

Kilgobbin

20th September

Hike Report by Andy & Marlise Pepperell
Kilgobbin Guest Farm – Dargle

The hike, led by Rob Mellis, saw some 14 hardy hikers braving the damp and chilly morning, and gathering at the car parking area at Crab Apple Chapel, which is on the Kilgobbin Guest Farm. Kilgobbin comprises of a quaint old farmhouse and some cottages, adjacent to an indigenous forest in the Dargle Nature Reserve. The reserve conservancy is administered by the Province but spans several private farms.



The first section of the hike took us through the wonderful indigenous forest and luckily the conditions underfoot were not too bad considering the preceding rainy days. The dense tree cover also shielded us from the chilly wind! Rob and Nelly had previously reconnoitred the walk with the farm owner and Graham Keit, so we benefitted from the three of them regaling us with descriptions of various huge trees and historical facts as we walked along. These included lovely white star flower blossoms on the trail that emanated from high in the canopy, as well as trenches dug in the past to assist hand sawing of large trees.

The going in the forest needed some attention as we climbed wood and earth staircases cut into the hill, going steadily higher and higher through the forest. Sticks came in useful!



Eventually we exited the forest onto open moorland and after a short zig zag we stopped at a viewing platform/braai spot for a well-earned mid-morning refreshment break and some lovely views across the valley and towards Midmar dam.

After this rest, we continued a steady gentle climb across moorland to a disused windmill and a cottage ruin, and then onwards towards the high point of the hike. On the way we investigated a carcass of something (we couldn't decide), and also enjoyed seeing some blue cranes, who honked their annoyance at us for approaching what was probably the brood or a nest perhaps? Please note we didn't get too close to them! Another interesting feature en route was the stone walls built by Italian prisoners of war.



The original plan was to stop at the hill crest under a large oak tree, but the wind was a bit strong at this point, so Rob decided to head to another more sheltered picnic spot on the way back to the farm. This was at the farm dam with a small boat store, and by this time (some three and a bit hours into the hike) everyone was ready for their packed lunches!

Once "lunch" was over it was a half-hour stroll downhill and back through a different forest path to the Kilgobbin farmhouse, where Rob, Nelly and Graham were thanked for a well-planned and managed hike, before we dispersed to the cars.

