

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 Kincaigie 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 Williamsons' 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-wooin ride
 oh-ho-ho-ho
 A froggie would a-wooin 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 caught 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