

# Clifton Rocks Railway Restoration Annual Report 2008

*Maggie Shapland, Restoration Officer*

Visitors have decreased in numbers from 2007 because we were not allowed access between October 2007 and May 2008 after the Hotel changed hands, discovered their insurance did not cover us, and wanted to make the tunnel safer. 16 trips between 24 Sept 07 and 28 Nov 07 were cancelled for a prospective 468 visitors due to insurance problems. We had hoped to be open again by the beginning of December, but did not in fact gain access until the night before May open day so I am very grateful to the band of volunteers who came to help me clean up the top station in my desperate hour of need. We left some weeds on purpose to add to the atmosphere! From May open day we gained another 29 requests for trips down the tunnel (we did not advertise since we wanted to honour the other people patiently waiting) and from September Doors Open Day another 675 (we had to stop adding people to the list). Taking people on trips at 10 at a time means that it will take a long time to show 1172 down! I have nearly caught up with the cancelled trips from September 07. I have already contacted those from September 08 who could organise their own groups- which is far easier for me. It is hard to do more than two trips a week since I do have a full-time job and other commitments. I still have 813 outstanding (136 from September 07 most of whom are on ansaphones when I try to talk to them).

Different regime- Due to insurance reasons, we now have to escort everyone through in groups of 10 on Open Days, so May was our first trial. I wrote a guide for guides so they roughly knew what to say where, and for how long. We also evolved methods of signalling if we needed to speed the groups up to avoid queues so as the day progressed our system evolved. I also wrote a top station hand out for the visitors to be handed out before they came in so they knew roughly what they would see (went down well). We did have people who did not want to stay in the queues again for Doors Open Day but we had more control over how long people would be in the top station so the queues did not build up too much. Some people did complain about being rushed through and not having time to look at the display boards, but many congratulated us for our guided commentaries which helped put everything into context for them and in fact donation/head increased. We did however have some very disappointed children and parents since children under 14 are now not allowed.

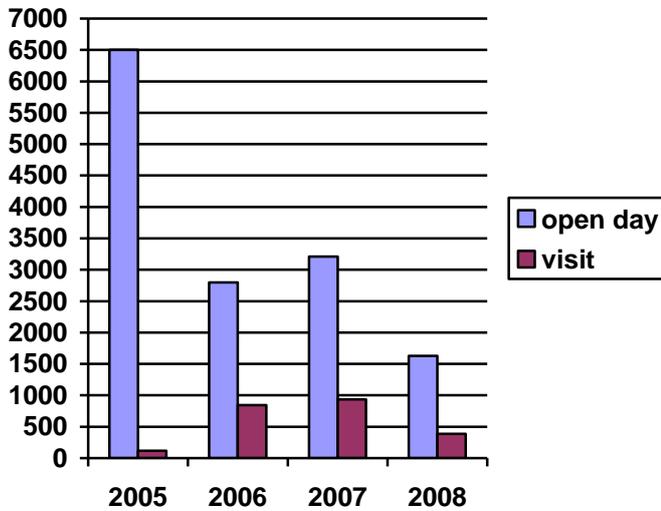
	2005	2006	2007 (to mid Sept)	2008 (from May)
Open day visitors (May, Sept)	4500 (3500, 3000) estimate	2797 (1132, 1665)	3212 (1088, 2124)	1627 (380, 1247)
Group trip visitors	117	843	935 (would have been 1400+)	386
Number of trips	9	41	48 (would have been 64+)	44
Hours spent on trips	30	225	229 (would have been about 315)	180
Work hours	1199	697	377 (would have been about 480)	36 (preparation for open day)
Number of volunteers helping	62	45	43	32 (10 help with group trips)

## Description of group trips

- Ofsted was a very useful tour. They were very enthusiastic since they said a whole school day could be spent at the Railway site- not just doing the World War II story which is in the school curriculum, but Maths, Mechanics, Victorian History, Geology etc
- Other meritorious groups have Friends of Museums, Round Table, AXA, Blagdon Scottish dancer, Leukaemia Trust, the Matthew, Institute of Structural Engineers, Geographical Association, Hanover

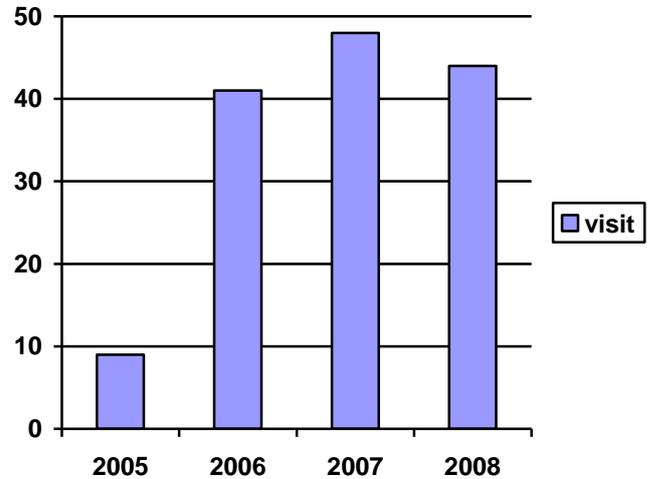
Exchange Group, Rotary, various History Societies, Mendip Motor Club, Clifton and Hotwells Improvement Society, and the Architecture Centre

