

= Jane Williams =

Jane Williams ( née Jane Cleveland ; 21 January 1798 ? 8 November 1884 ) was a British woman best known for her association with the Romantic poet Percy Bysshe Shelley . Jane was raised in England and India , before marrying a naval officer and settling in London . She soon left him for another military officer , Edward Ellerker Williams . After Edward and she left England for Italy , they became acquainted with Percy and Mary Shelley . Though she never had a romantic relationship with Shelley , near the end of his life he became deeply infatuated with her and addressed several of his poems to her . After Shelley and Edward Williams perished in a boating accident , she lived with Thomas Jefferson Hogg , also a close friend of Shelley , and had two children with him . The rest of her life was spent as a housewife in London .

= = Early life and first marriage = =

Jane was born in Marylebone into a wealthy family who owned an extensive library . Her mother gave birth to her when she was close to forty years old . Her father , who had spent much of his life working in India , died shortly after her birth . Her mother soon gambled away much of the family fortune .

As a girl , she learned to sing and to play the harp , the guitar , and the piano . By her mid teens , Jane possessed an annual annuity of only ? 30 . Jane spent much of her early life around military officers . Her brother , John Wheeler Cleavland , was an officer in the British Army who eventually reached the rank of general . He was deployed to India as a young man . Jane spent part of her childhood in India . While in India , she learned Hindustani and remained proficient in the language throughout her life . She often incorporated Indian harmonies into her music .

After returning to London , she fell in love with John Edward Johnson , who was the captain of an East Indiaman . This was a potentially lucrative career , and they were married at St Pancras Old Church in 1814 . Though she could have travelled with him , Jane remained at home . They soon separated , most likely due to abuse by John . Jane later said that she suffered " irreparable injuries " while married to him .

= = Relationship with Edward Williams = =

After John Johnson left on a voyage in May 1817 Jane decided to leave him for Edward Ellerker Williams , to whom she may have been introduced by John . Williams was an Eton College graduate who had served in the Navy before becoming a lieutenant in the 8th Dragoons . Edwards had inherited enough money from his father , a military historian and descendant of Oliver Cromwell , to allow them to live comfortably . Although they never legally married , she became his common @-@ law wife and began referring to herself as Mrs. Jane Williams . Their relationship initially drew disapprobation from their families , with Jane 's brother and Edward 's stepmother reproaching them for their decisions . Jane 's brother later apologised , and declared Johnson a " vile fellow " . Edward 's stepmother , however , always resented Jane . Though long distance mail moved very slowly then , Jane and her husband exchanged angry letters shortly after she left him for Edward . When John returned to London in late 1818 , he made no attempt to force Jane to return to him , although it was his legal right to do so .

Jane and Edward decided to leave London in 1819 after listening to Edward 's friend Thomas Medwin discuss his travels of Europe . They travelled to Geneva in September 1819 and stayed in a house that Medwin had found for them . By the time they arrived , Jane was four months pregnant . In February 1820 , she gave birth to their first child , Edward Medwin Williams . That summer , Jane became pregnant again . Medwin left Geneva in September 1820 to visit his cousin , Percy Shelley , in Pisa . Jane and Edward then travelled to France for several months , before joining Medwin and the Shelleys in Pisa in January 1821 .

= = = In Italy = = =

Jane and Edward enjoyed living in Italy and immediately got along well with Percy and Mary Shelley . Medwin soon left them to travel to Rome . Their second child , Jane Rosalind , was born in March 1821 . While they lived in Pisa the Shelleys and the Williamses often dined and went for walks together . Edward and Percy Shelley soon became close friends and often went boating , though this practice made their wives nervous . Percy Shelley often read his poetry to Edward , who was very impressed by its quality . Shelley also encouraged Edward to begin writing a play himself .

That summer , both couples moved into nearby summer homes . In November , they returned to Pisa and met Lord Byron , who had recently arrived there himself . The two couples later shared a house in a remote location near Lerici , where they were visited in early 1822 by Edward John Trelawny . Though they enjoyed each other 's company , the house was small and the arrangements led to numerous conflicts between the servants of each family .

