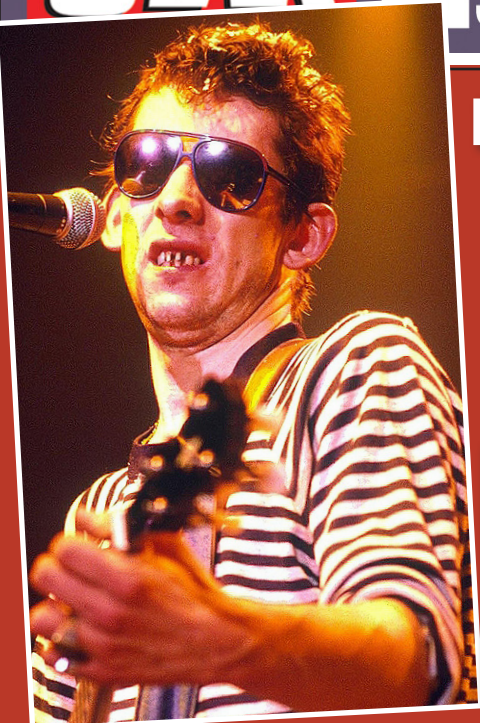




Tipp hurling was in Shane's heart and soul

AUTHOR SIOBHAN MacGOWAN ON HER BROTHER'S PASSION FOR CLUB AND COUNTY

SHANE MacGowan didn't just love Tipperary hurling, he ended up as one of the faces of it.

The chief Pogue was a great-grandson of John Lynch, a key Land League figure who attended the famous GAA Hayes Hotel meeting in 1884.

Lynch was a founder member and first chairman of the club at the north-eastern corner of Lough Derg, Shannon Rovers, where the river is indeed at its most broad and majestic.

A club which would, in turn, become MacGowan's obsessive sporting love, specifically asking for one of their jerseys for his funeral, and from which base he supported Tipperary inter-county hurling so passionately.

It's a good guess that today Shannon Rovers, from a picturesque triangle of townlands, Kilbarron, Ballinderry and Terryglass, are the most famous hurling club in the world.

And those who think haven't heard of them, think again: they are the club referred to in MacGowan's classic track



Derek **FOLEY**
EXCLUSIVE

The Broad Majestic Shannon.

For it's stupid to laugh and it's useless to brawl, 'bout a rusty tin can and an old hurley ball' and 'So I walked as the day was dawning, where small birds sang and the leaves were falling'.

For Shane's sister Siobhan and all of those associated with the club, the song is highly biographical.

The Shannon Rovers shirt that features Shane, John Lynch and the song lyric remains sought after worldwide.

This, be assured, was no marketing trick but the result of the coverage of the singer's funeral and his asking for the jersey to be placed on the coffin; it led to the club's telephone burning red with enquiries about how to buy one.

"At the time we just had the one set of jerseys for each team and now the senior

side had one less so we had no idea what to say to these fans," admits chairman Paul Tiernan.

Siobhan MacGowan, author of the successful historical novels *The Trial of Lotta Rae* (Welbeck, 2022) and *The Graces* (Welbeck, 2023) was in no doubt about what to say:

"Paul was a neighbour who had known us since we were children, he would have been in and out of the old house, and he approached me," she says.

"It was a month after the funeral and they'd got a lot of inquiries about the jersey, people asking could they buy them so they were trying to be cautious

"But I said, 'Oh, Shane would absolutely love that — yeah, let's do it right, it would be one of his proudest moments.'"

There ought to be a design award for the end result: "I thought it was brilliant, really well designed and very touching.

"You've got Shane there, and then you've got his words, the picture of our great grandfather which is hanging in the hurling field, the rusty tin and the old hurling ball on the back. It's gorgeous.

"The photo of Shane was taken by Andy Catlin and it was from, like, 30 years ago (taken in a hotel room in Porto) when he was around with The Pogues.

"I talked to Andy, who was a friend of mine, he was all too happy to give the go-ahead.

"Shane would have loved being alongside his great-grandfather John Lynch who was very nationalistic, part of the Gaelic Revival and quite a character, a real patriot."

