

TRANSCRIPTION

Duncan Williamson sings “Johnny My Man”

ScottishVoicesProj.0470

[This recording was made in October 1987 in the sitting room of a rented house outside Ithaca, New York. Present were Duncan Williamson and John Niles. Niles’ wife Carole Newlands and their young son Alan were also present from time to time during this session, and Alan’s voice can be heard in the background at the start of this excerpt. Williamson sings the song in response to a request made by Niles, who is interested in recording songs from the full range of Duncan’s repertory.]

- 1 “Oh, Johnny, my man, do ye not think o rising?
For the fire is gane oot and the bairnies are hame.
Our cellar’s gane doon, there’s nae meal in the barrel.
Wull ye rise up, my Johnny, and come awa hame?”
 - 2 “Who’s that at the door? Their voice sounds sae kindly,
For it sounds like the voice o my wee wifie Jean.
Come sit down beside me and hae a wee drappie,
For there’s plenty o room in the tavern for two.”
 - 3 “Oh, Johnny, my man, do ye ken what you’re daein?
You’re sitting there drinkin the whisky and wine.
The fire it’s gane oot, there’s nae meal in the barrel,
And you have neglected that family o thine.”
 - 4 “Oh curse tae the whisky, it’s what I’ve been drinking.
It’s curse to the whisky, it’s curse to the wine.
Oh, curse to the whisky, it’s what I’ve been drinking
That has made me neglect that fine family o mine.”
- “Oh Johnny, my man —” Nae, he nothing could rise him.
For the fire is gane oot and the bairnies are hame.
The cellar is gane down, there’s nae meal in the barrel.
So it’s “Rise up, my Johnny, and come awa hame.”

DW: That’s the way the old folks used to sing it, I never heard any mair of it. Jeannie, ah, Lizzie Higgins sings it a different way — they’ve got mair to it.¹ You know, they’ve mair bits tae it. But that’s the way the old Travellers used to sing it. Ah never had any reason to change it any different from the way they done it. Never ever sung it very much, anyway.

¹ A recording of this song as sung by Lizzie Higgins of Aberdeen, Jeannie Robertson’s daughter, is included in the double CD *In Memory of Lizzie Higgins, 1929–1993* (Musical Traditions MTCD337–8, 2006), vol. 1, track 2.

JN: It's another good one. Another good one — good tune.

DW: Yeah, the tune's nice.