

The Alpine Club Library cares for the Alpine Club's collections of mountaineering books, tracts, archives, artefacts, photographs. This year, the AC paintings have been added. All together, these form one of the most significant assemblies of mountain material in the world.

To celebrate 150 years since the Golden Age of Alpinism, when British climbers and their local guides made a large number of Alpine first ascents, an exhibition was created. "Les trésors de l'Alpine Club" has been a collaboration between the Chamonix Tourist Office, the Curator for the Musée Alpin, and us. Historic exhibits came from the AC collections, together with items from the Chamonix Museum and private collectors. The exhibition ran from 29 June 2015 until 17 April 2016; after a short closure in Nov last year, it reopened for the winter tourist season, until after Easter.



The spacious rooms of the Musée exhibited 100 paintings and engravings, important historic books, Führerbücher (diaries) of leading guides of the day, special artefacts such as Whymper's ice-axe, and over 300 scans of our historic photographs; all were extremely well presented. Many members were able to visit the show.



As a safeguard, we scanned or photographed all items at high resolution before they left Charlotte Road; the watercolour paintings were on show by rotation to limit their exposure to light. Of course, when the exhibition closed, we had to check in all items and return them to storage. This was a big job with the paintings, for the Hon Keeper of the Pictures).

Also, the Library provided images for many other celebration articles in: Mountaineering in Scotland; All Mountain Magazine [Italian]; Alpinist Magazine; Revue de l'Alpe; Schweitzer Illustrierte; 1865, l'âge d'or de l'alpinism by Guerin; Le Mont Blanc vu par les peintres by Jaques Perret; Climbers on the summit of Dent du Geant. Kept the photo team busy.



*Whymper's travels, Ice-axe & alpenstaff*

Further images and text have been supplied to Zermatt and the Buro des Guides in Chamonix for audio-visual and website use, and for smaller local exhibitions in the Alps. We have given public lectures to special interest groups in France and the UK and helped with images and information for programmes on the Matterhorn for two German TV channels.

We have often wished for 'rolling stacks' (bookshelves on rails) to fit more books into limited space but the expensive was prohibitive. Bonhams, the Auctioneers, decided to rearrange their warehouse in Acton and dispose of a set of rolling stacks. On the basis that we removed them and took them away, they agreed to donate them to us. Now, was this good or bad news?



We mobilised the teams, numbered the pieces, dismantled the racks, moved them, and covered the floor of our Lecture Room with everything. Meanwhile, we moved out metres of books from existing shelving, and built a false floor in the basement; this involved very accurate levelling for the racks to roll freely - and no fixings to penetrate the waterproofed floor. Then we aligned and reassembled all the pieces. A mammoth task but it gained us around an extra 130 metres of shelving.



The Alpine Club Library does its best to be open to members on every Tuesday to Thursday (except during August and the Christmas – New Year week). Do telephone ahead to check if travelling from afar. To plan ahead, the catalogues of Books and Archives, and Himalayan Index can also be accessed via the AC website. We always look forward to welcoming visitors.

To conclude, "Congratulations" and "Thank you very much" are due to everyone in the Library team for providing so much expertise and hard effort - often under considerable time pressure as things changed. We are now planning regional exhibitions around the UK for members to continue the celebration of the early ages of Alpinism.