

= Clifton Bridge railway station =

Clifton Bridge railway station is a former railway station in the Bower Ashton district of Bristol , England , near the River Avon . It was opened in 1867 by the Bristol and Portishead Pier and Railway Company as a single platform stop 3 @. @ 4 miles ( 5 @. @ 5 km ) along the line from Bristol to Portishead . It was later taken over by the Great Western Railway and had a second platform added .

Passenger services at the station declined following the Second World War , and the Beeching Report recommended the complete closure of the Portishead line . Passenger services at Clifton Bridge ended on 7 September 1964 , with goods services following on 5 July 1965 , although the line saw occasional traffic until 1981 . Most of the station was demolished , leaving some remains of the platforms , a retaining wall and the footbridge . Regular freight trains through the station began to run again in 2002 when Royal Portbury Dock was connected to the rail network . The line is due to be reopened to passenger traffic in 2019 as part of MetroWest , but there are no plans to reopen the station .

= = History = =

Clifton Bridge railway station was opened on 18 April 1867 by the Bristol and Portishead Pier and Railway Company , when services began on their line from the Bristol and Exeter Railway at Portishead Junction to a pier on the Severn Estuary at Portishead . The line was built as 7 ft ( 2 @. @ 134 mm ) broad @- @ gauge , and was largely single track . The station was sited in Bower Ashton at the southern end of the Avon Gorge , at the bottom of Rownham Hill and near the western bank of the river . The station , which took its name from the nearby Clifton Suspension Bridge , was 8 miles 42 chains ( 13 @. @ 7 km ) from the line 's terminus at Portishead , 3 miles 32 chains ( 5 @. @ 5 km ) from Bristol Temple Meads and 121 miles 63 chains ( 196 @. @ 0 km ) from the Great Western Railway 's terminus at London Paddington . To the north , the railway ran along the riverbank in the gorge , and to the south through fields just outside the Bristol conurbation . The station was initially the first along the line from Portishead Junction , before Portbury .

When it opened , the station had a single platform , on the west side of the track . Road access was through a large forecourt to the west from Clanage Road / Rownham Hill , now the A369 . There was a two @- @ storey building facing the road , the ground floor of which had a single long room , partitioned into a waiting room , booking office and station master 's office . The ground floor also housed a coal @- @ fired boiler and washing facilities , while upstairs was spacious living accommodation accessed by a private staircase . A single north @- @ facing bay platform for goods vans was at the north end of the station . The station was noted as having an excellent garden alongside the platform . The nearby Rownham Ferry allowed passengers to cross the river to Hotwells and Clifton . Services on the Portishead railway were operated by the Bristol and Exeter Railway , with six trains per day in each direction on weekdays and one on Sundays . The operation of these transferred to the Great Western in 1876 , when they took over the Bristol and Exeter , and in 1884 the Great Western took ownership of the Bristol and Portishead . The station was visited by Albert Edward , Prince of Wales , in 1878 .

The station saw major works at the beginning of the 1880s . From 24 to 27 January 1880 , the line was relaid as 4 ft 8 1 ? 2 in ( 1 @. @ 435 mm ) standard gauge , and on 15 September 1880 a passing loop was brought into use through the station , east of the original track , with a new platform serving it . The new platform had a large shelter and a small signal cabin immediately south of the shelter , with a footbridge at the south end linking it to the original platform . Both platforms had " half barrel " canopies added . The new " down " platform served trains towards Bristol , while the original " up " platform now served trains towards Portishead . The double track through the station was extended to Portishead Junction from 1883 . The station 's name was changed to Rownham in March 1891 , but reverted to Clifton Bridge in 1910 . In 1899 the station was flooded to a depth of several feet ( one metre ) , as were other parts of Bristol . A new signal box with 27 levers was built at the south end of the western platform , with the original cabin taken out of use from 25

August 1907 . The signal box contained three token instruments , connected to the line 's other signal boxes at Oakwood , Pill and Portishead , so that the Pill or Oakwood boxes could be switched out . The boxes at Clifton Bridge and Portishead were manned 24 hours a day . By 1889 , services had increased to nine trains in each direction on weekdays and one on Sundays , and from 1909 this increased to 13 on weekdays and two on Sundays .

