

Clifton Rocks Railway Restoration Annual Report 2011

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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.

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 April, May and September this year we issued tickets for 20 specific days. This worked well since they had the details on a ticket to keep, and we did not have to keep contacting people asking if they could come on a specific date. It also meant that we received a donation in advance which made up for the problem of people not turning up. 23 of our trips were for people who could not get together enough people, 33 for specific groups. Several of our trips were organised through the Hotel who had delegates wanting a trip as part of the conference agenda.

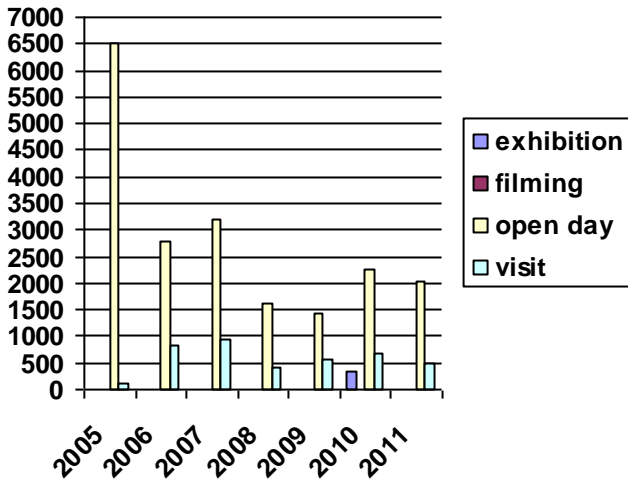
The Photographic Society display of pictures taken in December 2008 are still well received, and the Hotel has continued to let us use a room for exhibitions during open days. This allows visitors more time to chat to us.

	2005	2006	2007 (to mid Sept due to closure)	2008 (from May)	2009	2010	2011
Open day visitors (May, Sept). September always two day, May 2005 to 2007 two days	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	2019 One day April (377), two in May (447), 1195 September
Group trip visitors	117	843	935	406	582	659	500
Number of trips	9	41	48	46	57	70	56
Hours spent on trips	30	225	229	207	264	309	265
Work hours	1199	697	377	36 (preparation for open day)	56	63	92
Number of volunteers helping	62	45	43	32 (10 help with group trips)	28	24	22

Description of group trips

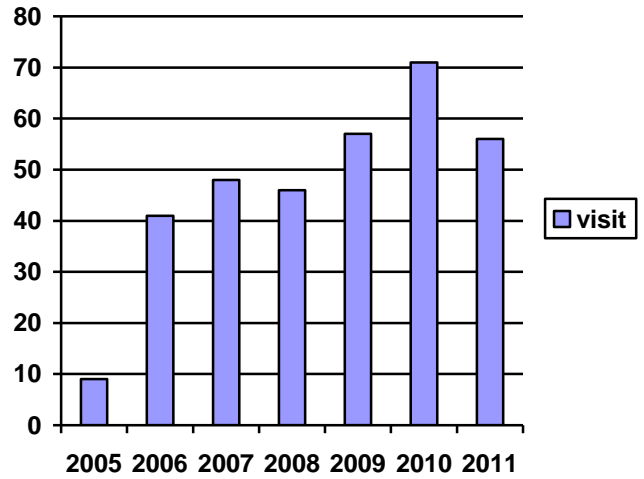
- We have again taken several appreciative groups down for special birthday celebrations/ retirement treat/ special family get togethers. We even took down a Canadian family, a group from Hanover, and a Swiss visitor from the English Language School who had been recommended to visit us by his landlady. It is really nice to be considered to be a special exclusive place to come and clearly our fame has spread.
- The Brunel Society (who were staying at the Hotel) who were then also taken on a walk from the bottom station to the Ferry (to get to the SS Great Britain) with all the historic features pointed out to them on the way
- From conferences at the Hotel: foreign transport engineers, Hydraulic delegates
- Other groups have been:
 - The Branchline Society, Bristol & S Gloucester Stationary Engine Club, Bristol Zoo, Cliftonwood residents, the Education Department of the University for an away day, West Harptree History Society, Young Rotarians, rambblers, cavers

