

## **CHRISTMAS TRIP: ROTOITI - ROTOROA** *OTMC Bulletin, April 1987, (Page 13)*

*(OTMC Christmas Trip – 1986/87 – Nelson Lakes)*

The drive through from Ohari to Hanmer on the first day was the easy part. The effort of will required not to succumb to a wave of inertia and further slumbers when the alarm went at 5:45 am after a strenuous Christmas day's lounging around, being fed copious quantities of food and opening and exchanging presents was a phenomenal drain on the system. Anyway, I picked up Allison Barbour in Balclutha and Ian Seque in Dunedin and made Hanmer that evening in time for a dip in the hot pools and an early night in the AA campground. We picked Ian Hill at the Lewis Pass and saw the intrepid parties off on their start near the St. James Walkway. Lunch at St. Arnau's where we met up with Jenny then it was packs on and off up the lakeside. We made the lakehead late afternoon, crossed the valley and set up camp at the Huhene Junction. Next morning, the beginning of another fine and sunny day, we set off for Lake Angelus, an idyllic little lake set amidst tussock and scree, just below the Travers Range. Allison, Ian Hill and I climbed Angelus while Jenny and Ian Seque headed back down. A mighty view from 7,000ft peaks and down valley, the length of Rotoroa. We made it back after a spell bluff-bashing down a hopeful shortcut, next day was a walk in the rain, lunch at John Tait Hut, a detour to the Travers Falls and up to the overpopulated Travers Hut. The rain stopped the next day when the snow began, an excellent day for pit bashing and socialising. Life was far from boring with 30 + bods in a 16-bunk hut.

Ian Hill and I set off early next morning with mighty plans to skip along the Travers Saddle up the ridge on to Mt. Travers. We were foiled by a 50ft deep notch in the ridge followed by a climb up smooth shiny rock. We scree-bashed down the Sabine side, tried some hairy but pointless rock-climbing where I managed to drop my pack. Our descent to the pack led us to a traversing point across a rock ridge and on to a scree slope which led on to a couloir leading to the summit. We had a few minutes for scrog and photos on top then shot down, and back up 1500ft to the saddle for Ian's pack. We left the saddle just before 7pm, dashed down to Sabine Forks Hut just on dark.

In future, anyone tackling Mt. Travers on a trip over from Travers Hut should drop down close to bush line on Sabine side, leave gear, then traverse a little to find the obvious couloir leading up to the summit. Take ice-axes!!

The three of us who decided not to tackle Mt Travers trudged on up to the saddle where we waved to the 2 intrepids up on the rocky ridge, little knowing we would not see them again till midday next day. The weather was improving all the time as we admired the views from the saddle into the two branches of the Sabine. We descended through the Chasm to the warmth & sandflies of the Sabine Forks. The day still had a few hours left, & it was New Year's Eve, so we carried on up to the legendary Blue Lake. This place is truly everything it's cracked up to be - magical lake, beech trees and grassees. A late dinner saw us in bed well before the New Year and we slept in until the hot sun became unbearable. A leisurely morning saw us sunbathing & wandering up to Lake Constance, a contrast to Blue Lake in the starkness of its bouldery landscape. We met up with the intrepid Traversers for lunch and headed down the valley again (J.W)

Ian & I made Blue Lake in time for lunch, saw Lake Constance and headed down with the others, and spent the night in Sabine Forks Hut. We had a pleasant stroll down to the head of Lake Rotoroa next day in time for a swim, set up tent fly and build a fire. Thanks to Jenny's organising of the food we had a feast right at the end of the trip, cheesecake & hot scones with jam! We got on the water taxi next morning and headed out along with the intrepid Lewis Pass trekkers. A most enjoyable, trip.

Dave McLean for Jenny Winter, Allison Barbour, Ian Seque & Ian Hill.