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Hillary Scott Base tractor secured in public private partnership

A Ferguson tractor, used by Sir Edmund Hillary's party at the newly-constructed Scott Base during the British Commonwealth Trans-Antarctic Expedition 1955 – 58, has been secured for public ownership through a public private partnership between Canterbury Museum, the Antarctic Heritage Trust and the Commodore Hotel Christchurch.

Museum Director Anthony Wright says the tractor, part of a private collection auctioned in Christchurch this morning, is one of the most significant items from this era to have come on the market in the last 20 years. Canterbury Museum already holds the world's most comprehensive collection of items from the heroic age of Antarctic exploration and discovery and many items from the Trans-Antarctic Expedition including a Tucker Sno-cat and one of the tractors used by Hillary's polar party which was the first motorised vehicle to reach the South Pole overland.

The tractor will be put on display at the Commodore Hotel as an attraction for hotel guests, many of whom are en route to Antarctica, until the Museum has space to show it in an expanded Antarctic exhibition. The tractor will also be made available to the Museum's long-term partner, the Antarctic Heritage Trust, to support their marketing and fundraising activities including their project to conserve Hillary's hut in Antarctica.

"It's fantastic that the Museum has been able to secure this outstanding item of national importance for permanent public ownership with the help of private partners," says Mr Wright. "The Museum will benefit in the short-term by having the tractor cared for and displayed at the Commodore until we have sufficient space to exhibit it in the Museum."

The Museum used funding from the M. C. Richards Bequest, left to the Museum specifically to acquire Antarctic objects, to purchase the tractor. The Commodore Hotel has contributed to the acquisition cost as a gift to the people of Canterbury through the Museum. The commercial terms of the agreement between the Museum, the Antarctic Heritage Trust and the Commodore Hotel are confidential.

ENDS

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