

Report on Christmas Party Weekend – Mount Park Guest Farm – Dargle – 25/26 November

This year's Christmas Party was something different as it was an away weekend at Mount Park Guest Farm, which is located near to the Everglades Hotel on the Dargle road, and which nestles under the Inhlazane peak – one of our club's "big four" hikes.



Some 30 members gathered at the farm on the Saturday morning where Chairman Alistair and his committee were already busy decorating the party rooms in Christmas theme, setting up sound systems, and preparing for the weekend's activities. Cathy welcomed and directed people to their accommodation which was in either main farmhouse or chalets attached thereto while Sue was overseeing catering and table decorations and Peter the braai fires. One or two other members pitched their caravan/tents in the adjacent camping site and some others were staying close by.

At about 11h30 our hike leader, Brian Henwood, gathered together those that wanted a morning walk and led us into the area above the farm to take a meandering and undulating walk through the forest and open areas above on the looped trails. It even included a short ladder section. The weather was a bit drizzly but that deterred nobody.



This relatively easy walk finished back at the farm by 1 pm where the "A" team had lit the braai fires and set the tables up for Christmas lunch.

Everyone cooked their own braai meat and shared in the merriment and accompanying food and drink for much of the afternoon.



Alistair had also set up a golf (nearest the pin) pitching competition in the back garden and many tried their luck at this.

Attendees were also invited to view and vote for the best photos in this year's 2018 club calendar.



During the meal, the Chairman thanked various people for their efforts that day and throughout the year, and announced the winners of the best photo competition based on votes of photos in the 2018 calendar.

The winner was Sue Rowley (September) and second Dave Sclanders (June)

The Report Writing Award, adjudicated by Brigitta, was shared between Keith Ashton and Dave Sclanders. They were awarded for their commitment to "Longstanding Dedication to Report Writing".

The winner of the golf pitching competition for sheer enthusiasm and determination was Carolee.

We even had two dedicated fancy dressers – namely



Erica and Clive Rossam – who were duly awarded the best (and only) costumes prize!

The afternoon festivities merged into the evening and the members were treated to lots of delicious snacks prepared by the ladies, and even more beverages, to the entertainment of Eric playing his saxophone and Alastair and Andy on guitar.



Just to keep everyone on their toes, a game of team darts ran throughout the evening which was narrowly won by Brian and his team.

Whilst some decided to get a well-deserved night's sleep, several hardy couples stayed up and the carpet was rolled back to allow some very enthusiastic and sometimes highly skilled dancing!



Even those party people had to call it a day and the last folks probably turned in by about 11pm +

Sunday morning began in glorious sunshine and clear blue sky. Many of the members enjoyed a leisurely and delicious cooked breakfast in the farm restaurant, and by about 09h30, Brian again mustered about 20+ members to begin the hike to summit Inhlazane. This path followed up through the forest area again before reaching open land trails which were a bit muddy, but well maintained and good underfoot. The path to the summit had some steep/very steep/rock clambering sections, but also some nice contour paths.



As we crested the rocky ridge leading to the summit, the weather began to change with the cool wind rising and mist starting to whip over the ridge.



The group arrived at the summit after about 2 hours walking and enjoyed some rest with their snacks and drinks. It was decided not to stay too long as rain had been predicted so the time soon came to return by virtually the same path as we took to climb.

A few hardy lads decided to go on a branch loop and go back over the top of the pass/plateau before re-joining the main group, which proved to be an enjoyable diversion.

The down hike was over in just about 1 hour, with the rain holding off and the weather actually improving, and the group gathered on the grassy area next to the farmhouse in beautiful sunshine for after-walk lunch/tea/beer/snacks/cake and chat.



The group then packed their bags and dispersed having had a thoroughly enjoyable Christmas weekend at a lovely venue. Well done to the committee for their organisation and hard work.