year number of visitors



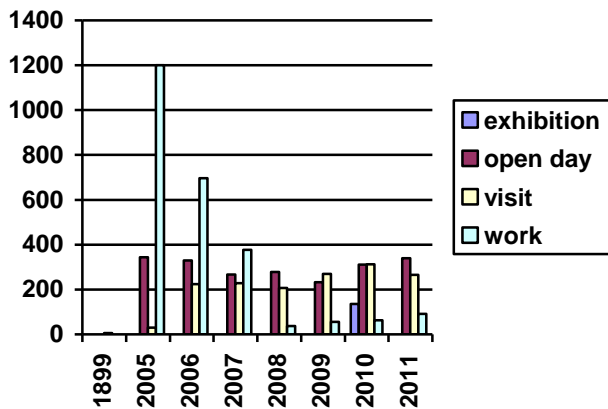
Number of visitors on open days reduced in 2008 and 2009 but increased in 2010 and 2011. Over 500 taken down tunnel since 2009 despite only being able to take down 10 at a time

year number of trips



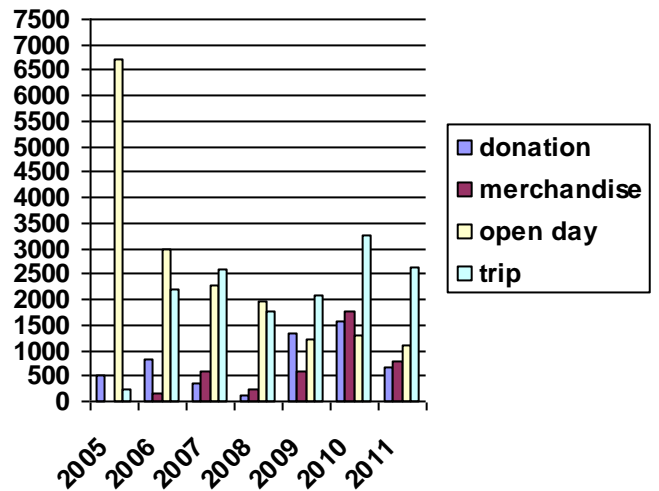
Demand still strong. Still doing just over one trip a week since 2009

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.

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 but revenue dropped from last year despite two days in May this year.

Significant Events since last AGM

- Maggie Shapland was invited to a summer garden party at Buckingham Palace for services to Clifton- a great privilege on a lovely sunny day.
- 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.
- Bristol Film and Video society did some filming in the tunnel as part of a film about the Avon Gorge. We look forward to seeing the end result.
- The BBC did a news article to celebrate 70 years of the BBC first broadcasting from the tunnel. A podcast can be seen on the BBC website.
- Two day books (1899-1901 and 1904-8) of an engineering company were loaned to us because the person's grandfather had installed the Crossley gas engines in the bottom station and did some work for the Railway. They were a fascinating insight into what kind of work a general engineering company did at the turn of the century and inspired Maggie to write a paper for the Bristol Industrial Archaeological Society which will be published in April 2012.
- 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 of the public.

Open days in 2011

- The heavy clock that we bought at auction in 2010 made of limestone from the tunnel and marble from the pump room which celebrated the opening of the railway in 1893 went on display and was much admired. This goes well with the first piece of limestone cut during construction in 1891.
- We added to our display a wooden toilet seat and a bucket from the tunnel, added more pictures and improved the display of photographs of work we had done since 2005.
- After the success of the single day in May 2009, and confusion as to when the bus rally would be, this year we again held one open day in April but two in May – one in May in conjunction with the bus rally again. We had intended to only have one in May, but the half Marathon was organised on the day we expected the bus rally to be so we then had to organise another open day the following week to accommodate the bus rally! 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. In April we had 377 (a very good turnout) and in May we had 172 on the 15th and 275 on the 22nd.
- 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 Sunday went down well too and the hourly bus was well used. We had a vintage car outside each day and were delighted when an Austin Seven parked up too. Numbers were down a little from the previous year, 696 on Saturday and 499 on the Sunday. We had to stay open until 5pm each day, so all guides very croaky. We also had a raffle for an original opening day medallion. The winner was highly delighted.

