

**Wednesday, 1 April 1964**  
**NEMS London Offices**  
**Sutherland House**  
**5-6 Argyll Street**  
**London**

John had been summoned. Brian had sent a car to the Scala, interrupting everything.<sup>i</sup> George and Ringo had been instructed to come along; only Paul had been excused, as he needed to visit a sick relative in Liverpool's Walton hospital.<sup>ii</sup>

Now, standing in Brian's office,<sup>iii</sup> John faced the flushed and highly agitated Epstein. The manager's eyes were flinty. His manner was all business, and none of the boys ventured small talk. They stood like errant schoolboys. They waited.

"John," Brian searched for words. "A man...a man who was accompanied here by a reporter from the *Daily Sketch*<sup>iv</sup> – a man whom I sincerely believe to be your father – is waiting in another room to speak with you."<sup>v</sup>

For a long, pained moment, John said nothing. He squinted. Folded his arms. Chewed gum. He refused to look at the others. Then:

"Look, I won't have any fuggin' reporters!" John's face was rigid. His eyes, black.

"No. No, of course not." Brian backed him up. "You can speak with...your father... alone."

"And if I don't want to? What then?" John raised his chin defiantly. His nostrils flared.

"I think you should," Brian said quietly. "I think it's important to handle this business, before the press has their way with him...don't you?"<sup>vi</sup>

John said nothing. He looked down. He scuffed the floor.

"You can stay here – use my office."<sup>vii</sup> Brian offered all he had to give. "In fact, just sit here until you're ready, John; no one'll rush you. And when you feel up to it, let me know. I'll be right outside. I'll be the one to bring him in."

John moved to the luxuriously covered divan<sup>viii</sup> and collapsed. His legs almost failed. He hunkered over – hands on his thighs, shoulders rounded, head down. And he prayed that Brian and the others couldn't see him trembling. But the one thing he didn't do was delay.

"Well, no time like the present, is there, Eppy?" John hissed, trying to sound cavalier but only sounding as angry as he felt. "Let's get this fuggin' shamble over with, right?"

And escorting George and Ringo from the room, Brian turned to bring Alfred Lennon back into John's life. After 18 years.

\*\*\*\*\*

"Listen Freddie," the *Sketch* reporter warned him. "From what I've heard, your John's a hard case. Don't expect him to be friendly."<sup>ix</sup>

"Johnny boy? Ah surely, he'll..."

"He's as likely to give you a punch on the nose as to want to shake your hand."<sup>x</sup>

"Well, in that case," Fred swelled with an audacity he didn't really feel, "he'd most assuredly receive *two* back!"<sup>xi</sup>

Both men laughed – hollow chuckles. Anxiety filled the room where they waited for John's decision.

"It's a...a bloody shame we can't take our cameras in,"<sup>xii</sup> the reporter artfully suggested once again. He hadn't yet surrendered the hope that this secret meeting would turn into a front-page story: "JOHN

LENNON AND FATHER REUNITE!” It could be *the* sensational chronicle that galvanized his career.

But Fred was loathe to buck Brian Epstein; the impeccably attired manager had been cold, stern, and unswerving. “No cameras, no reporters,” Epstein had spat.

Fred snickered behind his back calling Epstein, “ice water.” But to his face, Fred called him, “Sir.”

“Mr. Lennon?” Brian had returned. His face and neck were splotted with hives.

“Yessir?” Fred abruptly stood. His short, spindly legs – stunted by childhood rickets<sup>xiii</sup> – quaked.

“John will see you now. *And only you,*” he reiterated, moving towards the door. “This way, please.”<sup>xiv</sup>

Winking with forced bravado at his reporter friend, Fred followed The Beatles’ uncompromising manager out of the hushed, pregnant anteroom. He walked with a swagger and a limp.

\*\*\*\*\*

Fred blinked and stared at the younger version of himself. Same exaggerated forehead, same almond eyes beneath bushy eyebrows, same Roman nose. Thin but finely shaped lips, elongated face, squared chin.<sup>xv</sup> John was, in so many ways, his very reflection.

But Fred saw Julia there as well. So much of Julia that he almost gasped. He was astounded; his heart raced.<sup>xvi</sup>

John wore the exact scowl that “Julie-girl” wore when she was wounded or threatened.<sup>xvii</sup> John lifted his chin, just as she once did. He narrowed his eyes as only the Stanley clan could. John was his mother’s son. Mimi’s boy as well.

“Hello, son,”<sup>xviii</sup> Fred stuck out his hand.<sup>xix</sup> “Great to see you after all this time!”<sup>xx</sup> It was a well-rehearsed line.

“What d’you want, then?”<sup>xxi</sup> John refused the handshake.<sup>xxii</sup> He’d tried to lounge unconcernedly on Brian’s divan, but he’d failed. His arms were folded against his chest.<sup>xxiii</sup>

Fred kept his eyes locked on his son’s. “I don’t want anythin’, Johnny.”<sup>xxiv</sup> He took several steps into the room. “Certainly not to jump on the bandwagon, no matter what you’ve heard. I just want to make it clear to you that there’s *no truth* in the stories the newspapers are runnin’ about me.”<sup>xxv</sup>

“You never bothered about me before. Why now?”<sup>xxvi</sup> The set of John’s head telegraphed aggression.<sup>xxvii</sup> Fred kept his distance, making no overture to sit.

