

NOVEMBER MEETING

Second Speaker Archcliffe Fort in WWI

A talk by Phil Eyden
Reported by Terry Sutton



Kathleen Bashford

Kathleen Bashford, an 18-year-old typist during World War One, was a very naughty girl. Because of the danger of enemy spies, all photography in Fortress Dover was banned by law. But Kathleen, daughter of a milkman, took her box camera to Archcliffe Fort where she worked and snapped some of the soldiers who were stationed there.

Thanks to her law-breaking, fifty of her rare 180 pictures were screened at our public meeting at St Mary's parish centre on November 16. Displaying the rare photographs was Phil Eyden of the Western Heights Preservation Society who was made a study of the Royal Engineers based at Archcliffe Fort (now the home of the Dover Emmaus community) during the 1916-17 years.

He emphasised how the series of pictures were valuable and of national significance



Troops at the Fort



Motorbike AA-9223

because of the wartime photographic ban. He pointed out that because there were no officers present the pictures showed an unusual informality of soldiers posing in their work and their play. Phil was able to identify by name most of the soldiers depicted in the photographs. This he did by diligently researching photographs and reports published in the *Dover Express*.

One of the photographs was of the Dover "Terriers" of the Cinque Ports (Fortress) Royal Engineers whose headquarters were in Castle Street and then in Bench Street. There were pictures of Dover's early "Home Guard."

Several of the soldiers wore black buttons on their uniforms showing, unofficially, they had lost relatives in the war.

Another photograph, dated 1915, was of cadets from Dover County School (members of Cinque Ports Fortress Royal Engineers) who carried out part of their training at Archcliffe Fort during the war years. (The ACC at the school celebrated its centenary in 2015).

Several of the photographs revealed buildings at Archcliffe Fort, and other landmarks in the background, that no longer exist. One building, now



Outside Pay Office 3rd Fortress Company Royal Engineers

demolished on the lower slopes of the Western Heights, was of the military hospital which I well remember because I received my "jabs" there in 1948 while on embarkation leave before departing the UK with the Hussars for North Africa.



Parade Ground Archcliffe Fort



Archcliffe Fort Today