

Archaeological research of Steinaecker's Horse

A team of archaeologists and researchers are conducting an extensive investigation at the site of the second headquarters of Steinaecker's Horse, in the Kruger National Park. The investigation will take place from August 6 to 19, 2006, and will be led by the renowned historian and archaeologist Dr Anton van Vollenhoven. Dr van Vollenhoven is a director of the research department of Archaeos Archaeologists, the foundation running the project.

The project was started in 1997, and the first phase – concentrating on the most northern outpost of the unit near Letaba – has just ended. The second phase, focussing on Steinaecker's headquarters near Skukuza, will continue from now until 2009.

Steinaecker's Horse was an informal military unit used by General Redvers Buller in a skirmishing and border patrol role during the South African War. The unit was founded and led by a German, Christian Ludwig Steinaecker, who started the war as a sergeant and ended as a major. The unit consisted mainly of local villagers and indigenous people.

The project's most interesting aspect is in that very little research has been done on the indigenous people's involvement in the South African War. The site of the archaeological dig is also unique in that Steinaecker's headquarters were used after the war as a blockhouse by James Stevenson-Hamilton, first warden of the Kruger National Park. The headquarters had a number of other uses after the war as well, including housing a number of former members of the unit who became game rangers in the Park. The famous ranger Harry Wolhuter was one of these.

This multi-cultural and chronological spectrum provides the researchers with a challenging and diverse area to analyse. Artefacts already discovered by other digs made by Archaeos range from money-pouches and wallets, to water containers, clothing buckles, and much more.

The project does not receive funding from Sanparks, and Archaeos would welcome any form of financial assistance.