

Clifton Rocks Railway Restoration Annual Report 2013

Maggie Shapland, Restoration Officer
 97 Princess Victoria Street
 Bristol BS8 4DD
 Maggie.Shapland@gmail.com



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 and a room for exhibitions on open days. This allows visitors more time to chat to us.. There is still a huge demand for trips down the tunnel, and we have again averaged more than one trip a week this year by doing 71 trips, the same as in 2012.

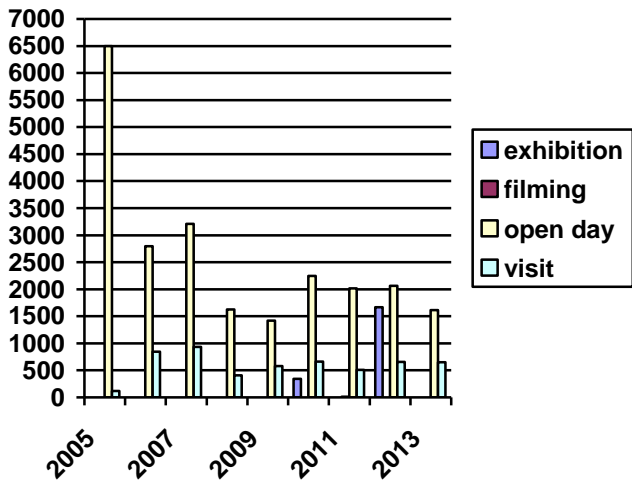
Many people organise their own groups- which is far easier for us. It is hard to do more than two trips in a week since most of us do have a full-time jobs and other commitments. On our open days this year we again issued tickets for specific days. This worked well since they had the details on a ticket to keep. It also meant that we received a donation in advance which made up for the problem of people not turning up. Paypal was also used successfully to sell tickets on line. 17 of our trips were for people who could not get a group together, 54 for specific groups. Several of our trips were organised through the Hotel who had delegates wanting a trip as part of the conference agenda.

	2005	2006	2007 (to mid Sept due to closure)	2008 (from May)	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Open day visitors). September two day, May 2005 to 2007 two days	6500 May 3500, Sep 3000 estimate	2797 May 1132 Sep 1665)	3212 May 1088 Sep 2124)	1627 May 380 Sep 1247	1417 May 233 Sep 1184	2248. April 374 May 502 Sep 1372	2019 April 377 2*May 447 Sep 1195	2065 April 402 May 219 Sep 1444	1614 2*Apr 431 May 171 Sep 1012
Group trip visitors	117	843	935	406	582	659	500	672	658
Number of trips	9	41	48	46	57	70	56	71	71
Hours spent on trips	30	225	229	207	264	309	265	304	331
Work hours	1199	697	377	36	56	63	92	71	78
Number of volunteers helping	62	45	43	32 (10 help with group trips)	28	24	22	22	24

Description of group trips

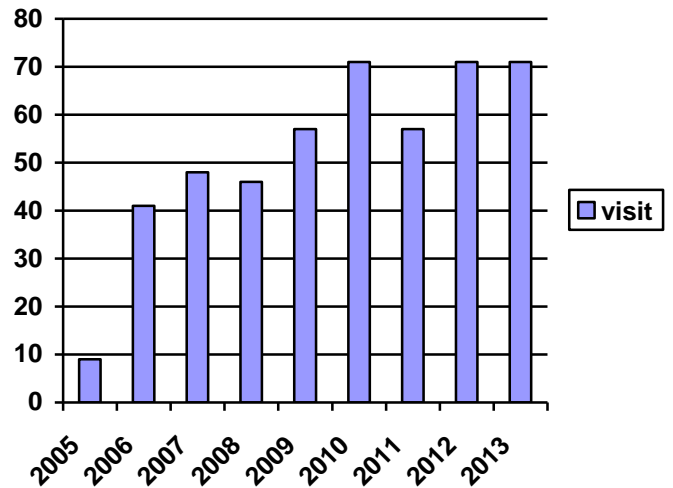
- We have again taken several appreciative groups down for special birthday/ retirement celebrations/ family get togethers. It is great to be considered a special exclusive place to come and clearly our fame has spread.
- The Brunel Society (who were staying at the Hotel) came again who are also taken 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.
- IMechE wants to get more young people involved with engineering since the nation faces a depletion of interest and it is through visits they can get people inspired. Other engineering institutions (IStrucE and ICE) also wanted to run similar visits of the Railway. They were fascinated to see the Engineers day book of Dec 1899-1901. Similarly some first year Civil Engineering students from Bristol University visited. The tunnel has many features that demonstrate tunnelling history and techniques.
- English Heritage organised 4 trips in February for the first time, and these were so successful that they then organised another 6 in September and 4 this April. This brought visitors from all over the country.
- RIBA (Royal Institute of British Architects) organised a series of building visits and guided tours for their nationwide Love Architecture festival in June with the aim of celebrating places and spaces in our built environment. This included the Railway.
- Other groups have been: Abbeywood, Airbus, AXA, Bristol Industrial Archaeological Society, Clarke Willmot, Mendip explorers (3 trips), Council Conservation Department, IMech E, John Elver, Fulbright students, Love Architecture (2 trips), Kemble, Somerset Industrial Archaeological Society, Suspension Bridge volunteers, University of Bristol (German, Civil Engineering, Public Engagement), Probus (Wells) and Womens Institute