“Who says I never bothered?” Fred’s tone became as razored as his son’s. Their voices were echoes of one another.<sup>xxviii</sup>

“Well, *I* never heard from you, did I – not for 18 years!” John’s eyes were hooded.

“Not since Julie – yer mother – talked me into lettin’ you go back to Liverpool with her ’n that boyfriend of hers. Back to ‘yer home ’n school,’ she said.”<sup>xxix</sup>

“’N *that* was the end of that!” John pronounced. He donned his deep, announcer’s voice: “’N his Pater sailed away, boys’n girls, straight off into the sunset!”

“Right.” Fred had had enough. Like John, he suffered fools not at all,<sup>xxx</sup> and his patience with his son was wearing thin. “Right! When Julia took y’back home, I had a job to do. Y’er absolutely right! I sailed out of Blackpool on 29 June on the *Almanzora*,<sup>xxxi</sup> ’n without havin’ a boy to raise – as I’d *planned to do* – I went back to work.” He paused, shrugging forlornly. “What else did I have left?!”

“If I’m supposed to feel sorry for you, I don’t!” John sat up and kicked a chair out for Fred. His father sat down, glad of it. Despite Fred’s bluster, he was quivering. “I lived in the same house in the same place for most of my childhood. You knew where I was!”<sup>xxxii</sup>

“I wrote to you, Johnny.” Fred insisted. “For a while, I sent letters from this port ’n that...that is, until y’er ‘lovely’ Aunt Mary Elizabeth – whom I appallingly discovered had become yer mother, more or less – informed me that I was a bad influence, a *nuisance* as it were – a ‘detriment to your happiness’ in yer new home with her ’n George, so she pompously said. ’N m’brother, Syd – who was never one to mince words – said I’d be doin’ you a great favour to leave you entirely alone<sup>xxxiii</sup> – ‘unconflicted,’ he said. At

peace. Resigned to yer fate. So...I stopped writin'. I let it be."

"Well, I never saw one fuggin' post!" John leaned in. "Not one."

"Yeah, well y'can chat with Mary Elizabeth about that!" Fred spat. "That's her fault, not mine."

For half a minute, no one spoke. Then:

"Look Johnny, I was on the *Almanzora*, then the *Andes*, then the *Dominion Monarch*... 'n after that, I was an innocent victim in a dire case of mistaken identity. Put behind bars in Argentina, son! I *couldn't* write! I couldn't even make it back to Liverpool when me own mum died! Ask y'er Uncle Charlie. He'll tell you!"<sup>xxxiv</sup>

John eyed him skeptically. "I asked *Mim* about you,<sup>xxxv</sup> 'n she had nothin' to tell."

Fred hung his head.

"'N so..." John's voice threatened to crack, "...so I forgot about my father. It was like he was dead!"<sup>xxxvi</sup>

"Well," Fred hesitated and then gambled everything on one gesture. "Easter weekend has just passed, hasn't it? And look, Johnny, another miracle, son! I'm back from the dead!"

Without wanting to, John sputtered, snorted. In immense nervous relief, he laughed. Both men chuckled at the vast irreverence. Then they eyed one another and gave in. And, for the next 10 minutes or so, the Lennons talked.

Fred shared his sea stories – the vignettes of years apart. He flavoured them with Scouse expressions, with sea talk, with his own caustic and ready humour. He gestured widely and jested and, as he went on, John fell under his spell, just as the pyjamaed five-year-old had done back in March 1946 on Menlove Avenue.<sup>xxxvii</sup>

Screwing up his courage, Fred finally broached the subject. "Do y'remember anythin' at all, then, about the times we spent together when you were small?"<sup>xxxviii</sup>

"No, not really." John shook his head. "Although...I do *vaguely* remember bein' in Blackpool with you...when would that have been?"<sup>xxxix</sup>

"Early summer, 1946...just before Julie came to take you away. Just before I sailed off, almost forever."

"'N now?" John seemed to see, for the first time, Fred's threadbare suit, missing teeth, and unkempt appearance.<sup>xl</sup> His father was – he hated to say it – jaunty but well-worn.

"Now, I'm a kitchen porter," Fred grinned sheepishly, "just as they said in that fiasco of a news article – if y'can call it that – that bit in the *Daily Express*,"<sup>xli</sup> Fred smoothed his long, greasy hair. "'N they were right about m'job, somewhat, but they're dead wrong about the rest of it, son. I *didn't* abandon you, 'n I'm not just a 'washer of dishes'! I'm the heart 'n soul of every kitchen I call home! A maestro!" He ginned. "An entertainer, like you, if y'll! I've been singin' m'way through me entire life! Music's in me bones!"<sup>xlii</sup>

Hearing Julia's famous words, John shivered – then said, "Yeah, I read that article. So did Mim. In fact, I rang her up about it, 'n she said it gave her a chill...right to her fingertips."<sup>xliii</sup>

Fred bit his lip, trying not to disparage John's pernicious aunt, the boy's sometime mother. He searched for something positive to say, and when he couldn't find anything, he said nothing.

