

# 'It's so sad knowing Jane can't see the milestones'

A year after Jane Clough's murder, her parents are fighting for justice – and rebuilding their family for the sake of baby Imogen



## Why was paramedic accused of rape set free to kill ex-lover?



Vass... rape charges  
**Nurse's killer ex gets life**

By RICHARD MORIARTY  
A BOUNCER who murdered his ex-partner after she refused to drop rape charges against him was jailed for 30 years yesterday.  
Former paramedic and steroid abuser Jonathan

treasure. The hand-painted sign from Jane's bedroom door now hangs on her favourite tree in a local park, one of the places where Penny and John go to feel close to their daughter. It's not far from Jane's grave, near the pond where the family take Imogen and Zack to feed the ducks.

John and Penny are only now edging towards the point where they're ready to face up to the full details of Jane's death and her treatment by Vass. "Jane was only just starting to tell us things that were going to come out in the rape trial," says John. "She was very frank with us, but how do you talk to your dad about being raped?"

It was months before John was able to go back to his job as a railway signals technician. He and Penny find that work helps, because it brings a hint of normality, but Penny says, "There are days when I wake up and I'm in pieces. Why one day is different to another, I haven't a clue. But I just know that there are days when I know I just could not be a safe nurse."

"There are times when I feel I've just got to see Imogen. Sometimes when I'm giving her a hug I think I'm giving a hug to Jane. And there are times when she really looks like Jane, and that makes me smile. But it's so sad knowing that Jane can't see the milestones. I often think, 'You would be loving this.' I talk to her in my own mind a lot."

The couple's anger is directed not only at Vass, but at the judge who freed him on bail awaiting the rape trial, which meant he was at liberty to kill their daughter. They have started a campaign – Justice for Jane – lobbying for a change in the law that would give victims the right to appeal against a bail decision, and they also want to see Vass tried for the rapes.

Jane's murder has inevitably put a huge strain on the couple's 33-year marriage. "We've struggled this past year; we're not as close as we used to be," Penny admits. "But I don't think we've even started grieving yet. We talk about Jane together lots, and we cry together. Despite offers of counselling we've found it easier to talk together, and to the people we love."

"We miss Jane and we think about her all the time. As a nurse I really thought I knew all about grieving, but this has really opened my eyes. It is tougher than I ever imagined." *Celia Dodd*

**A LIFE CUT SHORT**  
Jane Clough with her baby daughter Imogen and, above, the headlines that followed Jane's brutal murder

### Someone's Daughter, Someone's Son Friday 9.00pm ITVI, HD

PENNY CLOUGH IS reading the diary that was found after her daughter Jane's death. The neatly rounded handwriting is a marked contrast to the fears it expresses: "I've been worrying today about Jonny coming to get me, even kill me..." A year ago, on 25 July, Jane's fears turned out to be tragically well founded.

The murder of nurse Jane Clough in the car park of a Blackpool hospital shocked the nation and devastated her family, leaving her parents bereft and her baby daughter without a mother. Jane was about to start her night shift in A&E, but instead her friends and colleagues fought to save her from knife injuries so severe that they did not recognise her.

Months earlier Jane had accused her killer, her former partner Jonathan Vass, of raping her

nine times, and he was due to stand trial that October. Instead he was sentenced to life for her murder. He has never been tried for the rapes – a decision that has exacerbated Jane's family's grief. Penny, who is on the verge of tears throughout our conversation but determined to speak out for her daughter, says, "It's this overwhelming belief that Jane should not have died that really gets me. This has destroyed our family."

For Penny and her husband John the memories of that Sunday night are still raw. The family were looking forward to John's 50th birthday two days later. John had spent the day babysitting Jane's nine-month-old daughter, Imogen, so that Jane could get some sleep before her shift, while Penny, who is also a nurse, was at work in Preston.

"Penny came home from work saying there had been an incident in Blackpool A&E, because they were diverting patients to her hospital,"

recalls John. "But we had no idea it was Jane. We were about to go to bed when a police officer knocked on the door close to midnight. I knew straightaway in my heart it was about Jane."

"Two days later, instead of celebrating my 50th birthday, I was in the morgue viewing Jane's body. We were just in tremendous shock; it's your worst nightmare. All my fears about anything bad happening to my child had come true. Even though she was 26 she was still our baby."

The Cloughs had to keep going for the sake of Jane's baby daughter. In the months before her

"Sometimes when I'm giving Imogen a hug I think I'm hugging Jane"

PENNY CLOUGH

death, Jane had been so terrified that Imogen's father, Vass, was out on bail that she had moved back home. "Imogen's cot was at the bottom of Jane's bed, so as soon as she woke up they'd say hello," says Penny. "Suddenly her mum was no longer there. She was traumatised. You could tell she was missing Jane desperately and wondering what on earth was going on. She's transfixed by photos of herself with Jane; there's something deep in there."

John Clough sighs deeply as he describes how "gut-wrenching" it feels that Imogen, now nearly two, still has her father's surname. The toddler now lives with Jane's younger sister Louise, her husband and their three-year-old son, Zack.

One day they face the daunting task of telling Imogen what her father did. "We would never hide the truth from Imogen," says Penny. "It would be horrific if she found out in the school playground or somewhere. I think it will be a little child's inquisitiveness that will add more

details as she grows up, until she eventually finds out about the whole thing. And if she decides at some stage that she wants to meet Vass we'll support her. We would never stop her."

THE PAST YEAR has been punctuated by heartbreaking milestones, starting with Imogen's christening. Before Jane died she had hand-made the invitations, but the ceremony went ahead without her in the packed village church that Jane loved. Above all it's the day-to-day normality of family life the Cloughs miss. "I used to love it when we passed each other on the motorway on the way to work," says Penny. "She'd give me a little wave and it always made me smile. We were just an amazingly close family."

The Cloughs have reason to be grateful that Jane was sentimental about mementos; she even kept notes from school friends. Recently they found photos of a hen night they'd never seen before – it was, Penny says, like finding buried