

‘Disgusting, disgraceful, inconsequential and dirty renegade?’: Reconstructing the early life and career of Anglo-Boer War combatant and war prisoner ‘Artie’ Tully, 1889–1910⁵⁷⁸

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Abstract

Arthur William (‘Artie’) Tully is a largely forgotten name in South African military history. A professional boxer by trade, Australian-born Tully joined the republican forces during the Anglo–Boer War – also called the South African War – (1899–1902) while working on the Witwatersrand. Captured at Vaalkrans (5–7 February 1900), he became a prisoner of war on Diyatalawa in Sri Lanka (formerly Ceylon). After the Peace of Vereeniging in 1902, Tully, portrayed by his brethren as a traitor, rekindled his boxing career and established himself in Singapore, Southeast Asia, working as a bookmaker, turf commission agent and mine-owner. Tully’s visit to Australia after a thirteen-year absence was largely ignored, just like his legacy in post-war studies, and to this day, he, like thousands of others, remains an obscured figure of the Anglo–Boer War. His life before the war and the factors that motivated him to join the republican cause remain unknown. For some Australians, he is an emigrant traitor of no consequence. South Africans ironically continue to celebrate the contribution of a range of other foreign participants but, for unknown reasons, continue to ignore or are blissfully unaware of the contribution of this Australian to their history. Against this background, the study reported here reconstructed the early life and career of a significant personality with a view to end his current obscurity.

Keywords: Artie Tully, boxing, Anglo–Boer War, prisoner of war, Australia, Singapore, South Africa, sport

Introduction

On 31 May 2022, a significant number of British Commonwealth members will commemorate the 120th anniversary of the signing of the Peace of Vereeniging – the treaty that brought the Anglo–Boer War (ABW) (also called the South African War [SAW]) to an end. On this occasion, as in the past, those attending will recall the heroism and courage of the fallen and the survivors of this conflict through public displays and other events. Australians have developed a particularly strong commemoration tradition concerning this war. During their last celebrations in 2020, they hosted their annual Anglo–Boer War Commemorative Service at the Anzac Memorial on the Beswick Barracks Parade Ground, followed by a Descendants and Friends’ Day close to the war memorial in Adelaide.⁵⁷⁹ Two months earlier, descendants of the men and women who served in the war led the Anzac Day Commemorative March, commemorating all the

fallen soldiers and others in wars in which the country had participated. The ABW owed its prominence to the fact that it was the first conflict in which Australia as a national geopolitical entity had participated.

Commemorations inevitably recall the acts, omissions and betrayals of the ‘other’ – ranging pacifists, dissidents and traitors – those villains who are “consensually” defined, and to whom a “treacherous reputation” is assigned, and the ones who are often demonised and turned into a non-person for their deeds and convictions.⁵⁸⁰ Concomitantly with negative commemorations, such individuals are often silenced and marginalised and, at worse, rendered transparent and invisible.⁵⁸¹ Ducharme and Fine note that these consequences are “largely irreversible, successful status degradation processes relegate the offenders, and their reputations, to the area outside society’s moral boundaries”.⁵⁸² Ndlovu concurs with this sentiment and suggests that an act of epistemic violence is committed when this happens.⁵⁸³ A case in point is the story of William Arthur (‘Arty’) Tully, an Australian professional boxer who joined the Transvaal forces during the ABW (1899–1902) while working on the Witwatersrand. Captured at Vaalkrans, he became a prisoner of war on Diyatalawa in Sri Lanka (formerly Ceylon). Today, Tully, labelled a traitor by his brethren, is a largely ignored figure in ABW studies. His life before the war, and the factors that motivated him to join the republican cause, also remain unknown.

The individual life story, notes Rasch (2016), offers a lens for understanding both the past and “the relationship between individuals and collectives at the end of empire”⁵⁸⁴ and for the investigation of “wider issues around nationhood, ethnicity, race, sexuality and gender”.⁵⁸⁵ New ways of narrating the personal past became possible based on the insights gained.⁵⁸⁶ Concurrently, new insights about the intersection between “the border-crossing trajectories of individual lives, imperial influences and post-imperial narratives” are gained.⁵⁸⁷

Against this background, the study on which this article reports, used a combination of official and newspaper archives as well as secondary literature to reconstruct the life and career of Artie Tully to use it as a lens to investigate the intersection of sport, international migration, identity, and the war on individual and collective lives in the age of empire.

In search of Arty Tully

Martin Marix Evans’s *Encyclopaedia of the Boer War* indicates that one Joseph (‘Artie’) Tully, a boxer of Australian nationality, was born in Hobart in 1871, emigrated to South Africa in 1895 in search of fortune, and while there, joined the republican forces as a volunteer in the subsequent war against the British Empire.⁵⁸⁸ According to a 1913 newspaper report, Tully was 43 years old at the time of an interview, which suggests that he was born in 1870.⁵⁸⁹ This is confirmed by several contemporary newspaper reports. This difference, in name, is a vexing one and, over time, also proved to be problematic, as will be explained later.

Based on a diversity of fragmented sources, the consensus is that Tully was born and raised in South Carlton, Melbourne, in the state of Victoria. The son of Adelaide Tully,

who died in Carlton in 1914 at the age of 84, William Arthur was one of seven siblings – three brothers, George, Dave and Jack, and three sisters, Ada, Mary and Annie.⁵⁹⁰ However, very little is known about his father or the extended family network, their social status within the Melbourne society and the state of their family life and relations. Tully attended the St. Francis Church School in Elizabeth Street in the city, also the alma mater of fellow boxers Tut Ryan and Jack McGowan.⁵⁹¹

Living in Melbourne brought Tully in close contact with the general practice of juvenile entertainment, ad hoc and impromptu prizefighting contests in the side streets and alleys of the city, and the world of freakery where the human body and its characteristics, whether race or sexuality, is displayed as a curiosity for amusement and profit.⁵⁹² The city boasted many suburban halls, theatres, and pub backrooms, which regularly served as fighting venues. These spaces and others, such as the Lyceum Sports Hall, the Hibernian Hall and the Melbourne Athletic Club, frequently hosted events by physical culture entrepreneurs such as boxers, wrestlers, Indian club-swingers and dancers engaged in pursuing monetary opportunities. While colonials supported these performances well, some local newspapers, such as the *South Australian Advertiser*, deemed it appropriate to report a sentiment prevalent amongst the higher classes in the Mother Country that certain forms of entertainment such as “nigger and music hall shows” degraded or defiled spaces of high culture, and should therefore best be avoided.⁵⁹³ This sentiment was shared by the *Melbourne Leader*, who, on occasion, advised that less rather than more is advisable.⁵⁹⁴

