCATION OF THE SITE**

2.1. The site is in the Enoch Mgijima Local Municipality under the Chris Hani District Municipality, 12 km from Queenstown, Eastern Cape. See Fig 1: Location of Lesseyton Methodist Seminary.



Figure 1: Location of Lesseyton Methodist Seminary

2.2. Historic church building situated in Lesseyton village, 12km from Queenstown, Eastern Cape. It has unique architectural design. It is consisting of both a single and double storey, See Fig 2: Building Plans for Lesseyton Church depicting storeys. The single storey is currently used for church services and the top portion of the double storey is currently inaccessible because the stairs leading upstairs have fallen and the upstairs flooring has been destroyed. The church in general is in poor condition with collapsing walls and roofs, several cracked walls and damaged window panes. See Fig 3: Condition of Church.

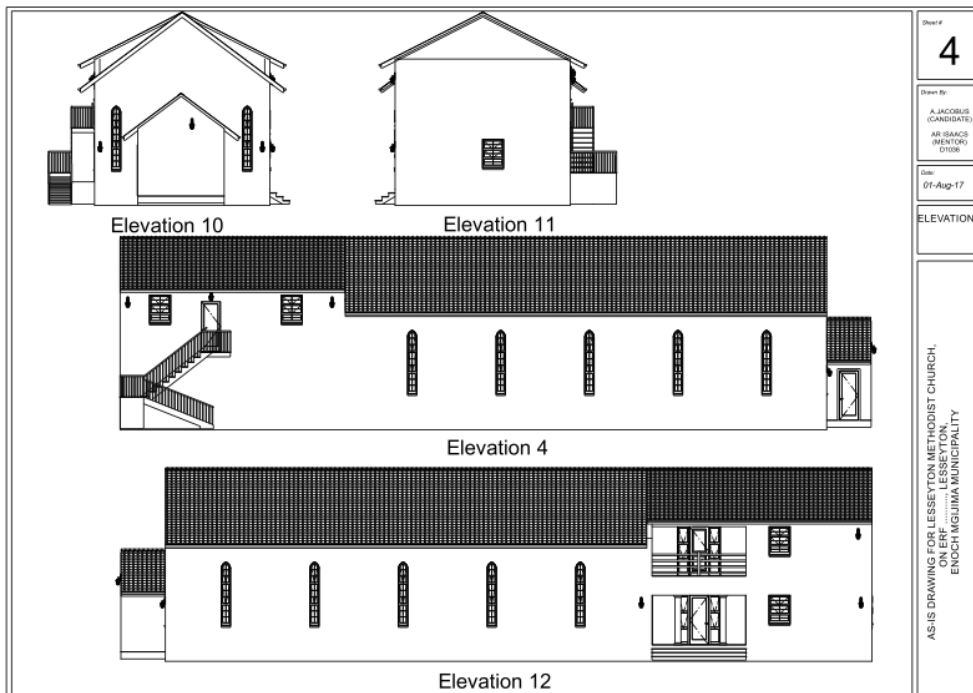


Figure 2: Building Plans for Lesseyton Church Depicting Storeys



*Figure 3: Condition of Church*

### **3. SHORT HISTORY OF THE SITE**

- 3.1. Lesseyton was established as a mission station in 1847 and later became an Industrial Institute in 1857, which provided industrial education for boys and girls. However, after the discontinuation of the Industrial Institute the Lesseyton Seminary granted permission that the building be used for primary and secondary schooling. The Seminary was then established in 1883 and was incorporated into the mission station.
- 3.2. The Lesseyton Methodist church is also positioned on vast arable land, which had been cultivated sometime in the past. In addition, the church is also linked 1985 massacre of eleven freedom fighters at Nonzwakazi Methodist church, which has its roots in the Lesseyton Methodist Mission station.

