

John Lennon

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John Winston Ono Lennon, MBE (9 October 1940 – 8 December 1980), was an English songwriter, singer, musician, graphic artist, author and peace activist who gained worldwide fame as one of the founders of The Beatles. Lennon and Paul McCartney formed a critically acclaimed and commercially successful partnership writing songs for The Beatles and other artists. Lennon, with his cynical edge and knack for introspection, and McCartney, with his storytelling optimism and gift for melody, complemented each other. In his solo career, Lennon wrote and recorded songs such as "Imagine" and "Give Peace a Chance".

Lennon revealed his rebellious nature and irreverent wit on television, in films such as *A Hard Day's Night* (1964), in books such as *In His Own Write*, and in press conferences and interviews. He channelled his fame and penchant for controversy into his work as a peace activist, artist, and author.

Lennon had two sons, Julian, with his first wife Cynthia, and Sean, with his second wife, avant-garde artist Yoko Ono. Lennon was murdered by Mark David Chapman in New York City on 8 December 1980 as he and Ono returned home from a recording session.

In 2002, respondents to a BBC poll on the 100 Greatest Britons voted Lennon to eighth place. In 2004, Rolling Stone ranked Lennon number 38 on their list "The Immortals: The Fifty Greatest Artists of All Time" and ranked the Beatles at number 1.

Contents

- 1 Early years: 1940-1957
- 2 1957-1960: The Quarrymen and the Silver Beatles
- 3 1960-1970: The Beatles
- 4 1970-1975: Solo career
- 5 1980: Starting over
- 6 Political and lifestyle controversies
 - 6.1 Christianity
 - 6.2 Political activism and the deportation battle
 - 6.3 Recreational drug use
 - 6.4 Meditation
 - 6.5 Primal therapy
 - 6.6 Humour
 - 6.7 Writing and art
- 7 Personal life
 - 7.1 Cynthia and Julia Lennon
 - 7.2 Yoko Ono
 - 7.3 House-husband
- 8 Death
- 9 Memorials and tributes
 - 9.1 Other tributes
- 10 Pseudonyms
- 11 Awards
 - 11.1 With The Beatles
 - 11.2 Solo career
- 12 Discography
- 13 Song samples
- 14 Notes
- 15 References
- 16 External links

Early years: 1940-1957

John Winston Lennon was born on 9 October 1940, in the Oxford Street Maternity Hospital in Liverpool, to Julia Lennon (née Meloy) and Alfred "Freddie" Lennon, during the course of a German air raid in World War II. He was named after his paternal

grandfather, John "Jack" Lennon, and Winston Churchill. Both parents played the banjo and sang (Freddie specialised in impersonating Al Johnson) though neither pursued music professionally. The names Lennon and Linnane, are anglicized versions of O'Leannain, or O'Lionnain, names which historically have been prevalent in Fermanagh and Galway. However, Dublin was the birthplace in 1858 of John's grandfather, John (Jack) Lennon who, like many men of his time, emigrated to Liverpool to seek better prospects of employment. Freddie Lennon was not present at John's birth. He was a merchant seaman during the war and sent regular pay cheques to Julia, who was living with John in Newcastle Road, Liverpool. The cheques stopped when Freddie went AWOL. As Freddie was seldom in Liverpool, Julia started going out to dance halls and met a Welsh soldier called 'Taffy' Williams [10] by whom she became pregnant in late 1944. [11] When Freddie Lennon eventually came home in 1944 he offered to look after Julia, John, and the expected baby, but Julia rejected the idea. [12] On 19 June 1945 she gave birth to a daughter, Victoria, [13] who was given up for adoption after intense pressure from Julia's family (the girl was later re-named Iggyid). [12] Lennon was not told about his half-sister's birth and never knew of her existence. [14]

Julia later met John "Bobby" Dykins and moved into a small flat with him. [15] After comments on the still-married Julia living in sin with Dykins [16] [17] and after considerable pressure from her sister, Mary "Mimi" Smith — who contacted Liverpool's Social Services and complained about John sleeping in the same bed as Julia and Dykins — Julia reluctantly handed the care of John over to Mimi. [17] (Julia later had two daughters - Julia and Jackie - with Dykins. [18] In July 1946, Freddie visited Mimi and took John to Blackpool for a long 'holiday', secretly intending to emigrate to New Zealand with him. [19] Julia and Dykins found out and followed them, and after a heated argument Freddie made the five-year-old John choose between Julia or him. John chose Freddie (twice) and then Julia walked away, but John, crying, followed her. [14] Freddie then lost contact with the family until Beatlemania, when father and son met again. [20])