As a youth, Tully developed an early yearning for boxing and a penchant for good taste in dress and the selection of his friends. He was good-looking, friendly and strong, and he worked in the gym with “an elusive cleanness that made the gentleman fanatics of that period seek his company”.⁵⁹⁵ Under the guidance of Dan Creedon and Peter Maloney, Artie Tully became a hitter with either hand and was so fast that Martin Costelloe quaintly said, “[t]het [*sic*] kid is sure fast enough to drink water out of a sieve. But Artie Tully’s sole trouble was that he would not train to fit his rubber body to withstand the strain of combat.”⁵⁹⁶ On romantic level, he was in a long-distance relationship with one Mary Brogan who insisted that the budding fighter quit prizefighting and find a steady and less precarious job. Tully instead joined the travelling troupe of English sprinter Billy Clarke and manager ‘Ole’ Warbler Evans, on their travels in search of fortune. While on tour in Murrumbidgee, and in response to verbal abuse by a local bully, one ‘Scragger’ Bogle, a challenge fight was arranged between him and Tully, which Tully won by knockout. This victory effectively launched him into a professional boxing career.⁵⁹⁷

However, the exact date for the start of Tully’s fighting career is still uncertain. In a preview to a fight in Singapore in 1905, the local *Straits Times* reported that Tully’s boxing career started in 1890, when he won his first three amateur contests.⁵⁹⁸ This assertion however is contradicted by the career records reported by the authoritative webpage boxingrec.com.⁵⁹⁹ According to this source, and based on reported events in the media, Tully’s recorded career, inclusive of both amateur and professional contests, had indeed started a year earlier.⁶⁰⁰ Based on the available evidence, boxingrec.com has retraced Tully’s professional debut to January 1889 at the Apollo Athletic Hall in

Melbourne against Frank ‘Young’ McShane in a four-round encounter. Aged 19 years, the debutant faced a much more experienced fighter – one who had already completed nine fights of which he had won three, including three encounters against Albert (‘Young Griffo’) Griffiths, at the time, Australia’s brightest lightweight prospect. Tully’s debut, however, started on a good footing with a draw or no-decision result, followed by six more fights, of which he won five and lost one. All of this helped to build a ring reputation worthy of financial backing and attractive to potential challengers and entertainment-hungry paying customers. Lamb, Williams, E Currow, J Helm, C Rowell and Jim Saxon were some of his opponents.⁶⁰¹

The first year of the new decade (1890) saw Tully fighting at least eight times within 12 months: each fight lasted either four or eight rounds. Amongst his opponents was Alf Forbes, whom he fought at the Crystal Palace, Richmond. This fight ended in a draw.⁶⁰² In his third encounter against William Lyndsay at the Apollo Athletic Hall in February 1891 and Jim Barron in July, he won five fights outright. This number was repeated the next year, including a contest against Sandy McGregor of New Zealand and a further five by 1892, including fights against ‘Young’ O’Neill at the Commotion Gymnasium in Melbourne⁶⁰³ and Stan Osborne and an unnamed “Malay lad Esler”.⁶⁰⁴ For four years, Tully’s income from boxing was supplemented by wood carting at a station.⁶⁰⁵ His record during these four years reflected a majority of either drawn or no-decision fights with only a small number of victories.

For the first four years of Tully’s career, he mainly fought in Melbourne venues, including the Apollo Athletic Hall, the Crystal Palace, Commotion Gymnasium, Melbourne Athletic Club, Abe Hickin’s Gymnasium, and Curran’s Gymnasium. He had the longest relationship with the first two, where he was thoroughly acquainted with the business of prizefighting and boxing. Since most of the venues belonged to practising boxers or physical culture entrepreneurs, these spaces served as more than hosting venues. It was also where support networks were formed, challenges received, and backers met to ensure the sustainability of the boxing industry. Fighters could thus better address the precarious nature of boxing as an occupation.

By 1893, Tully issued a challenge to Ned Burden and registered his willingness to fight Peter Murphy through the newspapers.⁶⁰⁶ He fought Jack Goggin at Goggin’s Hall at Captain’s Flat in early November as a boxing exhibition.⁶⁰⁷ Other fights included a contest against Charlie Gooley at the Salvation Army Barracks in Goulburn in November, which Tully won by knockout.⁶⁰⁸ He also re-issued his challenge to Burden in mid-December of that year. In the absence of further fights in Victoria, Tully toured New South Wales and Tasmania with black boxer Peter Felix in search of fighting opportunities. They hosted boxing exhibitions at shows as part of what was called a “boxing combination”.⁶⁰⁹ One of these was a fight against one Franks in May 1894 in the town of Bega.⁶¹⁰ This period was disappointing, with initially only three fights in 11 months and at least one seven-month period of inactivity. Between December 1892 and June 1895, 18 months of limited fights and reduced income followed. Among his opponents at was one Harry ‘The Stranger’ Edwards in a fight at the Temperance Hall in Wagga in December 1894 for £10 – a side-bet and the gate takings. The fight ended in a draw, and the proceedings

were split between the two boxers and their management.⁶¹¹ This fight was followed by a contest against one Myers, a local boxer, over four rounds in the same town. Generally, genuine “professional contests were few and far between, except [for] privately arranged matches, held in small halls at prohibitive prices of admission before select patrons, to whom money was no object”.⁶¹² In March 1895, just prior to departure to South Africa, Tully was challenged by Jim Richardson, which he accepted. Whether this fight took place is, however, not certain since each set his own conditions.⁶¹³

