

Book chance 'a gift'

By GUY WILLIAMS

FOR a poet who suffers from vertigo, writing a book about a mountaineering photography pioneer might seem like an unlikely project.

However, Rhian Gallagher clearly remembers the afternoon she was shown the photographs of Jack Adamson, and considers the chance to write a book about them as having been a "gift".

Tomorrow night, she will launch that book, *Feeling for Daylight: The Photographs of Jack Adamson*, alongside the opening of an exhibition of his photographs at the South Canterbury Museum.

The Jack Adamson Collection consists of more than 450 glass plate photographs placed in the museum's care by his descendants in 2006. Born in Levels and raised on an Albury farm before catching mountain-climbing fever, Adamson took up photography after getting a job at the Mount Cook Hermitage in 1889.

Gallagher says her book focused on Adamson's six years at the Hermitage — a period in which the first ascents of the Southern Alps' major peaks were achieved. Until now, Adamson had not figured in the history of New Zealand photography, merely appearing "in the sidelines of stories about illustrious climbers".

Yet he had left for posterity a "rare and unique collection" that not only captured some of the pivotal moments in the early history of climbing in the Southern

Adamson exhibition

AN EXHIBITION of photographs by Jack Adamson will open at the South Canterbury Museum tomorrow evening in conjunction with the launch of Rhian Gallagher's book about the mountaineering photographer's work.

Feeling for Daylight: The Jack Adamson Collection will open to the public on Saturday and continue until September 12.

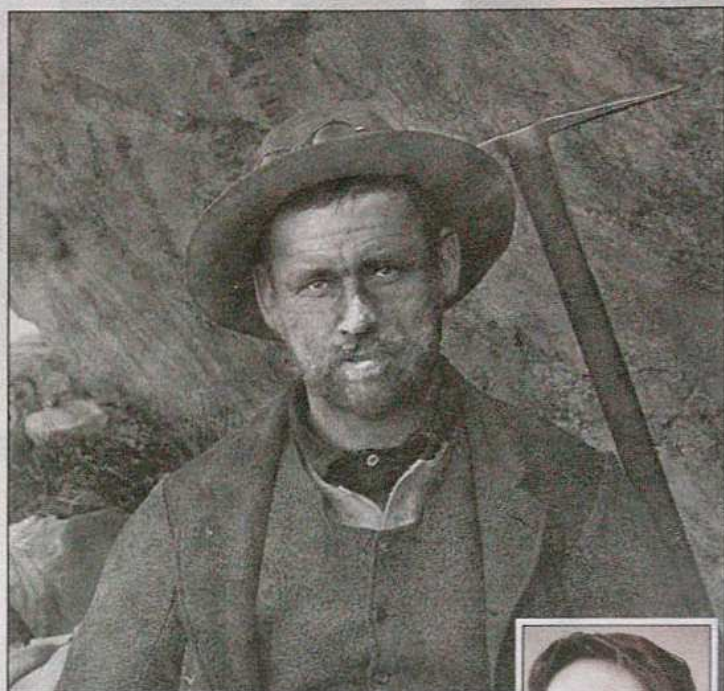
The exhibition consists of 20 large photos, a slideshow of more than 450 photographs, and about 30 items of Adamson's climbing and photography equipment.

Alps but gave an insight into the frontier communities at their foot, she said.

Gallagher was doing archival work at the museum on a short-term contract in 2007, when its curator of documentary history, Tony Ripplin, showed her some of Adamson's photographs.

"Everyone at the museum knew they had something wonderful," Gallagher said.

"I can still remember the afternoon. Looking through



On high: Jack Adamson pursued photography in the Southern Alps with "sustained energy and curiosity". Inset: Author Rhian Gallagher.



PHOTOS: SOUTH CANTERBURY MUSEUM/MIKE HYMAN



them, I thought they just had to be in a book.

"In so many ways it's been a real gift."

Gallagher worked on the project "on and off"

for three years, collaborating with Ripplin on the book's design and production.

The title *Feeling for Daylight* comes from a description by Adamson of crossing moraine in failing light while returning from a day spent guiding a fellow photographer. It is also a metaphor for

a photographer's acute awareness of light and a climber's instinct for finding the best way up a mountain.

Gallagher said part of her fascination with Adamson came from his working-class background, which made it unlikely he should have taken up such an expensive hobby as photography in the first place, "let alone pursue it with such sustained energy and curiosity".

□ *Feeling for Daylight: The Photographs of Jack Adamson* by Rhian Gallagher, on sale at the South Canterbury Museum for \$44.95.