Throughout the rest of his childhood and adolescence, Lennon lived with his 'Auntie Mimi' and her husband George Smith (who had no children of their own) in a middle class area of Liverpool at 'Meadops' (251 Mealeover Avenue). Family friends described Mimi as stubborn, impatient, and unforgiving, [20] but she also had a sense of humour. Often when she caught Lennon he would respond with a joke, and the two of them would be 'trolling around, laughing together'. [21] Mimi confided to a relative that although she had never wanted children, she had always wanted John. [21] Mimi and George gave Lennon all of their attention; [21] Mimi bought volumes of short stories, and George, who was a dairyman at a local farm, [19] engaged John in solving crossword puzzles and bought him a harmonica. [22] Julia Lennon visited 'Meadops' almost every day and John often visited her; she taught John how to play the banjo and the piano. [23] She also played Elvis Presley's records to John, and would dance around her kitchen with him. [24] Lennon was later inspired by Elvis Presley, Chuck Berry, Buddy Holly and Little Richard.

Lennon was raised as an Anglican, [25] [26] and like much of the population of Liverpool he had some Irish heritage. Lennon attended Dovedale County Primary School until he passed his Eleven-Plus exam. From September 1952 to 1957, he attended the Quarry Bank Grammar School in Liverpool [27] where he was a "happy-go-lucky" pupil, [28] known for drawing comical cartoons and making fun of his teachers by mimicking their odd characteristics. [29]

Julia bought Lennon his first guitar in 1957, a Gallotone Champion acoustic. It was an inexpensive model that was "guaranteed not to split", but insisted it be delivered to her house and not Mimi's. [30] Mimi hoped that John would soon grow bored with it - she was sceptical of Lennon's claim that he would be famous one day, and often told him, "The guitar's all very well, John, but you'll never make a living out of it." Years later, when The Beatles were successful, John presented Mimi with a silver platter engraved with those words. [31]

George Smith died in 1955. [32] [33] On 15 July 1958, Julia was killed on Mealeover Avenue — close to Mimi's house — when struck by a car driven by a drunken off-duty police officer. [34] [35] [36] Lennon was 17 at the time. Her death was one of the most traumatic events in John's life and one of the factors that cemented his friendship with McCartney, who had lost his own mother to breast cancer in 1956. [36] Lennon named his first-born son Julian after his mother, and later wrote the song, "Julia".

Lennon failed all his GCE O-level examinations by one grade. He was accepted into the Liverpool College of Art with help from his school's headmaster and his Aunt Mimi, who was insistent that John should have some sort of academic qualifications. It was there that he met his future wife, Cynthia Powell, when Lennon was a Teddy Boy. [37] Lennon failed his exams despite help from Powell, and was often disruptive in class with most of the teachers refusing to take him on in their classes. [38] He also picked on anyone who was in any way different, using his quick wit and sense of humour to bully them. [39] He dropped out before the last year of college. [40]

Lennon started The Quarrymen, a skiffle band, in March 1957 [41], while attending Quarry Bank Grammar School. [41] Their first engagement was on 9 June 1957 at an audition for impresario Carroll Lewis, known as "Mr. Star-Maker". [42] A few weeks later, on 6 July 1957, Lennon and The Quarrymen met guitarist Paul McCartney at the Woolton Garden flat he held at St. Peter's Church. [43] McCartney's father later allowed the Quarrymen to rehearse in his front room at 20 Forthlin Road. [44] [45] During their early

performances, Lennon encouraged McCartney to steal cigarettes, sweets, or books from shops, [46] and they found a shared interest in making jokes on the other band members and on their teachers. [29] It was around this time that Lennon and McCartney started writing songs with each other and separately. The first song that John completed was "Hello Little Girl" when he was eighteen years old. This became a hit for the Fourms.

Cartney convinced Lennon to allow George Harrison to join the Quarrymen — although son considered Harrison to be too young — after Harrison played at a rehearsal in March 8. [47] Harrison joined the group as lead guitarist, [48] and Stuart Sutcliffe (Lennon's art school friend) later joined as bassist. [49] The band soon switched to playing rock 'n' roll, using names "Johnny and the Moondogs", but Lennon found it too musically associated with the

mid-1950s. The Quarrymen made their first recording: a cover of "That'll Be The Day" by Buddy Holly and a McCartney-Harrison original called "In Spite Of All The Danger".