Against this background, Tully and several his compatriots and fellow boxers, including Tut Ryan and Tom Duggan, departed for South Africa and the gold mining communities of the Witwatersrand. This exit, notes *The Bulletin*, was an attempt to search for the “New Mecca for a cut at the shekels of the gold and diamond men”.⁶¹⁴ Chief in this regard was noted boxing promoter and trainer Jack Barnett who tracked the fighter down through the Australian newspapers and covered the required travelling costs after a swift agreement.⁶¹⁵ Tully departed with the express purpose of going to fight Jimmy Murphy in Johannesburg. He departed from his native land on a ship, the *Damascus*, and en route, while the ship docked at Albany in New Zealand, he fought in a four-round exhibition match against one R McBride.⁶¹⁶

Arrival and career in South Africa (1895–1899)

According to contemporary sources, the boxing game in Johannesburg was in a boom phase in the 1890s and “money [was] good and plentiful”.⁶¹⁷ In addition, the city had enough interested potential financial backers amongst the local business elite. Amongst the chief financial backers of sport and athletes were luminaries such as horse racing businessman Solly Joel, boxing enthusiast Barney Barnato, and baseball supporter, Dr Frederick Hollis Brenner, as well as several racehorse owners.⁶¹⁸

Tully arrived in Johannesburg on 2 August 1895 in the company of compatriots Joe Goddard and Tut Ryan and set himself up at the Goldfields Hotel. The local media described him as a “very likely lad” and acknowledged and referred to him as the lightweight champion of Australia.⁶¹⁹ Prior to travelling to the Rand, the fighter had one fight immediately after arrival in Cape Town against ‘Darkey’ Parker. As per standard practice, fellow boxer Tut Ryan acted as Tully’s trainer and, after assessing the local fighting scene, foresaw the possibility of several challenging fights against the likes of visiting boxers such as Barney Malone, Murphy or Billy Greaves as well as a local champion, Jim Holloway. Ryan also had Jimmy Murphy in mind for a fight – he indeed claimed that Tully came to South Africa with a view to fight the former. As a testimony of their regard for visiting overseas boxers with a suitable reputation, the local boxing fraternity appropriately welcomed the new arrivals with a reception at the local Empire Hotel where they “received the heartiest welcome from the local sportsmen present”.⁶²⁰

After settling in, Tully started to prepare for a potential fight against Murphy, the original reason for his presence in South Africa. However, repeated challenges to Murphy met with impossible conditions and, as a result, proved fruitless and “remained unanswered and the source of media speculation”.⁶²¹ A key problem was Murphy’s insistence that

his opponent had to be of a particular weight, a demand that, according to some in the media, “is impossible for Artie to come to without reducing himself to a skeleton”.⁶²² However, attempts by the challenger to spar against Murphy at an exhibition benefit opportunity as an alternative also failed. Following Murphy’s continued refusal to accept his challenges, Tully claimed the South African lightweight title, to which his nemesis laid claim. In order to prove his worth and consummate his self-proclaimed new status, Tully proceeded to challenge another new arrival, Bill Heffernan, for a fight. Due to prior commitments, Heffernan however declined the challenge.⁶²³ Ironically, Murphy, in turn, and because of a lack of other challenges, remained inactive – a situation which eventually forced him to accept a job at an iron foundry to “be relieved of the temptations which always follow in the track of idleness”.⁶²⁴

Tully, described by the Johannesburg newspapers as displaying a “bronzed face, erect bearing, and high spirits [which] testified to his robust health” and looking forward to potential “showers of silver” and claiming a record of 76 fights with “only been unsuccessful on one or two occasions”, in the meantime, continued to train.⁶²⁵ In early September, he secured a fight against Barney Malone. However, the fight was a disappointment and declared a ‘no contest’, chiefly because of Malone’s ring antics such as a deliberate attempt to engage in minimal combat to prevent a knockout or a defeat. In its aftermath, a public spat involving both disappointed backers and paying fans ensued.⁶²⁶ While some criticised the referee for declaring the fight a no-contest, the *Johannesburg Times* directed its criticism at Malone and suggested that the outcome of the failed encounter was an attempt by the local boxing establishment to use Tully as “a buffer for a despicable managerial difference” between local parties of which he had no knowledge.⁶²⁷

Notwithstanding, Tully persevered and found ways of keeping himself occupied. In line with established practices overseas, the boxer acted as ring referee at other events, including at a circus midget fight event, in addition to training for potential fights.⁶²⁸ He also accepted an occasional training role and provided advice and assistance as a ring second for fellow fighters – even at impromptu events.⁶²⁹ This kept him busy until his second fight – an exhibition match against Patsy Donovan at a race meeting at the end of September.⁶³⁰ Not an income-generating event, and with no better prospect of getting any profitable challenges, Tully started to consider the possibility of an early departure to England in search of fortune.

To pursue opportunities in the eastern part of the Cape Colony, the temporary partnership from Kimberley, Donovan and Tully left Johannesburg in early October.⁶³¹ This coincided with the start of the South African tour of renowned Australian heavyweight Tom Lees, who was on his way to Port Elizabeth with his horse Torpedo to participate in the annual race meeting there.⁶³² A week later, Donovan and Tully participated in a “grand fistic display” for a £500 side-stake and the “lightweight championship of South Africa” in Port Elizabeth.⁶³³ This amount was by far the largest purse they had fought for since their arrival on the African continent. By November, the two performed at an event in the Olympic Rink in Kimberley where Tully fought an “American Darkie”, Cohen, in an exhibition fight over three rounds while Donovan sparred against Harry Reynolds.⁶³⁴

Both were rewarded with gold medals for their part in the proceedings, after which they participated in a three-round 'spar' which was "fast and furious".⁶³⁵

Upon their return from their tour, the fighters found Johannesburg in a state of turmoil following the disruption of services including a lack of water and electricity following the escalation of a dispute between members of the 'Uitlander' community and the Transvaal government.⁶³⁶ Matters came to a head during November–December when, in the face of fears of a coup against the republican authority and its sovereignty, the Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek Politie (ZARPs) was withdrawn from Johannesburg. With the Transvaal authorities and key members of Johannesburg mining and industry (the key backers of professional boxing) opposing each other and the normal activity and services to the city population disrupted, there was little prospect of any further fights and consequently little financial gain for the visiting boxers.⁶³⁷

