

**DISTRICT PLAN – LISTED HERITAGE PLACE  
HERITAGE ASSESSMENT – STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE  
HERITAGE ITEM NUMBER 1367  
*MONCK'S CAVE AND SETTING, 2A CAVE TERRACE,  
REDCLIFFS, CHRISTCHURCH***



**PHOTOGRAPH: JENNY MAY, 9.4.2015**

**HISTORICAL AND SOCIAL SIGNIFICANCE**

*Historical and social values that demonstrate or are associated with: a particular person, group, organisation, institution, event, phase or activity; the continuity and/or change of a phase or activity; social, historical, traditional, economic, political or other patterns.*

Monck's Cave has high historical and social significance for its use by early Maori as a place of habitation. It has revealed much about the material culture of the late Archaic (or Moa Hunter) period. The site also has significance as a site of early archaeological investigation.

Providing both good shelter and rich food-gathering opportunities, the Avon-Heathcote estuary (Te Ihutai) and adjacent Redcliffs (Raekura) area were intermittently inhabited by Maori for over six hundred years, from within a century of first arrival in Aotearoa to historic times. Extensive archaeological investigation of three associated Redcliffs settlement sites (Monck's Cave, Moa Bone Point Cave, and Redcliffs Flat) has revealed nationally significant information about the Archaic (or Moa Hunter) phase and its transition into Classical Maori culture, and insights into the chronology of Moa extinction.

Moa Bone Point Cave/Te Ana o Hineraki has a history of on-going Maori habitation extending from about the late fourteenth century until the 1840s, and was first scientifically excavated in 1872 by Julius von Haast. By contrast, nearby Monck's Cave was buried by rockfall in the fifteenth century, and not disturbed until discovered by road workers in 1889. Consequently it has provided a unique time capsule of the late Archaic period, containing an assemblage of what is amongst the oldest, rarest (and consequently most-treasured) taonga in New Zealand. Of particular importance was the survival of quantities of perishable material such as fishing net fragments, a canoe paddle, a canoe float, a canoe bailer and an iconic carved wooden dog (rei kuri). The site was first archaeologically investigated soon after discovery, and has been periodically re-investigated in the 125 years since - most recently in 1998.

Post the 2011 earthquakes the cave has been closed off to the public because of the risk of rockfall.

**CULTURAL AND SPIRITUAL SIGNIFICANCE**

*Cultural and spiritual values that demonstrate or are associated with the distinctive characteristics of a way of life, philosophy, tradition, religion, or other belief, including: the symbolic or commemorative value of the place; significance to Tangata Whenua; and/or associations with an identifiable group and esteemed by this group for its cultural values.*

Monck's Cave has high cultural and spiritual significance for what it and its former contents reveal about the way of life of Maori in the late Archaic period, and particularly the

development of their artistic and material culture. It is also of significance to Maori as part of the cultural landscape of the Ihutai/Raekura area, and as the former repository of treasured taonga that provide a direct connection between manawhenua and their tipuna. The site comes under the takiwā of Rāpaki Rūnanga.

### **ARCHITECTURAL AND AESTHETIC SIGNIFICANCE**

*Architectural and aesthetic values that demonstrate or are associated with: a particular style, period or designer, design values, form, scale, colour, texture and material of the place.*

Monck's Cave has some aesthetic value for its form and appearance. The entry has been modified over time by excavation and cliff collapse.

### **TECHNOLOGICAL AND CRAFTSMANSHIP SIGNIFICANCE**

*Technological and craftsmanship values that demonstrate or are associated with: the nature and use of materials, finishes and/or technological or constructional methods which were innovative, or of notable quality for the period.*

As a natural feature, Monck's Cave does not have significance under this criterion.

### **CONTEXTUAL SIGNIFICANCE**

*Contextual values that demonstrate or are associated with: a relationship to the environment (constructed and natural), a landscape, setting, group, precinct or streetscape; a degree of consistency in terms of type, scale, form, materials, texture, colour, style and/or detail; recognised landmarks and landscape which are recognised and contribute to the unique identity of the environment.*

Monck's Cave is of high contextual significance as a key site in an important area of early Maori settlement centred on Redcliffs/Raekura. The area also includes the adjacent Redcliffs Flat and nearby Moa Bone Cave/ Te Ana o Hineraki.

The setting of the cave is its immediate land parcel, a plot defined on three sides by Main Road, Cave Terrace and Monck's Spur Road. At the intersection of Main Road and Cave Terrace is a large area of level threshold. This contains a utility building and is planted with native vegetation. Behind this is the cliff face containing the cave entry.

### **ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND SCIENTIFIC SIGNIFICANCE**

*Archaeological or scientific values that demonstrate or are associated with: the potential to provide information through physical or scientific evidence an understanding about social historical, cultural, spiritual, technological or other values of past events, activities, structures or people.*

Monck's Cave has archaeological and scientific significance as the location of the discovery of an outstanding archaeological assemblage which has made a substantial contribution to the understanding of Archaic-period Maori culture and society. The cave has also contributed important information on the pre-history of Aotearoa - particularly on the chronology of Moa extinction - and played a role in the development of archaeology as a discipline in this country. Although the site has been extensively excavated over 120 years, there is still the potential for it to reveal further insights.

### **ASSESSMENT STATEMENT**

Monck's Cave and its setting have high overall heritage significance to the Christchurch district including Banks Peninsula. The cave has high historical and social significance for its use by early Maori as a place of habitation, revealing much about the material culture of the late Archaic (or Moa Hunter) period. The site also has significance as a site of early archaeological investigation. The cave has high cultural and spiritual significance for what it has revealed of the way of life and material culture of Maori in the late Archaic period, and to modern Maori as part of the cultural landscape and the repository of important taonga that provide links to tipuna. The cave has high contextual significance as a key site in an

important area of early Maori settlement centred on Redcliffs/Raekura. The area also includes the adjacent Redcliffs Flat and nearby Moa Bone Cave/ Te Ana o Hineraki. The cave has archaeological and scientific significance as the location of the discovery of an outstanding archaeological assemblage which has made a substantial contribution to the understanding of Archaic-period Maori culture and society. The cave has also contributed important information on the pre-history of Aotearoa - particularly on the chronology of Moa extinction - and played a role in the development of archaeology as a discipline in this country.

**REFERENCES:**

New Zealand Historic Places Trust Pouhere Taonga [Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga] *Registration Report for an Historic Place: Monck's Cave, Redcliffs, Canterbury* 2007.

**REPORT DATED: 26/03/15**

PLEASE NOTE THIS ASSESSMENT IS BASED ON INFORMATION AVAILABLE AT THE TIME OF WRITING. DUE TO THE ONGOING NATURE OF HERITAGE RESEARCH, FUTURE REASSESSMENT OF THIS HERITAGE ITEM MAY BE NECESSARY TO REFLECT ANY CHANGES IN KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF ITS HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE.

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