Shane's relationship with Shannon Rovers, says Siobhan, was very simple: "We were coming over here every summer from year dot so hurling was just part of what everybody was doing.

"It wasn't like coming over here as a teen or something and seeing it, more coming over at four, five years of age so it was just going on. He was a child, he'd be playing in the fields.

"But, as we saw, it was Tipperary and hurling, because it was the Irish national sport, for him. He was obsessed with that."

The Broad Majestic Shannon appeared on the *If I Should Fall From Grace* with God album considered, along with *Rum, Sodomy & The Lash*, to be The Pogues' most accomplished albums.

But it was almost certainly an original

for the album as Siobhan had not heard it but it was very simply all about this area and about our home.

"So the Carney Commons in Kilbarron is where our great grandfather, John Lynch, was from. He was there with our great grandmother, Margaret, and they had whatever, like 11, 12, 13 children, something like that.

"A lot of the grand aunts and uncles were in the house. Our granny was in the house with our mum who had two children, our dad and uncle Sean, who is my first cousin Lisa's (sitting beside us as we speak here) dad.

"So a lot of the song is about here. There is the gap in the wall, that's real, and they did call the rosary at just after six every night, and they did play cards, and there was a lot of music in the house and a lot of dancing.

"Shane is talking about that and about walking by the Shannon, which is right there, this is the Lough Derg area, so there's loads of surrounding scenery, surrounded by water."

"I find it quite emotional because it's definitely about lots of old people in the family as well. Shane was very close to all those that I'm talking about, our great aunts and uncles.

"I actually live by the Shannon now and I practically say some of the song in my head every day, my walk as the day is dawning, small birds and things, I can actually see them."

Shannon Rovers are, in any case, a historic club. Two-time All Star goalkeeper Pat McLoughney (1979, 1980) is still a key member.

Laura Leenane is the current Tipperary senior camogie goalkeeper — that was her making the critical save in Croke Park last Sunday week prior to Tipp's semi-final with Kilkenny.

Moreover, the excitement around the club this week has been palpable as the first team, captained by the chairman's son Matt, won the Intermediate Cup after beating local rival Borrisokane last Sunday in Cloughjordan.

Says Siobhan and Shane's cousin Lisa: "My son was goalkeeper on the team, so our great grandfather John Lynch, my father Sean Cahill and my son Vincent Mulvihill makes for a fourth generation having played for the club."

Meanwhile the focus is turning towards Shane's secondary hurling obsession, the Tipperary inter-county side and this weekend's All Ireland final.

Siobhan recalls going to a Tipp match with Shane and their uncle Sean in Nenagh around 1981 in the early days of The Pogues and the late singer's passion for the Premier men never waned.

"Yes he went to hurling matches at any opportunity he could get. He was at the final when Tipperary last won in 2019 and he was at a number of their other All Ireland finals," she says.

And then suddenly, wonderfully, Siobhan bursts: "I remember! I've a good story, we lost one year against Clare and we'd bought a Tipperary teddy bear, yellow on top and blue.

"And I was driving and we were going down O'Connell Street and a Clare car went by shouting and Shane got the teddy bear and leant out the car window screaming 'Raaaaah, Raaaaah' roaring at them, it was absolutely mad.

"And then when they saw who it was, they were like 'Aaaaargh', we've just upset the wrong person and went very quiet!"

"So, yeah, he used to get very, very irate and enthusiastic.

"He was a shouter at the telly to do with hurling and then, obviously, an even bigger shouter at his hurling matches."

Shane may be well be represented at Croke Park.

"I know Victoria, Shane's wife, she desperately wanted to be there at Croke Park for Shane and we moved heaven and earth so she would have tickets for the game, that was important.

"I don't know but she may well be wearing one of the jerseys with Shane on it, the Shannon one, or the Tipp one that just has his image — now that would be something I think he would have absolutely loved, been so proud of."



WILD ROVER
Mairead Tiernan, owner of Paddy's Bar, Terryglass, with the famous Shane jersey



SHANE'S ROVERS

Shannon Rovers fans showing off the North Tipperary Intermediate trophy



WALL OF SHANE

Siobhan MacGowan and (right) Derek Foley at the Shane MacGowan mural in Nenagh