

## Clifton Rocks Railway Restoration Annual Report 2014

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At the beginning of the year, we had a meeting with the Avon Gorge Hotel manager and found out that although the Hotel was still owned by Swire Pacific based in Hong Kong, that Swire UK and Alias Hotels had been closed, and there were no funds to justify a liaison person between ourselves and the Hotel. This has made life considerably easier for us as we had always got on well with the Hotel staff and we had lost layers of management. This has resulted in us being able to do more work and to have more to show in 2015. Any work would have to be safe and secure and we would provide details of what was proposed complete with some sort of photo montage before anything was done. It was agreed we could replace the windows of the top station which would be preferable to boarded up holes. Anything to improve the appearance of Princes Lane would be a bonus to them. Chris McCambridge (his deputy who had worked at the Hotel for several years) took over from Guillame Lesage as General Manager in August and so our good relationship was continued.

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 a record number of 78 trips,.

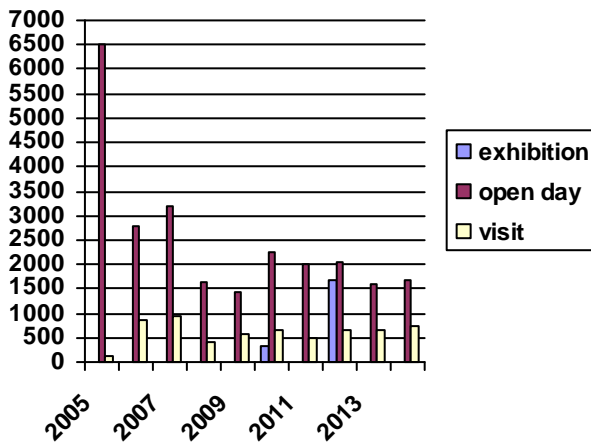
Many people organise their own groups- which is far easier for us. It is hard to do more than two trips in a week since many of us do have a full-time jobs (though I retired in 2013) and other commitments. On our open days this year we again issued tickets for specific days. This worked well since they 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 is also used successfully to sell tickets on line. Some dates were not released until open day to give open day visitors first choice. 20 of our trips were for people who could not get a group together, 58 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	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Open day visitors										
April						374	377	402	431 (2)	294
May	3500 (2)	1132(2)	1088(2)	380	233	502	447(2)	219	171	241
Sept (2 day)	3000	1665	2124	1247	1184	1372	1195	1444	1012	1056
<b>Total</b>	<b>6500</b>	<b>2797</b>	<b>3212</b>	<b>1627</b>	<b>1417</b>	<b>2248</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>2065</b>	<b>1614</b>	<b>1590</b>
Group trip visitors	117	843	935	406	582	659	500	672	658	728
Number of trips	9	41	48	46	57	70	56	71	71	78
Hours spent on trips	30	225	229	207	264	309	265	304	331	362
Work hours	1199	697	377	36	56	63	92	71	78	109
Number of volunteers helping	62	45	43	32	28	24	22	22	24	29

### Description of group trips

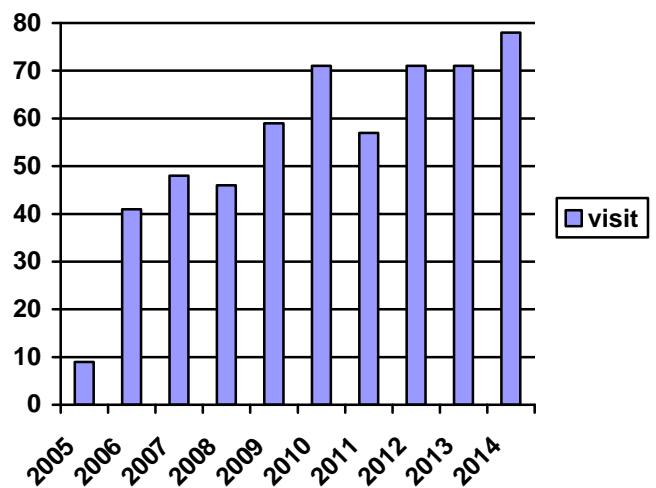
- We have again taken several appreciative groups down for special birthday/ retirement celebrations/ family get togethers. It is great to be considered a special exclusive place to come and clearly our fame has spread.
- The Brunel Society (staying at the Hotel) came twice this year and are also taken on a walk from the bottom station to the Ferry (to get to the SS Great Britain) with historic features pointed out to them on the way. They were delighted to see progress with the Brunel Swivel Bridge (several of us are also involved with that too)
- 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 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. We are still learning ourselves.
- English Heritage organised 8 trips again this year, having run several trips last year for the first time since they were very successful. This brought visitors from all over the country and get booked up within hours.
- Other groups have been: 18by80, Antiques Roadshow, Bristol Locomotive Society, Brunel walking group, Canada Life, Cotswold Rotary, Explorers, Fulbright students, Institute of Archaeology, Kingsdown Sports, Oldbury Power Station, Radio Society, Rotary, Savage Snappers, Saxon Explorer Scouts, Stroud photo, Bristol University Alumni (3 trips) , UWE Architect Society