year number of visitors



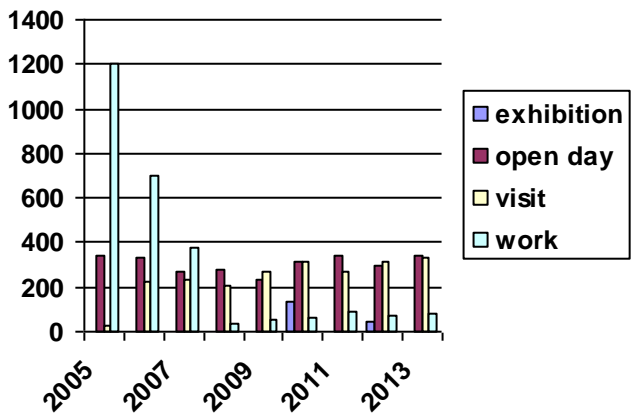
Number of visitors on open days reduced in 2008 and 2009 but increased in 2010 and 2011. 3477 taken down tunnel since 2008 despite limit of 10 at a time

year number of trips



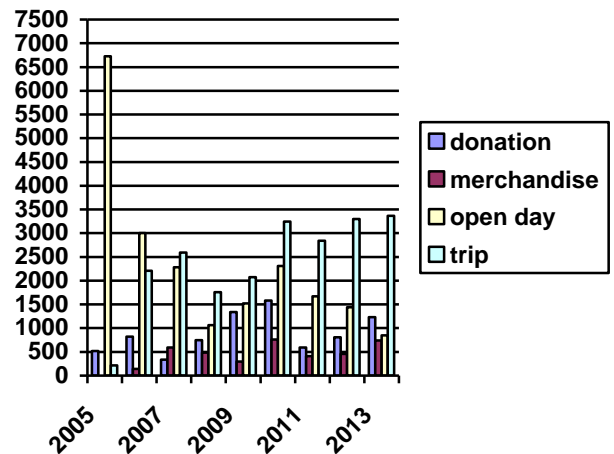
Demand still strong. Still doing just over one trip a week since 2009. 71 trips again this year.

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.

Income



We 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. In 2011 and 2012 we raffled an 1893 opening day medallion.

Significant Events since last AGM

- For the first time the University of Bristol hosted the prestigious Fulbright Commission's Summer Institute, established to explore the culture, heritage and history of the UK. Ten undergraduates from the US, who have been awarded scholarships in recognition of their academic achievements, spent four weeks in the city taking part in various meetings, workshops, seminars and field trips looking at the role Bristol has played in American history. This included volunteer help in the Railway as well as a tour. They thought the experience awesome.
- Chairman Peter Davey took Michael Portillo down the tunnel in April to film an episode for his latest series of **Great British Railway Journeys** on BBC2. Michael Portillo is discovering how the railways have affected people and find out what remains of Bradshaw's Victorian Britain. This will be shown in January.

- Maggie Shapland who was awarded the British Empire Medal for services to Clifton in the Queens Jubilee Honours list in 2012, received it from the Lord Lieutenant of Bristol in the Merchants Hall, Clifton in 2013. She also went to Buckingham Palace for a garden party too.
- We welcome two more trustees to add to the three trustees that were already appointed (James Tonkin chairman, Ed Scammell, Maggie Shapland secretary). Dominic Hewitt Liaison Officer and Roger Howard vice-chairman.
- Our exhibition boards showing historic photographs, Bristol Photographic Society and work by the volunteers were again displayed by the Hotel during Open Days in April and May. This allowed visitors to spend more time to discuss the project including the Lord Mayor in April.
- We were featured in a new book published September 2013 celebrating 20 years of Doors Open Day by Penny Mellor who is retiring from organising this event for all twenty years. This latest Redcliffe Press *softback Inside Bristol: Twenty Years of Doors Open Day* tells the remarkable story in more detail. Penny sets the scene in an introductory chapter and discusses 31 venues chosen out of the 180 that have opened their doors. All are beautifully illustrated in colour. ISBN: 978-1-908326-42-3 80pp full colour throughout £12. Next year the Architecture Centre on Narrow Quay will be taking over the running of Doors Open Day and the contact for 2014 onwards will be Christine Davis (Christine.Davis@architecturecentre.co.uk).
- Gordon Young of the Bristol Film and Video Society completed his film (started in April 2011) about the Avon Gorge which included a visit to the Railway and we went to his first public viewing. There is no commercial aspect - the finished documentary will be entered into competitions and will be shown at public gatherings in Bristol. Incorporates Suspension Bridge vaults, Clifton Rocks Railway, peregrine falcons, trees, plants, rock climbing, goats, the source of the gorge, observatory, history. View it at our AGM on February 28th.