In the absence of law enforcement, members of the Uitlander campaign, the Reform Committee, appointed their own law enforcers under Trimble, the former head of the ZARPs. Trimble, in turn, appointed notable boxer and so-called South African heavyweight champion James Couper as Chief Inspector of Police, who proceeded to appoint his now-unemployed fellow boxers Artie Tully, Owen Sullivan, Tom Duggan, Tut Ryan and Bill Doherty as sub-inspectors. This group was tasked with supervising the interim police force, closing and policing canteens and gambling houses. They were paid 25 shillings per day and were given accommodation at the Goldfields Hotel for their effort. According to Doherty:

[A]s there were many lawless characters in the place the millionaire mine-owners and other rich men of Jo'Burg, decided that special constables would have to be sworn in. Owen Sullivan and I, because I suppose of our pugilistic eminence, were given a very high position in the force for we wore on our left sleeves the word "Inspector", which gained for us 25s a day.⁶³⁸

Within this law enforcement vacuum, some within the 'new' police force exploited the situation to their own benefit and engaged in blackmailing and extracting protection fees. Consequently, "some of the inspectors did richly out of the spielers" and even wished the crisis to last longer.⁶³⁹ By his own admission, Doherty was involved, and he implicated Owen Sullivan and related that they occasionally collected up to £300, which was supposedly handed over to some of the charities in the city. Tut Ryan confirmed the allegations of profiteering amongst the sub-inspectors, and Doherty further suggested that others, such as Tully and Duggan, tried a similar scheme but were less successful.⁶⁴⁰ These innuendos, however, were subsequently denied by Duggan.⁶⁴¹

After the Jameson Raid in 1896, some overseas boxers, including Tut Ryan, left Johannesburg, and returned home or went to England. Tully, however, stayed and motivated his decision by declaring, "he never struck a better country, and he is not going to leave it".⁶⁴² In the end, this proved to be a life-changing decision. While others who remained ventured into mining labour, Tully returned to boxing, not totally discounting a

future visit or relocation to England.⁶⁴³ Johannesburg, like most of the Australian mining centres at the time, were popular destinations for individuals from all walks of life, who were driven by all manner of motives, including “come-on men of the carnival world”.⁶⁴⁴ It was further fully integrated within the global theatrical circuit, which facilitated the continuous transnational movement of entertainers to pursue opportunities.⁶⁴⁵ Remaining in South Africa therefore made economic sense. Tully, having spent half a decade in Johannesburg, also had established a network of sponsors, loyal fans and a social network, all of which were crucial for the socio-economic survival of itinerant boxers and entertainers. Like so many of his peers, he was used to a nomadic existence and relatively carefree lifestyle, a situation that made a domestic life rather difficult. As far as could be established, he also had no romantic attachments elsewhere. He therefore clearly developed a stake in the society in which he was located.⁶⁴⁶

As normality returned to Johannesburg after the *Outlander* challenge, Tully continued to work with fellow boxers around future fights to make a living and to prepare for a potential fight with Murphy.⁶⁴⁷ This was done in the hope to benefit from any betting, silver showers and or side-stakes. Another important consideration for boxers was their drawing power for fans and financial backers. They therefore needed to stay in the public eye to prevent forced “retirement for ‘resting on their laurels’” and, Tully as a result, continued to “fire of the blank verbal cartridge” (challenges) but to no avail.⁶⁴⁸ However, the period after the Jameson Raid was a period of economic depression that negatively affected several sectors. Unemployment, a stagnant property market, high rentals, a down-turn in the building trades, a struggling retail sector and rising business insolvencies and falling wages all conspired to undermine the market in entertainment in which Tully and his contemporaries were operating.⁶⁴⁹

After eight months of inactivity, Tully fought Bill Heffernan at Searelle’s Theatre of Varieties for a stake of £600, scheduled for 30 rounds.⁶⁵⁰ The large gap between fights, prolonged inactivity and, arguably, insufficient preparation or a lack of ring fitness contributed to him losing the contest following a knockout in the thirteenth round. This was mitigated by the prospect of a scheduled fight against Murphy, who had finally agreed to a contest in June. However, this fight was preceded by Tully challenging long-distance runner, William Baker of Australia, for a £100-a-side “go-as-you-place” 24-hour endurance race. Tully participated in this challenge to generate an income and raise further sponsor and fan interest. The fighter-cum-runner appropriately styled himself as the “champion long-distance runner of Tasmania”.⁶⁵¹ This claim, far from being an empty boast, seemingly had some substance. Judging by some newspaper evidence, Tully had a record of accomplishment in pedestrianism that started in 1888 in an international six-day event.⁶⁵² Lacking the conditioning required for a 24-hour-long event, Tully was defeated by Baker after the first day.⁶⁵³ Fortunately, he beat Murphy in their fight on 4 July 1896 – one full year after arriving from Australia.⁶⁵⁴ The year, however, concluded on a low point with Tully having to appear in the Johannesburg Criminal Court on an allegation of theft by Robert Mayricke, a new arrival in the city.⁶⁵⁵

During the first quarter of the New Year, Tully ventured into Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) for a number of exhibitions and prize fights.⁶⁵⁶ Prior to his departure, he fought and defeated

one Jones in Mafeking.⁶⁵⁷ Not fully acquainted with the state of boxing and prizefighting north of the Orange River, Tully arrived without any fixed programme intent to “come to see what the place is like” and to give a number of exhibitions to attract interest.⁶⁵⁸ One of his first recorded performances was when he gave a boxing exhibition in the Bulawayo Market Hall in March. In addition, he fought twice: the first a six-rounder against one Davis for a small purse, and the second against Pats Carroll.⁶⁵⁹ Two months later, in May 1897, Tully participated in what was billed as a “Boxing Competition and Grand Assault-at-Arms” together with fellow fighters Tom Duggan and Patsy Donovan. To generate local participation, they offered a silver cup for interested amateurs.⁶⁶⁰ In addition to a scheduled fight against Jack Lee in late June, the three fighters continued to issue challenges to willing and aspiring fighters. Profitable encounters, however, remained in short supply. In September, Tully participated in a boxing exhibition at the Hatfield Hotel in Salisbury (now Harare) against two amateurs in six-round fights.⁶⁶¹ Although conditions to earn real money improved with a fight against Jim Holloway over 25 rounds in Bulawayo, conditions remained challenging.⁶⁶² The fight in October was billed as the “Lightweight Championship of South Africa and Australia” to attract fans and backers.⁶⁶³ Promoted by fellow traveller Patsy Donovan at Cooke’s Circus, the programme included a midget fight, an acrobatics exhibition, and a curtain-raiser over 20-rounds between J Lee and J Hardy. This occasion attracted an estimated paying crowd of around 700, which disappointingly saw Tully’s corner stopping the fight in the sixth round. This attracted criticism from the likes of JR Couper, who accused Tully of foul play and suggested that everything was not above board, and that the result was predetermined.⁶⁶⁴ This claim was strongly denied by Tully, who in response claimed that he suffered from a bout of fever at the time of the fight but not wanting to disappoint his backers and fans, he continued even fighting outside of his weight class.⁶⁶⁵