### year number of visitors



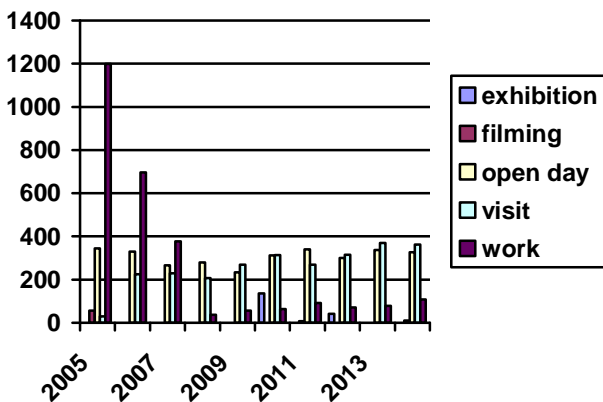
Have now seen over 25000 visitors on 43 open days and taken over 6000 on 545 trips down the tunnel. Over 33,300 in total

### year number of trips



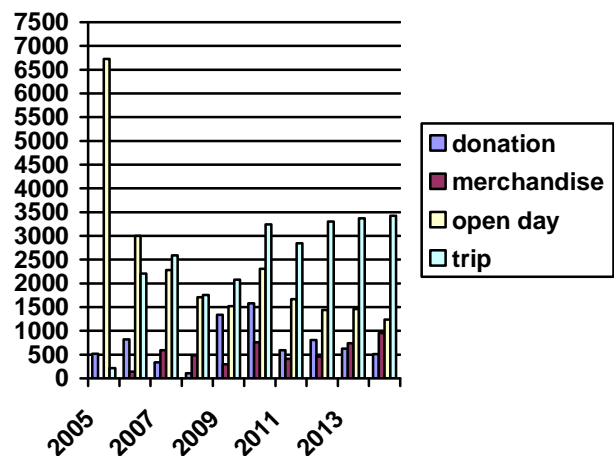
Demand still strong. Still doing just over one trip a week since 2009. Record 78 trips this year.

### work hours



In 2005 we spent 1200 hours working. In 2014 we spent 108 the most we have been able to do since 2007. Work hours had reduced since 2008 since we were only able to clean up for open days, sweep the steps, check the light bulbs and do some recording. We spent a total of 808 hours in the railway this year.

### Income



We now getting more revenue from trips than open day (in 2005 merchandise was not separated). Clearly more time consuming per visitor. Open days are a good focus point and good for publicity. Trips can be booked on open day and on the web site.

### Significant Events since last AGM

- Chairman Peter Davey took John Craven underground to discover BBC Bristol's secret role during World War Two as part of the celebrations for 80 years of BBC Bristol. John was also introduced to David Pearce who had worked in the Railway during the war. The interview can be seen on our facebook page.
- We were also visited by the Antiques Roadshow who may display a feature about us when they film in Bristol in 2015.
- Mike Taylor took the new "Made in Bristol" TV channel a short trip down the tunnel. It was meant to advertise the new railings he had installed but ended up being a brief view of the top station. This can be seen on facebook too.
- The BBC is marking the 70th anniversary of the end of the Second World War in 2015 with a two-part series of documentaries telling the extraordinary story of how broadcasting was revolutionized in Britain and around the world from 1939-1945. The series will be presented by Jonathan Dimbleby. Obviously the BBC installation in the Clifton Rocks tunnel is a fascinating example of how the BBC adapted during wartime. They would like to film Jonathan telling the story of the Clifton Rocks site as he explores the old recording rooms.
- 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 Lord Mayor Faruk Choudhury in April. We have now shown 6 Lord Mayors around, and we are grateful for their continued support.

