

A Complete Portrait of Arthur Jeffress 1905-1961

1939-1945 War

Arthur Jeffress and John Deakin parted company just as the war began. Deakin joined the British Army Film and Photographic unit while Arthur went to the USA to volunteer for the American Field Service as an ambulance driver.

His ship the Zamzam was captured in 1941 by the Germans and, in spite of their US citizenship and the USA not yet being at war, the ambulance drivers were kept briefly as prisoners of war. Jeffress still collected art, including a painted inn sign from Baalbek, the start of an interest in Middle Eastern Art.

Later he acquired two paintings by Tristram Hillier to remind him of his final return to liberty when he crossed the border into neutral Portugal in the summer of 1941.

Jeffress finally served as an ambulance driver and then liaison officer in the Middle East and Italy. He wrote many funny and touching letters to Esther Rolwand Clifford, the American wife of a Harrow school friend, in which he discusses food, books, clothes and art. The suffering he saw is rarely mentioned.



Jeffress became a captain in 1944,
Southampton City Archives



In front of his damaged ambulance,
Southampton City Archives



Jeffress, photograph possibly taken in Italy,
Southampton City Archives