"So," John rescued him, "where're y' now?"

"Well, I've moved about a bit," Fred explained, "tryin' me best to keep a low profile, y'see."<sup>xliv</sup> I had a job in Caterham at Christmas, but the tabloids found me there, so I moved on to Bognor Regis.<sup>xlv</sup> Right now, I've a new job in..."

"Excuse me, John," Brian slid the door open a tad. He leaned in and spoke softly but firmly. "So sorry, but we've the scheduled interview with the BBC, remember?"<sup>xlvi</sup>

Fred quickly stood and once again extended his hand to his son. With eyes that mirrored his father's, John stood as well, reaching out to take the hand that had once clasped his along the Blackpool shore.

"Right, well...I just wanted," Fred reiterated, "to set the story straight. That. Nothin' more."

"Right," John let go – ill at ease, at a loss for words. "Well...stay in touch, then. Leave yer address out front, all right?"<sup>xlvii</sup>

And resolutely walking towards his manager – his eyes locked on Brian's eyes – John exited.

Fred stood stock still for almost a minute before following John's lead. He moved slowly to the NEMS receptionist and gave her the address of the Skindles Hotel near Maidenhead – where Fred had just accepted another kitchen post – a menial job, but one complete with all that Fred required: laughter, companionship, room, and board.<sup>xlvi</sup> He was still a ship's steward at heart. And still, John's father.

\*\*\*\*\*

## Meeting Room NEMS Enterprises Sutherland House London

Although Fred suspected that the so-called “scheduled interview” was a mere fabrication – a flimsy excuse to get rid of him quickly – nothing could have been farther from the truth. The Beatles (minus Paul who was off visiting a relative in Walton Hospital, Liverpool)<sup>xlix</sup> were indeed meeting with Australian interviewer for the BBC, Bernice Lumb, in the NEMS conference area.<sup>1</sup>

And although, at first, George and Ringo were tentative and a little solicitous, they quickly discovered that John was anything but upset. Or rattled. In fact, he was in a brilliant mood: playful and upbeat.

John had never learned to mask his emotions from anyone, including the press. If he were angry, he responded in short, sharp, bitter ripostes. If he felt threatened, he lashed back violently. If he felt depressed or sad, his face and demeanor exposed it.

But clearly, this afternoon, John was smiling, laughing – mickey-taking. He was witty, full of ready puns and double entendre. The brief reunion with his father had not left him sardonic or morose. If anything, John seemed happier than he'd been in a long, long time. Through the interview, he was “on.”

**Bernice Lumb:** I don't expect anyone to believe this, but I am actually with The Beatles in London! (To The Beatles) This is my first trip to London!

**John:** Congratulations, do you like it?

**Lumb:** I certainly do! John, you've written this book...

**John:** Yeah.

**Ringo:** (Jokingly) It's *my* book!

**John:** (Getting it) Oh! That's Ringo's *copy*, but *I* wrote it!

**Lumb:** Tell me about this please, John, because it says *In His Own Write*, and this means quite something.

**Ringo:** He writed it himself, you see.

**John:** (Correcting him) *Wroted it!* Wroted it! (Jokingly to the interviewer, about Ringo) He's very higgorant.

**George:** This is George speakin'. This is *my* first trip to London!

**John:** That's rude, that... George.

**Lumb:** Tell me your impressions of London, George.

**George:** Yeah well, it's very nice, y' know. I thought there'd be more...

**John:** Not as hot as Sydney.

**George:** Yeah, it's not as hot as Sydney, but Dave was pretty cool, wasn't he?

**John:** Yeah. 'N Arthur's very hot, I believe.

**Lumb:** Oh Ringo, I've just realized...I've got to show you something. (She shows him her ring.)

**Ringo:** It's marvelous. I was looking at it, actually. What does it mean?

**Lumb:** It's a dragon.

**John:** (Narrating for the audio-only interview) They're looking at the ring on Bernice's hand at the moment. It's a sort of green dragon... 'n a gold thingy.

**George:** Funny lookin'... like a dragon.

**John:** On her left hand – the second finger from the little one. Have you got the picture, Cobber?

**Ringo:** What do you call them charms you're wearin' 'round your neck?

**Lumb:** 'Round my neck? I haven't got any charms.

**George:** (To Ringo) That's called a sweater.

**Ringo:** What do *you* call them?

**John:** I call them Eric.

**George:** (Snickers) Arthur.

**John:** Bernice.

**Ringo:** I don't know what they're called...the little green idols you wear.

**John:** There's a little yellow idol to the north of Kathmandu.<sup>li</sup>

**Ringo:** I give up!

**Lumb:** I'm having a ball! Now tell me something. How do you people manage to live? You cannot walk anywhere without people trying to tear you apart.

**George:** Well it's like this, Bernice...

**Beatles:** (Singing together to the tune of "On the Street Where You Live" from *My Fair Lady*) We could never walk down this street before. We could never walk down this street before.

**George:** (To the tune of "From Me To You") If there's anything that you want. If there's anything I can do...

**John:** That's without echo chambers.

**Ringo:** That's without backin'.

**John:** Don't be put off. We're only joking, Cobbers.

**Lumb:** Oh, you're 'with it' now.

**John:** 'Ello, Cobber! That's all I can say.

**Lumb:** The thing that I've loved about the interviews I've heard with you two is that you have sent everybody sky high.

**Ringo:** (Aggravated at being overlooked again) There's *three* of us!

**Lumb:** Yes, I know.

**John:** Well, we don't take much notice of Ringo.

**Lumb:** Ringo, you're being beautifully talkative tonight. Someone told me you'd only say 'yup' and 'nope.'

**Ringo:** Well I'm learnin', y'see. They're teachin' me more words now.

**John:** (To Ringo) Say the bit...

**Ringo:** Which one?

**John:** (Prompting him) The bourgeois...

**Ringo:** Oh! (From the script of "A Hard Day's Night") "There you go, hidin' behind a smokescreen of bourgeois clichés!"

**John:** That's his line.

**Ringo:** I don't go messing about with your tape recorder, do I?

**John:** Carry on the interview.

**Ringo:** Why John, *why*? I mean, I'm talkin', aren't I? Don't stop me now!!

**John:** (To Bernice Lumb, who is from Australia) Rolf Harris, your mate from Australia, is standin' for Parliament over here. 'N we hope he gets in.

**Ringo:** Nice lad. We were on a show together.

**John:** (To Lumb again) Do you know Rolf? You must know Rolf Harris...

**Lumb:** I've met Rolf...

**John:** Well, there y'go. I'm only lyin', of course, but it's a nice way to get Rolf in the story, y'know.

**Lumb:** (Laughing) Tell me something now...you've written a number. And I met the two lads who are singing it. (Referring to Peter and Gordon and their recording of Lennon/McCartney's "World Without Love.")

**Ringo:** Oh, yes.

**John:** Oh, "Peter 'n Go-Go"! Well, that number's very old. We wrote that when we were teenage school buddies, Paul 'n I did. Paul's not here. He said, "Hi" or "Hello." But luckily, I'm here to tell you about it. Bighead talkin', John. Hand it you over to George Pinhead.

**George:** *Pinhead?*

**John:** Yeah, Pinhead.

**George:** (To Bernice) Did you know Ringo was an Aborigine?

**Lumb:** Now tell me about this, George...

**George:** We found him. He was a bald Aborigine. And he was cyclin'...

**John:** Before we made it.

**George:** Yeah. He was cyclin' 'round the Eclipse of Wales, wasn't he?

**Ringo:** He was.

**George:** With a bone through his tooth. 'N we saw him, sort of...

**John:** From afar.

**George:** ...passing percussive persuasions through the bongos.

**Ringo:** (Quoting from "A Hard Day's Night" again) "There you go, hidin' behind a smokescreen of bourgeois clichés!"

**George:** So we found him there, 'n he fitted into the group, y'see. But since then, we've cleaned him up a bit 'n growed his hair a mighty mass.

**John:** (To Bernice...batting his lashes rapidly...using another quote from the film) You're not going to change the basic, rugged concept of my personality, are you?

**Lumb:** It's *Ringo's* personality!

**John:** No, that's another...we're doin' lines from the film, y'see.

**Ringo:** Just rememberin' lines from the film.

**John:** You see what a borin' film it's goin' to be... all that rubbish in it.

**George:** At the moment, we're flickin' our ash.

**John:** ...on Brian Epstein's carpet. That's our manager. But we don't care.

**Ringo:** We bought it.

**Lumb:** Hey, tell me kids... have they written a script for you?

**Ringo:** *Kids?*

**George:** Oh, aye!

**Ringo:** Alun Owen wrote the script.

**John:** Alun Owen. A fella that writes plays about Liverpool 'n Ireland 'n that.

**George:** He writes many plagues 'n music halls.

**John:** They let us loose a bit, y'know. We changed a lot of it, but they've got a basic thing. (They all laughed. It was a rare moment: a truly happy afternoon.)

## **Notes!**

***There are so many biographical facts in this chapter that differ vastly from biographer to biographer that we will need to examine them by category. Past biographers disagree about almost every detail of this meeting. I will present the facts and then tell you why I selected the version that I selected.***

### **1. Why did Fred decide to meet with John after 18 years?**

*Almost all biographical sources agree on this one point: that Fred was the one to seek out John. As Pauline Lennon (Fred's wife) put it in her book, Daddy Come Home: "Fred [made up his mind to] arrange a meeting*

with John before the libellous stories about him forced him to sue – which he was sure would cause John even more embarrassment than a face-to-face confrontation.”