AGM

We will be holding an AGM on February 28th at 6pm in the Avon Gorge Hotel. Do come.

This is your opportunity to put your views forward, to question members of the Clifton Rocks Railway committee and to have a general discussion about the Railway. It is really important for the committee to know the feelings of members. The Annual Report and the audited accounts will be available at the meeting.

AGENDA

- The Chairman's welcome.
- Report from the Treasurer.
- Election to the committee.
- Report from the Chairman.
- Questions and answers on topics covered by CRR.
- Any other business.
- 'The Avon Gorge. Bristol's spectacular route to the sea'. Gordon Young of the Bristol Film and Video Society

Open days in 2013

- We added to our display a lampshade from the BBC section, and labelled the Malago colliery bricks to be seen in the top station and improved the display of photographs of work we had done since 2005.
- We held two open days in April (since the bus rally date was announced late) and one in May. We averaged 200 visitors at each. In April it was cold and windy but a great team effort by all, at least it did not rain. We all had some entertaining people to deal with! I have never seen Peter hide from anyone before!
- September: We had 706 on Saturday boosted by the bus disgorging visitors regularly, and when George Ferguson the Mayor arrived he was happy to tag onto a group when I requested him to (much to my relief!). At least I had time for a 5 minute chat afterwards before I had to rush off to do another guided tour. It was also interesting to talk to the Architecture Centre people who said our visitors were far more diverse in age and ethnicity than at Clifton Hill House. On Sunday we had 310 visitors and gatekeepers making friends with dogs left in their care. The half marathon on Sunday affected peoples ability to get to Clifton, as well as bad weather so numbers were down from the previous year. We got pretty wet through after about 3pm though fortunately the rain had held off on Saturday. As per usual lots of laughter and applause. We even took round a group of Spanish Engineers just as we were closing down, who were on their way to the airport.

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

- Sunday April 27 10-4 in conjunction with the harbourside bus rally
- Sunday may 18 10-4
- Sept 13,14 Doors Open Day (free bus trips from Canons Marsh on Saturday). May include a raffle again

Oral History

- We have now spoken to over 120 people with memories. We would like to speak to more.
- We spoke to a lady who was 4 when she slept in the tunnel, another couple who recorded their mother's memories of travelling on the railway. Another visitor travelled on the Railway on its last day of operation.

Education

- We have assisted an MA student from Bath Spa University studying MA Heritage Management. She has helped us on group trips and an open day as part of her volunteering experience.

Publicity

- We had a good write up in Clifton Matters.
- Pictures of progress continue to be put on the web sites bring in emails asking for information and group trips.

Survey

- Many still 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 BTCC sign languishing in a garden somewhere in Somerset. The owner is still not ready to part with it. We have put our "new" gatepost on 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. Condensation above 60 and below 50F.

	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Jan	38F	42F	50F	50	50 wet
Feb	44F	42F	45F	44	45
March	48F	46F	45F	48	42-45
April	50F	50F	52F		50
May	56F	52F			50
June	60F	62F (88 outside)		58	57-60 condensation
July	60F	62F (90 outside)	58F	59	60-64
August	60F	63F (76 outside- much condensation)	58F	62	
September	58F	57F	58F	56	58-61
October	58F	54F- 52	56F	52	56
November	52F	52F	54F	50	54
December	52F	52F	50	47	48 Wet after heavy rain, condensation

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 again this year. This year 22 different volunteers have helped with open day and group trips. We need more.

Most 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, Lenka Cmelakova 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, Lenka and Peter). Guiding all day is 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 and Alan 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 helps organise people going on trips, and Anne Heald who rallied her family to help tidy the top station and look after the sales on open day (along with Sue Stops and Pauline Barnes).

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.