

Clifton Rocks Railway Restoration Annual Report 2012

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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. On our open days this year we again issued tickets for 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, 48 for specific groups. Several of our trips were organised through the Hotel who had delegates wanting a trip as part of the conference agenda.

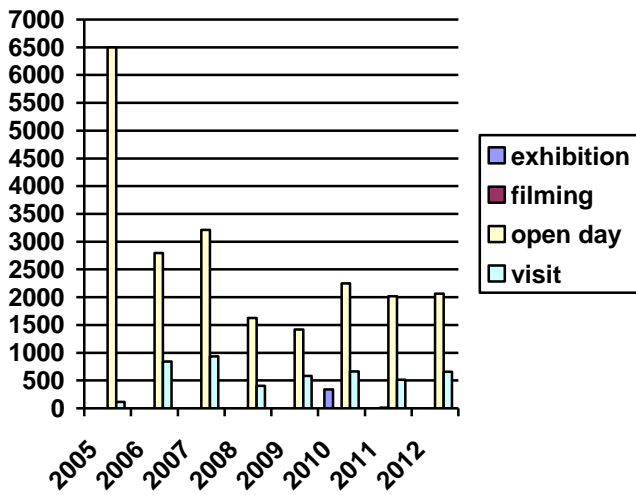
The Photographic Society took some more pictures for us for the display in the Records Office. The Hotel has continued to let us use a room for exhibitions during open days. This allows visitors more time to chat to us.

	2005	2006	2007 (to mid Sept due to closure)	2008 (from May)	2009	2010	2011	2012
Open day visitors (May, Sept). September always two day, May 2005 to 2007 two days	6500 May 3500, Sep 3000 estimate	2797 May 1132 Sept 1665)	3212 May 1088 Sept 2124)	1627 May 380 Sept 1247	1417 May 233 Sep 1184	2248. April 374 May 502 Sept 1372	2019 April 377 2 May 447 Sept 1195	2065 April 402 May 219 Sept 1444
Group trip visitors	117	843	935	406	582	659	500	672
Number of trips	9	41	48	46	57	70	56	63
Hours spent on trips	30	225	229	207	264	309	265	304
Work hours	1199	697	377	36 (preparation for open day)	56	63	92	71
Number of volunteers helping	62	45	43	32 (10 help with group trips)	28	24	22	22

Description of group trips

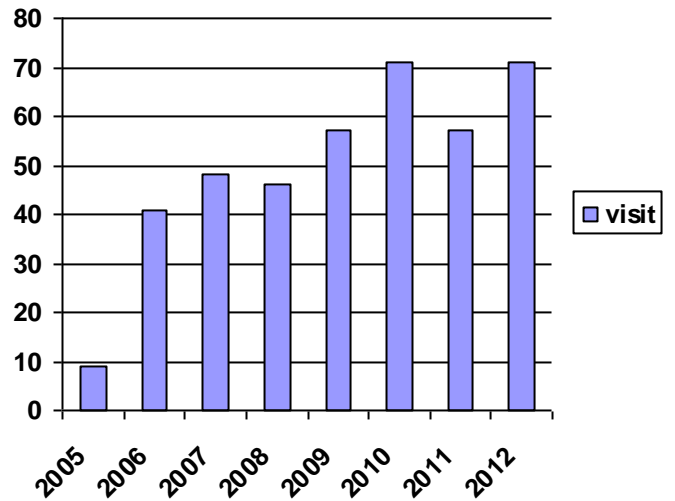
- We have again taken several appreciative groups down for special birthday celebrations/ retirement treat/ special family get togethers. We also spent a whole morning doing trips of the top station for wedding guests who were staying at the Hotel. We have two more wedding groups who have already booked us for next year. 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: TUC, I Mech E
- Other groups have been:
 - Burnham Yacht Club, Ovation Finance, Tour guides, Railway Ramblers, Bray Leino Yucca, Probus, driving instructors, Railway group, Whitchurch History group, Clevedon 41, Avenue Drivers club, TR roadster club, Oxford Instruments, Rotary, Portishead and groups from Usk.

year number of visitors



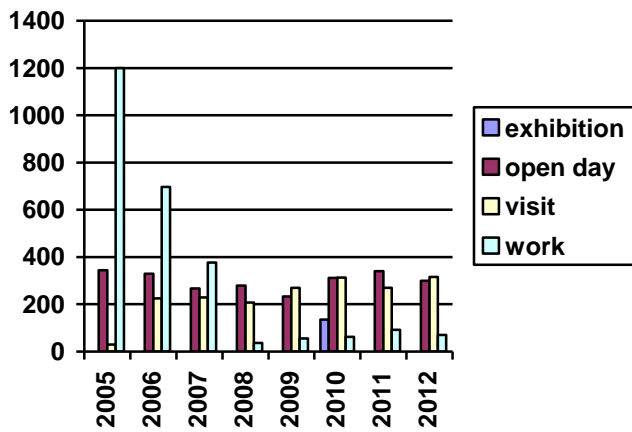
Number of visitors on open days reduced in 2008 and 2009 but increased in 2010 and 2011. Over 500 taken down tunnel since 2009 despite only being able to take down 10 at a time