**year number of visitors**



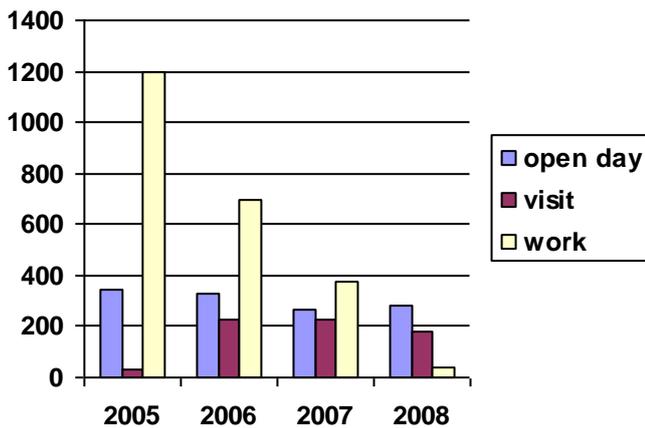
Number of visitors on open days have reduced, but revenue per head increased this year due to tours being guided rather than browsing

**year number of trips**



Number of trips will be the same as in 2007 despite the fact we have only been open since May. Number of visitors is reduced due to now only being able to take down 10 at a time

**work hours**



The amount of time doing visits looks steady but the hours only relate to May onwards. Work hours have obviously reduced in 2008 since we now just clean up for open days

Now that we have made the tunnel accessible and safer, we are now getting nearly as many donations from trips as from open day. Clearly it is more time consuming.

We want to put more pictures up down the tunnel

Open days are a good focus point and good for publicity. The Photographic Society display of pictures for the next open day should be very interesting

## Significant Events and Publicity since last AGM

- Gained access again in May 2008 after the new Hotel owners organised insurance for us, added new electric circuits, emergency lights and trips, barriers down the stairs and some other work all costing £15,000. They see the tunnel as a community project
- Photographic Society will be having two sessions in the tunnel in December. We will be having a competition to decide favourite pictures which will be shown on next May open day
- Richard Clutterbuck – who has been a volunteer a couple of times, is a freelance cameraman, often working for BBC. He took some footage during May open day to help with a promotional DVD

## Open days

- May: had 380 visitors, opened again 6-8 on Saturday evening to participate Museums and Galleries at night event (but disappointing number of visitors). We had decided to do have a blitz evening again like last year in view of the fact we had so many war-time finds on display. Most of us had tin helmets and overalls with ARP badges, but we were surpassed again by members of the Military Vehicle Trust who came resplendent in ATS and military uniforms. This time they brought 2 searchlight and a siren. We then had fun with the search lights and siren when it got dark. The Times Educational Supplement took some photos. Thanks again to the bus drivers at the harbourside bus rally which meant that numerous vintage buses disgorged passengers every half an hour. The weather was fantastic, and everyone was very complementary about all the hard work we had put into the project, many had come back to see progress. The new Lord Mayor Christopher Davies came on Sunday. We were very pleased at this gesture. He brought his camera so someone took shots of us together. *“Thanks Maggie, loved the visit, your group are doing a great job for Bristol. I'm really proud of all you and your team, and send my very best regards.”*
- September: Another very successful sunny Doors Open Day with over 1200 visitors (637 Saturday, 610 Sunday). Everybody was so full of praise- it was very gratifying. I received a lot more completed surveys and will do another analysis of them, since last analysis was very interesting.

## Next open day

- May 16/17 (free bus trips plus bus rally at Lloyds Amphitheatre on Sunday).
- Sept 12/13

## Education

- Two students from the University of Bristol Archaeology Department did heritage projects. The Archaeology Department want MA students to help when we investigate the BBC rooms and the barrage balloon section. They have offered to run a training course
- One Architecture student from Cardiff was going to do a project, but changed his mind
- One student from Exeter University used the Railway for part of his Heritage dissertation

## Publicity

- In May: Venue, BS8, Clifton, Evening Post, Clifton and Hotwells Improvement Society newsletter
- In September: Somerset Life, Folio, Venue (nice article), Evening Post
- An article in Civic Society newsletter will be published in January giving our progress and aspirations

## Survey

- I have now received 256 surveys back (60 since did last analysis in Sept 07) so will be analysed again in December.

- Many confirm the CRR group's views about the future use as preserving the WWII history and keeping the site as a museum, railway running possibly part of way, including a visitor from English Heritage. WWII is on the school curriculum and will attract funding. They say it was totally unrealistic to consider that the Railway would ever run as a transport system and that the WWII history was as important as the Railway *the WWII history belongs to all of us*.

## **Courses Attended**

- February : Museums skills courses - collections care in Bristol - free- organized by MLA (Museums Library Archives)
- May: St Johns Ambulance First Aid Course (Maggie Shapland, Mike Taylor). More people will attend in due course
- June: a day at Berkeley Castle with the University of Bristol Archaeology Department looking at the way they record sites
- June: Museums skills course Revisiting Collections (identifying hidden knowledge)
- Sept: Museums skills course: museum governance and trusteeship- free- organized by MLA

## **Volunteers**

Thank you to everyone who has helped to make the Railway such a success this year. This year 32 different volunteers have helped with open day and group trips.

Very few work hours have been spent, but far more time has been taken in doing trips especially when you consider the figures are only from May. Many thanks to the volunteers helping so diligently with the group trips (especially my stalwart Mike Taylor and Peter Davey). I thank in particular those who helped me guide the visitors through the top station during open days. Guiding all day was very exhausting and the more that helped made it easier for everyone. We could not have got through the numbers wanting to visit without them.