By December, after nine months of a less-than-profitable stay and tour of the territory, Tully was offered a benefit event and a rematch against Holloway – indicative of the respect and esteem he enjoyed among the locals in the aftermath of his countrywide tour.⁶⁶⁶ This effectively concluded his time in Rhodesia and his departure to the Cape Colony. The first month of the New Year saw him hosting his own boxing carnival in the Eastern districts of the Cape Colony in Port Elizabeth.⁶⁶⁷ With cooperation from the soldiers from the Middlesex Regiment, Tully hosted a programme inclusive of sparring exhibitions, formal fights and even some comedy. Following the proven methods, he offered medals to winners to encourage participation in the various events. During this period, he also fought Billy Greaves and Frank Daniels and secured a future match against Scotty Kane for £100, as part of two further shows.⁶⁶⁸ The latter fight, a 20-round contest, finally took place on 16 March 1898 for a side-stake of £200. The programme featured several other fights.⁶⁶⁹ Although Tully outclassed Kane “as regards science”, noted a newspaper, he could not deliver a knockout.⁶⁷⁰ The fight consequently ended in a draw.

By April, Tully returned to Johannesburg and now, boasting 81 career fights, resumed with issuing the customary challenges to both old and new rivals. Prospects, however, continued to look bleak. An attempt to secure a fight against Bennie Marks also failed since the latter prioritised a contest with Jim Holloway. To mitigate the new round of

inactivity, he participated in an exhibition with fellow boxer, Jack Slavin, at the Royal Theatre in Durban.⁶⁷¹ Concurrently, Tully issued a challenge to any lightweight in Africa for a fight for a stake of £200.⁶⁷² After returning to his home base in late June, Tully fought and defeated Bennie Marks in Johannesburg over 25 rounds.⁶⁷³ This victory brought in a raft of challenges from the likes of heavyweight boxers Jack McAuliffe and Barney Malone; McAuliffe was much heavier and outside Tully's weight class.⁶⁷⁴ Based on the monetary values offered, Tully declined most of the new challenges and declared through the local media that he would "take no notice of them unless a substantial sum is put in your hands as a guarantee of good faith".⁶⁷⁵ In the meantime, he also started to make plans to tour the Cape Colony.

In September 1898, Tully fought McAuliffe at Scott's Theatre in Pietermaritzburg for a £200 side-bet over 25 rounds, after all the required guarantees had been deposited. Despite losing this bout, he continued to enjoy the respect of his peers, some of whom – such as Duggan, McAuliffe, Tom Denny, Harry Winters and others – not long afterwards volunteered their services free for a benefit event in his honour.⁶⁷⁶ As the year neared its end, Tully fought Sid Fillis over twenty rounds for a side-stake "one man to win" in the Albany Hall in Johannesburg on Christmas Eve.⁶⁷⁷

At the beginning of 1899, Tully was in East London, where Scotty Kane challenged him to a knock-out fight.⁶⁷⁸ This was followed two months later by a fight and victory over Frank Daniels while in the same city – his last fight before the start of the ABW. On 11 October 1899, with the start of the war between the South African Republic (or Transvaal) and the Orange Free State against Great Britain, Tully was back in Johannesburg amidst frantic civic activity to prepare for the duration and the consequential results of the conflict.

During the Anglo–Boer War (1899–1902)

Soon after the start of the conflict, a group of Dutch railway officials employed by the Dutch–South African Railway Company in Johannesburg established a Volunteer Military Corps to support the Transvaal forces. The leadership of the corps, some of whom were ex-soldiers, recruited other volunteers, both experienced and civilian, and received uniforms and a limited supply of rifles (short Mausers) from the Transvaal authorities. Otherwise, they had to supply their own horses and clothing before being placed in the Johannesburg Commando. Since some were British citizens and potentially guilty of treason, various groups travelled to Pretoria to discuss their status with the Kruger government. The affected were then all granted Transvaal citizenship, the franchise, and a certificate of citizen rights.⁶⁷⁹ Tully was among those eager to serve, but there is no firm evidence that he was among those who became full citizens.

Tully, like a significant percentage of other recruits, both in the Republican and enemy forces, were civilians who joined the conflict for a variety of reasons. An analysis of the socio-economic composition of the Canadian forces in the conflict, for example, discovered that, while the first rounds of recruitment were aimed at enlisting ex-military men, the second round, due to a shortfall of experienced soldiers, targeted all sectors of

society and from all classes and creeds.⁶⁸⁰ As a result, recruits included individuals from the white- and blue-collar sector, both skilled and unskilled, and ranged from professionals (teachers, doctors, engineers) to clerks and business proprietors, in addition to skilled artisans and semi- or unskilled factory workers and labourers. Under the category of ‘miscellaneous recruits’ were listed individuals, such as horse trainers, actors, artists and jockeys, while the farming sector also provided a good number of recruits.⁶⁸¹ Given this mix of recruits, Miller, in his analysis of the socio-economic composition of the Canadian war contingents, is of the opinion that the researcher can only speculate about the true motivation for an individual’s enlistment and that a combination of factors rather than a single factor might have played a role in their decision to become soldiers. For some in the white-collar sector, boredom and a sense of adventure might have been a key driver, while for others, including those in the blue-collar section and agriculture, social pressure, a sense of duty, religious mission or economic incentives might have played a role. The latter, it is postulated, might even have trumped patriotism.⁶⁸²

As suggested previously, Tully’s decision to join the Republican forces might have come about as a result of him having developed a stake in his new homeland. According to a business model developed by Licata and Chakraborty, loyalty is driven by three factors, namely satisfaction, stake, and the value of switching service provider (monetary or non-monetary), all of which are determined by the length and depth of the relationship.⁶⁸³ Stake in particular, affects individual behaviour, commitment to people, and commitment to institutions with whom a relationship has been established. Further, the longer (five years plus) and deeper the relationship and feelings of satisfaction, the more certain it is that the relationship would evolve from “spurious loyalty” to true “attitudinal loyalty” to both an institution and a people.⁶⁸⁴ By the start of the war, Tully was in his fifth year of residence and possessed a notable network of professional and social relationships (event organisers, hoteliers, circus owners, fellow boxers, etc.) in all the South African colonies. This allowed him to find sustainable and ongoing work, which allowed him to remain an independent contractor. The depth of these relationships – as demonstrated by his regular and repeated paid joint activities with others in the same profession as well as with event organisers – was satisfactory to both parties and therefore assisted in reducing the risk of unemployment and thus social precariousness that is so often associated with a brutal occupation such as boxing.

