



NOS NEWS • [INLAND \(/NIEUWS/BINNENLAND\)](#) • 01/06/2021, 3:43 AM

Archaeologists uncover centuries-old cemetery on St Eustatius

Archaeologists have unearthed 48 skeletons in just over a month at a centuries-old cemetery on St Eustatius. It may be people who have been enslaved, the researchers say.

Near the place where the remains were found, the slave house on a sugar plantation stood in the eighteenth century. The researchers mainly found skeletons of men. On one coffin a coin from 1737 was found, with the image of the English king George II on it.

'Exceeded all expectations'

At the end of April, (<https://www.statiagovernment.com/about-st.-eustatius/news/2021/04/19/new-archaeological-excavation-to-begin-on-statia>) the team consisting of a group of international archaeologists started digging in the area

intended for the expansion of the airport of the special Dutch municipality.

Soon the first graves were uncovered. According to Alexandre Hinton, director of the St. Eustatius Center for Archaeological Research, the find "exceeds all expectations." She expects to find many more skeletons, she says to news agency AP. The excavations will continue until the end of June.

Hinton predicts that there may even be more graves uncovered than at the Newton Plantation in Barbados, another Caribbean island. There, 104 enslaved people were exhumed in a similar cemetery.

That slave cemetery provided scientists with a wealth of knowledge, because there is little objective information available about the living conditions of slaves in the Caribbean. Most of the stories have been recorded by the people who were in power or managed the plantations.

Global trade hub

Alexandre Hinton says that the skeletons on St Eustatius will be examined for diet, geographical origin and possible diseases, among other things. "The first analyses show that these people are of African descent," hinton says.

"Furthermore, we have found two individuals with dental adaptations that fit West African traditions. Plantation owners did not allow slaves to do this, so these individuals may belong to the first generation of enslaved people shipped to St. Eustatius."

St Eustatius was an important hub for world trade in the eighteenth century, after the Dutch Republic had made the island a free port. St Eustatius also became a transit port for African slaves and enslaved people worked on the sugar, tobacco and cotton plantations.

The island was until 1816, when it finally came into the possession of the Netherlands, alternately in Dutch, French and English hands.

SEE ALSO



[Report: create slavery museum on the north bank of the IJ, with 'strength and struggle central'](https://www.slavery.nl/artikel/2382647-rapport-maak-north-bank-of-the-IJ-with-strength-and-slavernijmuseum-op-noordoever-ij-struggle-central) ([/artikel/2382647-rapport-maak-north-bank-of-the-IJ-with-strength-and-slavernijmuseum-op-noordoever-ij-struggle-central](https://www.slavery.nl/artikel/2382647-rapport-maak-north-bank-of-the-IJ-with-strength-and-slavernijmuseum-op-noordoever-ij-struggle-central))