

## Clifton Rocks Railway Restoration Annual Report 2010

*Maggie Shapland, Restoration Officer*



We have now been running group trips and open days under the new access rules from May 2008, after the Hotel changed hands in September 2007. The Hotel continue to provide our insurance and electricity. There is still a huge demand for trips down the tunnel, and we have again averaged more than one trip a week this year.

We had to abandon the list of people requesting trips from September Doors Open Day 2008 since so many more people were wanting trips. Of the 418 from September 2009 we still have 252 outstanding (45 people left to contact) - but most of these had said they wanted to form their own group but subsequently had not. We then added another 7 potential groups from April and 11 groups from May (3 of whom have been down) plus another 40 so we still have too many people waiting patiently. Taking people on trips at 10 at a time means that it will take a long time to show people down who are still on my list!

Many people organise their own groups- which is far easier for us. It is hard to do more than two trips in a week since most of us do have a full-time jobs and other commitments. In September this year we issued tickets for 11 specific days. This worked well since we did not have to then keep contacting people asking if they could come on a specific date.

The Photographic Society display of pictures taken in December 2008 are still well received, and the Hotel has continued to let us use a room for exhibitions during open days

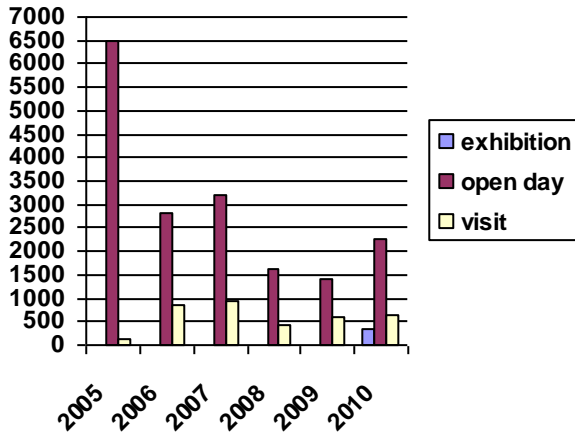
	2005	2006	2007 (to mid Sept due to closure)	2008 (from May)	2009	2010
Open day visitors (May, Sept). September always 2 day	6500 (3500, 3000) estimate	2797 (1132,1665)	3212 (1088, 2124)	1627 (380, 1247)	1417 Only one day May (233), 1184 in September	2248. One day April (374), one in May (502), 1372 September
Group trip visitors	117	843	935	406	582	659
Number of trips	9	41	48	46	57	70
Hours spent on trips	30	225	229	207	264	309
Work hours	1199	697	377	36 (preparation for open day)	56	63
Number of volunteers helping	62	45	43	32 (10 help with group trips)	28	24

### Description of group trips

- We have again taken several appreciative groups down for special birthday celebrations/ special family get togethers. It is really nice to be considered to be a special exclusive place to come.
- The Council Conservation department and Bob Jones the Council archaeologist came in December while we were helping with the Clifton Conservation Appraisal. They were very enthusiastic and said they were very inspired. They all considered it should be kept as it is
- This year we have taken round many engineers (including graduate engineers), and architects
- We also participated in the NAMHO conference that was based at Coalpit Heath so we gave them two trips and a talk on construction of the tunnel
- The Victoria pub at Westbury on Trym had a pub quiz and kindly donated the proceeds to us.
- Dave Carton, photographer put some images of the Railway on his redbubble website and said he would send any proceeds to us, having admired our work
- I took a BBC engineer down who had used morse code in the tunnel. He could remember the sequence of signals to identify if he was receiving signals from friend or foe.
- Other groups have been:

