

## Why we play gigs.

Since Blackford Fiddle Group was set up in 1996 we have always played for other people. The first few gigs were a bit of an experiment but they set the tone for everything that has followed. It is interesting that we call them gigs and not concerts or performances. Although we have played concerts we tend to be much less formal and indeed we only occasionally have a programme worked out in advance. We play music that suits those that come to play.

We have written about BFG in various places one of the things we say is;

*The purpose of BFG is to create the right atmosphere, to offer a basic level of support and encouragement and to **make sure that we have enough fiddles for fiddlers and gigs at which to play.***

Enough fiddles for fiddlers and enough gigs at which to play. The two things go together really. While many of us learn to play for fun and to be able to knock out a few tunes, we also want to provide entertainment for others. Even if we play a gig for family or friends it is still a gig, and what is the point of all learning if we can't go and show off to others? Taking that a step further, most of our early gigs were at Women's Institute meetings, in residential homes and for local community events. We actually provide a valued service to other people and in return they provide us with an opportunity to play.

Why else? Playing in public is a wee bit different from practicing at the hall. There is a greater need to get it right and so the gig offers a bit of a challenge. It is a useful goal to get out there and play a few tunes we have practiced together. As it happens it is also fun. Gigs are times we get together just to enjoy our music.

Let's not underestimate the value of gigs in our own success. As well as providing a challenge for us gigs have inspired many members to join. After our local ceilidhs we almost always get new members. The publicity is good for us.

Lastly, gigs are the main way in which BFG earns money. Most BFG members have or used to have a BFG fiddle. These cost BFG about £70 and we never ask members for money. We buy strings and fix broken fiddles. We hire the hall. We have bought recording and sound equipment. We produce music books, CDs and other things and BFG pays for up front. The hall fees cover only a small part of this. So instead of asking members for more money or to do sponsored events and buy raffles tickets we do gigs.

So gigs are at the very least:

- A way of showing what we can do.
- For entertaining others.
- A way of providing a service to our communities.
- For inspiring others to become members or to play traditional music.
- For enjoying ourselves socially.
- For raising funds to pay for the running of the group.

Without our gigs BFG would cease to be what it is. It might even cease altogether. With over 500 gigs now behind us it is worth remembering that they are as much a part of what we are about as is the process of learning together.