



From far left, 1953 expedition photos of the climbers trekking in the snow, Edmund Hillary and Tenzing Norgay at 8500m and a porter in the Khumbu icefall. Below, Hillary and Norgay on their return from the summit.



Alfred Gregory captured British seaside fun in 1953 with Hoopla Stall, Blackpool, top, and above in the 1960s with Oyster Paddy, Blackpool. Left, the unusual sight of Llama in Bar, Peru.

# An accidental career

An exhibition of scene-setting photographs by Alfred Gregory, best-known as the man who took iconic Everest photos in 1953, is shown in Auckland this month

**H**e was a grocer's son from Blackpool, a provincial travel agent and a mountaineer. What Alfred Gregory was not, when he set out for Nepal with Sir Edmund Hillary and the 1953 British-led Everest expedition, was a professional photographer. Although his images of the conquest of the world's tallest mountain are epic and now iconic, Gregory was chosen for the expedition for his climbing ability. In fact, his appointment as the party's stills photographer was an afterthought by its leader, John Hunt. "Now let's see, does anybody know a bit about photography?" Hunt apparently wondered. "Yes, you do, Greg. You take the photos". Gregory would later say that he left for Nepal as an amateur photographer and returned a professional. He seems to have had remarkable luck, too. The famous image of Hillary and Sherpa Tenzing Norgay was the result of a single shot - which, like the rest of his undeveloped photos, took seven days to reach Kathmandu by runner. "I didn't take any more," he said. "I came up, sat down, held my breath ... and snap. I didn't

think it might be ruined in the darkroom or it might never reach Kathmandu, or back to London. I just took a picture. I thought that was how you did photography." The images he took on the expedition would launch him on a 50-year career as photojournalist and he spent a lifetime travelling on photographic assignments to most countries. His pictures and classic photo essays were published worldwide. In the years following Everest, Gregory returned to Blackpool and shot what he believed was his best work, capturing the beehived girls and teddy boys of the once-glamorous-now-shabby holiday resort in the early 1960s. "The whole place smelt of the sea, chips, beer and candyfloss," he told the *Daily Telegraph*, "but there was still the decorum of the old." The Blackpool pictures would eventually be published as *Alfred Gregory's Blackpool*, a companion volume to *Alfred Gregory's Everest*. Gregory, who moved to Australia with his second wife Sue in 1996, died last year at the age of 96. © *Alfred Gregory: Photographs from Everest to Blackpool*, is on until September 11 at Webbs, 18 Manukau Rd, Newmarket.

