

Places

Cooden Camp

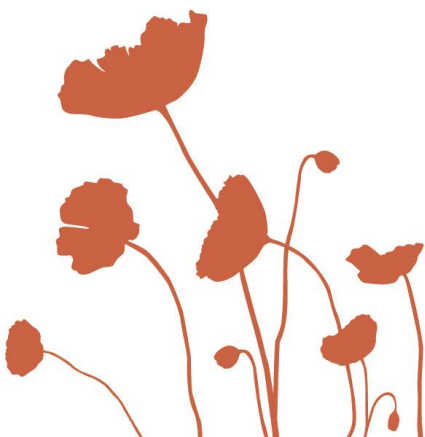
Read this article to learn about Cooden Camp in the First World War.

Cooden Camp was a military training camp established in Bexhill at the start of the war. The early occupants of the camp were housed in tents in the *Lower Camp* near the parade ground, whilst wooden huts were constructed in the *Upper Camp* at the end of 1914.

The role of Cooden Camp changed throughout the war. In September 1914, new recruits for the [Royal Sussex Regiment](#) stayed in the camp. They were clothed, equipped and trained at Cooden Camp until the summer of 1915.

In September 1915, 700 men from the [South African Heavy Artillery](#), arrived at Cooden. In the following weeks these men were joined by a small group of Australian soldiers as well. By the summer of 1916 the Royal Garrison Artillery controlled the entire site and the camp remained a training post for the next 18 months.

In January 1918, Cooden Camp's duty changed again. The artillery units were replaced by Canadian Engineers, who turned the camp into a Canadian military hospital for wounded soldiers. Canadian troops were already a familiar sight in Bexhill during the War, as a [Canadian Training School](#) and Trench Warfare School were established at the Metropole Hotel on the seafront.



The first 131 patients arrived at Cooden Camp in March 1918 to receive treatment. The hospital itself had room to care for 2000 casualties. The main function of the hospital was to allow injured soldiers to recover before returning them to France.

Sport and recreation were a big part of life at the hospital as it was a way to build spirit and morale. It was believed that if soldiers had confidence in one another on the sports field then they would have confidence in one another on the battlefield.

The Princess Patricia Canadian Red Cross Hospital also had its own Concert Party, known as the 'Parakeets,' who entertained the sick and wounded at Canadian hospitals across Sussex. The hospital remained open until February 1919. The [V.A.D hospital](#) established as part of the camp in 1914, also operated until January 1919.

Questions to ask your students

- 1) Which town was Cooden Camp opened near?
- 2) Soldiers from which different countries stayed at Cooden Camp?
- 3) What was the main role of the hospital at Cooden Camp?



