

Tony Tyson's Memories of Vence

Rosemary Howard

Readers of the D. H. Lawrence Society's 1997 *Journal* may recall Christopher Pollnitz's note on page fifty-six concerning the numbers of mourners at Lawrence's funeral in Vence on 4 March 1930. Recently, new evidence has come to light about one other mourner who was present: Edward Hugh Tyson. Owing to two coincidences – the fact that Mr Tyson and Mr Titus, another mourner, shared the same Christian name; and that Robert Nichols in his account of the funeral spelt Mr Titus' name 'Thys', while Frieda, when writing to Mr Tyson, used the German spelling 'Thysson' – matters at one point seemed more complicated than they actually are. Subsequently, however, Pollnitz cut through this small Gordian knot by quoting Frieda's letter to Titus (Lawrence's American publisher), saying 'I am so glad you were with us at his end.'¹ 'It's not an elimination round', says Pollnitz; 'We can be fairly assured that both Edward Hugh Tyson and Edward W. Titus were at the funeral.'

Events that led up to this revelation are as follows. As a result of an advertisement in the *Daily Mail* which mentioned the D. H. Lawrence Society, a number of phone calls were received by the Secretary, Ron Faulks. One of these calls came from George Tyson (known as 'Tony') saying that he had met Frieda in Vence as a boy. Subsequently correspondence arose between Tony and myself concerning Pollnitz's article in the *Journal*.

On 15 May 2000, Tony writes as follows, from 9 Pound Street, Wendover, Aylesbury, Bucks HP22 6EJ, explaining that it was his father who had had dealings with Frieda:

I was only 8 years old when I went to live in Vence, in 1929. When Lawrence died I saw the cortège, but my father was present at the interment.

My father arranged accommodation for Frieda while Lawrence was in the Sanatorium. When D. H. died, my father helped arrange for a death mask to be made...² Later, when Lawrence's ashes were taken to New Mexico, my father was present at the exhumation.

I met Frieda and she seems a very strong and large woman!! (I am speaking through the eyes of an 8-9 year old.) She was very kind to my friend Patrick Rochford and me: we were told a lot about D. H. Lawrence by Frieda and my father. The paintings were hung in Auntie's (Mrs Martha Crotch's) china-shop in the Place Peyra in Vence. I was taken, with Pat, to see them. I remember some strange faces in a garden and some appeared to be naked 'nuns', but I don't remember them all that well. If ever they were around I would love to see them again. They were quite large paintings, and I got the impression that they were not considered very good.

Frieda went back to live in Italy and from there wrote to my father asking him if he would help, regarding payment for the house she had rented in Vence, complaining about demands for payment. I am profoundly sorry I never met D. H. Lawrence. I believe he liked young children very much.

On 25 May Tony Tyson writes again with further details and enclosing a copy of Frieda's unpublished letter (see pages 114-15):

Regarding Lawrence's death mask my father did say that he had arranged for some Artist/Sculptor (there were plenty around in Vence at the time!) to carry

out the 'job'. Obviously this did not materialise, or perhaps the mask was not satisfactory.

With regard to Frieda's letter, Tony comments:

I think it is highly amusing, and gives some insight into Frieda's character! – typically German: she even spells my father's name in the Germanic way...My father's name was Edward Hugh Tyson...he owned a Bistro/Restaurant in the Place Antony Mars called 'Le Rendez-Vous', mainly used by English, American, Polish, White Russians etc...

On 30 June 2000, Tony now makes references to Mrs Martha Crotch who appears frequently in Frieda's later correspondence:

I knew 'Aunty', Mrs Crotch, very well. I did return to Vence in 1951 and Aunty was there, having come back after the war. Her shop had been closed by the bailiffs who would not let it re-open until Aunty paid her dues. I don't think she ever did. In 1951 Vence looked just the same as when I left it in 1938. However I went back again in 1995, and I did not recognise the place and nobody I knew was there. (Regarding the name 'Thys', my father was always called 'Ty' or 'Tys' – pronounced 'TIE'.)

Further references to Tony's Vence circle and the paintings appear in Frieda's correspondence between 1930 and 1935, as well as in Ada's letters. Frieda writes to Mrs Crotch from Florence:

Ask Thysson to help: really it's too monstrous of Giraud – he has done it before to some English people. They will do it to foreigners. Do fight. Ask Maestracci – I am sure he will advise you. Thysson always

helped...serves the Riviera right for their greed if no foreigners come.

Ada meets Martha Crotch in 1931 and writes to her: 'It makes me sad to see the pictures piled up round the walls of the villa.' In 1932 she sends flowers to Martha for the grave and asks her to look after the pictures. Frieda also says to Martha: 'Hang on to the pictures – don't let them go.'

Angelino writes thanking Martha for making it possible for him to go to Kiowa and finally, in 1935, Frieda asks if Martha still pays the caretaker to look after the grave, even after the body was removed.³

14 Lungarno delle Grazie
Florence

Dear Mr Tyson,

I implore you to help me, if you can - This man is just 'rying it on - I left everything in order when I went in may & left it in the agent's hands - I asked if I could be left off to pay the rent & the beastly Giraud would not - It's just a question of getting something, he is a well-known rogue & has done this to English people before. It seems monstrous to have to pay 3000 frcs, when I already had paid so much and not living in the house. I paid for a new chaff-bain & lots of repairs in his old barrack of a house - I don't

know anybody in Vence, who will help me - And I know you will try, why should we be absolutely at the mercy of these greedy dishonest swine, that's what they are -

Do see if nothing can be done. - I come to Vence soon, but am busy here with some of Lawrence's work - Richard Aldington & Pino Orioli and Douglas helping me -

You have already been ~~so~~ such a help & I think Auntie only feels scared.

Sincerely yours,

Frieda Lawrence

It seems such a cheek to ask you to help - Of course if there's no other way, I must pay -

Endnotes

1. Harry T. Moore and Dale B. Montague, eds., *Frieda Lawrence and Her Circle: Letters from, to and about Frieda Lawrence*, Connecticut: Archon Books, 1981, p.4.
2. Letter from Frieda to Emily and Ada, 4 March 1930: 'I so wanted a death-mask, but there was no time.' According to Peggy Needham, Emily and Ada were very grieved not to be able to get to the funeral: they even tried to go by plane.
3. Harry T. Moore and Dale B. Montague, *ibid*, *passim*.

Reviews