In 1960, the band changed its name five times. Stuart Sutcliffe suggested the Beatles' as a nod to tribute to Buddy Holly and The Crickets, which he and Lennon then thought of using to the Beatles'. They changed their name again to the 'Silver Beats', the Silver Jets, and the 'Silver Beatles', but Lennon shortened it to The Beatles, to avoid being accused as "Long John Silver of the Silver Beatles", which was too similar to "Johnny and Moondogs". After a tour with Johnny Gentle in Scotland, [50] [51] they changed their name to 'Beatles'. [52]

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60-1970: The Beatles

Williams started to manage The Beatles in May 1960 after they had played in his Jazzcafé club. [55] A few months later he led them into Bruno Koschmider's Indra club in Hamburg, Germany. [56] [57] Mona Best ran the Cavern Club in the basement of home in Liverpool. [58] where The Beatles often played in 1959. [59] and Mona's son Pete Best joined The Beatles on drums as a as their first Hamburg session was confirmed. [59] Aunt Mimi was horrified when Lennon told her about Hamburg. She pleaded with him to continue his studies, but was ignored. [60] The Beatles first played at the Indra [57] club — sleeping in small, dirty rooms in Bambú Kino [57] — and after the closure of the Indra moved to the larger Kaiserkeller. [57] [61] In October 1960, they left chneider's club and worked at the "Top Ten Club", [62] [63] which was run by Peter Eckhorn. [63] Koschmider reported McCartney Best for arson after the two attached a condom to a nail in the 'Bambú' and set fire to it. [64] They were deported, as was George rison for working under-age. [65] Days later Lennon's work permit was revoked and he went home by train, but Sutcliffe had illitis and a head-ache. [66] When Lennon got back to 'Meadops', his Aunt Mimi threw a cooked chicken (that Lennon had bought her) and a hand-mirror at him for spending money on a leather coat for Cynthia Powell (John's girlfriend, and later his wife) whom referred to as "a gangster's moll". [67]

In December 1960, The Beatles resailed, and on 21 March 1961, they played their first concert at Liverpool's Cavern club. [68] [69] y went back to Hamburg in April 1961, and recorded "My Bonnie" with Tony Sheridan. [70] Sutcliffe stayed with Astrid Kirchherr as it was time to go home, so McCartney took over bass. [71] When Lennon was nearly 21 in October 1961, his Aunt Miter (who d in Edisburgh) gave him 100 pounds, which he spent on a holiday to Paris with McCartney. [72] Brian Epstein first saw The Use in the Cavern Club on 9 November 1961, and later signed them to a management contract. [73]

Beatles were driven to London by their road manager, Neil Aspinall, on 31 December 1961 and auditioned the next day for Records, who rejected them. [74] In April 1962 they returned to Hamburg to play at the Star-Club, but they learned that Stuart liffe had died a few hours before they arrived. [75] This was another shock for Lennon, after losing Uncle George and Julia.

Lennon finally signed a record contract on 9 May 1962, with Parlophone Records, [76] after having been teased down by many labels. "Love Me Do" was released on 5 October 1962, [76] featuring Lennon on harmonica and McCartney singing solo on the chorus [77]

Lennon-McCartney songs on the first pressing of *Please Please Me* album (recorded in one day on 11 February 1963) [78] as well e single "From Me to You", and its B-side, "Thank You Girl", are credited to "McCartney-Lennon", but this was later changed to onon-McCartney. [79] They usually needed an hour or two to finish a song, most of which were written in hotel rooms after a xert, at Wimpole Street, at Cavendish Avenue, [80] or at Kenwood (John Lennon's house). [81]

Recording technology improved, and they were doing more work in the studio than live, overdubbing was used so that Lennon id provide the harmony parts as well as the lead for his songs. The "Beatles" sound was a three-part harmony with Lennon or artney singing lead, and harmony provided by the others.

group's decisions were democratic: if any member objected to an idea, the group wouldn't se it. The Beatles decided to stop touring after their San Francisco concert in 1966, and never