In June 1914 , the station played a major role in bringing passengers to the Bristol International Exhibition , known locally as the White City , held on Ashton Meadows to the south @-@ east of the station . The exhibition came to an early end due to the outbreak of the First World War , as the buildings were used for troop barracks . The station had earlier that year seen the discovery of a decapitated corpse , later identified as prominent local solicitor Edward Payne Press . The death was ruled a suicide by means of lying down in front of a train . The war saw the establishment of a mule depot , which handled mule traffic from the docks before the animals were transported to military installations such as at Shirehampton or Salisbury Plain . From 1917 the station was closed on Sundays as a wartime economy measure .

After the war , services increased , and from 8 July 1929 a half @-@ hourly service operated along the line : two trains per hour to Portishead , one to Ashton Gate and one to Bristol Temple Meads , equating to 21 trains per day on weekdays . On Sundays eight trains per day operated . There were eight staff assigned to the station in the 1930s , and in 1944 three carriage sidings were laid at the south end of the station .

The Portishead line again saw a rise in use during the Second World War , as Bristolians evacuated to the more rural areas of Pill and Portishead commuted in to work , many alighting at Clifton Bridge and walking across the Cumberland Basin bridges , the Rownham Ferry now obsolete . During air raids , people would sleep aboard carriages in the station sidings , or in Clifton Bridge No. 1 tunnel north of the station . The station was also used during the war for timber traffic from the local woodlands , loaded onto trains by members of the Women 's Land Army . Other freight traffic included goods from the Ashton Containers factory and a local firm dealing in herbal medicine .

When the railways were nationalised in 1948 , Clifton Bridge came under the aegis of the Western Region of British Railways . Services had reduced by 1949 to 13 trains per day on weekdays and seven on Sundays , and passenger numbers fell . The station became an unstaffed halt from 29 October 1962 , and in 1963 , the Beeching report suggested the complete withdrawal of services along the line . Passenger services at Clifton Bridge were ended on 7 September 1964 , with goods services ending the next year on 5 July 1965 . In the final year of passenger operation , there were only six trains on weekdays and none on Sundays . One of the carriage sidings had been taken out of service in 1964 , and the others followed in 1966 . The line through the site was reduced to single track in 1965 , and the signal box was closed on 4 November 1966 . The station buildings were mostly demolished , and the site became the headquarters of the Avon and Somerset Constabulary Mounted Police and Dog Section . Part of the western platform remained in situ , as did the retaining wall of the eastern platform shelter . The station footbridge became part of a footpath . Freight trains continued to pass through the station , but their number decreased over time , with the line falling out of regular use from 30 March 1981 . The route however was kept intact by British Rail , with occasional freight trains , and in 2002 a single track was relaid to allow rail access to Royal Portbury Dock .

= = Future = =

The Portishead Branch Line is to be reopened as part of the MetroWest scheme , a rail transport plan which aims to enhance transport capacity in the Bristol area . The scheme was given the go @-@ ahead in July 2012 as part of the City Deal , whereby local councils would be given greater control over money by the government . A consultation on the plans was held between 22 June and 3 August 2015 to gather views from the community and stakeholders before moving on to detailed designs . The detailed proposals will be subject to a second consultation before the plans are finalised . Due to the additional capital costs , the line will not be electrified , but the design will include passive provision for future electrification . The station at Clifton Bridge is not being

considered for reopening , but the line in the area will be increased to double track . The line is expected to reopen in 2019 .

Trains along the reopened line will operate between Portishead and Bristol Temple Meads , with two trains per hour in each direction . Services would call at Pill and Parson Street , with aspirations to also call at Bedminster and a reopened Ashton Gate . Trains could also be extended on to the Severn Beach Line . The trains used will be diesel multiple units , likely three carriages long . The line will be operated as part of the Greater Western passenger franchise . Great Western Railway , a subsidiary of FirstGroup , operates the Greater Western franchise . Their contract expires in early 2019 , before services to Portishead are due to start .