

BATTLEFIELDS

27 - 29 MAY 2025

Hike Organiser: Hettie Randall

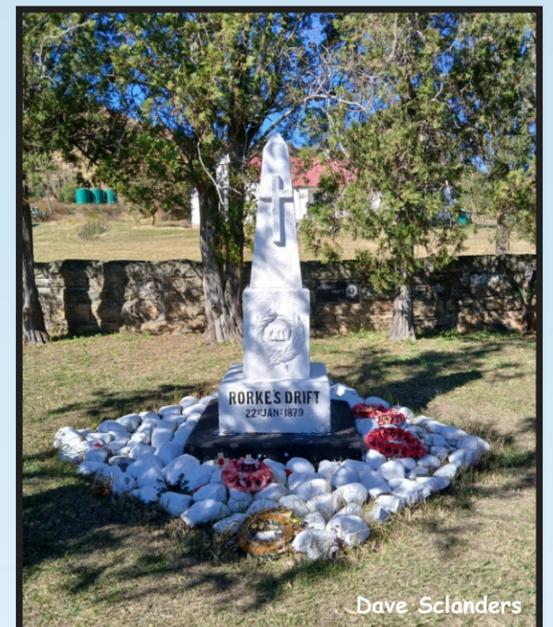
Number of hikers: 15

History Guide: Kevin Smith

This was a HisStory journey of immense detail. We stood open mouthed as our guide Kevin Smith rolled out the legends of our past. His knowledge and eye to detail was incredible.

Each day we started at 7am, once fed and watered we headed off into the battle zones with detailed descriptions of how it all began, happened and how it all resulted in the uniting of all parties with peace agreements eventually signed. At such mind blowing numbers of those who lost their lives, the price was paid.

We covered 15 battle sites in 3 days.



Our timeline began with the 1838 Boer vs Zulu clashes, remembering the massacre at Umgungundlovu of Piet Retief and his men, through the ensuing battles throughout that year to the legendary Battle of Blood River on 16th December 1838.

We were reminded of the first Boer War against the British. The 1880/81 Bronkhorstspuit clash on 20th December to the eventual Boer victory on Majuba the following year on 27th February.

With the discovery of gold on the Reef, the battle for independence and ownership took on another urgency with the start of the second Boer War of Independence 1899-1902.

The Boer ultimatum to the British expired on 12 October and the action started with the Boers ambushing the British supply train at Kraaipan near Mafeking and the clashes then progressing through to our route for this trip, namely Colenso, Ladysmith and Dundee.

We visited the grave memorials to all these courageous fallen, across an incredible distance, with fighting continually moving from hill top to hill top, the graves grew in numbers as more and more men fell until the eventual signing of peace at Melrose House in Pretoria in May 1902 after the scorched earth and concentration camps eventually snuffed the flames of Boer resistance, the cost too high.

This journey back to our grassroots was incredibly humbling. The exposure to the conditions in our harsh land was a highlight as we realised how these people, in all these battles, lived in demanding conditions and ultimately gave their lives.

This was a well worth journey back into our history to acknowledge and give thanks to the people who went ahead and prepared this land for us.

