

TRANSCRIPTION

Betsy Whyte sings “Young Johnstone”

ScottishVoicesProj.0584

[This recording was made in July 1986 during an informal ceilidh held at the home of Duncan and Linda Williamson at Kinraigie Farm Cottage, near Strathmiglo, Fife. Participants were Betsy Whyte and her husband Bryce; Duncan and Linda Williamson; John Niles and his wife Carole Newlands; and Holly Tannen, Niles's research assistant that summer. Before she begins singing, Betsy Whyte remarks that her mother was a Johnston and that the song had been passed down in that branch of the family. She also observes that the Johnstons were explosive and reckless; they reacted before they thought. There is some background noise on the recording, chiefly from the shifting of dishes or cups. Halfway through the song, Duncan Williamson (who has had a few drinks by this time in the evening) starts singing along intermittently with Betsy, perhaps as a way of consolidating his own knowledge of the song.]

[*Betsy Whyte sings:*]

And I have killed the young colonel,
Your own dear lover was he.”

- 7 If ye have killed the young colonel
Then cast oot shall ye be.
You’ll hang upon the gallus tree
And ne’er be chanced tae flee.”
- 8 He’s spurred his steed and swiftly rode
Like lightning ower the lea,
Til he did come to his sweetheart’s gate
And he tinkled at the pin.
- 9 “I dreamt a dream, love dear Johnstone,
And I hope it’s for your good.
They’re seeking ye wi hound an hawk
And the young colonel is dead.”
- 10 “They’re seeking me wi hound an hawk
As I well expect they’ll be,
And I have killed the young colonel,
Your own dear brother was he.”
- 11 “Come in, come in, love dear Johnston,
Come in and take a sleep.
I care no more for the young colonel
When your ain dear body is safe.”
- 12 He was scarcely landed up the stairs
Into the tower above,
When four and twenty well-belted knights
Came seeking him at the gate.
- 13 “Oh did you see a bloody knight,
And a bloody knight is he?
Oh did you see a bloody knight
Ride furiously ower the lea?”
- 14 “Alright, alright please, gentlemen,
And have some bread and wine.
If the steed be good he rides upon
He’s across the bridge of Tyne.”
- 15 “Oh thank you, lady, for your bread
And thank ye for your wine,
But rather than thrice a thousand pounds

That your fair body was mine.”

16 Now Johnston had a gey broad sword
And a gay broad sword had he,
He reared it through the lady's breast
Til she dropped upon her knee.

17 “What ails thee now, love dear Johnston?
What ails thee now at me?
I've given you all my father's land,
Beside my mother's fee.”

18 “Oh live, oh live, Lady Margaret,” he cried,
Live for half an hour!
And there's not a leech in broad Scotland
But I'll have at your bower.”

19 “How can I live, love dear Johnston,
Even for one half hour?
For can't you see my very heart's blood
Is trinklin on the floor?”

20 Now Johnston had a gey broad sword,
And it hung down by his side.
He reared it through his jealous heart
And clutching her he died.

All: [Applause, words of appreciation.]

DW: Magic, Betsy. Nobody in the world — you're the only person in the world that sings the “Young Johnstone.” De ye know that? There's nobody in the world that could compete wi you at singing the “Young Johnstone.” There's nobody could sing it! That's true! There's nobody that's singin “Johnstones.”