

## “Auld Lang Syne”, “The most famous song that nobody knows”

“Auld Lang Syne” has been called “the most famous song that nobody knows.” It is difficult for speakers of modern English to get the words to “Auld Lang Syne” right because they are in the **Scots** language, a derivative of Anglo-Saxon English (“old” English). A speaker of modern English could not communicate with a speaker of Anglo-Saxon English.

So that the lyrics to “Auld Lang Syne” **are comprehensible when we sing them** at our annual Tribute to the Beatles/Welcome to the New Year concert, **our pianist, Bill Jackman, has translated “Auld Lang Syne” from the Scots language to modern English.** This is the only such translation we are aware of. Bill has donated this new set of lyrics to the Piedmont Center for the Arts (PCA) who will own it and any performing rights accruing to it. We premiered this new version of “Auld Lang Syne” in modern English at our concert on January 7, 2024.

### Scottish poet, Robert “Rabbie” Burns

In 1788, Scottish poet, Robert “Rabbie” Burns, put words in the Scots language to an old Scottish melody; this song came to be known as *Auld Lang Syne*.

### The Scots language

Scots is one of three native languages spoken in Scotland today, the other two being English and Scottish Gaelic. Scots is descended from a form of Anglo-Saxon brought to the south east of what is now Scotland around AD 600 by the Angles, one of the Germanic-speaking peoples who began to arrive in the British Isles in the fifth century. The Angles and the Saxons controlled Britain for approximately six centuries, from 410-1066 AD. In 410, the Romans abandoned their colonies in Britain (after an occupation of 367 years). In 1066, the Normans invaded England,

defeated the Anglo-Saxons, and took control of Britain. The Normans spoke French.