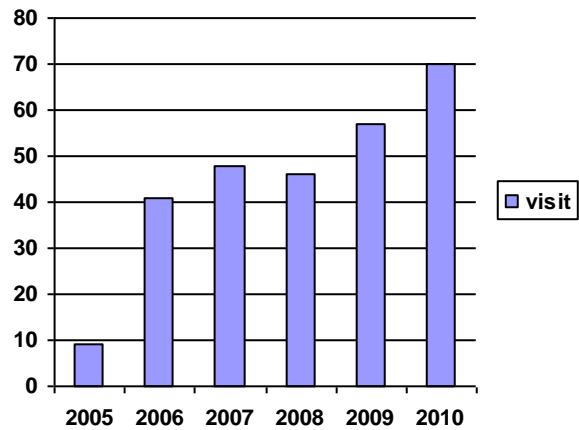
archaeological students; Rotary club; Nailsea Probus, Strollers, a bowling club, Bristol Trefoil, Suspension Bridge volunteers, University Maths department, Vintage Clothing, Jessops, Bristol Lions, Airbus, BT engineers, Portishead Parish Wharf 50+.

**year number of visitors**



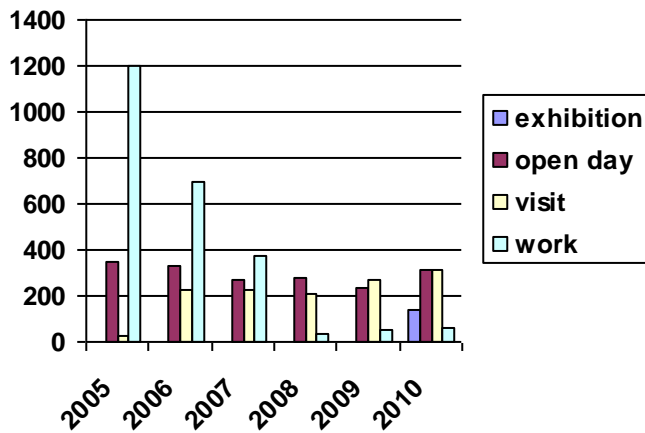
Number of visitors on open days reduced in 2008 and 2009 but increased in 2010. Revenue per head increased in 2008 due to tours being guided rather than browsing. Number of visitors since 2008 is reduced due to only being able to take down 10 at a time

**year number of trips**



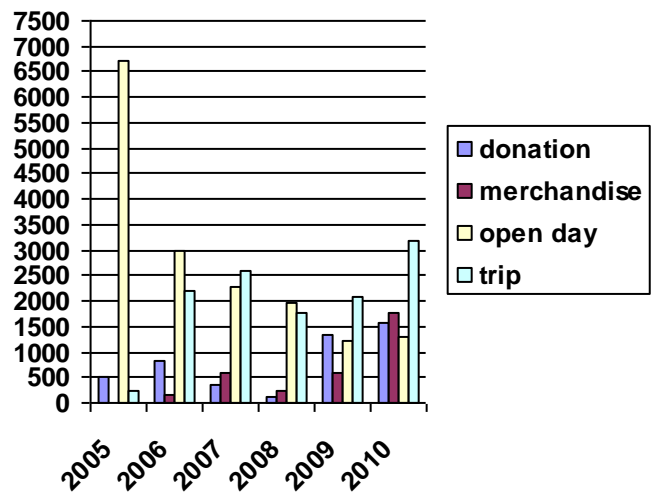
Demand even stronger than 2009. Now doing on average over one trip a week

**work hours**



Hours doing trips the same as hours spent during open days this year since we were open 4 days rather than 3 as in 2009. Work hours have obviously reduced since 2008 since we now just clean up for open days, and do some recording. This year we also manned an exhibition for five days.

**year income from visitors**



Now that the tunnel is accessible and safer, we are now getting more revenue from trips than open day (in 2005 merchandise was not separated). Clearly more time consuming. Open days are a good focus point and good for publicity. In 2010 we opened up for an extra day in April. We brought out a new set of postcards and photographs

## Significant Events since last AGM

- Our exhibition boards showing historic photographs, Bristol Photographic Society and work by the volunteers were again displayed by the Hotel during Open Days. This allowed visitors to spend more time to discuss the project.
- We bought a heavy clock at auction made of limestone from the tunnel and marble from the pump room which celebrated the opening of the railway in 1893. This goes well with the first piece of limestone cut during construction in 1891.
- We held a 5 day exhibition in the Photographique gallery in Baldwin Street in January. 341 visitors braved the snowy weather.
- President of the University of Bristol's fine art society would like to hold their annual exhibition of students work in the top station next year.
- The Council will consider, without prejudice, granting a 100 year peppercorn lease to the CRR Trust providing certain conditions can be met. The primary conditions will be that the property is open to the public and available for the benefit the public.
- The Hotel share our aims to preserve all the history of the tunnel.
- A paranormal investigation group based in Bristol asked to stay up all night in the tunnel. The offer was declined due to lack of facilities (and volunteers wanting to stay up all night!)
- We discovered an article written in 1893 about the Clifton Rocks Railway Crossley gas engine complete with engineering drawings.

