

Wild Mountain Thyme - Fascinating Facts - Lesson 5



The name:

The song 'Wild Mountain Thyme' is also known as 'Will ye go lassie go'. Wild mountain thyme is named after a lovely plant with pink flowers which grows in Scotland, most of Europe and North Africa. It is also known as 'purple heather' and is part of the mint family.

The history of the song:

'Wild Mountain Thyme' is a folk song from both Scotland and Northern Ireland. Its story goes way back to the 1700's, and it has been written and re-written by many people, and inspired by many songs along the way.

The first we know of, was from Scottish poet Robert Tannahill who adapted the words from an older song around 1796. He was born in Paisley in 1774, and died in 1810.



The melody was also adapted from an older song by composer Robert Archibald Smith, who was born in 1780 and died in 1829.

It is believed that this song was inspired by an older song called 'The Braes of Balquhither'.

Like Robert Burns, Robert Tannahill collected and changed old songs, but it doesn't stop there....

'The Braes of Balquhither' was likely to have been inspired by an the even older song called 'The Braes o' Bowhether', which is thought to have been written in the early 1700's or even the late 1600's!

The song eventually travelled to Ireland in the 1900's, and was adapted by Belfast musician Francis McPeake (1885-1971), into the Wild Mountain Thyme song we know and love today. So, this song has come on a VERY long journey!

Wild Mountain Thyme was first recorded by Francis McPeake, in 1957 for the BBC series As I Roved Out.

The Story:

Wild Mountain Thyme is a sweet love song about the arrival of summer, with all its flowers and scents of that time of year, and a young man who is searching for a sweetheart.



Today, it is a very popular song all over the world, and there have been hundreds of recordings made of it. Singers like the wonderful folk singer Dick Gaughan, the 1980's pop band The Silencer's, and more recently, Ed Sheeran did a lovely version of it. Have a listen here: