

... on the day Queen became kings of the Castle

James Mulcahy

Rhapsody on a soggy Saturday

"I WANT to break free", sang Freddie Mercury, just as a section of the crowd prepared to go over the wire at Slane.

A battalion of bouncers charged to the perimeter of the VIP enclosure, and made sure that the break was contained.

"Lord knows," continued Freddie passionately, "I got to break free". Spurred on by their hero, the aspiring escapees tried once more with feeling but were rebuffed again. Still, anything was worth a shot if it meant getting shelter in the castle from the rain.

"I paid £15 to listen to the music, not to help plough entry Mountcharles' front garden," complained one punter, looking as if he had been dipped in treacle and liberally dusted with green vermicelli.

The wet weather did a lot to dampen the ardour of many fans, who seemed to think that God had granted concert promoter Jim Aiken a divine right to sunshine. They got thoroughly soaked and muddled and directed poisonous glares through the wire fence at their dry guests roaming the VIP enclosure.

It would literally cost them an arm or leg to get inside, as the steady procession of walking wounded being escorted through the gate testified. Their reward was a pat on the back from the ambulance men and a decoration of bandages from the stretcher party.

The festive atmosphere normally associated with the annual rock extravaganza had shown no signs of abating on Saturday morning.

A tidal wave of bodies crested down the village street, enfolding the burger, poster, ticket, sandwich, tee-shirt and mineral sellers.

There were about 10 different official "shirts" to be bought. Freddie and the boys, Freddie and Maradona — We Are The Champions — and Freddie and Freddie.

"Get your act together," exhorted one pedlar, "get your 'Kind of Magic' baked spuds".

Food is a major consideration on these long, wet, tiring days. Depending on how important you were, there was free nosh in the castle. The paying guests had to fork out £7.50 for a beef salad.

The chef swore "it would feed you for a week". Just as well, after a couple of those dishes you probably couldn't afford to eat for a month.