year number of trips



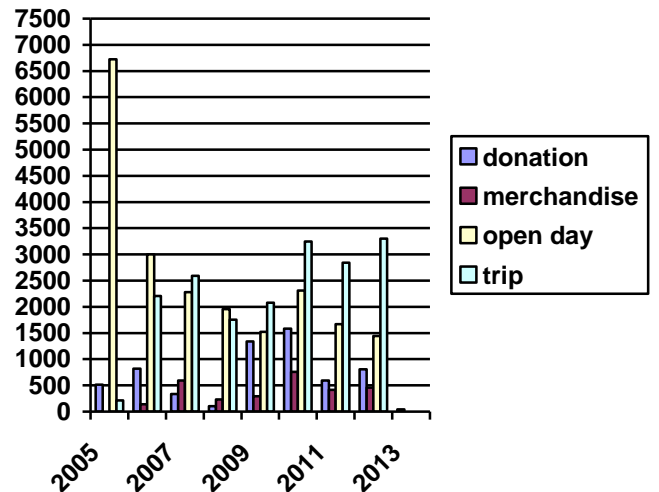
Demand still strong. Still doing just over one trip a week since 2009

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, sweep the steps, check the light bulbs 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. Trips can be booked on open day, and in 2011 and 2012 donations were increased by having a raffle

Significant Events since last AGM

- Maggie Shapland was awarded the British Empire Medal for services to Clifton in the Queens Jubilee Honours list. This will be presented by the Lord Lieutenant of Bristol in the Merchants Hall, Clifton in January.
- We have now bought another special medallion presented to the architects wife which was in the form of a brooch
- We held an exhibition in the Records Office July to September. This was very successful and enabled the Records Office to display some of their items, and us to display items which are not normally on display such as the 1900 day books of Alfred Woolley who did maintenance in the tunnel, and the training books of a wartime BBC transmitting engineer as well as a gatepost that had been newly brought back! It also meant that we were able to send visitors down to the Records Office on Doors Open Day. Also on display was the clock and the medallions presented on opening day and the first piece of limestone dynamited.
- 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.

Open days in 2012

- 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 in the Records Office so we borrowed the telegraph from L Shed for our open days.
- 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.
- We held one open day in April and one in May. This time the bus rally was not organised. In April we had 492 (a very good turnout) and in May we had 219- both up from last year.
- 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 a Bristol and Renault 4cv parked up too. Numbers were up from the previous year, 772 on Saturday and 672 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 (some will incorporate a photographic display in the Hotel)

- Sunday April 14 10-4
- Sunday April 28 10-4 in conjunction with the harbourside bus rally
- Sunday May 12 10-4
- Sept 14,15 Doors Open Day (free bus trips from Canons Marsh on Saturday. May include a raffle for an original medallion again

Oral History

- We have now spoken to over 120 people with memories. We would like to speak to more. This year we spoke to 6 with railway memories and 2 with war time memories (this include a lady who wrote from Australia).

Education

- We took down Mark Horton with a group of his undergraduates as part of a unit called Managing the Past. . The session was a 'heritage case study' and they wanted to look at the various issues about conservation, public access, volunteers etc
- We had to turn down a UWE tutor who wanted us to provide 120 hours of work with their students.
- We have turned down all groups wanting paranormal experience. We never knew there were so many groups.

Publicity

- Clifton Life, Venue, Evening Post and the visitbristol website have all given us good publicity this year. Having the exhibition in the Records Office meant good write ups in the Evening Post and an hour on Radio Bristol describing what was in the exhibition.
- Maggie being awarded the British Empire Medal also meant another good write up in many local newspapers and being on the Phil Hammond show where she was asked about her life and who she would invite to a dinner party. Croydon Marks and Peter Davey were some of her chosen dinner guests
- Pictures of progress continue to be put on the web sites which bring in emails asking for information and group trips.
- Doors Open Day will be celebrating 20 years next year so we have been asked to provide some of our memories since we have been participating since 2005.

Survey

- 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. They regard it as a privilege to see the Railway in its current state with its own special atmosphere.

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. However we now have a gatepost to work out where to display!

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	2012
Jan	38F	42F	50F	50
Feb	44F	42F	45F	44
March	48F	46F	45F	48
April	50F	50F	52F	
May	56F	52F		
June	60F	62F (88 outside)		58
July	60F	62F (90 outside)	58F	59
August	60F	63F (76 outside- lots of condensation)	58F	62
September	58F	57F	58F	56
October	58F	54F- 52	56F	52
November	52F	52F	54F	50
December	52F	52F	50	47

The Way Forward

We would still like archaeologists to record the barrage balloon and BBC rooms, but do not have 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.

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 and in the Records Office, 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.