

## TRANSCRIPTION

**Duncan Williamson sings or recites three children's rhymes: "The Mousie's Wedding to the Frog," "The House that Jack Built," and "The Old Woman and Her Pig"**  
ScottishVoicesProj.0503

[This recording was made in August 1986 at the Williamson's home at Kincraigie Farm Cottage, near Strathmiglo, Fife. Present were Duncan Williamson, John Niles, and three members of Niles's research team. Also present in the session from time to time were Linda Williamson and the Williamson's two children Betsy and Thomas.]

DW: Well, Jack, this is a school song. I learned it in school a way, back, long before you were born. And it's an old school song. And I learned it way back, fifty years ago in my primary school. And the story is about a frog who went a-courting. Would you like to hear it?

JN: I'd love to hear it.

DW: Now, I'm not a singer in any way. [Sings:]

- 1      Oh, a froggie would a-woooin ride  
            oh-ho-ho-ho  
    A froggie would a-woooin ride,  
    With sword and buckle by his side,  
            oh-ho-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      He took Miss Mousie on his knee  
            oh-ho-ho  
    He took Miss Mousie on his knee  
    He said, "Miss Mouse would you marry me?"  
            oh-ho.
  
- 4      She said, "Where will the marriage supper be?"  
            oh-ho  
    "Where will the marriage supper be?"  
    "Down in the hollow by the old oak tree"  
            oh-ho.

*[People begin to join in on the refrain. Betsy or Thomas starts to sing along.]*

5 Well, the first came in was Mrs. Moth  
oh-ho-ho  
The first came in was Mrs. Moth  
She came to lay the table cloth  
oh-ho-ho.

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

7 Then they had to send for Doctor Fly  
oh-ho-ho  
They had to send for Doctor Fly  
For fear that Major Dick would die  
oh-ho-ho.

8 Then came a squirrel with a big, long, curly tail, tail  
Then came a squirrel with a curly tail  
He tore his head on a rusty nail  
oh, ho, ho.

9 Oh, next came in was a big, brown snake  
oh, ho, ho  
Next came in was a big, brown snake  
He coiled hisself round the wedding cake  
oh-ho-ho.

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

All: [Laughter; sounds of appreciation.]

DW: That was a children's song. But then we had, Jack, another more interesting one which I'd love to do for you. You've probably never heard it sung before. And this is a, a song called "The House That Jack Built." Ye know?

BW: Oh, I love this one.

JN: Well, I never heard this as a song, only as a story.

DW: Well, this was sung among children in my time. And we used tae gather hands in the schoolroom and make a ring, you know, in the school playground. And we'd put one in the center, and everyone would run round in a ring. And we would sing the song, as children, a long time ago, long before your day. [*Begins; Betsy or Thomas joins along softly.*]

- 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 dog  
          That worried the cat — worried the rat —  
          [*starts again*]:  
          And this is the dog  
          that worried the cat  
          that ate the malt  
          that lay in the house that Jack built
- 4      And this is the cow 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 built
- 5      Oh, 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 built
- 6      Oh, this is the man all tattered an torn  
          that kissed the maiden all forlorn  
          that milked the coo 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 built.

7 Now, this is the man all tattered an torn  
that kissed the maiden all forlorn  
who milked the coo 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 built.

8 Oh, this is the minister shaved and shorn  
that married the man all tattered and torn  
to the maiden all forlorn  
that milked the coo 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 built

9 Oh, this is the cock that crowed in the morn  
that wakened the minister shaved and shorn  
that married the man all tattered an torn  
to the maiden all forlorn  
that milked the coo 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 built.

10 Oh, this is the farmer sowin the corn  
that fed the cock that crowed in the morn  
that wakened the minister shaved an shorn  
that married the man all tattered an torn  
to the maiden all forlorn  
that milked the coo 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 built!

All: [General laughter.]

So we took one each turn, you see. We pointed to each one along, you know. He stepped in the ring. You know, he stepped in the ring.

JN: Uh-huh.

DW: And we all sang this song. And as ye pointed at each one, "Oh, this is the..." And no one wanted to be the man tattered an torn, you know. And we all stepped out in the ring, till at last there was hardly anyone left. They were all in the center o the ring. You understand? We all catched hands in a ring, first.

JN: Mm-hmm.

DW: And we put one in the middle. He was Jack.

JN: Mm-hmm.

DW: And Jack stood in the center. Everyone sang. And the ring ran around Jack. And then, when Jack said, "Oh, this is the man all tattered an torn," he had to leave the ring and come into the center of the ring, ye know?