Next open days (hopefully all will incorporate a photographic display in the Hotel)

- Sunday April 15 10-4
- Sunday May 13 10-4 (no bus rally this year so no free buses)
- Sept 8/9 Doors Open Day (free bus trips from Canons Marsh on Saturday. Includes raffle for an original medallion again)

Oral History

- We have now spoken to over 100 people with memories (17 BBC, 54 railway, 28 wartime shelter). We would like to speak to more. This year we spoke to 6 with railway memories and 2 with war time memories.
- On Open Day, a grand daughter of George George- who undertook many major blasting and boring operations including Clifton Rocks Railway, visited us. We had already met a grandson and have been able to help unite different branches of the family through publicising this on the website.

Education

- We have helped another UWE student do a project. She is an MA student of architecture aiming to use Clifton Rocks Railway as the subject of her Advanced Cultural Studies module which is concerned with exploring how buildings' careers develop over time
- A photographic group from UWE also learned new skills from the challenging lighting conditions in the tunnel.
- Was fun taking down the Education department from the University

Publicity

- We were disappointed that the press did not cover our raffle at all or our open days very well apart from April (Clifton Life, Venue, Evening Post and the visitbristol website), despite our best endeavours.
- 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 300 surveys back and analysed them. They clearly show that the people who have been down the tunnel appreciate the World War II history most of all.
- Many confirm the CRR group's views about the future as preserving the WWII history and keeping the site as a museum and railway experience. This includes visitors from English Heritage, Ofsted, the BBC and the Council. WWII is on the school curriculum and would attract funding due to the Educational aspects. Visitors realise the costs make it totally unrealistic to run the Railway as a transport system, and that the multi-faceted WWII history is as important as the Railway. We are lucky to have found so many artefacts from both histories.

Tantalising Finds

People have told us about objects relating to the Railway – such as a sign languishing in a garden somewhere in Somerset. The owner is not ready to part with it yet.

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		2011
	Shelter 1	Shelter 3	Shelter 1	Shelter 3	Shelter 1
Jan	38F		42F	40F	50F
Feb	44F		42F	40F	45F
March	48F		46F	44F	45F
April	50F		50F	48F	52F
May	56F		52F	51F	
June	60F	57F	62F (88 outside)	57F	
July	60F	58F	62F (90 outside)	58F	58F
August	60F	58F	63F (76 outside- lots of condensation)	59F	58F
September	58F	57F	57F	55F	58F
October	58F	57F	54F- 52	54F	56F
November	52F	50F	52F	51F	54F

The Way Forward

We would like archaeologists to record the barrage balloon and BBC rooms, and are waiting for the Hotel's authority to continue the archaeological study that stopped in 2007. James Tonkin is hoping to arrange our annual meeting with Jonathan Dawson, Operations Director of Swire Hotels UK in the new year.

Thanks

Thank you to everyone who has helped to make the Railway such a success this year. This year 22 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 Mike Taylor, Ray Smith, Alan Griffith, Michael Nelki, Dave Hewgill and Peter Davey). I thank in particular those who helped me guide the visitors through the top station during open days (June Jeffreys, Dave Strawford, Alan, Ray and Peter). 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 Williams for looking after the photographic exhibitions in the Hotel, Ed Scammell our treasurer who keeps us on the straight and narrow, Dominic Hewitt who looks after our website and has helped Ray and I organise people going on trips, and Anne Heald who rallied her family to help tidy up the top station and look after the sales on open day.

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 our Open Days was particularly appreciated.