= = Shelley 's infatuation = =

In June 1822 , Mary Shelley suffered a miscarriage that left her depressed and irritable . After the conflicts this caused in her marriage , Percy Shelley developed strong feelings for Jane . He was particularly taken by her musical gifts and skill as a housewife . Shelley saw Jane as an ideal or even utopian woman , the embodiment of the qualities that he had always sought in a woman . This attraction and the close quarters in which the couples lived caused what has been described as " an extraordinary and mounting tension within the isolated household " . Though she was flattered by the attention , Jane was careful not to reciprocate openly in order to avoid arousing her husband 's suspicions . She was successful in her attempts to prevent Edward from suspecting infidelity on her part .

= = = Poetry = = =

Shelley wrote eleven poems for Jane during that time . She served as the primary inspiration for the last poems that he wrote before his death . This did not bother Edward ; he was proud that his wife inspired such poetry . Some biographers of Shelley have maintained that Shelley 's feelings for Jane were strictly platonic , although different scholars have observed themes of frustrated sexual desires in Shelley 's poetry during this period . Other critics have noted that Shelley 's poems during this period struggle to define his feelings .

Having previously been drawn to other musical women , Shelley greatly appreciated her talents . Jane could skilfully play the flute , harp , and guitar . Shelley was particularly captivated by Jane 's singing voice , to the extent that some commentators have suggested it had a hypnotic effect on him . Shelley once purchased a guitar for Jane , and commemorated the gift in the poem " With a Guitar , to Jane " . In this poem , he ascribes to her voice the ability to alter the consciousnesses of her audience . Jane kept the guitar for her entire life and played it often . Shelley also purchased her a flageolet and wanted to give her a harp , but abandoned that plan due to its expense .

Shelley attempted to disguise his feelings for her in these poems because he expected that Edward and she would read them together . In some cases , Shelley addressed the poems that were inspired by his feelings for Jane to both Edward and Jane . After writing poems in which his affections were less disguised , such as " The Serpent is shut out from Paradise " , he hinted to Edward that he did not want Jane to see the poem . Shelley also used Edward as a stand @-@ in for himself , having Edward read poems to Jane that Shelley had filled with ambiguous pronouns and innuendos . During this time , Percy Shelley concealed many of his interactions with Jane from his wife Mary . Jane later passed on the poems that Shelley had given her to Thomas Medwin and Edward John Trelawny ; Trelawny later published them .

= = Return to England = =

In July 1822 , Edward Williams and Percy Shelley drowned when their boat sank during a storm

while returning to Lerici from Pisa . Shortly before their deaths , Jane dreamed of floods and on one occasion thought that she had seen Shelley 's ghost through a window . After hearing of their deaths , Jane and Mary travelled back to Pisa for the funerals of their husbands ; Williams and Shelley were cremated on consecutive days in August 1822 . After Shelley 's cremation , Jane was forced to settle a dispute between Mary Shelley and Leigh Hunt over what to do with what they believed was the unburnt heart of Percy Shelley . Though Hunt had initially taken it from Shelley 's pyre , Mary insisted that he return it to her . Though Hunt was initially unwilling to do so , Jane later convinced him that it should be returned . Mary Shelley and Jane Williams briefly settled in Albaro , before proceeding to Genoa together . There they separated in September due to Jane 's desire to quickly return to England . Jane brought Edward 's ashes with her back to England .

Upon returning to England , Jane initially stayed with her elderly mother and often visited Vincent Novello and his family . Leigh Hunt was acquainted with Novello and had provided Jane with a letter of introduction . Novello enjoyed her company due to her excellent knowledge of music . When Edward 's stepmother learned that Jane had returned , she unsuccessfully attempted to gain control of Edward 's ashes and their children .