Images

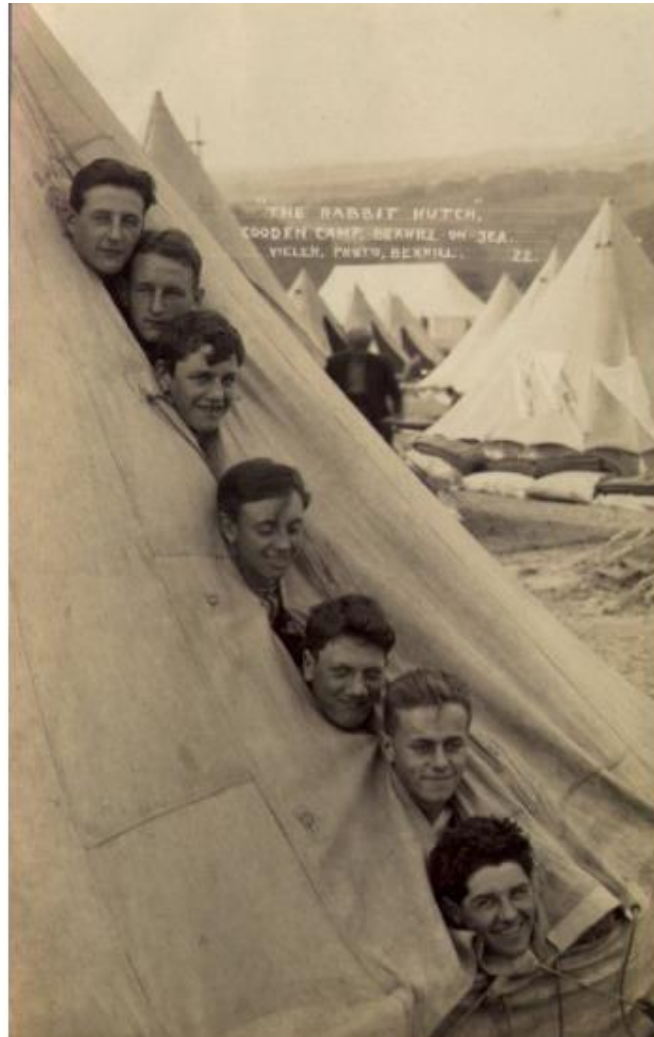


Figure 1: Cooden Camp - Image courtesy of Claire Eden



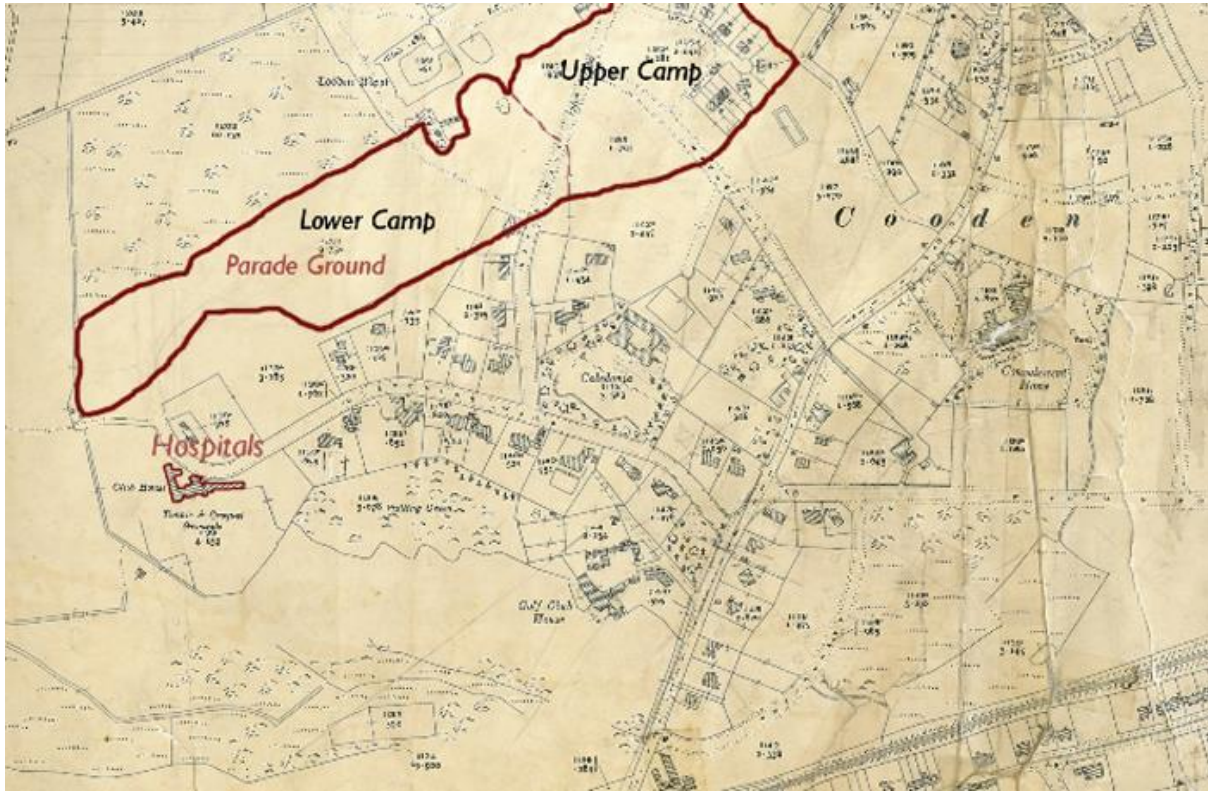


Figure 2: Cooden Camp Map - Image courtesy of Claire Eden





Figure 3: Cooden Camp - Image courtesy of Claire Eden





Figure 4: Cooden Camp, Catholic Army Hut c1914 - Image courtesy of Claire Eden





Figure 5: Cooden Camp hospital - Image courtesy of Claire Eden