- The Architecture Centre on Narrow Quay took over the running of Doors Open Day and held some useful sessions so that exhibitors could meet each other.
- Gordon Young who showed his film at our last AGM about the Avon Gorge which included a visit to the Railway, was runner up for the Bristol Film and Video Society annual trophy. The film won the Trophy for Best Narration. 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. We sold copies on our open days. This year he filmed Peter Davey giving his talk about Clifton Rocks Railway. You will be able to view excerpts at our AGM on January 9th.
- For the second 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. We were asked to take the students down the tunnel again (and again in 2015). They ended up knowing more about Bristol than their own home towns and were very enthusiastic.

## **AGM**

We will be holding an AGM on January 9th 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.
- Excerpts from a video of the talk Peter Davey gives about Clifton Rocks Railway presented by Gordon Young of the Bristol Film and Video Society.

## **Open days in 2014**

- We added to our display some ARP medals we had bought at auction, and Peter Davey lent us the tramway destination board Hotwells to Brislington to display.
- We held an open day in April and one in May. The May bus rally was cancelled at the last minute, but we did get the buses in September. A great team effort by all. Wet in April, but sunny in May and September. A jazz band visited us in April much to our surprise and played several tunes in the top station before departing. Very reminiscent of our first ever open day in May 2005.
- In September we had 678 on Saturday boosted by the bus disgorging visitors regularly, On Sunday we had 378 visitors. The 91 year old grand daughter of Philip Munro the local architect of the railway (the bottom station is called the Munro waiting room), and the Pumproom next door came to visit us all the way from Nottingham to have a look at the clock and medallions presented to the Munro family to celebrate the opening in March 1893. After her father remarried after her mothers death the clock was never seen again since his effects were left to the stepmothers family.

**Next open days** (April and May will hopefully incorporate a photographic display in the Hotel)

- Sunday April 12 10-4
- Sunday May 17 10-4 in conjunction with the harbourside bus rally
- Sept 12,13 Doors Open Day (free bus trips from Canons Marsh on Saturday).

## **Oral History**

- We have now spoken to over 120 people with memories. We would like to speak to more.

## **Education**

- The student we helped from Bath Spa University studying MA Heritage Management passed with merit and now has a job with the SSGB. She helped us on group trips and an open day as part of her volunteering experience and wishes to continue to help- which is great.

## **Publicity**

- Our publicity has come from television this year, but we hope to get more publicity in 2015 as a result of the work we did this year. Bristol magazine and Bristol Post continue to advertise our events.
- Pictures of progress continue to be put on the web sites bring in emails asking for information and group trips.
- We now have 390 facebook members, which is a great way of interacting with the public. 78 paid up friends.

## Work

- For several years we have looked at the rotten wooden head board at the apex on Sion Hill wondering whose responsibility it was to replace it since it had a big Hotel sign on it. Mike Taylor asked Chris McCambridge if he could make some railings to match the existing ones so he got some new zigzag cast by Bristol Foundry, bought some steel and two sizes of finials and made a wonderful job.
- James Tonkin our vice chairman also made and fitted two sash windows for the top station. It is amazing how light the room is now. We will have to paint the ceiling and walls after the condensation has gone since they now look shabby.
- We are also waiting for a new curved overthrow for the apex which has been commissioned from Dorothea Restorations which should arrive in January.
- In addition we have been given a drinking fountain from the Port and Pier railway which needs refurbishing before placing in the top station. This will be a good reminder of the spring industry.
- In due course we will replace the ironwork over the current top station entrance and put an interpretation board up.

## 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.

## 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 is a problem particularly in the top station.

	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Jan	38F	42F	50F	50	50 wet	48 wet, condensation
Feb	44F	42F	45F	44	45	48
March	48F	46F	45F	48	42-45	49 Drying out
April	50F	50F	52F		50	52
May	56F	52F			50	53
June	60F	62F (88 outside)		58	57-60 condensation	61-63
July	60F	62F (90 outside)	58F	59	60-64	60-65
August	60F	63F (76 outside- condensation)	58F	62		59
September	58F	57F	58F	56	58-61	58
October	58F	54F- 52	56F	52	56	57
November	52F	52F	54F	50	54	52 condensation
December	52F	52F	50	47	48 Wet after heavy rain, condensation	52

## 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. We have continued to do more research.

## 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 still 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, 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 Cmelakova 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 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 look after the sales on open day (along with Anne Heald, David Smith, Sue Stops and Pauline Barnes, and Ed). Anne has sadly moved to Malvern and will be sorely missed. We are glad to welcome Marion Reid for trips and open days.

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.