

# WAR ARTISTS      WW1

The first official war artists scheme was set up by the British government in 1916. Initially for propaganda it became one of memorialising and a range of significant artists were commissioned. Although several women artists were approached by the British War Memorials committee, or the Ministry of Information, none actually completed an official commission.

The Imperial War Museum did commission 10 female artists through its Women's Work Sub Committee. This was set up to record the various contributions of women in the war effort.

Example: painting "IN AN AMBULANCE" by Olive Mudie – Cooke of a VAD (Voluntary Aid Detachment) lighting a cigarette for a patient.

Art was seen as the means to convey the righteousness of Britain's cause, to bear witness to the experience of war and to remember the fallen and to provide effective propaganda.

The first official war artist was Muirhead Bone, in May 1916.

Others were:

OVER THE TOP      John Nash

BLOOD AND IRON      Charles Ernest Butler

BATTERY SHELLS      Percy W Lewis

THE FIELD OF PASSCHENDAELE      Paul Nash

YOUTH MOURNING      George Clauson

Over 100 years later Chloe Dewe Mathews, a British photographer set up her camera in the grounds of a chateau in Picardy. It was the site where a WW1 Private was executed.

Her series of photographs Shot at Dawn records many sites where soldiers were shot for desertion. It was a commission by the Ruskin School of Art, as part of a commemorative art series 14 – 18 NOW. Places photographed included – fields, woodland, a primary school, and a slag heap. Also the cellars and holding cells where the men spent their last night alive.

Often the execution sites were on a sloping field or elevated ground as they allowed bullets which missed their target to be embedded in the soil. In total she produced 23 studies.