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Eotyrannus lengi, a new species of dinosaur unearthed in Britain, was identified by scientists as a relative of Tyrannosaurus rex yesterday.

Dinosaur fossil identified as an ancestor of T. rex

BY ED JOHNSON, LONDON

A previously unknown relative of *Tyrannosaurus rex* has been unearthed in Britain, adding a branch to the family tree of the predator, scientists said yesterday.

Eotyrannus lengi, named after collector Gavin Leng, who found the first bone on the Isle of Wight, was a 4.5-metre-long carnivore that lived 120 to 125 million years ago.

Martin Munt, acting curator of the Museum of Isle of Wight Geology, which is co-ordinating the dig, said *Eotyrannus* — the name means “early tyrant” — was an important piece in the evolutionary jigsaw puzzle of *T. rex*.

“The remains start to fill in the family tree of life. They are a missing link. The *T. rex* was around 60 to 70 million years ago. At that time this skeleton was already 55 million years old,” Mr. Munt said.

this age that has been found. It gives us a lot of information about the early evolution of the tyrannosaur that we did not know before.

“It also gives us a lot of information about the diversity of dinosaurs at this time in Europe.”

The later tyrannosaurs, including *T. rex*, stalked North America and Asia in the late Cretaceous period, about 65 million years ago. They were as long as 11.5 metres, had tiny forearms and huge heads with powerful jaws, and relied on teeth alone to kill their prey.

Although much smaller, *Eotyrannus* had a similar skull, shoulder and limb structure. It would have been a fast, agile hunter, preying mainly on species such as *Valdosaurus* and *Hypsilophodon*, also found on the Isle of Wight.

Dr. Naish said the new species may also be closely related to *Velociraptor*, a two-metre-long predator