

Identity unknown woman Westdorpe traced

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Westdorpe - The identity of an unknown woman, who was found dead in Westdorpe by a passerby in 2019, has been found. The police and the Public Prosecution Service let us know this. The research lasted three years and received a lot of national and international attention. The large-scale investigation team (TGO), consisting of detectives, a public prosecutor and a public prosecutor, has announced that the case can be entered in the books as 'solved'.



On June 22, 2019, a woman was found shot to death in a meadow in Westdorpe, close to the canal from Terneuzen to Ghent on Sint Anthoniekade. Who she is and where she comes from remains a big question mark for a long time. A large-scale investigation into her identity and the crime, exploring many different scenarios, follows.

Her DNA and fingerprints have been shared with the Netherlands Forensic Institute, but also with foreign investigative authorities in Belgium, Germany, France, Poland and Romania. A kinship study was also conducted. In addition, in various European countries, including the 'Cell Missing Persons' in Belgium, searches have been made in missing persons reports in the hope of a possible match with the victim found.

Gold and tip

When the match was not forthcoming, the Public Prosecution Service offered a reward of 15,000 euros for the person who would step forward with the golden tip. Through the (social) media, the TGO team appealed to the public several times to help solve this case.

Several times, both nationally and internationally, attention was paid to the unknown dead woman in investigative programs on television. This was the case, for example, in several Opsporing Requested broadcasts, in the Belgian program 'Faroek' and in the German investigation program 'Aktenzeichen'.

Composition drawing

In those broadcasts, among other things, a composite drawing of the woman was shown that depicted what she might have looked like in life. Search reports were also translated into several languages in order to reach as many people as possible in Europe who might recognize the woman. People thought along with the team en masse and this resulted in 758 tips. These have all been selected by the detectives.

Unfortunately, so far without the desired result. On Tuesday, August 13, 2019, the woman was buried, amid great interest from the public and the press. This happened in a nameless grave, at the cemetery in Terneuzen, in the municipality where she was also found.

Breakthrough

In 2021, the case takes a different turn when French police officers find a dead man just outside Dunkirk, after a distant relative of his raises the alarm with the police. The man appears to have died of a medical cause and the French are starting an investigation because they want to inform the deceased's wife of his death.

However, the woman has not been found and has not been reported missing. The French launch an investigation into the missing woman. Her DNA is placed in an international DNA database. And then the breakthrough in the Dutch research quickly follows: the DNA appears to be a 100 percent match with the unknown dead woman found in Westdorpe.

French research team

After this discovery, the French police officers reported to the TGO team, which was still dealing with the case. Thanks to the cooperation between the French and Dutch police, the identity of the woman has become official. She was 57 years old and came from the vicinity of the northern French city of Dunkirk.

Killed

Together, the French and Dutch police then look again at the investigation and the crime surrounding the woman's death. The French investigation team has determined that the woman has most likely already been killed in her home country by her (now deceased) husband.

The investigation team is pleased that the identity of the woman has become known. Her remains can now be handed over to her family.

Tipsters

TGO leader Dekkers: "The correct use of DNA databases has contributed 100 percent to the solution to find out the identity of the woman."

The entire investigative team that dealt with this complex case would like to thank everyone who has been involved in this case in any way. The research leader: "I am thinking in particular of the many tipsters and co-thinkers who still provided us with information almost every week. As sad as the case is, it's nice that the woman's family now knows where she is. The case can now be closed in an appropriate manner, also by them".