Most New Zealand mountaineers are amateurs, and only alpine guides make their living from climbing. Although mountaineering is, and always has been, a fringe activity, a New Zealander who learned to climb in the Southern Alps became one of the world’s most famous mountaineers – Sir Edmund Hillary. Why climb mountains? Mountaineers usually avoid having to explain why they climb. Edmund Hillary was 20 when he first visited Hermitage hotel near Aoraki/Mt Cook. His reaction to the mountains partly explains his passion: “It was a perfect day and the great peaks seemed to tower over our heads. I loo Some of the greatest mountaineers which the world has ever seen. Courage, love and fear is what helped them achieve heights which others couldn’t. Standing at 29,028 feet above sea level, Hillary not only made his nation, but the world proud. Did you know that the Himalayan mountain system stretches across six different countries: Bhutan, Tibet, India, Nepal, Pakistan and Afghanistan? For more interesting facts about the Himalayas, check this out. After peaking the Everest, Hillary went on to explore Antarctica from 1955-58. A concerned Hillary then persuaded the New Zealand government to help Nepal protect its pristine forests. Though Hillary lost his wife and daughter to an air crash in 1975, he continued to occupy himself with humanitarian and environmental causes in Nepal. This book does not contain a history of New Zealand, but something of the story of many full and stirring days. Almost like the ghost the Maori thought him, Tasman came swiftly out of the rosy West, struck a blow which harmed his country more than it hurt those upon whom it fell, and yet more swiftly sailed away. Notable enough were his coming and going, but only as the prelude to the drama which began after an interval of one hundred and twenty-seven years. Then there steps upon the stage of Maoriland that well-graced actor, Captain Cook; and so the play goes on until the fall of the curtain In just two years, New Zealanders had climbed the world’s highest and third-highest peaks, confirming the country’s reputation for producing some of the finest mountaineers on the planet. Edmund Hillary, rightfully, became world famous. But Hardie’s climb received comparatively little attention, and 50 years on his feat remains largely forgotten, even by many in the mountaineering community. As Philip Temple notes in his excellent history of New Zealand mountaineers, The World at Their Feet: This rescue saw a small group of fit, competent young men together, destined to take a leading part in the royal flush of Himalayan mountaineering that was to begin within three short years.â€