Only one source tells a different story. In Peter Doggett's essay "Meet the Parent" found in Paul Trynka's collection of essays on *The Beatles* entitled *The Beatles: Ten Years that Shook the World*, Doggett suggests: "Brian Epstein grew alarmed at the potential for bad publicity if the media were allowed to collar Fred before he'd been defused and disarmed. **So he [Brian] sent a polite invitation: If Alfred Lennon would care to visit Epstein's NEMS offices next to the Palladium in central London on 1 April 1964, then he would be sure to meet up with his long-lost son.**"

Brian's arranging the meeting with Fred at the NEMS offices (to head bad publicity off at the pass) seems logical. However, I can find no confirmation for this in Ray Coleman's *The Man Who Made The Beatles*, Debbie Geller's *In My Life: The Brian Epstein Story*, or any of the other sources listed for this chapter.

## **2. Where did Fred and John meet on 1 April 1964?**

Pauline Lennon does not give the location. Fred, she explains, was blindfolded but he "entered a building" and went up in "the tradesman's lift." She says he was taken up one floor where he met Brian Epstein. (p. 110) (**Note:** these facts seem to bear out the theory that Brian had arranged the meeting.)

The Beatles Bible ([www.BeatlesBible.com](http://www.BeatlesBible.com)) says that John and Brian met at the London NEMS offices in Sutherland House, 5-6 Argyll Street. According to the [www.BeatlesBible.com](http://www.BeatlesBible.com), Brian is the first to meet Fred, and then he sends a car for John.

Mark Lewisohn, in *The Beatles: Day by Day*, says simply that Fred and John met at the NEMS office. (p. 44)

Keith Badman, in *The Beatles: Off the Record*, says the meeting took place in the London offices of NEMS. (p. 99)

Barry Miles, in *The Beatles' Diary*, Vol. 1, says the meeting took place in the London offices of NEMS. (p. 139)

Peter Doggett in Trynka's collection, *The Beatles: Ten Years that Shook the World* (p. 120), says: "Freddy arrived [in NEMS] where he was shown into a plush office where he found not only the suave Mr. Epstein exuding courtesy and good manners, but also no fewer than three of The Beatles." Doggett explains that John had not wanted to go through with the meeting, but that Brian had urged him to do so and "during a break in filming...Lennon, Harrison, and Starr were ferried to NEMS and prepared for the inevitably uncomfortable encounter."

Bob Spitz says that Fred Lennon showed up unannounced at NEMS. He told the receptionist that he was John's father, Brian was notified. Brian Sommerville states that Brian "went into a panic" and "sent a car for John, without any explanation." (p. 497)

Philip Norman, in *John Lennon: The Life and in Shout!*, does not give a location.

Bill Harry, in *The John Lennon Encyclopedia*, says they met "on the set of 'A Hard Day's Night,'" but doesn't specify where. (p. 482) He says the same thing in *The Ultimate Beatles Encyclopedia*. (p. 373)

Albert Goldman, in *The Lives of John Lennon*, places the meeting in the dressing room in the Scala Theatre. (p. 287)

Tim Riley, in *Lennon*, says they met "on the movie set" but gives no exact location. (The movie was shot in many locations.) (p. 252)

Ray Coleman, in *Lennon*, combines the 1964 and 1965 meetings into one, confusingly blending the facts.

Cynthia Lennon, in her book, *John*, only reports on the 1965 meeting and acts as if the 1964 meeting never occurred. She says that when Fred showed up on her doorstep in 1965 it was **the first time** John had seen his father "since [Fred] had walked out on his son twenty years earlier."

Richard Buskin, in *The Complete Idiot's Guide to The Beatles*, also skips over the 1964 meeting to concentrate on the details of 1965.

There is no mention of this 1964 meeting in Hunter Davies' *The Beatles*, Tony Barrow's *John, Paul, George, Ringo and Me*, or Julia Baird's *Imagine This*. (Julia Baird never mentions Fred again after the 1946 separation.)

\*\*\*I selected the version presented by Lewisohn, Badman, Miles, and [www.BeatlesBible.com](http://www.BeatlesBible.com) because it most agrees with Fred Lennon's primary source description of the building, the lift, and the meeting with Brian Epstein. The description given by Fred seems to be that of Sutherland House.

### **3. Who was present when John met Fred in 1964?**

Pauline Lennon, in *Daddy Come Home*, reports that Fred saw Ringo, George, and Paul exit the office where John was waiting for his father. In this version, Paul even gave Fred an encouraging squeeze of the arm. (p. 110)

[www.BeatlesBible.com](http://www.BeatlesBible.com) says that Brian sent a car for John. No one else is mentioned as leaving the filming at the Scala to go to NEMS.

Mark Lewisohn, in *The Beatles: Day by Day*, says that George and Ringo were there. (p. 44) More from this source when we talk about Miles's observations.

