

TRANSCRIPTION

Duncan Williamson sings three children's rhymes: "The Mousie's Wedding to the Frog," "The House that Jack Built," and "The Wind Blows High."

ScottishVoicesProj.0536

[This recording was made in August 1986 in a rented house in Auchtermuchty, Fife. Present were Duncan Williamson, John Niles, and a half dozen members of Niles's research team. The event was recorded concurrently on cassette recorder, reel-to-reel tape, and videotape. The aim of this session was to make "best quality" recordings of some of the songs in Williamson's repertory. As this excerpt begins, Williamson is finishing a cigarette; in an aside, he apologizes to the group for smoking.]

DW: Anything else you would like today?

JN: I'd love the Froggie. How about the Froggie, for special for Howard?¹

DW: Okay. Well, it's special for Howard. You see, Howard, not only traditional songs were beautiful, but the children's songs are beautiful forbyes. (Sorry about the smoke, ladies and gentlemen; I just can't pack the habit.) —This song was sung back fifty years ago when I was a child, ye know? [*Clears throat.*] So I hope you like it. [*Sings, tapping his foot to mark time.*]

- 1 A froggie would a-wooin ride
A froggie would a-wooin ride
With sword and buckle by his side,
oh ho.
- 2 Oh first he came to a mouse's den
oh-ho, ho
First he came to a mouse's den
He said, "Miss Mouse, would you let me in?"
oh ho.
- 3 So he took Miss Mousie on his knee
oh-ho, ho
He took Miss Mousie on his knee,
He said, "Miss Mouse, will you marry me?"
oh ho.
- 4 She said, "Where will the marriage service be?"
oh-ho, ho
"Where will the marriage service be?"

¹ Howard Diller, one of the members of the research team.

“Down at the hollow by the old oak tree,”
oh ho.

5 She said, “What will the marriage supper be?”
oh-ho, ho
“What will the marriage supper be?” /
“A slice of cake and a cup o tea,”
oh ho.

6 Then the first to come in was Mrs. Moth,
oh-ho, ho
The first to come in was Mrs. Moth,
She come to lay the tablecloth,
oh-ho, ho.

7 Then the next came in was Major Dick,
oh-ho

[*Spoken aside:* Major Dick was a grasshopper.]

The next came in was Major Dick,
He et so much that he fell sick,
oh-ho, ho.

8 So they had to send for Doctor Fly,
oh ho
They had to send for Doctor Fly,
For fear that Major Dick would die,
oh ho.

9 The next came in was a squirrel with a curly tail, tail,
The next came in was a squirrel with a curly tail,
He tore his head on a rusty nail,
oh-ho, ho.

10 Next came in was a big big black brown snake,
Oh, next came in was a big brown snake,
He coiled himself roond the weddin cake,
oh-ho, ho.

11 So they all went sailin down tae the lake,
oh-ho, ho
They all went sailing tae down the lake,
They were gobbled up by a big fat drake,
oh-ho, ho.

All: [Laughter.]

DW: That was “The Mousie's Weddin to the Frog.”

Now Jack has told me that there's a wonderful song we had as children, and it's been sung all the days of our life. But Jack tells me he's never heard it sung in verse —

HT: Yeah, uh-huh.

DW: — called “The House That Jack Built.” You know? But we had this fifty years ago! When I was young, as a child. And it tells a wonderful story, and it goes like this. [*Clears throat; sings, tapping his foot to keep time:*]

- 1 Oh this is the house,
Oh this is the house,
Oh this is the house that Jack built.
- 2 And this is the rat
that ate the malt
that lay in the house that Jack built.
- 3 And this is the cat
that killed the rat
that ate the malt
that lay in the house that Jack build.
- 4 And this is the dog
that worried the cat
that killed the rat
that ate the malt
that lay in the house that Jack build.
- 5 And this is the cow with the crooked horn
that chased the dog over the burn
that worried the cat
that killed the rat
that ate the malt
that lay in the house that Jack build.
- 6 And this is the maiden all forlorn
that milked the coo with the cruiket horn
that chased the dog over the burn
that worried the cat
that killed the rat
that ate the malt
that lay in the house that Jack build.

- 7 And this is the man all ragged an torn
 that kissed the maiden all forlorn
 that milked the coo with the cruiket horn
 that chased the dog over the burn
 that worried the cat
 that killed the rat
 that ate the malt
 that lay in the house that Jack build.
- 8 And this is the minister shaved and shorn
 that married the man all tattered and torn
 to the —
 milked the cow wi the cruiket horn
 that chased the dog over the burn
 that worried the cat
 that killed the rat
 that ate the malt
 that lay in the house that Jack build.
- 9 And this is the farmer sowin his corn
 This is the farmer sowin his corn —
 This is the farmer sowin his corn
 that fed the cock that crowed in the morn
 that wakened the minister shaved and shorn
 that married the man all tattered and torn
 to the maiden all forlorn
 that milked the coo with the crooked horn
 that chased the dog over the burn
 that worried the cat
 that killed the rat
 that et the malt
 that lay in the house that Jack build!

All: [*Laughter.*]

DW: See, we used to have that — we used to have this [sittin] all round the fireside, you see? We took — everyone took a part and sang it. You done one part, we done this part, you done another part, some was this — this, eh, the tattered man, the maiden all forlorn, the cow with the cruiket horn, the dog and the cat, you know. Everyone took a part. This was played as a party game, you know? But it was sung forbyes.

JN: That's good, Duncan. Now there was another one, about the wind and the sky, that you mentioned to me.

DW: Oh aye, but that's just a mini — It's a children's story. [*Sings, tapping his foot to mark*

time:]

- 1 Oh the wind and the wind and the wind blows high,
The rain comes dashin from the sky,
Our wee Holly² says she'll die,
For the lad in the roamin sky.

- 2 He is handsome, he is pretty,
He is the flower of the golden city,
He has lovers, one two three,
Can you guess who they will be?

- 3 Oh our Donna says she loves him,
In the bosom she will kiss him,
A hug and a hug and away they'll go,
Back to the land of ee-aye-oh.

DW: These were done in school parties, d'y'know what I mean? They were children's games. I'm talkin about fifty years ago! Long afore anyone was born in here. He [indicating Howard, with a smile] was just a wee pup.

All: [*More laughter.*]

DW = Duncan Williamson
JN = John Niles
HT = Holly Tannen
Donna = Donna Chang

² Holly: incorporating into the song the name of Holly Tannen, a member of the group. Later in the song Duncan incorporates the name Donna into the song, using the name of another group member, Donna Chang.