

Put another log on the fire

Duncan Williamson's parents were both travellers and he was born in the family tent on the shores of Loch Fyne, In 1928. the seventh of sixteen children.

He recalls, "My father was a wonderful story-teller. You can Imagine us on a cold winter's evening living in a great big tent on the west coast, in the forest of the Duke of Argyli. We had no books, no toys and the only musical instrument was my father's bagpipes. but there was always an evening for singing and story-telling".

As he travelled throughout Scotland Duncan picked up local ballads and stories and started to write his own songs, building a vast repertoire. 'My old horse and me' is one of his best known songs which he wrote to celebrate his travelling days. and he also sang many of the older songs as a tribute to his family tradition.

Duncan would sing the title song 'Put another log on the fire' whenever there is a whiff of feminism in the air it is of course the type of Country and Western classic which became, in recent years, an essential feature of the traveller's repertoire.

Finally his versatility was further exemplified by his mastery of two pocket instruments: he was not only a fine vamping mouthorgan player, but also played the jew's harp superbly. He was a former champion at the Auchtermuhty Traditional Music Festival on the latter.

Duncan Williamson left the travelling life in 1980 when he settled in Fife, and through his many published works and his visits to festivals and schools he became well known as a storyteller These recordings hopefully completed the picture and show what a unique traditional performer he was.

RECORDINGS: These are field recordings made mainly in August 1991 They were recorded on three evenings at Duncan's house in Fife, and the odd crackle in the background is appropriately from the log fire.