Peter Doggett, in Trynka's *The Beatles: Ten Years that Shook the World*, says George and Ringo were there. And Doggett has them remain in the room, with George making a few comments. (p. 120)

Bob Spitz, in *The Beatles*, says that Brian Sommerville attests that Brian "sent a car for John" when Fred showed up. No mention is made of any other Beatles accompanying John to NEMS. (p. 497)

Philip Norman, in *John Lennon: The Life*, depicts only John and Fred as being present. (p. 379) In *Shout!*, Norman does not mention any one else being present in NEMS for the meeting.

Bill Harry, in *The John Lennon Encyclopedia*, says that all four Beatles were there when Fred arrived, but Ringo, George, and Paul left John alone with his father. (p. 482)

Keith Badman, in *The Beatles: Off the Record*, only mentions John and Fred. (p. 99)

Tim Riley, in *Lennon*, mentions only John and Fred as being participants in the meeting. (p. 252)

**Barry Miles, in *The Beatles' Diary*, Vol. 1, says George and Ringo were present but not in the room with John and Fred. Miles says that Paul was visiting a sick relative at Walton Hospital. (p. 139) And John C. Winn in *Way Beyond Compare* agrees. He says "Paul travelled to Liverpool to visit a sick relative while John, George, and Ringo remained in London." (p. 167) Mark Lewisohn in *The Beatles: Day by Day* says that Paul's visit occurred in the evening, but Lewisohn clearly states that only George and Ringo are present in NEMS during Fred's visit. Therefore, we can assume that Paul was en route to Liverpool's Walton Hospital at the time of the meeting. (p. 44)**

**Paul is clearly not present for the BBC interview. How do we know? First of all, he does not speak and secondly, John states that Paul isn't there.**

**Please note that in none of these scenarios do any of The Beatles (other than John) speak to Fred**



**or interact in any way with Fred Lennon. George and Ringo, however, are definitely along with John because they all actually had the scheduled interview with the BBC at NEMS immediately following the meeting with Fred.**

#### **4. How long did the meeting last and was it successful?**

*Pauline Lennon, in Daddy Come Home, reports it lasted 10 minutes and was not “disastrous but neither had it been a mind-blowing success.” (p. 111)*

*[www.BeatlesBible.com](http://www.BeatlesBible.com) says the “meeting was not a success.” We are told the meeting lasted 20 minutes before John “ordered Fred out of the office.”*

*Mark Lewisohn, in The Beatles: Day by Day, says the meeting lasted “a fleeting 20 minutes.” He gives no report on its success. (p. 44)*

*Philip Norman, in John Lennon: The Life, says it lasted 20 minutes and Fred left feeling that the reunion had gone well enough. (p. 379)*

*Bill Harry, in The John Lennon Encyclopedia, says the meeting lasted 10 minutes and at the end, they shook hands. (p. 482) In The Ultimate Beatles Encyclopedia, Harry says there was no meeting – that John refused to talk to Fred but asked him to leave his address.*

*Bob Spitz, in The Beatles, says John cut the meeting short and ordered Fred from Brian’s office. (p. 498)*

*Albert Goldman, in The Lives of John Lennon, says it lasted 20 minutes and then John “was summoned to do a BBC interview.” (p. 288)*

*Keith Badman, in The Beatles: Off the Record, says the meeting lasted 20 minutes and Brian came in to say, “Sorry but we have an appointment with the BBC.” (p. 99)*

*Pete Shotton, in John Lennon: In My Life, says that he saw John the following day and that John was elated about his meeting with his father. He said to Pete, “He’s good news! A real funny guy – a loony just like me!” (p. 104)*

*Tim Riley, in Lennon, says the meeting was “awkward but not hostile” and gives no time limit. (p. 252)*

*Hunter Davies, in The John Lennon Letters, calls the meeting “brief” and offers no commentary on its success. (p. 101-103)*

*Barry Miles, in The Beatles’ Diary, Vol. 1, says it lasted 20 minutes but gives no other information. (p. 139)*

***I used direct quotes compiled from these sources to recreate the conversation in this chapter. I did not try to steer the conversation to be “positive” or “negative.” I have simply reported the facts as I found them.***

***However, in my opinion, what transpired did not seem to be a failure or even what I would term “awful” for a first meeting after 18 years. Furthermore, the fact that John called Mimi the next day to tell her that “Freddie will not trouble us further” combined with his comment to Pete Shotton that Fred was “good news” leads me to believe that this meeting was more hopeful and welcome than it was negative.***

***Finally, when you read the BBC interview that John did following this meeting, you see that John was in a wonderful mood. John Lennon was not in the habit of faking good moods. If he had been “browned off” or upset, he would have delivered a fairly unpleasant interview. As a postscript...***

*After this meeting, John ended up sending his father a letter addressed to “Alf Fred Dad Pater Father*

Whatever.” (If you look in Hunter Davies’ *The John Lennon Letters* (p. 103), you can see a letter written to Freddie by John in 1967 with this same salutation.) John followed up on his promise to keep the contact going. That says something.