Tully’s switch of loyalty from Australia to the Transvaal was, arguably, also aided by the existence of clear differences of opinion in his mother country and by the actions of other British-born volunteers. Some of the clergy in New South Wales, supported by sections of the Catholic press, were amongst those who were very critical about Australian involvement in the conflict. They, and other critics, equated the war against the Boer republics and the suppression of the Irish as essentially the same.⁶⁸⁵ This stance was often ridiculed and criticised by the pro-war lobby and resulted in local Irish priests chose to remain silent in the face of accusations of disloyalty.⁶⁸⁶ The Tully’s or MacAtilla, as it was known in pre-Norman times, seemingly were Irish and this link therefore provides another possible reason for Artie’s changed loyalties and decision to fight the British.⁶⁸⁷ In addition, Irish Americans who established their own units to fight alongside the republic forces also might have served as a motivating force. Their actions,

notes Bhroméil, were motivated by their “natural inclination ... to be anti-English” and a “sense of ethnicity” rather than a special love for the republican Boers.⁶⁸⁸

Judging the individual’s actions of participation, non-participation, conscientious objection, opposition, dissent or the changing of sides during a war, require an awareness of the multi-layered nature of individuals and their circumstances. It further requires both taking account of nuances and complexity, and refraining from automatic labelling of dissenting individuals, based on a one-dimensional assessment as traitors and enemy agents worthy of being “closeted away in history’s attic of shame”.⁶⁸⁹ Treason, Stockdale argues, is inherently complex and, according to Glick, involves “a man’s feelings towards his origins, it involves his political ideology, and his code of ethics”.⁶⁹⁰

Following the Boer forces’ defeat at the Battle of Elandslaagte on 21 October 1899, the Johannesburg Commando was dispatched to the front. Upon their arrival at Dannhauser Station in Natal, the newcomers – including Tully – were assigned to the Braamfontein Field Cornetcy under Field Cornet Van der Byl. He, in turn, served under Commandant Ben Viljoen.⁶⁹¹ In this capacity, they participated and witnessed the battles for control of Ladysmith, Platrand, Colenso and Spioenkop.

The decisive battle in Tully’s short but eventful military career was the Battle of Vaalkrans, fought on 5–7 February 1900. During this epic battle, which started on the 5 February and lasted three days, the 95-member Johannesburg Commando under Commandant Ben Viljoen suffered 29 deaths, 24 wounded, and only six unwounded, all of whom were captured.⁶⁹² Tully, who, according to CJ Blom, held the rank of corporal and was therefore in the thick of things.⁶⁹³ Given the strategic nature of the terrain for the defence of Ladysmith, Tully and 30 of his men were reportedly ordered to occupy the hilltop on the southern side of Vaalkrans to prevent the British forces led by Generals Lyttleton and Wynne from gaining a strategic foothold. Despite their best efforts, Tully’s group, assisted by the rest of the Johannesburg Commando, could not prevent the capture of Vaalkrans. Blom notes that this battle saw the “extermination of the Tully corporalship” and the removal of the captured to the prisoner-of-war camps.⁶⁹⁴ Since Tully was not among the recorded death left behind on the battlefield, it is accepted that he was indeed a prisoner of war.

Prisoner of war (1900–1902)

Artie Tully, officially listed as ‘James Tully’, was awarded prisoner of war number 92. However, his date of capture, listed as 7 February, should be assumed as wrong since the decisive battle that resulted in the British occupation of Vaalkrans took place two days earlier – 5 February 1900.⁶⁹⁵ Further, the use of the name ‘James’ instead of his Christian name, Arthur William, or the equally well-known ring-name, Artie, raises interesting possibilities. It might have been an attempt to conceal his identity and nationality to avoid death by firing squad for committing treason against the Empire. By mid-year, Tully, aged 29 years, was placed on board the ship *Ranee II* and, together with others, were imprisoned in the Diyatalawa Camp on the island of Ceylon (Sri Lanka).⁶⁹⁶ The *Ranee II*, which transported two loads of prisoners to the island, offloaded on 2

September and 9 November 1900.⁶⁹⁷ Tully's identity was widely known by this time but attracted no other penalties. This suggested that Tully might have been regarded as a Transvaal rather than a British citizen.

Tully's capture and subsequent imprisonment attracted significant comments from his fellow boxers, fans and compatriots. Fellow Australian Tom Duggan, his travel companion to and throughout South Africa, remarked:

I'm blowed if I know. We were all disgusted. I don't know of any other Australian sports who did the same, while I know hundreds who went to the front for England. The Boers didn't like the idea of the Australians helping the old country.⁶⁹⁸

This remark suggested that Tully's choice was motivated by disloyalty and an attempt to please his local supporters rather than a distant nation. Consequently, a boxing fan, in a letter to the *Sidney Referee*, wrote:

I am sending you this clipping from the Bloemfontein Post' for the benefit of my fellow pugilists in Australia, so that they will know how to treat such men as Jim Holloway and Artie Tully should ever, they meet.⁶⁹⁹

Similarly, another reader, writing under the pseudonym 'The Amateur', suggested that incarceration is an act of redemption and a means "to lessen the disgrace" and should therefore be prolonged.⁷⁰⁰ For the *Bulawayo Chronicle*, Tully's imprisonment was nothing more than paying for his indiscretion and thus by implication, "just and proper".⁷⁰¹ There was therefore clearly an expectation that British society at large wanted to exact revenge on Tully.

