

J·D·H·L·S

Journal of D. H. Lawrence Studies

Citation details

Title: **D. H. LAWRENCE AS GAMES ORGANISER
AND FOOTBALL REFEREE**

Author: JOHN WORTHEN

Source: *Journal of the D. H. Lawrence Society*, vol. 6.3 (2023)

Pages: 11–16

Copyright: individual author and the D. H. Lawrence Society.
Quotations from Lawrence's works © The Estate of Frieda
Lawrence Ravagli. Extracts and poems from various publications
by D. H. Lawrence reprinted by permission of Pollinger Limited
(www.pollingerltd.com) on behalf of the Estate of Frieda
Lawrence Ravagli.

**A Publication of the
D. H. Lawrence Society of Great Britain**

D. H. LAWRENCE AS GAMES ORGANISER AND FOOTBALL REFEREE

JOHN WORTHEN

Pupil-teachers in the decade when Lawrence was being trained (and was training himself) as a teacher had to be able to teach subjects including music and art; and at the Albert Street Schools in Eastwood, where Lawrence was based, art classes were held from seven until nine on Tuesday and Thursday evenings, for the benefit of the pupil-teachers.¹ Lawrence would later claim to “have had only one real lesson in painting in all my life” (*LEA* 228), and – assuming that that is true – then the man who taught him was George Leighton Parkinson (1864–1938), an artist who had moved to Eastwood in 1898 and worked as a designer and decorator at the Langley Mill Pottery firm of Lovatt and Lovatt. Being, according to his son William George Parkinson (1893–c.1965), “a fully qualified Art Teacher”, he gave those art classes on Tuesday and Thursday evenings, where “One of his adult students was D. H. Lawrence”.² It was possible for teachers to take their examinations in art following those classes, the subjects taught including “freehand drawing, shading from the cast, figure drawing”. These, Lawrence may also have attended: “I was thoroughly drilled in ‘drawing’, the solid-geometry sort, and the plaster-cast sort, and the pin-wire sort” (*LEA* 228),³ though the thorough drilling may, of course, have happened to him as a child.

Up until now, most of what we have known of Lawrence’s links with the artistic family of the Parkinsons is what came into print in 1957, after Edward Nehls persuaded William George Parkinson to write a memoir of Lawrence (completed in December 1953) which Nehls included in the first volume of his *D. H. Lawrence: A Composite Biography*.⁴ Parkinson very usefully describes Lawrence as a pupil-teacher at the Albert Street School down to 1906, when

Parkinson was fourteen, and both he and Lawrence left the school; Lawrence to study at Nottingham University College, Parkinson to go (fairly soon) into the firm of Lovatt and Lovatt (he appears there in the 1911 Census).

At some point, apparently late in life, Parkinson started or possibly wrote in full 'The Autobiography of an Artist'; this survives in the form of the photo-copies of its first two typed pages, and in a printed form as the first chapter of the book which appeared in the newsletter of the Langley Mill Pottery Collectors' Club in 1997, along with a second chapter about work at the Pottery but without any mention of school or Lawrence. All these materials have come into my possession courtesy of their discoverer and preserver, John Giblin (Brenda Sumner brought us together and I am very grateful to them both).⁵ All the pages will eventually be deposited with the Department of Manuscripts and Special Collections at the University of Nottingham.

The typing is done either on a sophisticated electric typewriter between the 1970s and 1997 (I hazard an IBM Selectric) or on an early computer in the 1990s; this is clear from the way in which the lines are automatically justified and the text contains no corrections of any kind. It may have been done by Parkinson himself; it reproduces characteristics – non-standard punctuation, colloquialisms ("abridged this quite a good bit") and inconsistent diction – a sentence, for example, starts off using the "one" form ("one invariably got the wrong colour tone") and ends using "you" ("unless you were very experienced")⁶ – all of which suggest a text typed by Parkinson himself without any attempt at editing or improving it.

The pages are mostly about Parkinson's family and its involvement with the Albert Street Schools, filling in details not available elsewhere; the Parkinsons lived in Eastwood, for example, although the father worked in Langley Mill. The new material about Lawrence comes mostly in the course of one paragraph, on the second page, but the whole document is preceded by an 'Introduction' setting out Parkinson's aims:

The purpose of writing this autobiography is that my life has been full of incidents and experiences. I thought it might interest readers of later generations, especially my war service. I have abridged this quite a good bit and have picked out things that would make interesting reading. This, by the way, has no fiction and all the incidents are from my actual experiences. There are also no exaggerations. ([1])

I think we can assume that what Parkinson writes at the start of his autobiography about his family and schooldays is equally lacking in “fiction” and is also without “exaggerations”. (I have checked some of the details he supplies of his family members, using Census returns and birth, death and marriage records, and he is correct in every case I could check, suggesting a man either with a good and retentive memory, or detailed family records on which he is drawing – or both.)

In his ‘Autobiography’ there is, to begin with, a description which I don’t recall having seen in any other place of exactly how the Albert Street School for Boys was laid out:

The boys school consisted of one very large room with a low platform at one end where the master’s desk was situated. At the other end was a passage which led outside to the playground off which was a small classroom for infants, where I started my education.

Most of the teachers at that time were termed ‘pupil teachers’ ...⁷

So when Lawrence started as a pupil-teacher under George Holderness, in the autumn of 1902, it was in that setting; May Chambers, too, remembered “the one big room” which during the week Holderness occupied as Master,⁸ and which was used by the Congregational Church (just next door) for its Sunday School. Lawrence would have known it almost all his life.