Tim Riley, in *Lennon*, says that John sent Fred £30 after the meeting and then each month another £12. (p. 252) Riley suggests that John sent this money “to keep Fred quiet,” citing one source for this information as *Daddy Come Home*, p. 110-112. I can find **absolutely no mention** of John sending Fred “hush money” in those pages cited by Riley.

John’s sending Fred the £30 pounds and the monthly stipend of £12 is also mentioned by Bill Harry in *The Ultimate Beatles Encyclopedia* (p. 373) but Bill gives no motivation for John’s generosity.

Similarly, Albert Goldman, in *The Lives of John Lennon*, says John began sending Fred “a few pounds now and then.” (p. 288) But neither Goldman nor Harry mention John’s sending the money to Fred “to keep him quiet.”

### Sources:

Lewisohn, *The Beatles: Day by Day*, 44.

Lewisohn, *The Complete Beatles Chronicle*, 152.

Lewisohn, *Tune In*, Vol. 1, 104-105, 108-109.

Harry, *The John Lennon Encyclopedia*, 482.

Harry, *The Ultimate Beatles Encyclopedia*, 373.

Lennon, Pauline, *Daddy Come Home*, 107-111.

Winn, *Way Beyond Compare*, 167.

Miles, *The Beatles’ Diary*, Vol. 1, 139.

Norman, *John Lennon: The Life*, 378-380.

Norman, *Shout!*, 243.

Doggett, Peter, “Meet the Parent,” *Trynka*, *The Beatles: Ten Years that Shook The World*, 120-121.

Buskin, *The Complete Idiot’s Guide to The Beatles*, 64.

Coleman, *Lennon*, 302.

Goldman, 287.

Shotton, *John Lennon: In My Life*, 103.

Spitz, 497-498.

Badman, 99.

Baird, *Imagine This*, 33.

Epstein, *A Cellarful of Noise*, 97-99.

Lennon, Cynthia, *John*, 179.

Riley, 252.

Davies, *The John Lennon Letters*, 101-103.

<http://www.beatlesbible.com/1964/04/01/john-lennon-reunited-father-alf/>

---

<sup>i</sup> Lewisohn, *The Complete Beatles Chronicle*, 153, and Spitz, 497. Spitz says “[Brian] sent a car for John without any explanation.” This is probably not entirely true since John, George, and Ringo had a scheduled interview with the BBC at NEMS that morning. Brian sent a car for all three. So many of the facts surrounding John’s meeting with Fred Lennon are *all over the board*. Some biographers suggest that they met at the Scala. Others, just as vehemently insist that they met at the NEMS London office. At the end of the chapter, I’ll give you all of the data...who said what and why.

<sup>ii</sup> Lewisohn, *The Beatles: Day by Day*, 44, and Miles, *The Beatles’ Diary*, Vol. 1, 139.

<sup>iii</sup> Lennon, Pauline, 110, Miles, *The Beatles’ Diary*, Vol. 1, 139, and <http://www.beatlesbible.com/1964/04/01/john-lennon-reunited-father-alf/> Fred doesn’t name the building, but what he describes is Sutherland House, the location of NEMS. He reports that he took a lift one flight up, which is where Brian’s office was located. He meets Brian and

---

then is issued into a room to speak with John. None of the descriptions Fred offers fit with backstage at the Scala Theatre. Instead, it clearly fits NEMS.

<sup>iv</sup> Lennon, Pauline, 110, Norman, *John Lennon: The Life*, 380, Harry, *The John Lennon Encyclopedia*, 482, and Goldman, 287. One of the few things that biographers seem to agree on is that Fred was accompanied by a *Daily Sketch* reporter (or reporters). See *Notes!* at the end of the chapter.

<sup>v</sup> Lennon, Pauline, 109-110. Pauline says that the *Daily Sketch* reporter had arranged this meeting with John as part of “Operation John.”

<sup>vi</sup> Doggett, Peter, “Meet the Parent,” Trynka, ed., *The Beatles: Twenty Years that Shook the World*, 120.

<sup>vii</sup> Doggett, Peter, 120. Doggett says that Fred was shown into Brian’s “plush office.”

<sup>viii</sup> Lennon, Pauline, 108. Fred recounted that John was “lolling on a kind of divan” when he entered the room.

<sup>ix</sup> Lennon, Pauline, 110. Direct quote.

<sup>x</sup> Lennon, Pauline, 110. Direct quote.

<sup>xi</sup> Lennon, Pauline, 110. Direct quote.

<sup>xii</sup> Lennon, Pauline, 110. Direct quote.

<sup>xiii</sup> Norman, *John Lennon: The Life*, 378, and Goldman, 287.

<sup>xiv</sup> Lennon, Pauline, 111. I added the “please.” I am almost certain that Brian Epstein’s strict code of etiquette forced him to add the “please,” no matter how he felt.

<sup>xv</sup> Goldman, 287.