Incarcerated with his fellow combatants of all nationalities, Tully and his long-time rival, Jim Holloway, organised and hosted boxing matches and gave lessons as part of their camp recreation programme.⁷⁰² Among the first reported was a contest involving young amateurs in February 1901. This was followed by two fights against different opponents by Holloway. They also arranged two boxing contests in the Camp Recreation Hall. The programme sometimes included wrestling and, on occasion, even provided for private side bets. Although billed as prisoner recreation, these events were often paid events with a nominal charge of between 1 and 5 shillings.⁷⁰³ Camp officers and outside visitors often attended these occasions.⁷⁰⁴ This close involvement of Tully with his Boer compatriots suggested an affinity that went way beyond superficial personal liking. Tully even remained behind when other foreign prisoners were transferred to the Ragama Camp in January 1902. He also remained a feature of camp-life long after the Peace of Vereeniging was concluded on 31 May 1902. He for example fought against Jim Holloway on 19 July 1902 in the Recreation Hall of the Diyatalawa Camp as part of the entertainment programme for the remaining prisoners.⁷⁰⁵ Tully seemingly left the camp later in the year.

After the war (1903–1910)

According to the *Indian Daily News*, Tully arrived in Calcutta, India, from Ceylon in October 1902 with a view to fight Jack Hardman.⁷⁰⁶ Realising the undermining potential of his military past, Tully was promoted as an Irish champion to attract paying customers.⁷⁰⁷ He made his fighting debut in the city at the Corinthian Theatre on Tuesday night, 9 December 1902, and won the fight after three rounds, following a foul by his opponent.⁷⁰⁸ This effectively relaunched his boxing career and attracted the interest of a range of potential opponents, such as fellow Australian JP Donovan and American Jasper Lamphier.⁷⁰⁹ However, these fights fell through because Tully suffered successive bouts of sickness, arguably as a result of his period of incarceration as a prisoner of war.⁷¹⁰ During the early part of 1903, Tully focused on rebuilding his health and life. To earn an income, he staged physical culture shows and performed as an itinerant entertainer, including acts such as a punching ball exhibition and fighting against amateurs.⁷¹¹ As matters improved, he also started to work towards reviving old boxing rivalries.⁷¹² However, reintegration into community life posed its difficulties, and this period saw Tully being arrested and fined for public drunkenness and disorderly conduct.⁷¹³

By 1904, having formally left the war behind him, Tully ventured into the world of horse racing and betting, specifically bookmaking, and settled in Singapore. Since Singapore was a British Colony and followed the same operating model as the Mother Country, Tully required a significant amount of starting capital, including the Tattersall entry fee of £250 and a yearly subscription of £4-4s. He also had to secure a standing security deposit of £300 for bets at any given time. Furthermore, every bookmaker had to deposit £500 cash prior to the quarterly race meeting, which was only returned when no claim was registered.⁷¹⁴ To accumulate sufficient start-up capital, Tully returned to the ring and fought several opponents all over Asia.⁷¹⁵ These fights, often billed as “the greatest glove contest ever seen in the East”, were combined with complementary attractions, such as circus shows, which featured exotic entertainment such as midget boxing, juggling, club-swinging, comedy, ball-punching exhibitions, acrobatic cycling and “mystifiers”.⁷¹⁶ Otherwise, he supplemented his income by appearing in exhibition boxing matches and officiating at boxing contests.⁷¹⁷ To ensure ongoing public support and reassure paying clients, events were coordinated by a committee of gentlemen “identified with sport in Singapore”.⁷¹⁸

Tully accumulated a meaningful and useful financial reserve thanks to these activities and arguably some financial discipline. Over three months, his advertised activities in the Singaporean media illustrate his improved financial standing. In June 1905, he deposited \$5 000 as a “guarantee of good faith with the public” for bids on the horse racing meeting at the Selangor Turf Club.⁷¹⁹ This was repeated for the scheduled Penang Derby when a similar amount was deposited as a guarantee against all bets with a “well-known sporting owner”.⁷²⁰ By September, he deposited \$10 000 as a guarantee for a series of races for the Maiden and Governor’s Cup in October.⁷²¹ As further evidence of his solvency, a deposit was made to the *Straits Times* – a practice requiring that this security deposit be held until one week after the races.⁷²²

Tully extended his betting activities across Southeast Asia, including India and Malaysia, to ensure a consistent income. However, this venture was not cheap since he had several deposits as a guarantee to gain entry to the various events.⁷²³ Among the key races for which Tully took bets were the Merchants, Ex-Griffins, Singapore Derby, the Governor's Cup, Grandstand Cup and Double Griffins Lawn Stakes and Paddock Cup races in Singapore, the Viceroy's Cup in Calcutta, and races at the Batavia Turf Club.⁷²⁴ He was also a regular feature at the races in Deli (Sumatra) and obtained rights to do business at the races in the city of Taiping in Malaysia.⁷²⁵ He also in limited fashion, extended betting to boxing and took bets for others in contests initiated by private individuals.⁷²⁶

Aided by the absence of any other strong competitors, Tully's business flourished. In this regard, an Australian visitor wrote to the *Referee* in Sydney, noting that Tully was "looking extremely well and fleshy" and "has blossomed into a turf commission agent, and is, I believe, doing well".⁷²⁷ In 1908, Tully succeeded in obtaining a concession for tin mining in Siam – the culmination of a process, according to the available archival sources, that started in April 1907. In support of his application, he described himself as a former "miner in South Africa" and "in command of sufficient capital to work such a concession successfully".⁷²⁸ This mine was formally opened on 22 February by the Inspector of Mines.⁷²⁹

With established interests in bookmaking and mining, Tully finally visited Australia in December 1908 – six years after his capture at Vaalkrans and 13 years after his original departure from his motherland. The visit attracted little attention.⁷³⁰ Throughout, he continued to cite South Africa as his primary residence. After returning to Singapore, any further relationship with his roots was severed. Questions about his intentions to return in later years were simply met by a non-committal response.⁷³¹ Although still expressing the hope of being remembered by his peers, Tully was firmly committed to his new life in the Malay States and seemingly still proud of his South African connection.⁷³²

