

This is A Few Forgotten Women Story



This story was written, in July 2025, as one of a series resulting from the 'A Few Forgotten Women Friday' collaborative research project, investigating the lives of women who were born in the same year as Queen Victoria, 1819 in the parishes of Wem, Shropshire and Wells-next-the-Sea, Norfolk.

Jane Shone's Story

Jane Shone was baptised in Wem, Shropshire, 26 September 1819. She was the third daughter, and one of five eventual children of John Shone, agricultural labourer, and his wife, Jane, nee Roberts¹. We know nothing of her childhood. By 1841, parents John and Jane were still in Wem². Jane died in 1847, and in 1851 John, by now blind, was living with his widowed brother and family, still in Wem³. John died later that year.

In the 1841 census we find Jane Shone, living in the township of Wolverley, on the outskirts of the parish of Wem, born c. 1821. She is a female servant, aged about 20, living in the household of Thomas Maddox, aged about 25, of independent means. She is one of five servants, four of them female, aged between 12 and 20, all born in

¹ Wem Parish Registers, Find My Past.

² 1841 census HO107/902/6/3 p. 6.

³ 1851 Census HO107/1995/181 p. 24.

Shropshire⁴. Thomas Maddox or Maddocks, was from a family of local gentry, and was probably living at his new home, The Woodlands⁵.

By the time of the 1851 census, Jane was a house servant, this time in the household of Henry Thursby, Rector of Cound in Shropshire, a parish 8 miles to the south of Shrewsbury⁶. Jane's age was given as 35, and her birthplace as Wem. She was one of five female house servants, and a male butler. All except one house servant, born in France, were born in Shropshire. The Thursby family consisted of Henry, his wife, and two daughters, aged 21 and 8.

In the 1861 census she is in Shrewsbury, working as a housekeeper for George Richard Downward, a Church of England clergyman without cure of souls. He was living with his wife and three unmarried adult daughters at Shrewbury Castle. Working under Jane were a lady's maid, house maid, kitchen maid and a male house servant. In a separate household there was a coachman and his family⁷.

Later that year, on 2 September, she married George Evans⁸, a widowed plumber with five children aged between 4 and 12⁹. In 1871 George and Jane were living on Castle Street, Shrewsbury with two of George's children¹⁰. George and Jane do not appear to have had further children of their own. She is listed as age 57 born Wem.

By 1881 she is still in Castle Street with George, listed as a master plumber, employing 9 men and 5 boys. His two adult unmarried

⁴ 1841 census HO107/902/13/ 3 p. 11.

⁵ *Victoria County History Shropshire* /http://www.vchshropshire.org/_Wem_Rural_Texts/Wolverley.pdf.

⁶ 1851 census HO107/1990/22; Page: 6.

⁷ 1861 Census RG9/1869/12 p.18.

⁸ St Helens, Shrewsbury parish register, Find My Past.

⁹ 1861 census RG 9/1869/10 p.14.

¹⁰ 1871 England Census RG10/2769/14 p. 21.

daughters are living with them, working as governesses, and the family have one live-in servant. The neighbours are respectable professional and tradespeople, many of whom also have servants in their households¹¹.

By 1891, still in Castle Street, George has retired¹². He and Jane have two of George's adult children living with them, his son described as living on own means, and the daughter with no occupation listed. The family now has two servants living in. The same year, George was appointed mayor of Shrewsbury and in 1896, he was elected Alderman. George appears to have been a prosperous and respected businessman, serving on the Sanitary Committee of Shrewsbury council and overseeing the modernisation of the town's sewerage¹³.

At some point before 1897, George and Jane moved to a substantial property in Shrewsbury, Severn Hill House, overlooking the river. It seems likely that Jane died there in the June quarter of 1898, aged 79 with her death indexed at Atcham Registration District which includes Shrewsbury.

George survived Jane, and all but one of his children, dying in 1915 at the age of 91 with an estate valued at over £35000¹⁴.

By Ruth Wilson

Sources

England & Wales census, 1841-1891

England and Wales National Probate Calendar

Shrewsbury St Helens Parish Registers (Find My Past)

Shrewsbury Chronicle, British Newspaper Archive

Victoria County History, Shropshire

Wem Parish Registers (Find My Past)

¹¹ 1881 census RG11/2649/13 p. 20.

¹² 1891 census RG12/2109/14 p. 22.

¹³ *Shrewsbury Chronicle*, 4 June 1915, British Newspaper Archive.

¹⁴ England and Wales, National Probate Calendar, 1915.