#### 4. SWOT SUMMARY

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES	OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The church is still in use</li> <li>Vital part of the community's sense of place and pride</li> <li>Pioneering Seminary with renowned alumni</li> <li>Played a role in national liberation politics (e.g. South African Native Congress annual conference held at Lesseyton in September 1902)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Refurbishment and maintenance of the church requires funding</li> <li>The building is severally deteriorating</li> <li>Double-storey section is completely dilapidated</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Encourage people to value heritage in rural areas</li> <li>Church has both historic and cultural significance to Lesseyton community and the surrounding areas, solidifying a community's past, preservation can help strengthen a community's future</li> <li>Located on arable land, therefore potential to resuscitate crop cultivation on dormant arable land to help alleviate poverty, create food security and economic opportunities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Buildings at risk of collapse</li> <li>Environmental factors accelerating the rate of deterioration</li> </ul>

#### 5. MOTIVATION FOR NATIONAL DECLARATION

##### 5.1. (a) Its importance in the community, or pattern of South Africa's history;

The existing Lesseyton Methodist Church building is a historical building of significance. It is the only remaining building on the site of the Lesseyton Methodist Theological Training School established in 1883 following the relocation from Healdtown..

##### 5.2. (b) Its possession of uncommon, rare or endangered aspects of South Africa's natural or cultural heritage;

The preservation of the historic Lesseyton Methodist Seminary building is vital to the understanding of the nation's heritage. The building at 100 years is reflective of a particular era in architecture. The building techniques that were utilized in the 1800s are also preserved a Lesseyton.

##### 5.3. (c) Its importance in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics valued by a community or cultural group;

The worshipers (who were Africans) at the Lesseyton Methodist Mission station came from the local village and Queenstown which had no church building at the time. The church ministers were sympathetic to the worshipers that walked long distances (about 12 km) from Queenstown to Lesseyton and back. They arranged a plot and built a Methodist Church for Africans at Scalen Street in Queenstown. The church

was relocated to current site of Nonzwakazi Methodist at Mlungisi Location (Queenstown) in 1959.

**5.4. (d) Its strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons;**

The Lesseyton Methodist Seminary like other pioneering seminaries is the bedrock of heritage in formal Theological Training in South Africa. Many Seminaries like Seth Mokitimi Methodist Seminary, John Wesley College, College of the Federal Theological Seminary, and others have their roots in the early ministerial and evangelical training in Healdtown and Lesseyton Theological Training School and later at Wesley House, Fort Hare. The site is important as the area where pioneering missionary and struggle growth occurred that led to national movements and eventually the independence of our country.

**5.5. (e) Its strong or special association with the life or work of a person, group or organization of importance in the history of South Africa;**

The Lesseyton Methodist Mission Station was the venue for major conferences, for instance, the South African Native Congress (SANC) annual conference was held at Lesseyton in September 1902. The SANC was formed in 1891 by some members of the African elite of the Eastern Cape such as Reverends WB Rubusana and AK Soga. The movement received nationwide support from the followers of the Independent churches. These included the Tembu National Church founded by Nehemiah Tile in 1884 and the Ethiopian Church established by Mangena Makone. The SANC was the distant forerunner of the South African Native National Congress formed in 1912, renamed the African National Congress in 1925. The African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church in South Africa convened its first Annual Conference at Lesseyton on 07 April 1897

## **6. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE**

6.1. The existing Lesseyton Methodist Church building is a historical building of significance. It is the only remaining building on the site of the Lesseyton Methodist Theological Training School established in 1883 following the relocation from Healdtown. The seminary was transferred to Fort Hare in 1916. The church outbuildings (church hall, houses, toilets, dormitory, multiple rooms used for teaching and training, etc) of this former Methodist Theological Training School were destroyed and completely demolished. The over 100 year's old isolated, dilapidated and unsightly historic church building structure with unique architectural design is the only remaining portion. During the governorship of Sir George Grey much was done towards the establishment of Industrial Schools like Lesseyton. The Wesleyans obtained their share of government aid and good buildings were erected at Lesseyton. Unfortunately, after the removal of Sir George Grey the training done at the Lesseyton Industrial School was discontinued. After the discontinuation of the Lesseyton Industrial School and Seminary the Lesseyton community was granted permission to use the buildings for primary and secondary schooling. The church hall was used to host various community activities like concerts, weddings, meetings, etc. The buildings were also allowed to collapse due to various causes like withdrawal of government aid. Over time the church structures deteriorated and ended up completely destroyed due to vandalism and theft of equipment and poor

or non-existent maintenance. New school buildings were constructed on different sites for the Lesseyton Primary and Secondary schools.