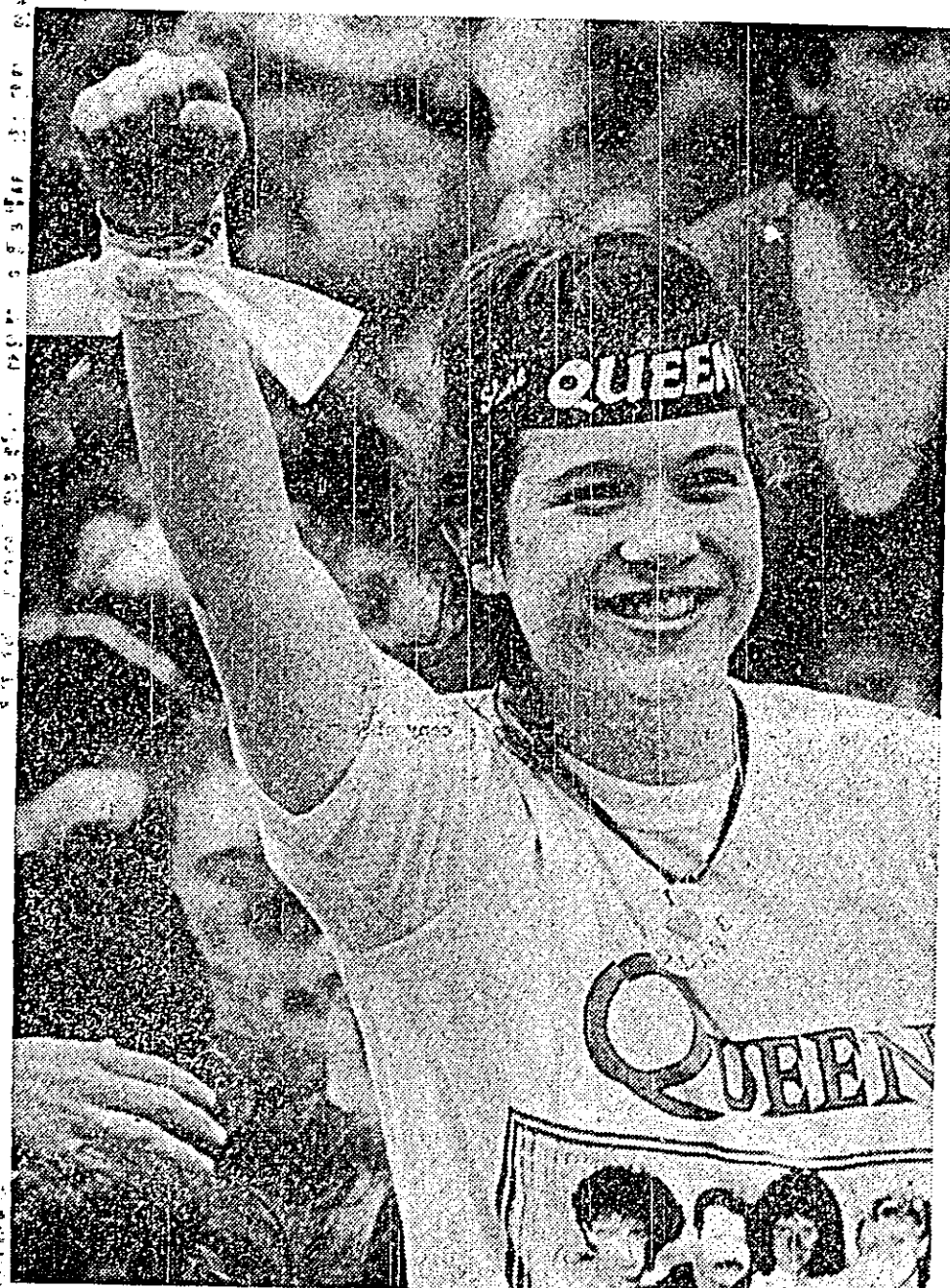
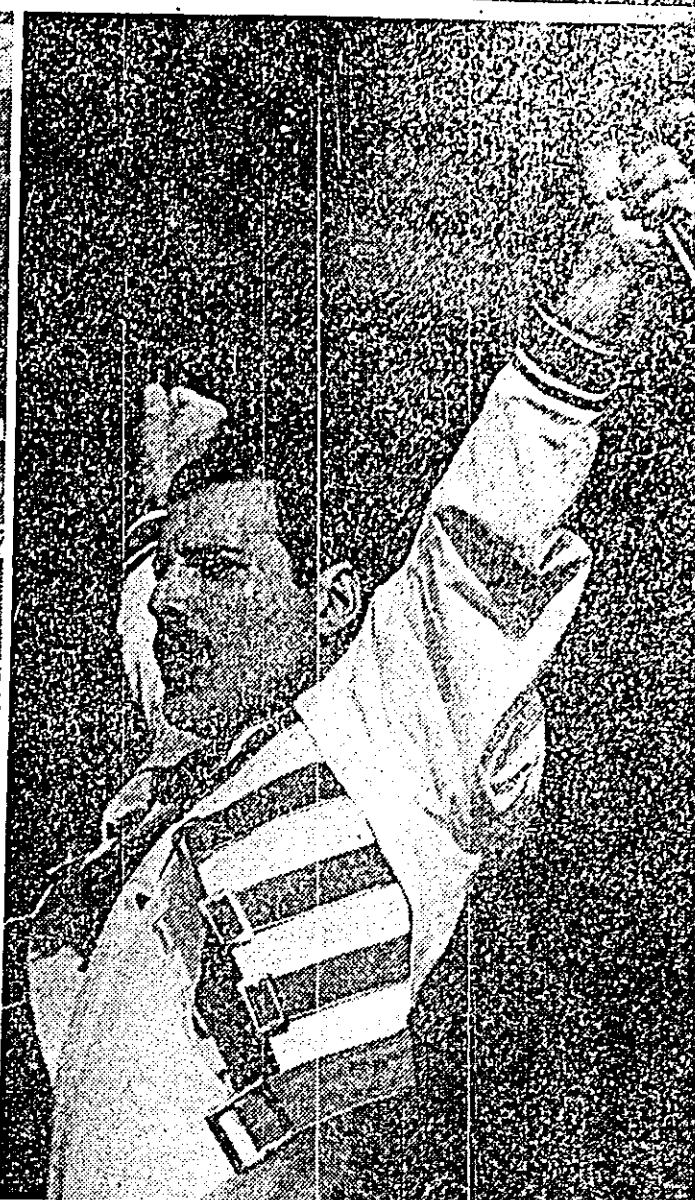
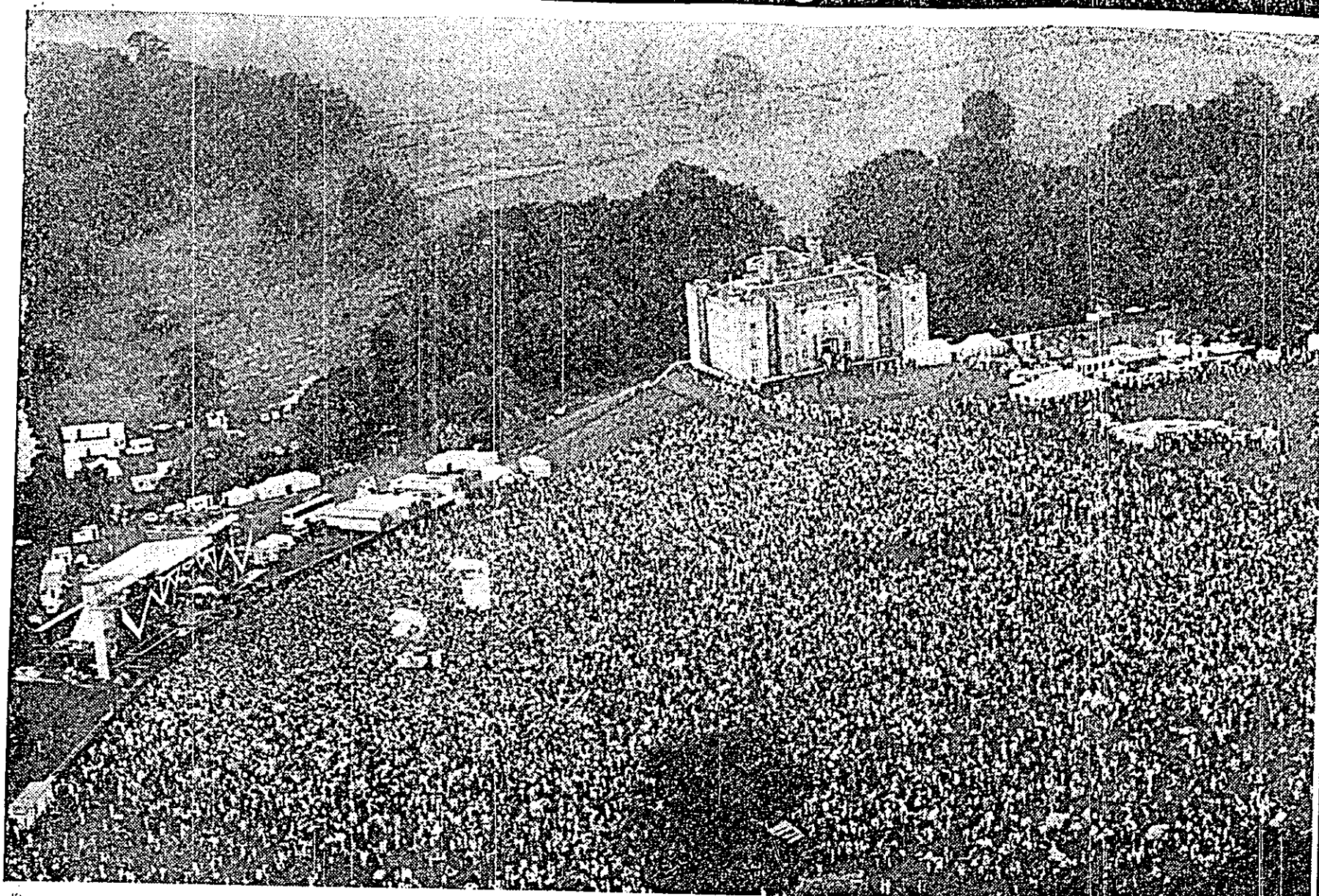
The rot set in just as The Bangles took the stage. It began to drizzle and, by the time the girls got to "Manic Monday", it was pouring down on a soggy Saturday.

But everyone said Queen would bring back the Slane buzz and settled down to Chris Rea and a laid-back drenching.

Freddie Mercury did his best but his fireworks fizzled in the damp and his smoke effect just looked like somebody was burning rubbish behind the stage.

The high point of the concert was Queen's smash hit "Radio Ga Ga". The amphitheatre took on the appearance of a Hitler youth rally, as arms were raised in salute to the music.

But no amount of shape-throwing by the outrageous Mercury could change the overall verdict of the crowd. Good, but not brilliant, and certainly not up to the standard of previous years.



Wearing her heroes' colour, this fan saluted joyfully . . .



Above: Enjoying the Queen concert were (left to right) Lord Henry Mountcharles, Senator Donle Cassidy and Michael Keating T.D.



Below: The excitement was too much for this young woman who fainted and had to be carried away.



Above: Bangles lead singer Susanne Hoffs.

Picture coverage at Slane Castle by Brian Farrell Frank McGrath Jnr. Martin Nolan and Jim Walpole.

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