

John Earp

IT WAS ONLY recently that old friends and colleagues of John Earp learnt that he had died in Worthing last September, shortly before his 60th birthday. John, for many years photographer for this magazine, was well known to many London archaeologists.

John was a printer by trade and keen to learn about archaeology when I met him in 1968. It was at a City Lit class on Practical Archaeology, held in conjunction with the excavations in Highgate Wood.

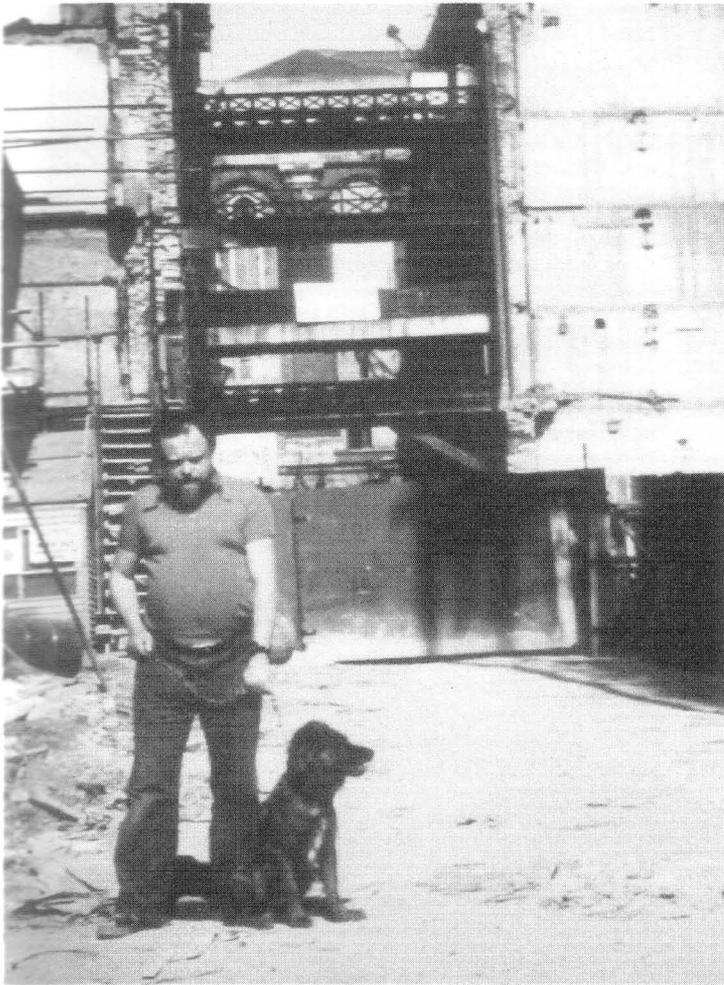
His enthusiasm for excavation was soon allied to his long-standing interest in photography. He was able to combine both activities in rescue archaeol-

ogy. Thus, when the largely weekend campaign of excavations began at Lefevre Road, Old Ford, in September 1969, he became responsible for site photography, as well as the tools and equipment provided by the London Museum and LAMAS. In 1970 with more funding for rescue archaeology work became available, redundancy from his printing job gave John the opportunity to do archaeological work full-time. He was an original member of the group set up that year which dug on sites in Southwark and elsewhere in London, and even as far afield as Cambridge, on funds channelled into museums and voluntary bodies by the DoE.

In 1972 this group became the nucleus of the staff of the Southwark and Lambeth Archaeological Excavation Committee. For a decade or more, John was an integral member with a particular role as photographer. Gregarious and instantly recognisable, often with bobble hat and slightly eccentric dress, weighed down with photographic equipment; he was a familiar figure about the streets and cafes of Southwark. From the beginning of the 1970s, ill health dogged John, culminating in a near-fatal heart attack a decade later, which meant that a working life was no longer possible. By then he had moved from East London to Worthing near to the surviving members of his family, particularly under the watchful eye of his cousin, Joyce Elsdon. Despite his illness, photography, archaeology and Southwark still meant much to John. For most of the 1980s it was possible for him to come up a couple of times a week and, as a volunteer, participate in projects, thanks particularly to the efforts of Tony MacKenna and Hedley Swain. It was during these years that he undertook a photographic survey of Southwark's urban fabric, which will be preserved by the Council.

John was an integral part of London archaeology during those formative years of the late 1960s and 1970s. His humour and curiosity will be remembered alongside his loyalty and determination. It will be impossible to show the photographs he took without remembering with much affection the person behind the camera.

Harvey Sheldon



John Earp in Southwark in 1975.
(Photo: Harvey Sheldon)