

TRANSCRIPTION

Adam McNaughtan sings his own song “The Yellow on the Broom”

ScottishVoicesProj.0599

[This recording was made in August 1986 at a house in Auchtermuchty, Fife, that John Niles and his research team were renting at the time. The session took place during that year’s Auchtermuchty Festival, to which McNaughtan contributed substantially as an organizer and as a leading player in the Festival Pageant. Present were McNaughtan, Linda Williamson, John Niles, and five or six members of Niles’s team, including Holly Tannen, whose voice is heard at the start of this excerpt. Members of the audience join in on the song’s chorus (with better will than skill, for the most part). Not transcribed here are a few introductory spoken words, including a reference to McNaughtan’s song “Oor Hamlet,” which he had sung shortly before.]

[*Adam MacNaughtan sings:*]

1 I ken ye dinnae like it, lass, tae winter here in toon,
For the scaldies ay miscry us and they try to bring us doon.
And it’s hard to raise three bairns in a single flea-box room,
But I’ll tak ye on the road again when yellow’s on the broom.

*Chorus: When the yellow's on the broom, when the yellow's on the broom
I'll tak ye on the road again when yellow's on the broom.*

2 The scaldies caa us tinker dirt and sponce oor bairns in school, [sponce: cheat
But who cares what a scaldy thinks, for a scaldy’s but a fool.
They never hear the jorlin’s sang or see the flax in bloom, [jorlin:
For they’re aye cooped up in hooses when the yellow’s on the broom. [yellow-hammer

*When the yellow's on the broom, when the yellow's on the broom
They're aye cooped up in hooses when the yellow's on the broom.*

3 Nae sale for pegs nor baskets noo, so jist to stay alive
We’ve had to work at scaldy jobs frae nine o’clock till five.
But we caa nae man our maister for we own the world room,
And we’ll bid fareweel tae Brechin when the yellow’s on the broom.

*When the yellow's on the broom, when the yellow's on the broom
We'll bid fareweel tae Brechin when the yellow's on the broom.*

4 I’m a-weary for the springtime when we tak the road yince mair,
Tae the plantin and the pearlin and the berryfields at Blair
When we meet up wi oor kinfolk frae aa the country roon,
And the ganaboot folk tak the road when yellow’s on the broom. [ganaboot: travelling

*When the yellow's on the broom, when the yellow's on the broom
And the ganaboot folk tak the road when yellow's on the broom.*

All: [Applause, words of appreciation.]

[In remarks not transcribed here, Niles remarks that he had heard a whole roomful of people singing the song in a folk club in St. Andrews the previous week; they all seemed to know it by heart.]