But the very fact recalled by Parkinson, that “Most of the teachers at that time were termed ‘pupil teachers’”, should remind us of Holderness’s anger when obliged to release Lawrence and others to attend the Pupil-Teacher Centre in Ilkeston. In April 1905, for example, “work was almost impossible. The master [i.e. Holderness himself] endeavoured to take Stand[ard]s. 3. 5. 6. 7 – over 90 boys”. On another occasion, when Lawrence was required to attend the Centre for two solid weeks, Holderness knew he had to have the arrangement altered, “as it would leave over 100 for the Master alone”.⁹ That was clearly a recurring problem for a small school relying on pupil-teachers.

We can compare the layout of the Albert Street School with the kind of school room at ‘St Philips’ by which Ursula Brangwen is confronted in Chapter XIII (‘The Man’s World’) of *The Rainbow*. The school at “Brinsley Street, Ilkeston”, is, of course, like the Albert Street Schools in being lighted only by gas (R 343:36), but the fictional school divides “the big room” by a glass partition; the Albert Street School apparently remains completely open (or its partitions can be pushed right back), so that in dire need Holderness could endeavour to teach (not just control) at least four classes simultaneously. Fortunately, the Albert Street School being smaller, the classes are often of between twenty and thirty boys, not the fifty or sixty by whom Ursula is confronted in *The Rainbow*.

The paragraph of most interest to Lawrentians comes towards the end of Parkinson’s surviving print-out:

On reaching standard 7, Mr Holderness told us we were to have a new teacher, who turned out to be D. H. Lawrence, and I was taught by him up to the time of my leaving school. He was a good teacher and most of the boys liked him. He was a good organiser of games and sport generally and often in the lunch hour would pick a side for a game of football. This was usually played with a rubber ball a little larger than a tennis ball not like today when you have both match balls and fields to play on. We had to play in the playground with two brick ends for goal posts. He used to

referee our games of football, and afterwards other classes got to doing the same, and ultimately became a general thing.¹⁰

The fact that Parkinson found Lawrence “a good teacher” echoes a number of other accounts of him, though it was also the case that, like Ursula, he “had to fight bitterly for my authority” in “a rough and fierce elementary school of mining boys” (*IL* 39), and later referred to it as “savage teaching” (*LEA* 112, 178).

What is completely new, and (I must say) unexpected, is the information about him as an organiser of games, and his role as football referee. On reflection, I suppose such information should not really come as a surprise to those who know about the way, later on, Lawrence set up games and charades at the Hags, or later with groups in London and Garsington Manor and New Mexico. He organised groups, he took over naturally. And we should not forget that throughout his speculative curriculum in part II of ‘Education of the People’, for children from the age of 7 to 20, the only kind of instruction on which he insists for everyone, throughout, is “physical training” (*RDP* 97–8).

But Lawrence choosing sides for football and acting as referee is something new, all the same. He obviously knew the game of football better than he did cricket, as is demonstrated by his attempts to describe a cricket match in Chapter VIII of *The Boy in the Bush*, even though his phrase “putting the two goals through” in ‘Strike-Pay’ (*BB* 112–14, *LAH* 139) does suggest someone not conversant with the normal language of football. But, as his role as a referee shows, football and how it was played was something more nearly native to all boys in Eastwood; cricket tended to be regarded as a game for those at (for example) Nottingham High School, who could afford the kit. And Lawrence was never one of those. All he needed for football at the Albert Street School was a ball and a whistle.

¹ 'The Autobiography of an Artist, by W. G. Parkinson' [hereafter 'The Autobiography'], TS (JW), p. [1]. The text was published in the newsletter of the Langley Mill Pottery Collectors' Society (*The Windmill*) in April 1997, 6–7.

² Ibid., 2.

³ Perhaps a reference to drawing geometrical forms such as circles and ellipses, today more often called pin and string.

⁴ Edward Nehls, *D. H. Lawrence: A Composite Biography, Volume One 1885–1919* (Madison, WI: U of Wisconsin Press, 1957), 42. One of the relatively few errors in Nehls is in his Appendix 'The Lawrence Circle' (523), where he names the artist Sir Frederic Leighton, later Lord Leighton (1830–96), as the father of George Leighton Parkinson (W. G. Parkinson's father). Lord Leighton had no recognised children, but in 1864 his cousin Euphemia (1842–87) married William George Parkinson (1843–1905) (W. G. Parkinson's grandfather); according to W. G. Parkinson, the couple were married "from Lord Leighton's London Studio". The use of identical names across generations makes the Parkinson genealogy confusing, however: William George and Euphemia Parkinson used the famous name "Leighton" for their son, while one of their daughters was named Euphemia, after her mother. In the next generation, George Leighton Parkinson and his wife Sarah Bertha Jennings named their first daughter Euphemia May and their son William George after his grandfather.

⁵ John Giblin and his wife Jenifer ran the Langley Mill Pottery Collectors' Club for twenty-two years. W. G. Parkinson's son Brian and his wife were both members of the club and the pages of 'The Autobiography' ended up in its records.

⁶ 'The Autobiography', [1]–2.

⁷ Ibid., [1].

⁸ Nehls, *D. H. Lawrence: A Composite Biography, Volume Three 1925–1930* (Madison, WI: U of Wisconsin Press, 1959), 583.

⁹ John Worthen, *D. H. Lawrence: The Early Years 1885–1912* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1991), 117.

¹⁰ 'The Autobiography', 2.