## Open days in 2010

- After the success of the single day in May 2009, and confusion as to when the bus rally would be, this year we held one open day in April and one in May – the latter in conjunction with the bus rally again. In April we had 374 and in May we had 502. Thanks again to the bus drivers at the harbourside bus rally which meant that numerous vintage buses disgorged passengers every half an hour. Many come back to see progress
- September: We had very happy, positive Doors open days again. Everyone was appreciative of our efforts with lots of happy laughter from the visitors and even applause. The photographic show in the Hotel on Saturday went down well too and the hourly bus was well used. We had a couple of vintage cars outside each day and delighted when a Trojan bubble car parked up too. Numbers were up, 758 on Saturday and 614 on the Sunday. We had to stay open until 5pm each day, so all guides very croaky. Penny Mellor the organiser said" *Many thanks to you and your team, including the bus lot. What is it about going underground? I sometimes think really all I need to 'open' on DOD is yourselves, Redcliffe Caves and TempleMeads and all Bristol is happy!*"

## Next open days

- April 17
- May 15 (free bus trips plus bus rally at Lloyds Amphitheatre on Sunday).
- Sept 10/11 Doors Open Day

## Oral History

- We have now spoken to over 100 people with memories (17 BBC, 46 railway, 26 wartime shelter). We would like to speak to more.
- Next year Radio Bristol want to mark 70 years of since the corporation fitted out part of the tunnel for wartime emergency broadcasting. They would like it to be part of the railway's oral history project and will ask for our help in due course.

## Education

- Three students from the University of Bristol Archaeology Department did heritage projects.

## Publicity

- In May: Area, Evening Post, Clifton and Hotwells Improvement Society newsletter, Somerset Life
- In September: Area, Evening Post
- Pictures of progress continue to be put on the web sites which bring in emails asking for information and group trips.

## Survey

- I have now received 291 surveys back (last analysis written up in January 09). They clearly show that the people who have been down the tunnel appreciate the World War II history better.
- 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, Ofsted and the Council. 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:

## Tantalising Finds

People have told us about objects relating to the Railway – such as a sign languishing in a garden somewhere in Somerset.

## Temperature

We have been recording the temperature in the tunnel since January 2009. The bottom shelter is usually about 2 degrees cooler than the top shelter.

	2009		2010	
	Shelter 1	Shelter 3	Shelter 1	Shelter 3
Jan	38F		42F	40F
Feb	44F		42F	40F
March	48F		46F	44F
April	50F		50F	48F
May	56F		52F	51F
June	60F	57F	62F (88 outside)	57F
July	60F	58F	62F (90 outside)	58F
August	60F	58F	63F (76 outside- lots of condensation)	59F
September	58F	57F	57F	55F
October	58F	57F	54F- 52	54F
November	52F	50F	52F	51F

## The Way Forward

We would like archaeologists to record the barrage balloon and BBC rooms

## Thanks

Thank you to everyone who has helped to make the Railway such a success this year. This year 24 different volunteers have helped with open day and group trips. We gained two more volunteers who thoroughly enjoyed themselves.

Most of our time has been taken in doing trips and open days. Many thanks to the volunteers helping so diligently with the group trips (especially my stalwart Mike Taylor, Ray Smith 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. I also wish to thank Nicky for organising the photographic exhibition which have provided such stunning photographs.

We also wish to thank the Avon Gorge Hotel for their continued support, for supplying our electricity and insurance, their friendly receptionists, and for supplying a room for our meetings. The use of a room for both Open Days was particularly appreciated.