Assessing Tully

Arthur William Tully had a full and significant life as a boxer, soldier and entrepreneur, and thoroughly deserved his place in the annals of international boxing and the ABW. His embeddedness within South African and Australian history further shines a light on the interconnectedness of the sporting and military past of this two high-profile members of the British Empire. However, Tully's life also serves as a useful lens into the challenges that the exiles and expatriates had to face and the strategies that some had to employ to ensure economic survival while they operated within and moved through the colonial context. Displaying a high measure of resilience and motivation, Tully did not only embrace the challenges and obstacles that confronted him during his travels fully but continuously displayed a keen sense of agency as he moved through the Empire and beyond. When he chose sides in the ABW, it was consistent and with due regard to his assessment of his past, present and future. As an itinerant entertainer, Tully clearly valued his relationship with fellow boxers, promoters, fans and event organisers and their importance for his economic survival. Further, having developed a stake in his new homeland and after identifying the commonality between the republican struggle

and that in Ireland, his ancestral homeland, he chose against Australia and the British Empire. Far from being an opportunistic decision, Tully's enlistment reflected his history, his identity and his ethics, which turned it into much more than a treasonous and condemnable act.

ENDNOTES

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- ⁶⁹⁴ Blom *op. cit.*, p. 46.
- ⁶⁹⁵ The only other incarcerated ‘Tully’ on the database of the National War Museum in Bloemfontein was one Joseph Tully (Prisoner of War Number 11434), age 24 years, who hailed from Heidelberg (Transvaal) and who was captured in Johannesburg on 14 August 1900.
- ⁶⁹⁶ “Prisoners of War”. From the database of the National War Museum, Bloemfontein. <https://www.wmbr.org.za/view.asp?pg=research&pgsub=databases&pgsub1=2&head1=Prisoners%20of%20War&strGlobalTerms=Tully&opt=ditem&rdID=168>>. Accessed on 5 January 2021.
- ⁶⁹⁷ E Malherbe. “Transportation of Boer POWs from South Africa”. <<https://www.angloboerwar.com/other-information/89-prisoner-of-war-camps/3251-transportation-of-boer-pows-from-south-africa>>. Accessed on 4 August 2021.
- ⁶⁹⁸ *Sportsman*. “Tom Duggan back from South Africa”. 10 September 1901. 3.
- ⁶⁹⁹ *Referee*. “A renegade pug”. 13 February 1901. 7.
- ⁷⁰⁰ *Referee*. “Artie Tully and Dutchman Holloway”. 6 February 1901. 7.
- ⁷⁰¹ *Bulawayo Chronicle*. “Looking backward”. 13 February 1901. 9.
- ⁷⁰² FJG van der Merwe. “Sportontwikkeling onder Boerekrygsgevangenes tydens die Anglo-Boereoorlog (1899–1902)”. *South African Journal of Cultural History* 12/1. 1998. 53.
- ⁷⁰³ *Beira Post*. “Sport: Boxing – A Ceylon assault-at-arms”. 9 February 1901. 4.
- ⁷⁰⁴ *Cape Daily Telegraph*. “Pars from everywhere”. 1 October 1902. 6.
- ⁷⁰⁵ Western Cape Archives and Records Service, KAB, Leica Collection, L2232: Photograph of a boxing match between Artie Tully and Jim Holloway
- ⁷⁰⁶ *Indian Daily News*. “Boxing in Calcutta: Arrival of Artie Tully”. 2 October 1902. 31.
- ⁷⁰⁷ *Indian Daily News*. “Overland summary”. 25 September 1902. 31–31; *Indian Daily News*. “The Hardman – Tully Fight”. 20 November 1902. 43.
- ⁷⁰⁸ *Englishman’s Overland News*. “Death of Dr. G. Ferris”. 11 December 1902. 15–16.
- ⁷⁰⁹ *Leamington Spa Courier*. “Local news”. 26 December 1902. 4.
- ⁷¹⁰ *Indian Daily News*. “Boxing”. 12 February 1903. 27–28.
- ⁷¹¹ *Englishman’s Overland Mail*. “The featherweight championship”. 23 April 1903. 19.
- ⁷¹² *Sunday Press*. “Boxing”. 7 June 1903. 7.
- ⁷¹³ *Indian Daily News*. “Local intelligence”. 8 October 1903. 41.
- ⁷¹⁴ *Sportsman*. “What Australians are doing in South Africa”. 20 April 1897. 2.
- ⁷¹⁵ See, for example, *Madras Weekly Mail*. “The Tully-Brophy fight: A fiasco”. 26 May 1904. 12; *Rand Daily Mail*. “Boxing”. 3 August 1904. 9.
- ⁷¹⁶ *Singapore Free Press & Mercantile Advertisers*. “The stranded cruiser Sully”. 5 April 1905. 5; 7 April 1905. 2.
- ⁷¹⁷ *Straits Times*. “Boxing”. 11 March 1905. 1.
- ⁷¹⁸ *Straits Times*. “Boxing contest”. 11 March 1905. 5.
- ⁷¹⁹ *Straits Times*. “Mr. Artie Tully”. 24 June 1905. 1.
- ⁷²⁰ *Straits Times*. “Notices”. 15 July 1905. 2.
- ⁷²¹ *Straits Times*. “Latest advertisements”. 4 September 1905. 4.

⁷²² *Straits Times*. “Artie Tully”. 30 September 1905. 5.

⁷²³ *Straits Times*. “Artie Tully”. 18 December 1905. 4.

⁷²⁴ *Eastern Daily Mail and Straits Morning Advertiser*: 27 October 1906. 3.

⁷²⁵ *Eastern Daily Mail and Straits Morning Advertiser*: “Deli races”. 26 March 1907. 4.

⁷²⁶ *Eastern Daily Mail and Straits Morning Advertiser*: “McAuliffe v. Tully”. 20 December 1905. 2.

⁷²⁷ *Referee*. “Pugilism in India”. 14 February 1906. 7.

⁷²⁸ National Archives of Malaysia, Setiausaha Kerajaan Negeri Selangor, Pejabat, 1957/0135695W, Application by Mr AW Tully for a prospecting license over 500 acres of land in Serendah Mukim, 26 April 1907.

⁷²⁹ *Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Advertiser*: “Opening of Mr. Artie Tully’s mine”. 5 March 1908. 150.