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Background information

Birth name: John Winston Lennon

Born: 9 October 1940
Liverpool, England

Died: 8 December 1980 (aged 40)
New York City, New York, United States

Genre(s): Rock, Pop, Experimental

Occupation(s): Singer-songwriter, Musician, Poet, Artist, Peace activist

Instrument(s): Guitar, Harmonica, Piano, Organ, Melodion, Harmonium, Bass, Melodica, Banjo, Drums, Percussion

Years active: 1957 – 1975, 1980

Label(s): Parlophone, Capitol, Apple, Vee-Jay, EMI, Geffen

Associated acts: The Beatles
Plastic Ono Band
The Dirty Mac

Website: JohnLennon.com
(http://www.johnlennon.com/)

Notable instrument(s):
Rickenbacker 325, Epiphone Casino, Gibson J-160E, Les Paul Junior

grandfather, John "Jack" Lennon, and Winston Churchill. [6] Both parents played the banjo and sang (Freddie specialised in impersonating Al Johnson) though neither pursued music professionally. [17] The names Lennon and Linnane, are anglicized versions of O'Leannain, or O'Lionnain, names which historically have been prevalent in Fermanagh and Galway. However, Dublin was the birthplace in 1858 of John's grandfather, John (Jack) Lennon who, like many men of his time, emigrated to Liverpool to seek better prospects of employment. [8] Freddie Lennon was not present at John's birth. He was a merchant seaman during the war and sent regular pay cheques to Julia, who was living with John in Newcastle Road, Liverpool. The cheques stopped when Freddie went AWOL. [9] As Freddie was seldom in Liverpool, Julia started going out to dance halls and met a Welsh soldier called 'Taffy' Williams [10] by whom she became pregnant in late 1944. [11] When Freddie Lennon eventually came home in 1944 he offered to look after Julia, John, and the expected baby, but Julia rejected the idea. [12] On 19 June 1945 she gave birth to a daughter, Victoria, [13] who was given up for adoption after intense pressure from Julia's family (the girl was later re-named Iggyid). [12] Lennon was not told about his half-sister's birth and never knew of her existence. [14]



The 10-year-old Lennon outside Meadops - George and Mimi Smith's home.

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1970-1975: Solo career

Further information: John Lennon discography

Lennon had a varied recording career. Whilst still a Beatle, Lennon (along with Ono) recorded three albums of experimental music, *Unfinished Music No.1: Two Virgins*, *Unfinished Music No.2: Life with the Lions*, and *Wedding Album*. His first 'solo' album of popular music was *Live Peace in Toronto 1969*, recorded prior to the breakup of The Beatles, at the Rock 'n' Roll Festival in Toronto with The Plastic Ono Band. He also recorded three solo singles: the anti-war anthem "Give Peace a Chance", the heroin withdrawal report "Cold Turkey", and "Instant Karma!".

The album *Imagine* followed in 1971, and its title song soon became an anthem for anti-religion and anti-war movements. The song's video was filmed during Lennon's "white period" (white clothes, white piano, white room, and the like). He wrote "How Do You Sleep?" as an attack against McCartney, with George Harrison on slide guitar, [86] but later claimed that it was about himself. [87] On August 31 1971, Lennon left England for New York, never to return.

Some Time in New York City (1972) was loud, raucous, and explicitly political, with songs about prison riots, racial and sexual relations, the British role in Northern Ireland, and his own problems in obtaining a United States Green Card. Lennon had been interested in left-wing politics since the late 1960s, and was said to have given donations to the Trotskyist Workers Revolutionary Party. [88] In 1972 Lennon released "Woman Is the Nigger of the World", which drew parallels between exploitation of women and discrimination against blacks. Radio stations refused to broadcast the song and it was banned nearly everywhere, though he managed to play it to television viewers during his second appearance on *The Dick Cavett Show*. [89]

On 30 August 1972 Lennon and his backing band, Elephant's Memory, staged two benefit concerts at Madison Square Garden in New York. These were to be his last full-length concert appearances. Lennon and Ono also did a week-long guest/co-hosting the *Mike Douglas Show*. [90]

Following Lennon's depression over the poor-selling *Some Time in New York City* album and Nixon's re-election as president (which would insure the continuance of Lennon's immigration problems), Lennon and Ono decided to separate. He moved to California and embarked on a period he would later dub his "lost weekend" (despite the fact that it lasted approximately eighteen months). At Ono's



Lennon at Kenwood, his and Cynthia's home.



John Lennon in early 1970, after he cut his hair for charity