- 6.2. The worshipers (who were Africans) at the Lesseyton Methodist Mission station came from the local village and Queenstown which had no church building at the time. The church ministers were sympathetic to the worshipers that walked long distances (about 12 km) from Queenstown to Lesseyton and back. They arranged a plot and built a Methodist Church for Africans at Scalen Street in Queenstown. The church was relocated to current site of Nonzwakazi Methodist at Mlungisi Location (Queenstown) in 1959.
- 6.3. The Lesseyton Methodist Mission Station was the venue for major conferences, for instance, the South African Native Congress (SANC) annual conference was held at Lesseyton in September 1902. The SANC was formed in 1891 by some members of the African elite of the Eastern Cape such as Reverends WB Rubusana and AK Soga. The movement received nationwide support from the followers of the Independent churches. These included the Tembu National Church founded by Nehemiah Tile in 1884 and the Ethiopian Church established by Mangena Makone. The SANC was the distant forerunner of the South African Native National Congress formed in 1912, renamed the African National Congress in 1925. The African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church in South Africa convened its first Annual Conference at Lesseyton on 07 April 1897.
- 6.4. The Lesseyton Methodist Seminary like other pioneering seminaries is the bedrock of heritage in formal Theological Training in South Africa. Many Seminaries like Seth Mokitimi Methodist Seminary, John Wesley College, College of the Federal Theological Seminary, and others have their roots in the early ministerial and evangelical training in Healdtown and Lesseyton Theological Training School and later at Wesley House, Fort Hare. The site is important as the area where pioneering missionary and struggle growth occurred that led to national movements and eventually the independence of our country. The over 100 year's old isolated, dilapidated and unsightly historic church building structure with unique architectural design is the only remaining portion. The church precinct has unused plots of land suitable for crop cultivation and other vacant land with potential for development. Many people that were trained in the Lesseyton Methodist Seminary made outstanding contribution to South African society in political, social and religious spheres. The freedom enjoyed today can be traced from the unwavering efforts in the fight against oppressive colonial policies by the alumni like Rev. Z.R. Mahabane and E.J. Mqoboli. The legacy of the Lesseyton Methodist Seminary hymn writers is felt throughout South Africa even today.

## **7. INDICATION OF OWNER'S ATTITUDE**

- 7.1. The site owners and managers are the nominators and fully support the grading of the site.

## **8. INDICATION OF CURRENT MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS**

- 8.2. The site is owned and managed by the Lesseyton Seminary Board.

## **9. DESCRIPTION OF SITE BOUNDARIES**

- 9.2. See Annexures A and B for survey diagrams.



## 10. RECOMMENDATIONS

10.1 While Lesseyton certainly possesses certain qualities and features that may be considered for national acknowledgment, the current condition of the remaining building and the uncertainty pertaining to the future management of the site hinders any possibilities of a successful grading and subsequent declaration. It is thus recommended that the site be reconsidered for grading at a future stage when the circumstances around the site are greatly improved and that it does not meet the criteria for Grade I status.

<b>Prepared By: Ben Mwasinga</b>		<b>Supported By:</b>	
Name and Title	Signature	Name and Title	Signature
<b>Date:</b>		<b>Date:</b>	

### Proposed Nomination of Site for Grade 1 Site Status: NAME and LOCATION Resource

<b>Recommendation supported by GDRC</b>		<b>Recommendation not supported by GDRC</b>	
Name Chairperson: GDRC		Signature	
<b>Date:</b>			

<b>Recommendation supported by EXCo</b>		<b>Recommendation not supported by EXCo</b>	
Name Chairperson: EXCo		Signature	
<b>Date:</b>			

