

# **Fringe 2024 – paying tribute to the late Shane MacGowan**

## **Victoria Mary Clarke paid tribute to her late husband, and Irish folk hero, Shane MacGowan in Edinburgh.**

Victoria Mary Clarke arrived in Edinburgh to pay tribute to her late husband the songwriting genius Shane MacGowan. She appeared on stage with Johnny Mac and the Faithful for two final Fringe performances of For The Love of Shane MacGowan.

The band rattled through two Pogues' sets to a packed crowd at the Voodoo Rooms. John McLaughlin told stories of Shane's visit to Celtic Park the day Celtic won the league against Livingston in 2002. Shane's main concern that day was meeting Jimmy Johnstone and having a fight with the club's mascot Hoopy the Huddle Hound.

He told this writer in the aftermath "Going out on the pitch at Parkhead was like going on stage at the Barrowlands – it was the same crowd. Celtic are the only team I'm interested in apart from the Ireland team, but I'm not really a big soccer fan."

Victoria echoed those words and she also spoke not only about the trauma of losing Shane, but also being married to someone with a serious drinking problem. She added that MacGowan had not drunk during the last year of his life and that he was "so grateful to have had that opportunity to see what life was like without it, and that he was able to beat it in his final year". At that moment the crowd broke into a rapturous applause, perhaps not knowing MacGowan had finally confronted his demons and recognising an issue that has been too

romanticised without seeing the other side of the problem.

She added that Shane “always had tremendous respect and tremendous compassion for anyone who was affected (by alcoholism), I never once saw him once walk past a homeless person. He would always stop, he would always give them a cigarette and money, like wads of money.” She added that it could be “a few hundred quid or even a grand and that he always had time to talk” .

Victoria reminded the audience of Sinead O’ Connor who also died last year. She said: “I’ve met a lot of musicians but those two people really stood out as people who cared deeply about humanity. They had a deep love of humanity and neither was interested in being better than anyone else, they were not interested in velvet ropes, they were not interested in being VIPs, they didn’t have limos.”

It’s a good point that Victoria makes, I interviewed Shane at various points over the years and it didn’t matter if Bono or the President of Ireland or Johnny Depp were in the building, (they actually were at the time). He would ask how you were and how your family were and didn’t care what else was going on at the time. He’d ask to speak with my gran on the phone longer than I had interviewed him when I first began my career as a writer.

Shane was a rarity in the music industry in that he had a genuine love of the ordinary and everyday, he could see the beauty in that, his wife Victoria reminded us of this fact in Edinburgh.

As Bruce Springsteen said: “I don’t know about the rest of us, but they’ll be singing Shane’s songs 100 years from now.”

Perhaps more than Springsteen or Dylan or anyone else you care to think of, Shane MacGowan will be remembered. But what was even more important than that was his character, and how he treated people. He spoke to people, he prayed for people and

he had time.

Beyond the wild man persona, Shane MacGowan was a man you don't meet every day.



Victoria Mary Clarke PHOTOS Richard Purden



The writer with Victoria Mary Clarke