Though she initially contemplated returning to Italy , Jane remained in England , though she described it as a " vile country " . Part of the reason she disliked England was the climate , which she blamed for her poor health upon returning to England . Though her legal husband , John Edward Johnson , lived in London as well , Jane referred to herself as a widow during that period . While Jane was in Italy , John Johnson had also told people that he was widowed in order to freely attempt to find a new wife . Soon after her return to England , Jane met Thomas Jefferson Hogg , a lawyer who had been a longtime friend of Percy Shelley , after Mary suggested that Jane consult him about Edward 's estate . Hogg had been a schoolmate and a close friend of Percy Shelley , and was drawn to Jane immediately upon her return from Italy . Hogg immediately began pursuing her and in early 1823 they began regularly spending time together . In March 1823 , Jane moved out of her mother 's home into a home of her own due to renovations at her mother 's house . This allowed Hogg to visit her more freely . In the summer and early autumn of 1823 , however , Hogg left for northern England on business .

After Mary returned to England in 1823 , Jane and Mary initially remained close friends and lived together in Kentish Town . During that time , Jane helped introduce Mary into society .

= = Relationship with Hogg = =

Hogg 's father died in late 1823 . This removed one of the potential obstacles to him openly living with Jane , the possibility of his father disinheriting him . Jane was initially hesitant to pursue a relationship with Hogg , however . As a condition of her acceptance , she insisted that he qualify by taking a tour of Europe . He left England in August 1825 and returned nine months later . She moved into his house in April 1827 , and shortly after became pregnant . Few people in London knew that they were not married , with the exception of Hogg 's family and their close friends . Mary Shelley was particularly approving of their union .

In November 1827 , Jane gave birth to Mary Prudentia Hogg after a difficult pregnancy . Mary Prudentia only lived 18 months , however , dying in May 1829 . During Jane 's pregnancy , Mary Shelley learned that Jane had spoken openly of Percy Shelley 's attraction to her and coolness towards Mary late in his life . These revelations significantly hurt Mary 's feelings . Their friendship survived , however , and Mary Shelley was selected as the godmother of Jane 's daughter Prudentia Sarah Jefferson Hogg in 1836 .

Jane 's legal husband , who was still living in London , attempted to blackmail her in 1838 by publishing the details of her marital status in Barnard Gregory 's *The Satirist* . Johnson published the notice after learning that she was living with a Mr. Hogg . He was mistaken as to the identity of her lover , however , and attempted to blackmail James Hogg , a Member of Parliament for Beverly . After James Hogg prepared to bring a libel suit , Johnson quickly disappeared . Although one journalist initially planned to publish the correct identities of the parties involved , at Mary Shelley 's request Leigh Hunt convinced him not to publish the story . Johnson died in Hammersmith in 1840 ,

ensuring an end to the matter . Though they were now free to marry , Jane and Thomas declined to marry in order not to draw attention to the fact that they had been unmarried for so long .

When Jane Rosalind and Henry , Leigh Hunt 's son , became romantically involved , Jane strongly disapproved of the relationship . She sent Jane Rosalind to live with her old friend Claire Clairmont in France in an attempt to thwart the match . Clairmont , however , took Jane Rosalind 's side and sent her back to England to be with Henry . Jane then relented and allowed them to marry , which they did in 1842 . Jane 's disapproval of the match caused serious offence to Leigh Hunt and his family .

After Hogg 's father died , he had to opportunity to move into his family home north of London . Although he initially considered doing so , he chose to stay in London due to the expense that maintaining a large home would involve . Jane also enjoyed living in London , she visited with friends and often gardened with her husband in his later years . The family led a quiet and stable life together , though at times their finances were strained .

= = Widowhood = =

Thomas Jefferson Hogg died in 1862 . Though the bulk of Hogg 's estate was left to their daughter Prudentia , Jane was provided for in the will as well .

Though Jane never used her connection with Shelley to gain any publicity , she did entertain prominent admirers and biographers of Shelley , including George Eliot and William Michael Rossetti . In the years before Hogg 's death , a nephew of Jane 's , one of John Cleveland 's seven children , came to live with them after leaving the military due to an illness . Jane and her nephew , Harry Cleveland , became close friends and he began to run her household as she grew older . In her later years , Jane often read novels , played the piano , and spent time with Harry 's daughter and her grandchildren .

She lived a long life , and in her later years often wrote on census forms that she was born later than she actually was . Shortly before she died in 1884 , she suffered a stroke that left her deaf and bedridden . After her death , she was buried along with the ashes of Edward Williams next to Thomas Jefferson Hogg in Kensal Green Cemetery .