



# The Great War: Britain's Efforts and Ideals

*National Museum Wales*

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In 1917 millions of British men had been sent to the battlefields, and people at home were enduring hardship, unprecedented loss and food shortages as German U-boats bombed supply lines. The Bureau of Propaganda commissioned eighteen different artists to produce a set of sixty-six prints, with the aim of encouraging a war-weary public and raising support for the war. Although the subject matter and themes were highly prescribed by the Bureau (which was later renamed the Ministry of Information), the images reveal the impact of the war on society, particularly on the role of women. The images illustrate two headings 'Efforts' and 'Ideals'. 'Efforts' is further divided into nine headings depicting war-time activities: Making Soldiers, Making Sailors, Making Guns, Building Ships, Building Aircraft, Transport by Sea, Women's Work, Work on the Land and Tending the Wounded. One artist produced six prints for each heading. The artists are Muirhead Bone, Frank Brangwyn, George Clausen, A. S. Hartrick, Eric Kennington, C. R. W. Nevinson, Charles Pears, William Rothenstein and Claude Shepperson. In the 'Ideals' portfolio twelve artists illustrate symbolic themes such as The Freedom of the Seas and The Triumph of Democracy. The artists are Frank Brangwyn, George Clausen, Edmund Dulac, Maurice Greiffenhagen, Francis Ernest Jackson, Augustus John, Gerald Moira, William Nicholson, Charles Ricketts, William Rothenstein, Charles Shannon and Edmund Joseph Sullivan. The artists did not have full artistic freedom. They were given their subject and each image had to pass censorship regulations. However they were paid well - GBP210 (about GBP10,000 today) plus royalties. The 'Efforts' prints were sold for GBP2 2s 0d (GBP100) each and the 'Ideals' for GBP3 3s 0d (GBP154). Two hundred sets were printed. The prints were widely published when first exhibited in 1917, but support was not universal, with some of the images criticized for their idealism of war. The prints were exhibited around Britain and in France, America, Canada and Australia. A few sets were given to galleries and museums, and a set was presented to the National Museum of Wales in 1919. The prints are being exhibited for the first time ever at National Museum Cardiff in August 2014.

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