JN: Uh-huh.

DW: And then, we sang this song, which is good.

Now, this old woman had swept the house one morning. She lived alone as an old woman, and she swept the house one morning. And she was very poor. And lo an behold, she found a sixpence on her floor, which she never knew existed. She said to herself, "At last I'm rich. I'll go to town, with the sixpence, to the market today, an I'll buy a pig. An I'll bring it home and I'll bring it up. Now, on her road home to where she went, there was a little dyke and a little stile. We call it a stile, which is steps goin over a fence. An the old woman bought a pig for a sixpence. But when she came back to the steps, the pig wouldn't climb the steps. It wouldn't go up the steps for no one. So she said, "How am I goin tae get home tonight if this pig doesn't climb the steps?" So she said— [recites:]

Oh, stick, stick, beat pig  
pig won't climb the stile.  
I won't be home tonight.

And the stick said, "Not me, I'm not goin to beat the pig." So she said, "I must get home tonight." So she went to the— to the fire. And she said,

Fire, fire, burn stick

stick won't beat pig  
pig won't jump over stile  
and I won't get home tonight.

The fire said, "No, I'm not beating the stick. The stick never did me any harm." So she went to the little brook, and she says to the brook,

Brook, brook, put out fire  
fire won't burn stick  
stick won't beat pig  
pig won't jump over stile  
and I won't get home tonight.

And the water said, "Well, the fire has not done me any harm. So I'm not puttin out the fire." So she went to the cow. And she said,

Cow, cow, drink water  
please drink water because —  
drink the water  
the water won't put out the fire  
the fire won't burn the stick  
the stick won't beat the dog  
the dog won't bite the pig  
and I'll not get home tonight.

And the cow said, "The water has never done me any harm. I'm not thirsty." So she went to the butcher. And she said,

Butcher, butcher, kill cow  
cow won't drink water  
water won't put out the fire  
fire won't burn stick  
stick won't beat dog  
dog won't bite pig  
pig won't jump over stile  
and I'll not get home tonight.

The butcher said, "The poor cow has not done me any harm." So she went to the rope. And she said,

Rope, rope, hang butcher  
butcher won't kill cow  
cow won't drink water  
water won't put out the fire  
fire won't burn stick  
stick won't beat dog

dog won't bite pig  
pig won't jump over stile  
and I'll not get home tonight.

And the rope said, "The butcher has never hurt me." So she went to the rat. And she said,

Rat, rat, gnaw rope  
rope won't hang the butcher  
butcher won't kill cow  
cow won't drink water  
water won't put out the fire  
fire won't burn stick  
stick won't beat dog  
dog won't bite pig  
and pig won't jump over the stile  
and I won't get home tonight.

And the rat says, "I'm hungry. I'll gnaw the rope," said the rat. So the rat gnawed the rope. And the rope started to hang the butcher, and the butcher started tae kill the cow, and the cow started tae drink the water, and the water started tae put out the fire, and the fire started tae burn the stick, and the stick started tae beat the dog, and the dog bit the pig, and the pig jumped over the stile, and the old woman got home that night.

All: *[Laughter.]*

HT: What's the name of that one?

DW: It's "The Old Woman and the Pig," you know.

LW: It's real popular in Britain. Aye, you can buy a book with it.

JN: What book is that?

*[Some crosstalk here.]*

LW: ...Bedtime stories...

DW: Yeah, it's very, very popular. But we used to perform this in school a long time ago, ye know?

JN: You'd act that out?

DW: We'd act it out in school.

JN: How would you do that, Duncan?

DW: Well, we had the water, and we had the fire, and we had the — everyone had a different name, you know. So one was the water. One was the fire. One was the old woman. And one child had to be the pig, you know, crawlin on his hands and knees. *[Laughter.]* It was a wonderful act. And we all done it in the playground, you know. And, eh, everyone had a different bit to do. And everyone had to work their own bit. Like, the butcher, and the rope, and the rat. Nobody said, "Oh, I don't want to be the rat." "Come on, you must!" You know, you didnae want to be the rat, or be the rope. But they all wanted to be the old woman with the pig, you know. And the pig — the youngest child would be the pig. He would be on his knees. This was a play-act at school. It's a long, long time ago since we done it.

DW = Duncan Williamson

JN = John Niles

BW = Betsy Williamson

LW = Linda Williamson

HT = Holly Tannen