<sup>xvi</sup> Lennon, Pauline, 111, and Goldman, 287. Fred is quoted as saying, “He was so much like his mother. I was quite astounded.”

<sup>xvii</sup> Goldman, 287. Fred is quoted as saying, “[John] wore the kind of scowl his mother might have done in a situation like that, where she felt reason to resent...”

<sup>xviii</sup> Badman, 99.

<sup>xix</sup> Goldman, 287, and Spitz, 497.

<sup>xx</sup> Badman, 99.

<sup>xxi</sup> Lennon, Pauline, 111, Goldman, 287, Spitz, 497, and Harry, *The John Lennon Encyclopedia*, 482.

<sup>xxii</sup> Spitz, 496.

<sup>xxiii</sup> Lennon, Pauline, 111, Goldman, 287, and Harry, *The John Lennon Encyclopedia*, 482.

<sup>xxiv</sup> Lewisohn, *Tune In, Vol. 1*, 107. According to Billy Hall, Fred Lennon never called John anything but Johnny.

<sup>xxv</sup> Lennon, Pauline, 111, Harry, *The John Lennon Encyclopedia*, 482, and Goldman, 288. Direct quote.

<sup>xxvi</sup> Goldman, 288. Direct quote.

<sup>xxvii</sup> Epstein, Brian, *A Cellarful of Noise*, 98. Brian is quoted as saying “There is in the set of [John’s] head a controlled aggression which demands respect.”

<sup>xxviii</sup> Goldman, 287.

<sup>xxix</sup> Lewisohn, *Tune In, Vol. 1*, p. 109.

<sup>xxx</sup> Epstein, 99.

<sup>xxxi</sup> Lewisohn, *Tune In, Vol. 1*, p. 109.

<sup>xxxii</sup> Spitz, 497. Direct quote.

<sup>xxxiii</sup> Harry, *The John Lennon Encyclopedia*, 482.

<sup>xxxiv</sup> Lewisohn, *Tune In, Vol. 1*, 133-134.

<sup>xxxv</sup> Lewisohn, *Tune In, Vol. 1*, 134.

<sup>xxxvi</sup> Lewisohn, *Tune In, Vol. 1*, 134.

<sup>xxxvii</sup> Lewisohn, *Tune In, Vol. 1*, 105.

<sup>xxxviii</sup> Lennon, Pauline, 111.

<sup>xxxix</sup> Lennon, Pauline, 111, Coleman, *Lennon*, 302, Riley, 252, and Harry, *The John Lennon Encyclopedia*, 482.

Coleman gives a general description of Fred that covers both the 1964 and 1965 meetings.

<sup>xl</sup> Goldman, 287 and Norman, *John Lennon: The Life*, 378. One word that every biographer uses when describing Freddie Lennon is “jaunty.”

<sup>xli</sup> Norman, *John Lennon: The Life*, 378 and Harry, *The John Lennon Encyclopedia*, 482. Bill Harry says that the *Daily Express* ran an article with a headline reading, “Beatle Father Washes Dishes at Greyhound Hotel in Hampton Court.” According to Harry, it vilified Fred “as a deserting father.” This article was the main reason that Fred decided to see John and set the record straight.

<sup>xlii</sup> Norman, *John Lennon: The Life*, 378. The quote “the heart and soul of every kitchen” is Norman’s. He paints a vivid picture of Fred and says that he was kind and content with only “a drink and a laugh.”

<sup>xliii</sup> Badman, 99, and Shotton, *John Lennon: In My Life*, 103.

<sup>xliv</sup> Harry, *The John Lennon Encyclopedia*, 482.

---

<sup>xlv</sup> Norman, *John Lennon: The Life*, 378-379.

<sup>xlvi</sup> Badman, 99, and Goldman, 288. Direct quote from Badman's book. Peter Doggett, in "Meet the Parent, *The Beatles: Twenty Years that Shook the World* has Brian say that they must return to the Scala to continue filming. But they did, in fact, have a legitimate interview with the BBC before returning to the Scala. The interview is in the Appendix to this book.

<sup>xlvii</sup> Harry, *The Ultimate Beatles Encyclopedia*, 373.

<sup>xlviii</sup> Lennon, Pauline, 112.

<sup>xlix</sup> Winn, *Way Beyond Compare*, 167, and Miles, *The Beatles' Diary, Vol. 1*, 139. Both sources state that Paul "travelled to Liverpool to visit a sick relative while John, George, and Ringo remained behind in London." (Winn, 167) Miles adds that the relative was in Walton Hospital.

<sup>l</sup> Winn, *Way Beyond Compare*, 167, and Miles, *The Beatles' Diary, Vol. 1*, 139.

<sup>li</sup> Notice John's allusion to "a little yellow idol to the North of Katmandu." This is a Goon show parody of a line from J. Milton Hayes' poem "The Green Eye of the Little Yellow God." John was an avid reader, so he might have known the actual poem by Hayes, but he most assuredly knew the Goon quote by rote. Much later, of course, he uses this line in the song, "Nobody Told Me (There'd Be Days Like These)."