

BEFORE THE ERA OF STREET FIGHTING MEN: The Rolling Stones in 1964: from left, Charlie Watts (who died last week aged 80), Keith Richards, Brian Jones, Bill Wyman and Mick Jagger



What can happen when we give peace a chance

THE recent passing of Rolling Stones drummer Charlie Watts didn't mark the end of an era, since several other members of the band are happily still alive.

But Charlie's survival to the ripe old age of 80 years was somewhat unusual in rock music circles.

There's a film with Dudley Moore called *Thirty Is A Dangerous Age, Cynthia* but for rock stars, the time of peril is when you hit 27. Those who died at that age included Jimi Hendrix, Janis Joplin, Jim Morrison, Kurt Cobain, Amy Winehouse and of course Charlie's fellow band member Brian Jones.

I saw Watts and Jones on stage at a concert the Stones gave in Dublin in the 1960s. It hardly needs saying that Mick Jagger dominated the proceedings with his high-powered vocal performance and famous gyrations. By contrast, Jones just stood there looking into the middle distance and playing his guitar. Watts meanwhile was drumming away in the background to great effect.

A furore erupted just before the concert proper began when showband singer the late Brendan Bowyer made a surprise appearance with a troupe of dancers to perform his pop number *The Hucklebuck*. Bowyer had an excellent voice but the Dublin audience did not appreciate the Waterford native's intervention and there was an outbreak of heckling and jeering with offensive terms like "culchie" being used. There was considerable media coverage afterwards and it inspired this cheeky schoolboy to write a letter under the nom de plume 'I Was There' to the now defunct *Evening Press*, setting out my perspective on the incident: my first piece of writing in a national newspaper.

In general terms, the Stones have been rather less political than the Beatles although they did warn Donald Trump last year of possible legal

Deaglán DE BRÉADÚN



action if he continued using their material at campaign rallies, where the song *You Can't Always Get What You Want* had featured prominently.

John Lennon and Paul McCartney took a particular interest in the Irish situation. Indeed, both of them had significant Irish roots. The day after the Bloody Sunday massacre in Derry in January 1972, Paul and his late wife Linda wrote *Give Ireland Back to the Irish*, which was recorded by their group Wings. It was banned by the BBC but made it to number one on the Irish chart and also (thanks to Basque separatists) in Spain.

A photograph of Lennon with Yoko Ono at an August 1971 protest march in London shows him holding the front page of the far-left *Red Mole* magazine with the slogan "For the IRA, against British imperialism" and he has been quoted as saying: "If it's a

choice between the IRA and the British army, I'm with the IRA. But if it's a choice between violence and non-violence, I'm with non-violence. So it's a very delicate line."

Delicate is right, John, or in the words of the old Dublin saying: "You could sing that if you had an air to it." The wave of international sympathy for northern nationalists after Bloody Sunday, for example, was damaged by three terrible events that took place shortly afterwards: the Official IRA bombing on February 22 at Aldershot Barracks in England which killed six ancillary workers and a Catholic chaplain; the Abercorn Restaurant bomb in Belfast on March 4, attributed to the Provisionals, which killed two civilians and wounded 130; the Donegall Street PIRA car bomb in Belfast city centre on March 20, killing four civilians and three members of the security forces and wounding 148 persons.

Bullets are bad enough but it was particularly unfortunate that bombs became such an integral part of what militant republicans call the "freedom struggle". Matters were made even more horrific by the appalling recklessness displayed in the three events mentioned above.

But that was then. This is now. Since the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement of 1998 we've had a largely peaceful situation and republicans have made advances that would have been unthinkable even a few years ago. The latest polls indicate that Sinn Féin will hold the first minister post after the next Stormont assembly elections and might indeed be the main party of government in Dublin in a relatively short while.

Meanwhile, the timing of a border referendum and its potentially game-changing outcome are matters of constant public discussion. It just goes to show what can happen when, in John Lennon's words, you give peace a chance.

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ON THIS DAY

SEPTEMBER 1 1921

8 More Killed

SIX persons were shot dead in Belfast yesterday, a wounded man died during the night and a boy was killed accidentally by a Crossley tender. The fatalities amounted to eight. The organised mobs were again the aggressors. They held the centre of Belfast during the day where, if they did not actually initiate disturbance, they deliberately provoked it. The Lord Mayor, Sir W F Coates, appealed to the military. Soldiers appeared in the streets in the evenings. Their presence had a wholesome effect in some quarters but the sound of firing continued until Curfew.

The terrible scenes of disorder in Belfast since Monday at noon were renewed yesterday when fighting of a desperate nature took place over a much more extensive area of the city. Armed men held possession of the York Street, North Queen Street and New Lodge Road districts for about nine hours, causing great havoc to life and limb. A sudden decision by the authorities to call out the military to assist the police force had a good effect upon the gunmen who retired from their advance posts. Later, however, wild and indiscriminate shooting resumed.

As was feared, the activities of the gunmen extended to the city centre and matters assumed a very serious aspect when Orange mobs, apparently, had the freest licence to indulge in firing and assaulting inoffensive Catholic pedestrians. Mob law reigned supreme in Royal Avenue from about 9 a.m. until after dinner hour and hooligans, armed with revolvers, not alone interfered with passers-by but attacked shops. The casualties yesterday were the heaviest yet recorded. Six persons were shot dead and a seventh killed as a result of being knocked down by a [police] Crossley. Early in the morning there had been much shooting when the shipyard men were passing down North Street [for the Shankill]. Shots rang out from Carrick Hill and the shipyard men fired down Winetavern Street. Shortly after noon two sightseers were struck at the Free [Central Library].

A pathetic feature of the shooting of a woman, Alice Duffy, was that she was proceeding to her work in York Street Flax Spinning Company. Three men bravely went to her assistance but they also felt victim to the sniper's bullets and were wounded.

WITH the Truce holding firm in the south from July 1921, the Belfast 'pogroms' - as nationalists termed them - were covered in detail by the British, French and American press. In the words of Eunan O'Hallpin, co-author of *The Dead of the Irish Revolution*, 'In Belfast working-class loyalism took the lead in putting the nationalist minority firmly in its place'.

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