

TRANSCRIPTION

Duncan Williamson sings a family song in cant, “My Wee Maggie”

ScottishVoicesProj.0533

[This recording was made in August 1986 at a rented house in Auchtermuchty, Fife. Present were Williamson, John Niles, and five members of Niles’s research team. David Kotyk recorded much of the session on video.]

[The excerpt begins with about five minutes of introductory remarks by Williamson, not transcribed here, telling the story behind the song. Back when the song was made, around 1918, many weddings consisted of runaway marriages. Once a young man and woman ran away together and came back to their kinsfolk, they were married for life. The events told about in the song took place at Tangy Mill, near Campbeltown, a mill that was owned by two old brothers who loved the travelling people and who left food out for runaway couples. Williamson diddles a tune that was made about them, one called “The Two Brothers.” He then sings the song “My Wee Maggie,” which was made piecemeal by members of the families of two young people who had run off: one bit by one person, another bit by another person. Williamson’s own mother and father were married in the same place and in the same way. The couple who are featured in the song were his relatives on his mother’s side.]

DW: Now you know the story, listen to this. It sounds a wee bit — primitive, an complicated, but in these days it was wonderful. [*Sings, tapping his foot to mark time:*]

- Chorus:* My wee Maggie’s a-humphin, a-proochin,
A bun wood sprachin, my wee Maggie. [sprachin: begging,
providing food
[can: tea can
- 1 So Johnnie wi the burl and Maggie wi the can,
up the glen tae the aul blin man,
up the glen to the aul blin man,
their honeymoon they’ll have there.
- 2 So Johnnie says tae Maggie, “Oh come into the shed.
I will shake the strae, you can make the bed.
This is the place where yer mother she was wed,
and we’ll bing doon the glen in the mornin.” [bing: go

Chorus

- 3 So Maggie says to Johnnie, “The kinchens in the {nate}. [kinchens: children
My naismort an my naiskel, I’m sure that he will wait, [naismort & naiskul:
There’s haben fir the kinchens, {oh they’re happy to escate} aunt & uncle
An we’ll bing haben to them in the morgen. [bing haben: bring food

Chorus

4 So Johnnie says to Maggie, “The haben I will bing,
 The naiskel will be happy, I’m sure that he will sing,
 The kinchens will hae haben an I’m {sure we will bing}
 When we bing doon the glen in the mornin.

Chorus: My wee Maggie’s a-humphin, a-proochin,
 A bun wood sprachin, my wee Maggie.

[The excerpt concludes with some additional comments by Duncan, not transcribed here, about the song, the particular people that it is about, and the cant terms that are used in it.]