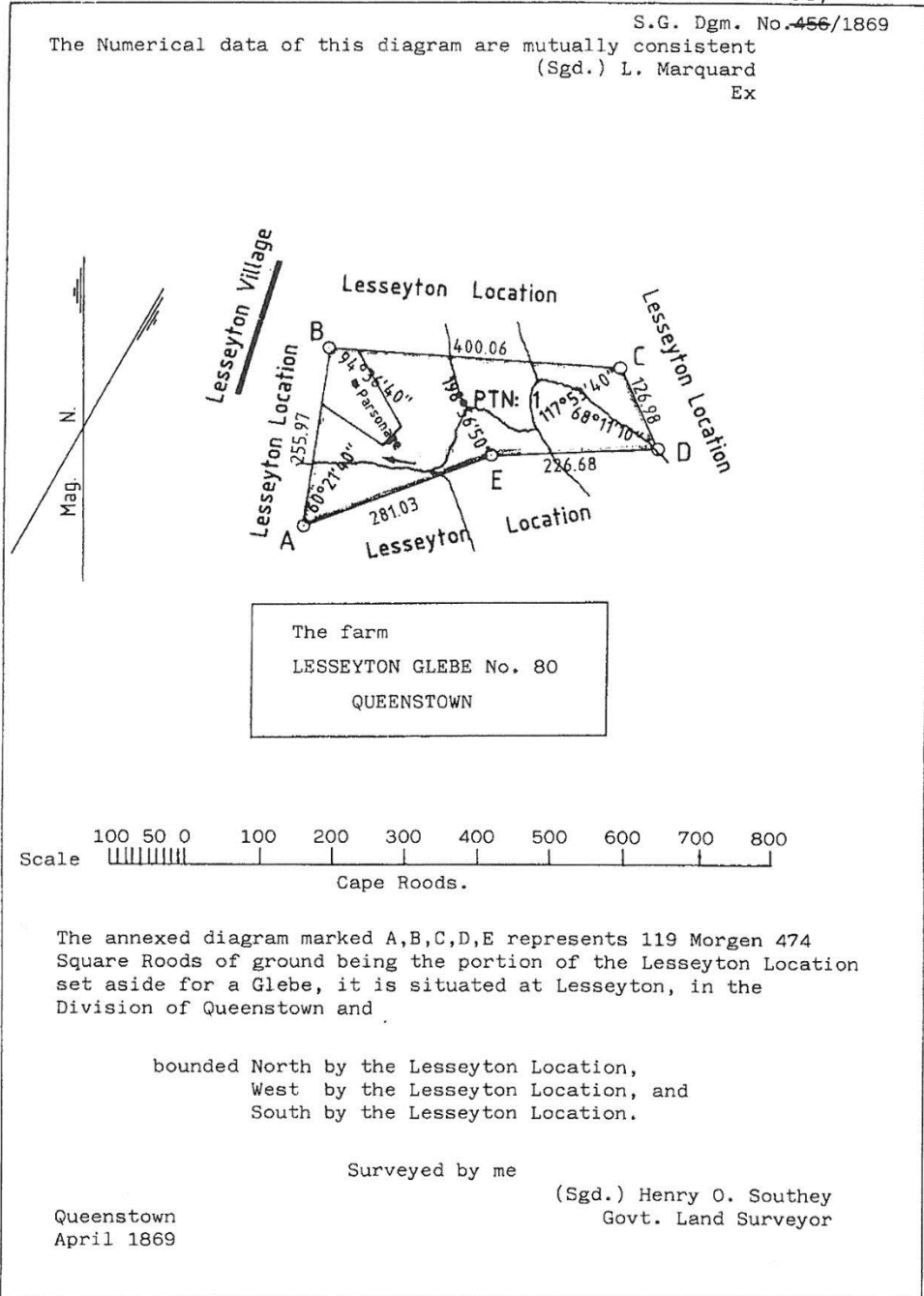
<b>Recommendation supported by HRM Committee</b>		<b>Recommendation not supported by HRM Committee</b>	
Name Chairperson: HRM Committee		Signature	
<b>Date:</b>			

<b>Recommendation supported by Council</b>		<b>Recommendation not supported by Council</b>	
Name Chairperson: Council		Signature	
<b>Date:</b>			



Annexure B: S.G Diagram

1064



Copied from diagram relating to  
D/G Q.Fr. 3 - 19

*W.F. Finney*  
for Surveyor-General  
Date: 1995. 03. 22.

DP-8 (5157)  
DP-8B (5159)

FOR REPRESENTING  
FREE SCALE OF DIAGRAM

**B**  
CK **S**