

# THE ORDERS, DECORATIONS AND MEDALS OF SIR EDMUND HILLARY, KG, ONZ, KBE (1919–2008)

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New Zealand Herald of Arms Extraordinary

*THE RESERVE BANK AND SIR EDMUND HILLARY HAVE ENJOYED A SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP. SINCE 1992 HIS PORTRAIT HAS APPEARED ON THE BANK'S FIVE DOLLAR NOTE.*

Following Sir Edmund's appointment as a Knight of the Order of the Garter in 1995 the Bank, as a tribute, gifted to him the fee for a personal Grant of Armorial Bearings (Coat of Arms). The **Letters Patent** granting the Arms are on display together with the **Warrant of Appointment** as a KG.

Hillary's ascent of Mt Everest with Tenzing Norgay on 29 May 1953 is one of the great feats of the twentieth century. It also was the beginning of many honours and awards that would be given to him during his life. On his descent Hillary heard that The Queen had made him a **Knight Commander of the Order of the British Empire (KBE)**. Shortly afterwards the King of Nepal conferred the **Order of the Gurkha Right Arm** and the Government of India, the **Everest Medal** in gold.

Awards from leading institutions followed and on display are the **David Livingstone Medal** of the Scottish Geographical Society, the **American Geographical Society of New York Medal**, the **Belgium Le Soir Medal**, the **Geographical Society of Chicago Medal**, the highly prized **Hubbard Medal of the National Geographical Society**, Washington, D.C., (presented by President Dwight Eisenhower, at the White House, on 11 February 1954), the **Cullum Geographical Medal of the American Geographical Society**, the **John Lewis Gold Medal** of the South Australian Branch of the Royal Geographical Society of Australasia, the **French Geographical Society Medal**, and the **Distinguished Services to Geography Medal** of the Geographical Society of Philadelphia.

Between 1955-58 Sir Edmund was leader of the New Zealand Party of the Commonwealth Trans-Antarctic Expedition for which he was awarded **The Polar Medal** and the **Fuchs Medal** of the Royal Geographical Society, London. In 1958 for his Antarctic and Himalayan expeditions he received the **Patron's Medal** of the Royal Geographical Society, London. On 6 February 1987 Sir Edmund was appointed a foundation member of the exclusive Order of New Zealand (ONZ).



*Knight Companion of the Most Noble  
Order of the Garter (K.G.)*

Hillary's ongoing exploration, work in the field of conservation, support of mountaineering and sporting groups, and benefactions, especially in Nepal, brought him further distinctions. From France the **Order of Sports Merit**, the **Order of the Golden Ark** of the Netherlands, and the **Order of Merit of the Republic of Poland**. In 2008 the President of India posthumously awarded him the **Padma Vibhushan** (Decoration of the Lotus).

Hillary's achievements gave him an international, if not legendary, status and his genuine interest in the people of Nepal, love of New Zealand, and the support, freely given, to individuals and groups not only in New Zealand but also world wide found him feted and honoured by organisations in the United Kingdom, France, Italy, Poland, Russia, Spain, the United States, Chile, Japan and the Republic of Korea, and honoured by several universities with honorary degrees.

Sir Edmund Hillary was born in Auckland on 20 July 1919 and died in that city on 11 January 2008. On 21-22 January 2008 he was accorded the rare distinction of a State Funeral in Auckland; and on 2 April 2008 a Service of Thanksgiving in St George's Chapel, Windsor Castle, the spiritual home of the Knights of the Garter.

**Awards on display are shown in bold.**

## FURTHER READING:

Sir Edmund's two autobiographies: *Nothing Venture, Nothing Win* (1975) and *View from the Summit* (1999).

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Reserve Bank Museum is delighted to host this special exhibition and is grateful to June, Lady Hillary, QSM, for her kindness in making the various awards available for display. The Bank also acknowledges the support and assistance from the New Zealand Herald of Arms, and the Honours Secretariat, Cabinet Office. The display installation has been prepared by Craig Turvey of 3D Creative Ltd, Wellington.



Top right: Reverse of Polar Medal  
with clasp.

Centre right: Coat of Arms from  
Letters Patent.

Right: New Zealand five dollar note.