

Archaeologists discover skeleton in doctor's garden

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A University of Bristol archaeologist uncovering the skeleton in Dr Jenner's garden Image by Department of Archaeology and Anthropology, University of Bristol

A skeleton, possibly dating from Roman times, has been unearthed by archaeologists from the University of Bristol during a dig in the garden of vaccination pioneer Dr Edward Jenner in Berkeley, Gloucestershire.

The [archaeologists](#), led by Professor Mark Horton and Dr Stuart Prior, have been excavating part of the garden of The Chantry, the former country home of vaccination pioneer, Dr Edward Jenner (1749-1823), during a series of annual digs since 2007. They have already established that Berkeley is an important Anglo-Saxon site with a mynster of the same scale and status as Gloucester.

Last week, they uncovered a skeleton believed to date from the Roman

or possibly sub-Roman (that is the ‘Dark Ages’) period. The Roman occupation of Britain ended in 410AD, making this an extremely rare find of great historical significance.

As the skeleton was painstakingly excavated it became clear that it was cut in half by a later ditch. Roman material was found in this ditch, which could have either been deposited by the Romans themselves or later inhabitants of the area as they were robbing the Roman buildings nearby.

The [skeleton](#) is known to be adult but its sex has not yet been determined. It was found underneath the sealed remains of part of the Anglo-Saxon Mynster, founded in the 8th century. This latest discovery, however, clearly puts Berkeley on the map as an even earlier religious site than previously thought.

Professor Mark Horton said: “This was a completely unexpected but really important discovery because it fills in the history between the Roman villa that we believe is on the site and the Anglo-Saxon monastery discovered during earlier digs.

“It just goes to show that you never quite know what lies under your feet. It is unlikely that Dr Jenner was aware of these unexpected neighbours lurking at the bottom of his garden.”

Sarah Parker, Director of Dr Jenner’s House said: “Year on year the archaeology and recorded data that the University of Bristol uncovers from Dr Jenner’s [garden](#) never ceases to amaze. It reinforces the importance of this historic site alongside the Birthplace of Vaccination. We are very pleased to be working with the university, sharing history being made being with the public.”

Provided by University of Bristol

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