This thesis examines the development of recreational mountain climbing in New Zealand from before 1840 to the 1950s. This small facet of social history illustrates certain aspects of the evolution of the wider New Zealand society. A variety of influences from overseas, especially from Britain, impacted on New Zealand mountain climbing. However, it always showed indigenous characteristics and the local elements became more distinct. After the First World War club organisation and activity independent of guides came to dominate, as mountaineering based on tramping became the norm. Issues of class were resolved but the participation of women was problematic. In the interwar years, mountaineering began to be identified with earlier pioneering and with male physical culture. This led to a more egalitarian recreation but within climbing the evolution of a masculinist culture meant that the place of women remained ambiguous and their progress was limited. Redevelopment of climbing after the Second World War led to the ascent of Mt Everest by Edmund Hillary in 1953 which crystallised many of the long-term features of New Zealand mountain climbing. It was a restatement of imperial ties, and it confirmed male dominance, but it was also a notable step forward in the internationalisation of New Zealand mountaineers. More importantly, Everest marked the inclusion of the mountaineer in the New Zealand identity which had been previously developed through pioneering, sport and war.
Born: July 20, 1919 Auckland, New Zealand New Zealander explorer and mountaineer. Edmund Hillary was one of the greatest explorers and mountaineers of the twentieth century. His conquest of Mount Everest and the South Pole inspired generations of adventurers and dreamers. Early years in New Zealand. A few years later he climbed his first mountain, the 7,500-foot Mount Oliver in New Zealand. Hillary enlisted with the Royal New Zealand Air Force in World War II (1939–45), where New Zealand aided the Allied powers of America, England, and Russia in their war against the Axis powers of Germany, Italy, and Japan. In March 1953, Hillary and Hunt, along with twenty other of the best climbers in the world, gathered at Everest.